

Fertility Frontiers

NOVA Activity 18 Ways to Make a Baby

Medical technology now offers at least 18 different ways to make a baby, allowing post-menopausal women to conceive, single-sex couples to have children, and children to have as many as three “mothers” (genetic, birth, and social) and two “fathers” (genetic and social). As fertility options increase, so do the issues surrounding children born by these methods. Read one case study below and consider some of the complexities involved with these technologies.

Motherhood After Menopause

Arceli Keh and her husband, Isagani, have been married for 16 years when they decide to try to conceive. Arceli retires from her job as a bank worker to have a baby. Isagani continues working.

To gain entrance into the fertility program, which has an upper age limit of 55, Arceli tells doctors she is 50 years old. At that time, she is 60. Arceli passes all the medical tests she is given, including a treadmill test and variety of blood tests.

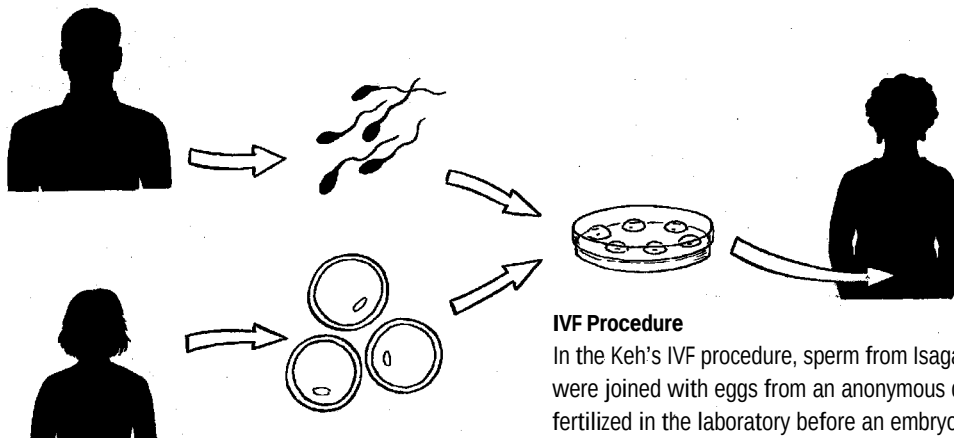
Arceli has already been through menopause, and is no longer producing her own eggs. She and Isagani go to a fertility clinic for in vitro fertilization (IVF) treatments, in which eggs from an anonymous younger donor are fertilized with Isagani’s sperm and then implanted in Arceli’s womb, which is made ready for pregnancy by hormones. The couple spend about \$50,000 on infertility treatments.

On November 7, 1996—after going through five IVF transfer cycles—the Keh’s have a baby girl, named Cynthia. Arceli is 63-years-old when she gives birth.

Questions

Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

- ① What criteria would you set for a couple entering a fertility clinic, such as age, financial status, marital status, etc.? Who should decide that criteria? The medical community? The society in which they live? The couple themselves? Defend your reasoning.
- ② Since Arceli passed the medical tests that qualified her for the fertility program, does it matter how old she was? Why or why not? How do you feel about what she did to get into the fertility clinic?
- ③ What other ethical, legal, or social issues does this case study bring up?



IVF Procedure

In the Keh’s IVF procedure, sperm from Isagani Keh were joined with eggs from an anonymous donor and fertilized in the laboratory before an embryo was implanted in Arceli Keh’s womb.