

# Golden Eggs

Oocyte Donation in exchange for money should not be glorified



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*Young girls lining up in front of fertility clinics for some easy money should be advised against it and should be made fully aware of the consequences.*

A few days back, Ms abc, a young girl, looking as if fresh out of school, came to my clinic and told me very brazenly that she wants to donate her eggs to an infertile couple. She also conceded that she wants to do it for money, which she needs to pay off as her coaching class fee. She came to know about egg donation from some online ads and her friends. At the same time she was very sure that so many of them are already earning these "quick bucks" from fertility clinics across the city. It took me almost one hour to counsel her that she is not the right person for this job and there are so many other ways to earn money. I was taken aback by her confidence and sheer ignorance and it prompted me to bring up this sensitive topic in front of our young readers.

As infertility climbs, so does assisted reproduction. Most of us know families whose children were created with help from fertility specialists or who owe their existence to egg donors. The emotional payoff of helping an infertile couple have a child is also immense.

## WHO NEEDS EGG DONATION

As per Indian Council of Medical Research guidelines (ICMR), the type of patients who need egg or oocyte donation are

- Gonadal dysgenesis.
- Premature ovarian failure.
- Ovarian failure due to ovarian surgery, radiation, or chemical castration.
- Women who have resistant ovary syndrome, or who are poor responders to ovulation induction.
- Women who are carriers of recessive autosomal disorders.
- Women who have attained menopause.

## WHO CAN DONATE EGGS

Donors should be healthy (as determined by medical and psychological examination, screening for STDs, and absence of HIV antibodies) women in the age group of 21-35 years.

Advances in medical technology frequently come with ethical problems, as well as scientific concerns and

issues. Egg donation, for women, is no different. Ethicists and some women's health advocates worry that lucrative payments are enticing young women with credit card debts and heavy tuition fees to sell eggs without seriously evaluating the risks.

Side effects that Egg Donors may or may not experience from the medications include: headaches, mood swings, bloating, nausea, and/or temporary stinging where the injection was administered. Egg Donors can expect to feel particularly bloated during the immediate period before and after the retrieval, since the hormone medications they take will cause their ovaries to swell and produce many eggs.

If the Egg Donor overstimulates she may run the risk of Ovarian Hyperstimulation Syndrome, which is rare condition that typically occurs in less than 3% of Egg Donors. Severe cases of this syndrome may result in damage to the Egg Donor's ovaries. In less severe cases, egg donors may experience severe bloating and strong cramping.

## SYMPTOMS OF OHSS

- Abdominal discomfort and swelling
- Breathlessness
- Thirst, nausea and vomiting
- Constipation

## EGGSPLOITATION

A documentary "Eggsploitation," made by Jennifer Lahl, a leading advocate from USA for women in terms of highlighting the problems they face with egg donations, is making its way across college campuses, reaching the women who feel economic pressure to sell their eggs but may not realise the medical dangers to them inherent in the procedure.

A new study published in the Fertility and Sterility found that almost one in five women who donated their eggs reported lasting psychological effects as a result of egg donation --

some positive and some negative. Some women felt a sense of pride in helping an infertile couple, while others developed concerns about the people who were raising their genetic offspring.

Still, two-thirds of women who donated eggs reported satisfaction with the process, the study found. Women also need to know that little data is available to assess whether donating eggs when young has any effect on fertility later in life.

And nothing I mention here intends to minimise the pain of infertility. There are very few things in this world which are as noble as helping somebody conceive and egg donors definitely play a major part in this process. But the fact remains that young women — girls of my own daughter's peer group — are being exploited as egg donors. Egg Donor ideally should be a healthy woman in age group of 25- 35 years, who has her own healthy children, and she should be made fully aware about the whole procedure. Financial compensations should not be overglorified and a maximum of six donations by any individual should be allowed.

## DONOR COERCION

Egg providers are enticed through ads in online classifieds, social media, and college newspapers, offering anywhere from `20,000 to 50,000 per extraction. Ads invoke kind of language which is appealing to the altruism of potential providers, calling for their pity on infertile couples desperate to have a child and suggesting that it is their duty to help such people have children. These ads are markedly coercive and manipulative for young college-aged women as they directly appeal to their financial need and so-called "maternal instincts." Ads generally do not make any mention of the potential health risks involved or reveal the lack of studies conducted.

