

eggsploitation

an exclusive interview with an egg donor recruiter

jennifer lahl

The following is an interview I did with an Egg Donor Recruiter. As a result of her doing internet research on my work and the film *Eggsploitation*, she contacted me and agreed to talk with me about her experience working for 18 years with a leading fertility center in the United States.

LAHL: How did you get into the Egg Donation business?

KAY: I was the weekend phlebotomist for a fertility clinic and they convinced me into working full time as an assistant to one of the doctors. Their egg donor program was sort of on the back burner and they were looking to grow it. One of the nurses in the clinic trained me.

My job was to give information to the egg donors and to screen their applications. We were looking for healthy, compassionate, young women between the ages of 21 – 33. I worked there for 18 years. In the early days, I really thought I was helping people and doing good work.

LAHL: Who were your typical egg donors in the early days?

KAY: Most of our donors were married moms, who had already had their children and wanted to make some extra money. Most of the donors had good intentions in wanting to help someone have a baby, but in all the years I did this work, I never met anyone who wanted to do it for free. I knew that money was an incentive to the women. In fact, years later, the clinic changed the compensation structure into three payments, to keep the donors motivated to get to the end of the cycle. The donors I recruited didn't have to have a college degree, they were of average height, weight, and intelligence. We wanted them to have a healthy medical history to avoid any diseases or life-threatening illnesses. We paid them about \$2,500-\$3,000. And they could make \$3,500 for doing repeat donations.

learn more!
purchase our documentary

eggsploitation

today!
eggsploitation.com

a project of the center for
bioethics and culture

facebook and twitter:
[@thinkagainCBC](https://www.facebook.com/thinkagainCBC)

eggsploitation

LAHL: What changes did you see happening with the patients (recipients) over the years?

KAY: I saw a shift in the fertility patients who had become more demanding, wanting 'designer babies'. I recall calling one woman who was using a surrogate and an egg donor to have a child. She was very picky about the women she wanted to use. One day, I was working on a Saturday, and I thought I'd found the perfect donor for her, so I called her. She said she was busy and asked if she could call me back in about 30 minutes. I explained that I wasn't going to be available then so she said she'd get off the treadmill now so we could talk. I thought it was strange that she was so picky, but didn't want to stop her exercise to discuss the egg donor I found for her. This was a child she so desperately wanted, but her exercise was her priority?

LAHL: What changes did you see happening in the clinic?

KAY: Fertility patients demanded more egg donors to choose from – they wanted to choose from hundreds of possible donors. The clinic wanted to meet that demand, so there was the pressure of always feeling like we didn't have enough donors. We started sharing our donor's eggs with up to three recipients and all donors had testing to check their ovarian reserve. Donors who were predicted to be high producers of eggs were very desirable. Donors whose ovarian reserve showed they only had enough eggs for one woman were not accepted into our donor program.

And the fertility patients started to demand egg donors of a particular kind. We lowered the BMI from 32 to 27 because patients wanted thin donors. And we dropped the age for donors from 21-33 to 21-30 since they wanted young donors. Also, in the early days, we had no educational requirements, other than a GED, but now we had to have college educated donors. Recipients of the donated eggs had the choice to use a donor's eggs all to herself or to share them with someone else. The more you were willing to share the eggs, the less expensive the costs of the fertility treatments were. But if you had a lot of money, you could use a high producer of eggs all to yourself.

LAHL: You eventually quit. Why did you decide to leave after 18 years?

KAY: The last few years was all about pleasing the recipients who were using egg donors. We stopped taking care of donors, but choosing donors based on their 'select ability'. Our clinic didn't want to waste time

learn more!
purchase our documentary

eggsploitation

today!
eggsploitation.com

a project of the center for
bioethics and culture

facebook and twitter:
[@thinkagainCBC](https://www.facebook.com/thinkagainCBC)

eggsploitation

and resources on donors who weren't going to be chosen, or wouldn't produce a good quantity of eggs, but focused on girls who would be picked and produce many eggs. It weighed heavy on my mind that people wanted 'designer babies' -- not that they just wanted a baby, but that they wanted a particular kind of baby. It wasn't that we stopped 'taking care' of the donors, but in my opinion, they were viewed as employees who were contracted and paid to perform a service. It also weighed heavily on my mind that your so called 'average' woman wasn't good enough anymore.

LAHL: Did you ever see egg donors that were harmed?

KAY: Since I was on the recruiting side, I actually never met the donors; I just spoke with them over the phone. I would occasionally hear about cases where girls were hyper stimulated, but I didn't work with them at that stage.

LAHL: Do you mind me asking what you were paid?

KAY: At the end, I was making \$65,000 a year. I felt the clinic was always changing my pay though, to pay me less. At the beginning, I was paid when the egg donor was matched with a recipient. Then they changed that and I was only paid when the eggs were retrieved. And finally, I was paid once the embryo transfer was made. And my recruitment goals were changed. At first, it was to get 300 egg donors, then 500, then 700. It never seemed to be enough.

learn more!
purchase our documentary

eggsploitation

today!
eggsploitation.com

Did this interview tell you anything important?

Share the link with your friends by email or social media:
cbc-network.org/eggdonorinterview

a project of the center for
bioethics and culture

facebook and twitter:
[@thinkagainCBC](https://www.facebook.com/thinkagainCBC)