

# January Virtual Mentor explores assisted reproduction and the art of medicine

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In this month's issue of *Virtual Mentor*, the AMA's online ethics journal, new technologies for assisting in human reproduction can raise ethical dilemmas for parents-to-be and physicians alike. As the new year begins, *Virtual Mentor* explores the ethics of assisted reproductive technology (ART).

In 1978, the first successful use of in vitro fertilization (IVF) gave birth to Louise Joy Brown and to ART, allowing infertile couples, those who carry gene-related illness, single women, gay and lesbian couples, and others to become biological parents.

ART also introduces a host of ethical concerns about which January's *Virtual Mentor* authors deliberate. These range from requests for help in becoming pregnant after menopause and for conceiving a child who can donate tissue to a seriously ill sibling to proper remuneration for donated eggs and fertility clinics' incentive to achieve high rates of pregnancy from IVF.

Select articles from January's issue:

- Are IVF Risk-Sharing Programs Ethical? a commentary by Leslie P. Francis, PhD. Risk-sharing programs for in vitro fertilization can be ethical if they are not offered to patients for whom they are not appropriate, if fees are not set in a way that promotes the practice's interests at the expense of the patient's, and if physicians do not change their practice methods inappropriately to attempt to avoid giving refunds.
- Fully Informed Consent for Prospective Egg Donors, an article by Naomi Cahn, JD, and Jennifer Collins. In seeking informed consent from egg donors, the goal must be enabling them to make fully informed decisions, not merely securing pro forma consent.
- Shared Decision Making about IVF for Savior Siblings, a commentary by Emily S. Jungheim, MD. When deciding whether to provide assisted reproductive services to a postmenopausal woman, the doctor must consider the well-being of the future child but not put social concerns above the individual patient's interests.