

Multiple Choice in Baby Making

Beyond Mother Nature: The Ethics of Reproductive Therapies

Winifred J. Ellenchild Pinch, RN, EdD, FAAN,

While conducting some of the latter work on the project, parental perceptions of ethical decision making in NICU, I became aware of a common factor among some of the women--use of infertility treatments and subsequent admission of their infants into the NICU. As the years went by, it became more apparent that there was a strong link between the use of reproductive therapies and admission of the resulting infants to intensive care. One significant contributing factor was multigestational pregnancies--some from the use of pharmacological agents that hyperstimulated the ovaries releasing multiple ova and others from the insertion of several embryos after *in vitro* fertilization procedures.

Framing the Exploration

The failure to present a balanced perspective about the outcomes for reproductive therapies would appear to be unethical. Based on the stories from six families who experienced infertility problems that led to their children's admission to the NICU, an examination of ethical implications for the use of reproductive therapies is underway.

Collecting Ideas

Based on their use of infertility treatments, selected participants were chosen from the project focusing on parental perceptions of ethical decision-making in NICU for a separate analysis. Their interviews will be examined to identify common themes relating to their decisions about reproduction and the various resulting outcomes. This data will then be combined with materials from the literature relating to reproductive therapies and outcomes for children who are conceived through these therapies. An ethical analysis will be completed and some suggestions for the future will be posed.

Work to Date

I am currently reviewing the selected parental interviews and also examining the materials which address ethics and reproduction in the literature. Four of the six families whose interviews are included in this project had either twins or triplets, one of the significant risks when using reproductive therapies.

Resources

The *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services* published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. This publication has implications for this area of ethics.

View the pre-publication version of an extensive report (March 2004) on reproduction and regulation from the President's Council on Bioethics. *Reproduction and Responsibility: The Regulation of New Biotechnologies*

Examples

Below are graphical examples of the study. Each example includes a brief explanation.

Infertility Interventions

Results of Non-donor Art

Quadruplet Rates

Thinking by Others

Graduate students in the School of Nursing often target similar issues as they create learning activities for their classes. The following are examples of student work that matches this topic.

In Vitro: How Many is Too Many?

Prenatal Genetic Screening