

Genetic Untruths

Traditionally government intervention into private matters is justified in the interest of preventing harm to others. Whether or not this is a valid justification of the Infertility Treatment Authorities recent 'Time to Tell' campaign is a matter of debate.

ITA recently launched a campaign encouraging people who conceive using donor gametes to tell their children 'the truth' about their donor-assisted conception. However the evidence in support of this campaign is far from compelling.

Anecdotally we are told that secrets damage families and that children who do not know their 'true' (ie genetic) parents are harmed. However several studies (Shenfield, Golombok) suggest that there is no evidence that either anonymity or the specific secret of gamete donation is harmful to children and that some children have no interest in finding information about their genetic parents. A recent study co-authored by the CEO of ITA (Johnson) reveals that some adolescents would prefer non-disclosure of donor-assisted conception.

Cannold (*The Age* 8/8) argues that '*young children told about their donor-assisted conception may find it easier to integrate their non-conventional conception story into their evolving identity*'. But there is more to families and to our identity than genetics and since when is it the role of the state to enforce conventionality?

Dr Giuliana Fuscaldo, Letter, *The Age* 10th August 2007