

26th June 2008

Everyone's missing the point...

The London Bridge Fertility, Gynaecology and Genetics Centre (Bridge for short) maintains one of the UK's largest sperm banks and offers the following and different perspective on the shortage of donor gametes - both sperm and eggs, which is affecting the lives and happiness of many infertile people in the UK.

It is only partly true that the shortages are caused by the removal of donor anonymity, although we believe it inappropriate to place the rights of unborn children over those of living parents and donors who desire anonymity.

It is also not the case that the shortage is caused by 'lack of awareness' - the position of the National Gamete Donation Trust.

The shortage of donor gametes comes down to simple economics - it's all about money.

We do not live in an altruistic society - perhaps we never did. The simple truth is that the 'expense only' payments we are allowed to make for donation are simply insufficient - for both genders of donors.

We work to laws and regulations made by MPs, committees and regulatory bodies. All the people involved in making the regulations are paid to do what they do and receive expenses on top of their salaries and fees.

We feel it is hypocritical of them to expect donors to behave differently.

Donors also have bills to pay and, out of every possible 100 sperm donors we reach, 85% decline for financial reasons - the time and effort involved is simply too great.

If we were able to compensate sperm donors fairly - at the rate of about £50 per donation instead of the current £17.50 reimbursement of expenses, there would be no shortage and the quality of the sperm available would be higher.

The same is true for egg donation, where the position is even worse as the demands of the donation process and the compensation offered are ridiculously far apart, involving egg donors in serious financial loss in addition to the discomfort and risk involved.

No wonder hundreds, possibly thousands, of British women go abroad for treatment and others live empty lives without children.

We hear many highminded opinions about the need for altruistic donation - coming from people who are well paid in terms of their time and expenses and, it seems, indifferent to the consequences of their highmindedness.

It is another example of how our lawmakers and regulators are out of touch with the wants and needs of real people.