

DONOR-CONCEIVED FAMILIES AT MATERNITY AND CHILD HEALTH CLINICS



Becoming a family with donated gametes differs from the typical way of becoming a family, as fertility treatments have included gametes from a person or persons outside the family.

Professionals need to be able to support parents regarding openness about donor conception because according to the Act on Assisted Fertility Treatments, which came into effect in 2007, all donors of gametes used in donor-conception treatments in Finland must be registered, and the conceived child will be entitled to learn the identity of the donor upon turning 18. The donor may also be a person known to and chosen by the parents. The donor has no legal rights or responsibilities towards the child.

Parents hope for genuine, direct and relaxed encounters with professionals as well as recognizing that donor conception does not affect every aspect of the child's being.

FAMILIES ARE DIVERSE

Parents hope that maternity and child health clinics would not presume, pity or marvel at a child's donor conception background or choices made by parents. The matter is entirely normal to the parents and they hope that professionals would also treat them as normal families. Parents additionally hope that professionals would consider the diversity of families. Children's and families' backgrounds should be treated with sensitivity, positivity and respect.

LEARNING TERMINOLOGY

A donor of gametes is referred to as "the donor", but it is also advisable to ask which term each family wishes to use. A gamete donor should not be referred to as dad, mom, parent or for example genetic/biological father/mother/parent.

INVOLUNTARY CHILDLESSNESS

Many parents of a donor-conceived child have been affected by involuntary childlessness. Someone expecting a donor-conceived child may have first been through prolonged fertility treatments using the parents' own gametes and then again with donor gametes. Parents feel that it is important to discuss involuntary childlessness and becoming a family through donor conception at the maternity and child health clinic.

AWARENESS IS IMPORTANT

A child should be aware of the donor conception and it is important to discuss the matter with the child from an early age. Parents of a donor-conceived child may need support with processing and discussing the child's origins. Parents should be encouraged towards openness regarding the donor conception in a safe manner, as it is a private family matter but not a secret.

INFORMATION BANK

COMPREHENSIVE
INFORMATION ABOUT
DONOR GAMETES FOR
VARIOUS AUDIENCES

WWW.HELMINAUHA.INFO

BECOMING A PARENT WITH DONOR GAMETES



Approximately 500 children are born each year through donor conception. The donation may be of eggs, sperm or embryos. Donors are either Finnish or foreign citizens.

Donor conception treatment is given to opposite-sex couples, female same-sex couples, single women and transgender persons. Treatment is provided by private fertility clinics and at university hospitals offering fertility treatments.

DONOR CONCEPTION COUNSELLING

Before beginning donor conception treatments, each person wishing to have a child through donor conception or considering it must participate in donor conception counselling, which aims to provide support with weighing different options and with deciding, as well as help prepare for or give up treatment with donated gametes. Donor conception counselling is a meeting with a psychologist where you discuss e.g., letting go of the idea of having a child with one's own gametes, attachment issues, and development of a child's identity. Counselling also addresses any questions relating to the donor.

HOPE AND LETTING GO

All parents of donor-conceived children find common ground in the lack of a genetic bond between the child and one or both parents. This loss of generational continuity may bring up feelings of loss, even though the treatment enables the dream of having a child.

OPENNESS SUPPORTS CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Knowledge of your own origins is important for the development of an intact identity. Only the child can know whether knowledge of their genetic origins is important to them; no one else can decide that on their behalf. Family secrets can impact a child's identity and familial relationships in a harmful way. Research has shown that donor conception should be discussed with the child from an early age, so that they grow up knowing their origins.

CHILDREN FEEL PARTICULARLY WANTED

Children feel their donor conception is natural, especially if the topic has been discussed at home from an early age and the parent/parents are at peace with it. Children who are aware of their donor origins know that their parents wanted them particularly much.