

This response was submitted to the consultation held by the Nuffield Council on Bioethics on Give and take? Human bodies in medicine and research between April 2010 and July 2010. The views expressed are solely those of the respondent(s) and not those of the Council.

International Donor Offspring Alliance

Question 1

No comment.

Question 2

Gametes (sperm and eggs) should be singled out as special. It is these cells that lead to the creation of the biological child of the person they come from. When considering gametes the interests of the human being thus created are of paramount importance, and should be considered more highly than those of the donor, recipient, or society in general. In the case of somatic tissues (non-gametes) those concerns do not arise at all. In the opinion of the International Donor Offspring Alliance, this consultation is flawed because it considers gametes alongside somatic (non-gamete) human material. The outcomes of using these two different types of tissue are very different.

Question 3

It is significantly different to use gametes to conceive a child after the person whose gametes they are has died. This would mean that the child would have intentionally been denied the chance to ever have a relationship with their biological mother or father. This issue marks a hugely significant difference between gametes and somatic cells, and thus this consultation, which does not go to enough lengths to distinguish the two types, will lead to insufficiently clear conclusions.

Question 4

There are many potential risks (medical, psychological developmental, emotional) to a child who is created with the full intention to deny him or her a meaningful relationship with his or her biological mother or father. These have not been fully enough considered by society at large. The relatives of the person whose gametes used to create a child may also suffer never knowing this child who will be their grandchild, niece, nephew, cousin, half-sibling etc..

Question 5

No comment.

Question 6

No comment.

Question 7

Again IDOA notes that the presumptions of this study are flawed. Gametes lead to the creation of autonomous human beings who are permanently linked to the people those gametes came from i.e. their mother or father. Thus they are so

completely different to the other forms of donation considered in this study and must only be studied independently.

Question 8

No comment.

Question 9

The reasons that men and women give the ability to create their biological children to somebody else, and abandon all rights and responsibilities over their children has never been fully understood. IDOA advises that in the absence of such understanding, the actions of such a person should be seen to have at best an ambiguous ethical value.

Question 10

In the case of gamete donation, the value that should always take precedence over the others is the welfare of the human being thus created. IDOA does not believe that the welfare of the child created should be weighed up against the welfare of the adults involved. If the welfare of the potential child is seen to be compromised then the donor-conception should not take place.

Question 11

It is unconscionable that a gamete "donor" should be provided with a financial incentive to relinquish knowledge of who his or her biological children are. It is beneath the dignity of any human being to be conceived in that way.

Question 12

There is no moral duty to provide gametes for the creation of a child the donor never intends to have a relationship with. Indeed society as a whole must very carefully consider whether it is moral at all to participate in the creation of a child destined never to have a relationship with his or her biological mother or father.

Question 13

No comment.

Question 14

It is not right to attempt to meet demand for "donated" gametes unless it is clear that it is beneficial for the children thus created to be deliberately separated from their biological mother or father. This is by no means obviously true and requires much more public discussion.

Question 15

In the opinion of IDOA, no form of incentive should be used to encourage people to create children of theirs that they have no intention of having a meaningful

relationship with.

Question 16

It is unethical to provide a financial incentive to encourage people to create children of theirs that they have no intention of having a meaningful relationship with. IDOA is also fully against egg "sharing" and deliberately creating human beings after one of their biological parents has died, as would be the case in harvesting sperm or eggs from deceased patients.

Question 17

No comment.

Question 18

Any forms of compensation will have a distorting effect on the understanding of a gamete "donor" of the significance of what they are participating in, which is the creation of their biological son or daughter.

Question 19

No comment.

Question 20

Intra-cytoplasmic Sperm Injection (ICSI) will allow men to fertilise an egg, who previously could not impregnate their female partners due to low quality of their sperm. This will reduced the perceived need for "donated" sperm amongst heterosexual couples.

Question 21

Receiving payment or free IVF treatment in return for "donating" gametes strongly distorts the ability of the "donor" to think clearly and truly understand the significance of what they are participating in.

Question 22

No comment.

Question 23

It is never ethically acceptable to create the biological children of a person without that person's consent.

Question 24

It is never ethically acceptable to create the biological children of a person who is unable to give their consent, for example if they are a minor, mentally handicapped or deceased.

Question 25

It is the opinion of IDOA that under no circumstances should a human being created whose biological mother or father is already deceased, so this question does not come in to play.

Question 26

The sperm or eggs of a dead person should never be used to create a human being. It is unacceptable to bring a person into the world knowing that their biological mother or father is dead.

Question 27

UK law should not permit anyone to sell their gametes for any purpose.

Question 28

No comment.

Question 29

No comment.

Question 30

The International Donor Offspring Alliance (IDOA) is a collection of donor-conceived people (conceived from "donated" gametes) with members around the world and of all ages. In our opinion the basis for the Nuffield consultation is flawed. The use of donated gametes (sperm and eggs) has consequences so different from the use of donated somatic tissue (non sperm and eggs) that a consultation which considers them together cannot possibly produce clear conclusions about the ethical validity of the use of gametes. The practice of donor-conception is widespread, yet there has been so little public discussion devoted to it. The conditions under which it is practiced are in desperate need of public debate and IDOA firmly encourages the Nuffield Council to consider gamete donation in isolation.

<http://www.idoalliance.org/>