

Online sperm donors more agreeable: study

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Online sperm donors more agreeable: QUT study. Credit: QUT Marketing & Communication

As prospective parents increasingly seek sperm donors online, an international study has analysed what sort of men are donating sperm in this informal setting as opposed to a traditional clinic. And it seems a key characteristic is they are more agreeable.

The international *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology* has just published the latest study (Clinical vs. Exclusively Online Sperm Donors: What's the difference? from QUT behavioural economist Dr. Stephen Whyte

"Scientists have been studying the psychology and motivations of men who donate in clinical settings for more than 40 years but globally tens of thousands of men and [women](#) are now choosing to participate in informal [sperm](#) donation," said Dr. Whyte, who added the study found exclusively informal donors were also more likely to be in a committed relationship and more likely to identify with a sexuality other than heterosexual, such as gay, bisexual or asexual.

"Connection websites are growing in popularity with the UK-based PrideAngel site having more than 27,000 members even just four years ago.

"Websites like these are a new cyber conduit for donors and recipients. Compared to the traditional clinical sperm banks and assisted reproductive technology providers, this online marketplace is far less constrained for participants.

"The finding that males already in committed relationships are less likely to have a history of clinical donation compared to single males is really a unique finding and may imply male donors currently in a relationship are more popular with women in the online setting.

"It may also represent a stronger signal of a male's ability to cooperate and coordinate successfully with a partner for the purpose of having offspring.

"Formal donation by males (technically) only requires them to attend a clinic and provide a sample at their convenience. Informal donation is a

two-sided interaction requiring logistical precision in coordinating timing and travel as well as alignment with a recipient's fertility needs and some level of emotional or psychological support."

The data for the study was collected via a 42-question online survey of 7,696 registered male members of PrideAngel. The donors ranged in age from 22 to 66 years of age.

"As this global marketplace for sperm grows, research is needed to identify and explore the socio-economic characteristics, personality and clinical reproductive history of this new group of men and how it impacts on their reproductive psychology and behaviour," he said.

"Men and women who interact on the connection websites and forums have made a conscious decision to be or find a [donor](#) outside of the traditional [clinical settings](#). These developing cyber economies operate outside regulatory frameworks and record-keeping which makes very difficult to conduct research into the micro-level behaviour of participants."

Dr. Whyte said growing appeal of connection websites may be explained by the fact they provide a setting in which men and women can communicate directly, reducing financial & psychological burdens and barriers that have existed previously. It also allows the men and women involved to freely negotiate their preferred donation and ongoing parenting arrangements.

"Future research could focus on establishing a greater understanding of the catalysts for males to participate or transition between both clinical and informal sperm donor settings, as well as develop a more accurate picture of the motivations beyond those participating in the informal marketplace," he said.

More information: Stephen Whyte, Clinical vs. exclusively online sperm donors: what's the difference?, *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology* (2018). [DOI: 10.1080/02646838.2018.1540864](https://doi.org/10.1080/02646838.2018.1540864)

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