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HOW DO CONTACTS BETWEEN GAMETE DONORS AND DONOR-CONCEIVED PEOPLE UNFOLD?

CONTEXT

Gamete donations were **anonymous** for a long time. But in recent years, new tools have allowed donor-conceived people to search for their origins (official registers, commercial DNA tests, etc.). As a result, some donors are **contacted by people conceived from their donation**, even when they were supposed to retain their anonymity.

So, what form do these contacts take?

METHODS

Interviews were conducted with **15 sperm donors** and **12 egg donors** who donated between the 1970s and 2010s in the United States, Australia, and Canada.

Most participants donated **anonymously** (21 out of 27). They were contacted an average of **26 years after** their first donation, most often following a **DNA test** (15), but also through parents who received the donation or donation agencies (4), a registry (4), or other unique circumstances (4). **Two participants declined** contact.



WHAT GAMETE DONORS TOLD US



INITIAL CONTACTS

The **first contact** is often initiated by donor-conceived people in the form of a **written message**. **Two sperm donors have refused** contact due to unfavorable life circumstances and their attachment to donor anonymity. For the others, **varying forms of contact** may then ensue, ranging from communications on different messaging services to phone conversations or even face-to-face meetings.

Contact may only amount to the exchange of **medical information**, but in most cases, it also includes **biographical and family details**, as well as **photos**.



VARIOUS RELATIONSHIP OUTCOMES

After initial contacts, some donors maintain a **distant relationship with the people born from their donation** through social media. Others cultivate a **closer relationship**, for instance, by keeping in touch regularly, getting together during holidays, or even, in one case, taking care of the donor-conceived person's toddler.

The nature and frequency of communication vary depending on **geographical distance**, the **level of interest** from either the donor or the donor-conceived person, the **quality of the connection felt**, and the **consideration of how sustained contacts might affect** the donor's or the donor-conceived people's **family**.



DONOR-CONCEIVED PEOPLE SETTING THE PACE

While some donors are content with their new relationship as it is, others would like to deepen it. However, most share the view that **donor-conceived people should be the ones to choose whether contact is made and how it unfolds**.



Contacts between gamete donors and the people born from their donation take various forms depending on individual circumstances and interests. With the exception of donors who refuse all communication, these relationships are a bonus in the lives of donors but can also take on a more significant place. In any case, most donors prefer to leave the initiative to establish and maintain contact to the people born from their donations.

