

Publication

A challenged choice : donating spare embryos to stem cell research in Switzerland

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Research questions: Couples undergoing IVF in Switzerland may have embryos in excess of their clinical need that they can donate to human embryonic stem cell research. Thus a new practice has emerged in Switzerland when IVF treatment and embryonic stem cell research come into contact. This interface needs to be investigated from an ethical-legal point of view to facilitate a fair informed choice process for the couples involved. Methods: Ethical analysis, patient perspectives elaboration. Interdisciplinary approach that draws on the research project JESP-ELSI (joint embryonic stem cell research project - ethical legal and societal implications). Results and conclusions: To facilitate the donation of surplus embryos to human embryonic stem cell research, we propose a procedure of informed choice that fits to the current Swiss legal situation. In addition we identify problems within the current legal setting and suggest methods to improve communication at the interface between IVF and embryonic stem cell research from an ethical perspective.

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