

The health of children conceived by assisted reproduction technologies: an articl...

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Assisted reproductive technologies (ART) have long been contentious on a moral and ethical level, but only in recent years have the technologies been available long enough to do meaningful studies on the safety and overall health of children conceived with these technologies. While long-term studies must still be done to consider the potential trends for health risks to children conceived by ART, the Larcher (2007) study suggests that there are, indeed, health risks that are posed by ART-assisted conception.

The primary issue, according to the Larcher (2007) research, is that implantation often occurs with multiple embryos, leading to multiple pregnancies. Because the Larcher (2007) study is United-Kingdom-based, the study notes that the incidence of multiple pregnancies and the related problems (premature delivery and incomplete gestation, for example) places a heavy burden on the UK's already-stressed neonatal care units (Larcher, 2007). According to the research, ART-conceived children are not known to be at any higher risk for long-term diseases such as cancer or genetically-linked diseases, but more long-term study must be done if ART is to be concluded completely free of risk. It is important, due to the potential problems with multiple births (particularly multiples beyond twins), that doctors using ART and parents considering ART operate within carefully-constructed ethical boundaries, including considering implanting only a single embryo, rather than multiples (Larcher 2007).

However, the Larcher (2007) study also suggests without evidence that mothers who use ART to become pregnant are often desperate to get pregnant, and will perhaps act in ways that are dangerous to their health or their child's health. There is no research cited to back up this statement;

indeed, it seems that if the Larcher (2007) study is concerned with the health of the child, women who must work hard to become pregnant will be more concerned with the health of any potential child, as they must have intentionally become pregnant. More research should have been cited to prove that the potential carelessness of a mother is a threat to ART-conceived children.

Overall the Larcher (2007) study is quite inclusive, and discusses a number of different areas regarding ART babies that should be studied further. As a primer for the potential health risks of ART conceptions, it provides excellent information and a good set of warnings for parents considering ART and for professionals considering the potential impact of ART.

References

Larcher, V. (2007). The health of children conceived by assisted reproduction technologies. *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, 92 (8), p. 668–669.

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