



Patients' attitudes towards the anonymity of gamete donation in Spain

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Study question

To what extent do infertility patients in Spain, support different forms of anonymity for oocyte and sperm donation?

Summary answer

Most patients who undergo treatment with donated gametes in Spain consider that their children should not know the identity of the donors.

What is known already

Spain has a large tradition of gamete donation, probably influenced by its law that requires gamete donation to be anonymous for the donor and the recipient. Although there is a growing support for openness and identity-release in gamete donation, Spanish Society of Fertility has generated an Anonymity in Donations Framework Document which recommends revelation to the donor-conceived children their biological origin preserving the identity. However, there is no information on what the preferences of the patients are regarding the disclosure of the origins to their children.

Study design, size, duration

A prospective, multicenter study that includes all eleven clinics in Spain and involves women and men who had used donated gametes. From September to October 2020, a self-administered questionnaire was sent out to a total of 66 patients which were asked to indicate their responses on a 7-point Likert scale from "totally agree" to "totally disagree". All 66 patients anonymously completed the questionnaire. All women answered to the survey, while only 18% of men responded.

Participants/materials, setting, methods

The participants were asking for their socio-demographic characteristics, their opinions concerning secrecy or disclosure of the method of conception towards the child, what type of information should the child have access to – identifying or non-identifying – and whether they intend to inform their child and relatives about his/her origin. Another set of questions were on ethical topics around moral attitudes of the patients.

The associations between the demographic factors were analyzed using the Chi square test

Main results and the role of chance

Homosexual couples or single women (82.4%), have the idea of telling their child that they have been conceived with gamete donation ($p<0,002$) whereas 61,2% of heterosexual couples refuse to inform the child about the circumstances of his/her conception and 51% would not tell anyone ($p<0,005$).

Patients do not want to know the identity of donors (0,279 SD:0,330 $p<0,001$) and they do not consider that knowledge about the origin of the gametes is important to a child (0,281 SD: 0,317 $p<0,001$) and that it is not necessary for the child to know the identity of the donor (0.171 SD: 0.259 $p<0,001$).

Limitations, reasons for caution

While the multicenter study design strengthens external validity, not being able to carry out the questionnaire to those born by donation of gametes constitutes a limitation and warrants caution when drawing conclusions from these data, as does the fact that these results are only generalizable in Spain.

Wider implications of the findings

The findings of this study can be used as a basis for further discussion between regulators and professionals with respect to anonymity relating to donor conception. These opinions should be considered carefully in legal and ethical discussions on gamete donation.

