

Open-Identity Sperm Donation: How Does Offering Donor-Identifying Information Relate to Donor-Conceived Offspring's Wishes and Needs?

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Abstract Over the past years, a growing number of countries have legislated open-identity donation, in which donor-conceived offspring are given access to the donor's identity once the child has reached maturity. It is held that donor anonymity creates identity problems for such children similar to the "genealogical bewilderment" described within the adoption context. The study of the social and psychological effects of open-identity donation is still very much in its infancy, but what has been left unquestioned is whether (and to what extent) offering access to the donor's name and address is an adequate response to such effects. This study has two goals: First, we aim to provide a systematic review of the reasons why donor-conceived (DC) offspring want to know the identity of their sperm donor. Second, we examine to what extent the provision of donor identifying information can satisfy the reasons mentioned. The most important motivations appear to be: (1) to avoid medical risks and consanguineous relationships; (2) to satisfy curiosity; (3) to learn more about the self or to complete one's identity; (4) to learn more about what kind of person the donor is (biographical information, why he donated, etc.); (5) to form a relationship with the donor and/or his family; and (6) to learn about one's ancestry/genealogy. Our analysis shows that for nearly all of these reasons access to the donor's identity is not necessary. In those cases where it is, moreover, donor identification is not sufficient. What is really needed is (extended) contact with the donor, rather than the mere provision of his name.

Keywords Donor conception. Open-identity donation. Donor searching. Donor-conceived offspring. Identity