

Cumulative research shows no explicit medical impediment to surrogate motherhood

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The Swedish government is investigating a change of legislation to make surrogate motherhood permitted in Sweden. A Nordic research team, which compiled the scientific knowledge, has established that surrogacy as a rule works well for the child and the surrogate mother.

Surrogate motherhood means that a woman becomes pregnant and expects a child in order to give the child to another woman or another couple. This method is used in many European countries, including the United Kingdom, Belgium, the Netherlands and Poland.

In Sweden the method is not permitted, but the Swedish National Council on Medical Ethics proposed in 2013 that this should be changed and the government is currently investigating the question.

Review of relevant science

In a Nordic collaboration, scientists at the Sahlgrenska Academy at the University of Gothenburg have reviewed all scientific articles regarding surrogate motherhood and summarised the findings of those deemed to be relevant.

The research review, published in the scientific publication *Human Reproduction Update*, shows that most surrogacies work well in general terms.

No negative signs

According to the published material, most surrogate mothers are well motivated, and only a small number have problems in handing over a child born as a result of this method.

"According to the studies that have been undertaken, there is nothing to suggest that children born as a result of surrogacy have more health issues than children born from ordinary in vitro fertilisation and/or egg donation, and the psychological assessments carried out show no negative signs concerning the [child](#)'s development up to the age of 10," says professor Christina Berg at the Sahlgrenska Academy, who took part in the Nordic study.

Interpreted with care

Since the number of studies is low, 55 in total, and in many cases they have serious methodological shortcomings, the researchers recommend great care is taken when the results of the research review are interpreted.

"The studies we examined include a limited number of individuals and many of the studies were burdened by the fact that many chose not to take part in the studies. The results are cautiously optimistic, but to achieve a definite conclusion will require more and better studies," concludes Christina Bergh.

More information: Viveca Söderström-Anttila et al. Surrogacy: outcomes for surrogate mothers, children and the resulting families—a systematic review, *Human Reproduction Update* (2015). [DOI: 10.1093/humupd/dmv046](https://doi.org/10.1093/humupd/dmv046)

Provided by University of Gothenburg

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