

Desire to have a child: Possibilities of the digital age and its consequences for reproductive medicine and psychosomatics

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Abstract

Introduction: CBackground: A lot of fertility treatments are existing and research consider also psychological aspects of artificial insemination and surrogacy. But there is little known about the role of the Internet, which delivers diverse options for having a child, e.g. initiation of egg- or sperm donation or co-parenting via websites. All these options have a special meaning for psychological counseling in context of family planning and reproductive health.

Research questions: What are the intersections between the desire to have a child and the Internet? Which motives and usage scenarios can be identified with regard to current state of research?

Method: Systematic literature research in the relevant medical and psychological literature databases (e.g. Pubmed, PsycInfo), search period: last 10 years; from 2008—2018.

Sperm donation via connection website

Private search for a sperm donor online. There are more donors on websites registered than in clinics

- Motives of women: Searching for a donor with specific characteristics e.g. appearance, intelligence, personality or looking for a person having a “deeper connection”. Motives of single-women: Greater sense of family and children, desire to act, living without partner, age, present social support

- Motives of donors: A donation initiated online is more informal and the recipient can be selected by the donor. Having a child conceived by sperm donation which was initiated by a connection-website can facilitate a family structure which is alike a traditional family where each parent is known. Most donors are heterosexual, aged 18-69. The most men have seen a photo of the child they conceived.

Egg donation via Internet agencies

Initiation of egg donation via Internet agencies, which are connecting donors and recipients. Most agencies are using marketing instruments to get attention and emphasize the mutual benefits between donors and recipients.

- Motives: cost-effective (compared to clinics), wider variety of

donors, partially not anonymous.

Surrogacy

Surrogates can be find online via websites or online agencies. Despite surrogacy is controversial, there is a huge online-community (e.g. surro_moms_online.com) for surrogates and women, who are looking for a surrogate or wants to become one. Online they chat with each other, get information's e.g. about surrogacy, pregnancy, legal constraints, experiences and can offer help if needed.

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Biography

Christiane Eichenberg completed her PhD in 2006 at the University of Cologne and Habilitation in 2010 at the Ilmenau University of Technology. She is Professor and Head of the Institute of Psychosomatics, Medical Faculty at the Sigmund Freud Private University. She is also a Psychotherapist (psychoanalysis). She has published more than 60 peer-reviewed papers in journals, given oral presentations at international conferences and published books about E-mental Health, Selftreatment and Self-medication, Psychotraumatology and Online-counseling.