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Egg donations soar to 10,000 yearly

By MARTHA IRVINE

Human egg donation was a rarity not so long ago. But heightened demand for eggs—and rising compensation for donors—are prompting more young women to consider it.

Jennifer Dziura, a 28-year-old New Yorker, is one of them.

She received \$8,000 to donate her eggs in 2005 and hopes she'll be chosen again. She realizes prospective parents who view her profile might think it a minus that her father is adopted.

"But, hey, I have perfect SAT scores," Dziura, an aspiring comedian and model, says with a slight chuckle.

Older mothers increase

As more older moms look for help getting pregnant, younger women have become increasingly willing to part with their eggs. Some do it to help relatives and friends, or from a sense of altruism, but others openly acknowledge money is a big factor in their decision, prompting critics to worry that they're helping drive an unregulated market.

In 1996, women in federally monitored programs donated eggs just over 3,800 times. That number has risen steadily, to more than 10,000 in 2004.

A decade ago, **Dr. Joel Brasch**, a fertility specialist in the Chicago area, had to work hard to recruit 5 or 10 young women for his own practice's donor pool—but not anymore.

The money is seen as compensation for time and trouble. Among other things, donors learn to inject themselves with hormones and, eventually, have a needle inserted through their vaginal wall so eggs can be harvested.

Everyone does it for the money," says Dziura. "No one would do that for free—maybe for your sister, but not for a stranger."

The president of the Society for Assisted Reproductive Technology argues researchers who've surveyed donors have found a strong motive besides money.

What's the motive?

"They're very altruistic and very willing to help a couple who's trying to conceive," says Dr. David Grainger.

Still, some egg brokers—particularly those in the East and West—are ignoring suggestions for a cap on compensation, and paying women more.

"We worry that we offer people so much money that they are blind to the risk and their motivation is strictly the money," says Dr. Jeffrey Kahn of the University of Minnesota.

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