



*Fertility Society of Australia
2018 Annual Scientific Meeting, Melbourne 9-12 September*

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Many single women wanting babies from donated sperm feel 'excluded' by questioning and judgement

The removal of many of the legal barriers to accessing assisted reproduction has resulted in a mounting wave of single women being treated in fertility clinics with donor sperm.

For example, over the past two years in Victoria, more than 50 per cent of patients treated with donor sperm have been single women with other States reporting similar patterns.

However, according to new research presented at the annual conference of the Fertility Society of Australia in Melbourne today, many of the single women seeking babies from donor sperm felt excluded over questioning about their treatment with some even reporting their GPs refused referrals to fertility clinics.

Professor Fiona Kelly of La Trobe Law School in Melbourne, said while the use of fertility services by single women has become commonplace, little attention had been given to their specific needs within the clinical environment, including their psycho-social care.

"While fertility clinics are increasingly welcoming of single women, with many now specifically advertising to single women through their websites, they do not always provide an inclusive practice," she said.

Professor Kelly's research involved qualitative interviews with 25 single mothers of choice who conceived their babies in recent years from donor sperm at Australian fertility clinics.

"All of the women took home the babies they desired, and generally they reported the treating doctors, nurses and staff at the fertility clinics were kind and supportive," she said.

"But when I dug a bit deeper into their experiences, I found that many of the women felt their treatment was not truly inclusive.

"The women reported issues with inappropriate language and questioning, judgment, and even refusal to treat.

"There were issues about questioning and presumptions about husbands or partners helping with injections and transport, and some of the information sessions and paperwork were clearly designed for heterosexual or same sex couples.

“Some of the respondents in the study were made to feel like they didn’t belong at a fertility clinic and said their quest for motherhood with donated sperm should be more inclusive of single women and their unique experience of assisted reproduction.”

Professor Kelly said the number of single women wanting babies from donated sperm was growing rapidly and would continue in that trend.

“It is therefore recommended that some referring GPs and fertility clinics review their practices to ensure their patients are treated in a more welcoming and inclusive environment,” she added.

Leading fertility specialists from Australia and overseas are attending the conference at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre to explore latest developments to help people experiencing infertility, which is defined as the failure to conceive after a year of unprotected intercourse, or the inability to carry pregnancies to a live birth.

In Australia, an estimated one in six couples experience infertility, the causes of which are equally shared between male and female partners.

For more information on speakers and the program for the 2018 annual scientific meeting of the Fertility Society of Australia, go to www.fsaconference.com

Interview: Professor Fiona Kelly is available for interview. To arrange, please contact Trevor Gill, FSA Media Relations, on 0418 821948 or e-mail lighthousepr@adelaide.on.net