

# Patients' attitudes towards the anonymity of gamete donation in Spain

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## Study question

To what extent do infertility patients in Spain, support different forms of anonymity for oocyte and sperm donation?

## Summary answer

**Most patients who undergo treatment with donated gametes in Spain consider that their children should not know the identity of the donors.**

## What is known already

Spain has a large tradition of gamete donation, probably influenced by its law that requires gamete donation to be anonymous for the donor and the recipient. Although there is a growing support for openness and identity-release in gamete donation, Spanish Society of Fertility has generated an Anonymity in Donations Framework Document which recommends revelation to the donor-conceived children their biological origin preserving the identity. However, there is no information on what the preferences of the patients are regarding the disclosure of the origins to their children.

## Study design, size, duration

A prospective, multicenter study that includes all eleven clinics in Spain and involves women and men who had used donated gametes. From September to October 2020, a self-administered questionnaire was sent out to a total of 66 patients which were asked to indicate their responses on a 7-point Likert scale from "totally agree" to "totally disagree". All 66 patients anonymously completed the questionnaire. All women answered to the survey, while only 18% of men responded.

## Participants/materials, setting, methods

The participants were asking for their socio-demographic characteristics, their opinions concerning secrecy or disclosure of the method of conception towards the child, what type of information should the child have access to – identifying or non-identifying – and whether they intend to inform their child and relatives about his/her origin. Another set of questions were on ethical topics around moral attitudes of the patients.

The associations between the demographic factors were analyzed using the Chi square test

## Main results and the role of chance

Homosexual couples or single women (82.4%), have the idea of telling their child that they have been conceived with gamete donation (p:0,002) whereas 61,2% of heterosexual couples refuse to inform the child about the circumstances of his/her conception and 51% would not tell anyone (p:0.005).

Patients do not want to know the identity of donors (0,279 SD:0,330 p<0,001) and they do not consider that knowledge about the origin of the gametes is important to a child (0,281 SD: 0,317 p<0,001) and that it is not necessary for the child to know the identity of the donor (0,171 SD: 0,259 p<0,001).

## Limitations, reasons for caution

While the multicenter study design strengthens external validity, not being able to carry out the questionnaire to those born by donation of gametes constitutes a limitation and warrants caution when drawing conclusions from these data, as does the fact that these results are only generalizable in Spain.

## Wider implications of the findings

The findings of this study can be used as a basis for further discussion between regulators and professionals with respect to anonymity relating to donor conception. These opinions should be considered carefully in legal and ethical discussions on gamete donation.

