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Doctors raise concerns after elderly Indian woman gives birth

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Doctors in India on Wednesday raised ethical and health concerns after a woman gave birth to her first child in her 70s, following two years of IVF treatment.

Daljinder Kaur gave birth last month to a healthy boy after falling pregnant by her 79-year-old husband, following fertility treatment at a northern Indian clinic.

Kaur said the couple, married for 46 years, were overjoyed at finally having their first child after enduring years of taunts in a country where infertility is sometimes seen as a curse from God.

"I feel blessed to be able to hold my own baby. I had lost hope of becoming a mother ever," Kaur told AFP from her home in Amritsar city.

"I used to feel empty. There was so much loneliness."

Kaur put her age at about 70—a common scenario in India, where many people don't have birth certificates—while the clinic said in a statement that she was 72.

But fertility expert Sunil Jindal raised questions about the future of a child born to elderly parents, as well as health issues for the mother.

"There are ethical issues. In my opinion it is unfair to do such a

procedure on a woman who is over 60," Jindal told AFP.

"The sheer fact that a woman in her 70s has to carry the weight of a child in her womb for nine months is stressful.

"Then the question comes how are the parents going to look after the baby? That is also quite a task."

The clinic, in the northern state of Haryana, told AFP the couple's baby was conceived using Kaur's egg and her husband's sperm after two previous unsuccessful attempts.

But Britain's the Guardian newspaper on Wednesday quoted the clinic's doctor saying donor eggs were used. The doctor declined to comment to AFP on Wednesday, saying it was not ethical of him to do so.

Gynaecologist Anshu Jindal, based in Meerut not far from the capital, said she tried to discourage women over the age of 60 from undergoing fertility treatment—for the sake of both mother and child.

"According to me it is not an age to have a baby. It will take a toll," she told AFP.

The clinic's doctor told AFP on Tuesday that tests showed Kaur was medically fine to carry the baby through pregnancy.

The case is not the first in India—a 72-year-old woman from Uttar Pradesh state reportedly gave birth to twins in 2008, also through IVF.

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