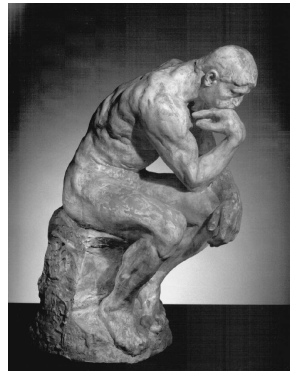


What are the Ethical Considerations for Sperm Donation?

<http://www.stanford.edu/class/siw198q/websites/reprotech/New%20Ways%20of%20Making%20Babies/spermeth.htm> (Visited March 23, 2014)



When considering the ethics of sperm donation, several factors must be considered:

- The rights of the sperm donor.
- The rights of the clients (who are purchasing the sperm).
- The criteria by which sperm are collected (i.e. choosing a donor who has certain traits).
- The amount of sperm that a single man can donate.

The following explain the rights of the various parties involved in sperm donation and examine some of the controversial issues in the field. These rights were developed through the principles of medical ethics and informed consent and are not mandated technically by law. However, sperm banks are approved by state health departments and national organizations; if certain criteria are not met, the banks are not accredited.

Sperm Donor Rights:

The identity of the donor shall remain anonymous. The clients have no right to learn the identity of the donor or solicit donor identifying information from any other source. The donor shall also be free from any responsibility to the biological offspring produced by his sperm.

Client Rights:

The clients have the right to be informed of the limitations and potential complications involved with sperm donation. Sperm donation is not always successful and multiple treatments might have to be performed. Also, the sperm bank cannot completely guarantee that the sperm they provide is disease free or free of genetic

abnormalities. Although genetic testing and disease screening techniques are advanced and sensitive, they are not foolproof. The client also must understand that she/he is fully responsible for the offspring conceived by use of the specimens.

Sperm donor and client rights are usually established via an informed consent form that is signed by the client and verified by the client's doctor. This form ensures that the client understands his/her rights and the rights of the sperm donor. The principle of informed consent is based on the principles of scientific and medical ethics.

The Ethics of Choosing Sperm:

Sperm banks differ in their selection of sperm donors. All are highly selective, but some are more selective than others. For example, California Cryobank only accepts donors who attend or have graduated from a "major four-year university." Donors must also be tall, trim, heterosexual, and between 19 and 34 years old. One sperm bank, the Repository of Germinal Choice at one time only accepted sperm from Nobel Prize winners. Other sperm banks like CryoGam Colorado, Inc. are selective, but not excessively so. They carry a more "normal" gene pool and their philosophy reflects a distaste for elitism. The disparity between ultra selective sperm banks and ones that cater to a more "normal" population raise ethical questions. Is only providing the most elite sperm a form of eugenics? As of yet, these ethical issues have not been resolved. Sperm banks can carry any type of sperm they wish as long as they adhere to proper laboratory standards and respect informed consent.

How Much Sperm Can Be Donated?:

If a donor sires too many kids, the risk of producing children who will eventually copulate increases. Although it sounds unbelievable, half brothers and sisters (from the same donor father) have actually married not knowing they were related. Thus, sperm banks place a limitation on the number of children a donor can produce. A donor can produce a maximum of ten children with his sperm. This limit prevents the problem mentioned above and is adhered to by all sperm banks.