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Finding your perfect sperm donor match has never been so simple

Recent reports that sperm donation in Britain is still in a critical state have been much exaggerated. Donors and sperm samples are in good supply, reports the London Sperm Bank

22 JULY 2014 | BY DAVID HUDSON

Reports continue to suggest that sperm donation in Britain is in a state of crisis: insufficient donors, insufficient supplies... and deep frozen sperm samples flown in from Denmark in yet another Viking invasion.

Nothing could be further from the truth, especially at the London Sperm Bank, where more than 15,000 vials of donor sperm are in storage and where, since the London Sperm Bank opened its doors in 2010, almost 4,000 cycles of treatment have been completed.

The facts are that never has treatment with donor sperm been so efficient, nor the choice of donor so broad. It means that those who need donor sperm for their fertility treatment are sure to find a donor whose characteristics – in terms of ethnicity and background – are just what they wanted... their perfect match.



Courtesy of London Sperm Bank

Yet just a few years ago the British Fertility Society described the shortage of sperm donors in Britain as 'critical'. An investigation by the BFS in 2007 found, 'only a small proportion of UK fertility clinics having the resources to recruit new donors.'

Indeed, figures from the HFEA showed that fewer patients received treatment with donor sperm in 2006 than in any year previously recorded. In 2006, there were only 307 newly registered donors, 40% lower than the number registered in 1991.

So what has happened since then? How can the London Sperm Bank now boast minimum waiting times for donor insemination treatment and a leap in donor recruitment 300% greater than during the previous 15 years?

Indeed, in the three years of 2010-2013 the London Sperm Bank recruited 513 donors, all of whom met the HFEA's screening requirements.

First, in 2010 the London Sperm Bank devised an alternative and innovative approach to the recruitment of sperm donors. This approach used social media and personalised customer care to reach and encourage a wider audience, some of whom had never even thought of sperm donation before, let alone considered doing it.

The campaigns not only explained the need for sperm donors - but were also fun, with a new logo which captured the imagination of a new younger generation.

Demographically, the outcome was a far wider range of donors – from all walks of life – than ever seen before. And far from being intimidated by the HFEA's removal of donor anonymity, donors were overwhelmingly in support. (New guidelines introduced by the HFEA in 2008 required all sperm donations to be anonymous but gave the children the right to access identifying information at age 18.)

Commenting on this new wave of sperm donors, Dr Kamal Ahuja, Scientific and Managing Director of the London Sperm Bank, said: 'Our latest results clearly demonstrate that men can be motivated and relationships can be built in this field of medicine.

'Donors are keen to demonstrate their spirit of goodwill to infertile patients whose only hope of parenthood is with donor sperm. The crisis has evidently become a celebration.'

The London Sperm Bank even introduced a sperm donor catalogue, which has now been upgraded even further. Patients are now able to select their donation from a wide variety of donors, all with different backgrounds and life experiences rather than depend on a limited choice, a long waiting-list or – worse – unlicensed private donations with all their associated legal problems or on clinics abroad.

All LSB donors now provide even greater information for the donor catalogue, with



results from psychometric testing, an extended profile (with lists of favourites) and an extended family tree. This extended information was requested from donors from September 2014, and thus, with an interim of six months quarantine before availability, will be available in the catalogue from mid-2015.



Those most likely to benefit from the upturn in sperm donor recruitment are those whose infertility can simply be treated by donor insemination – and today these are mainly lesbian couples and single women (whose only cause of 'infertility' is the lack of a male partner).

Twenty years ago, donor insemination was the first treatment for many infertile couples, particularly those with male fertility issues and unexplained infertility. But results were never good, and the introduction of ICSI [*Intra-cytoplasmic sperm injection*] in the early 1990s meant that men with low sperm counts or poor quality sperm could now be treated much more successfully.

Indeed, even men with no sperm cells in their ejaculate were amenable to treatment with new techniques of surgical sperm retrieval - for in the hands of the ICSI embryologist just one sperm cell might be enough to form a pregnancy.

For more details, check www.londonspermbank.com



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