



A Need to Know: DNA reveals a 30-year-old family secret

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(May 13, 2015) – For most of her life she thought she was an only child, but all that changed with a DNA test. A woman we are calling Carrie grew up on an Indiana farm and has fond memories of her childhood. Now, 30 years later, she has learned her dad is not her biological father and she is not an only child.

“I went from being an only child to having at least eight siblings overnight,” she told FOX59.

Carrie is a donor child. Struggling to conceive in the early 80s, her parents visited an Indiana doctor who inseminated Carrie's mom. She was told the doctor would use fresh sperm from a doctor in training and the same man's sperm would not be used for more than three successful pregnancies.

You can imagine her concern when she took a DNA test through 23andMe and found she was related to at least eight other people on the site. FOX59 tested those results through Strand Diagnostics, which confirmed that the evidence supports the siblings are related.

"I need to know if I have more siblings. I want to have a relationship with them. I would love to know who my biological father is."

"You watched the Delivery Man, a movie about this, and you think, 'Oh, it's going to be this happy, joyous thing,' and while it is—I have met, I love my sisters. I love them. I never knew I could fall in love I never knew I could love someone so much so quickly," one of Carrie's sisters said with tears streaming down her face.

But with that joy come pain, anxiety and a big mystery.

"Honestly, I want to know the truth. I feel like we deserve the truth."

FOX59's Angela Ganote interviewed three of the eight siblings whose mothers all went to the same Indiana clinic for their insemination. They say they were told by the doctor that the sperm donor was a doctor in training and he would only use the same sperm donor for three successful pregnancies.

Assisted reproduction attorney Michele Jackson said this was the norm 35 years ago.

"Everything was anonymous. You got very little information about your donor and you just trusted your professional doctor," Jackson said.

eight siblings from the same donor. They contacted the doctor that performed the inseminations.

“I was told it was fresh sperm within an hour when my mom started ovulating it would be used within an hour he would have a resident or medical student come in and provide the fresh sperm.”

But the sisters wonder how a medical resident or doctor in training could be that available for eight years—the time span between the youngest and oldest sibling. One of the mothers also says it took about five months to become pregnant and she had the insemination process two to three times a week.

“There are so many red flags we were suspicious from the beginning.”

With more questions than answers another sister wrote to the doctor asking for answers. He wrote her back saying, “I can tell you that your mother’s records have been shredded. Also, back then we did not keep a record of the donor’s identity.”

The siblings tell me their biggest concerns are not knowing their father’s medical history, not knowing for sure how many siblings they have and not knowing who they are related to.

“I don’t think it is fair to have to have my children if they start dating someone to have to have a DNA test just to make sure they aren’t cousins!”

Do the siblings have a right to know anything? Jackson says it depends.

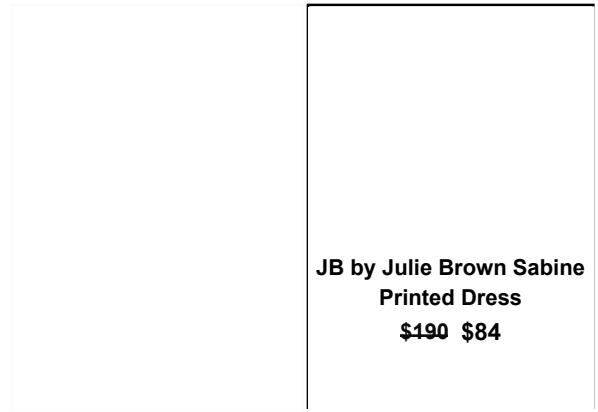
“Is there any recourse? There could be. If there are actual damages to the child, but typically there aren’t any damages. The child is healthy and doing well and it’s more about curiosity.”

That curiosity has the three sisters conducting extensive research trying to find answers and prove who their father is. They reached out to the attorney general to file a complaint against the doctor six months ago. Last wee

contacted State Sen. Jim Merritt, an

investigator got in touch with them. Merritt says everyone involved in the case is being very careful.

“We are setting a precedent for the future and so there are a lot of issues at stake here. We don’t know how many lives are at stake here and that’s one of the problems.”



The sisters are not only hoping to find their father so they can learn more about their medical history, but they also want to change regulations and make laws. They believe donor children need more rights.

“Even as crazy and messed up this situation is, I feel like God has blessed me so much. He has blessed me with sisters and brothers—people I am so close to—I would do anything for. That’s why I am here today because I want to fight for them.”

Right now the attorney general will not comment on this case, but we know from talking with the sisters they are actively looking into the complaint.

One thing is certain: there is a huge push for more regulations when it comes to reproduction assistance. Jackson says, for the most part, cryobanks regulate themselves and there currently aren’t any laws against the number of children one donor can produce.

She says it’s important for sperm donors and prospective parents to have their own contracts to protect themselves. But when it comes to the children – what rights do they have? That’s the piece these sisters are trying to figure out.