

IVF Regulation

The Texas Catholic Conference *supports the creation of regulatory standards for In-Vitro fertilization clinics.*

Because we are made in God's image, we are called to imitate him by letting new life arise from the loving union that makes two persons "one flesh." Children are not parents' possessions to manufacture, manipulate, or design; rather, they are fellow persons with full human dignity, and parents are called to accept, care for, and raise them to be new members of God's family and his Kingdom. Children deserve to be "begotten, not made." (*United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Life-Giving Love in an Age of Technology*)

A Texas Bishop Speaks:

"We feel sorrow and pain for couples who struggle with infertility, but we also maintain that children are a gift from God, and not to be technologically produced. The process of IVF results in the loss of children at their earliest stages, and has severe risks for women who sell their eggs for the procedure. Unlike organ donation, eggs are given to a consumer, not a recipient who is sick. IVF risks the lives of donors and the unborn, and must be regulated."



-Bishop Patrick Zurek, Diocese of Amarillo

Church Teaching

- ★ Respect for the unity of marriage and for conjugal fidelity demands that the child be conceived in marriage; the bond existing between husband and wife accords the spouses, in an objective and inalienable manner, the exclusive right to become father and mother solely through each other.(37) Recourse to the gametes of a third person, in order to have sperm or ovum available, constitutes a violation of the reciprocal commitment of the spouses and a grave lack in regard to that essential property of marriage which is its unity. (*Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, The Gift of Life*)
- ★ A child is not something *owed* to one, but is a *gift*. The supreme gift of marriage is a human person. A child may not be considered a piece of property, an idea to which an alleged "right to a child" would lead. In this area, only the child possesses genuine rights: the right to be the fruit of the specific act of the conjugal love of his parents, and the right to be respected as a person from the moment of his conception. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2378*)
- ★ Spouses who still suffer from infertility after exhausting legitimate medical procedures should unite themselves with the Lord's Cross, the source of all spiritual fecundity. They can give expression to their generosity by adopting abandoned children or performing demanding services for others. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2379*)
- ★ Surrogate motherhood represents an objective failure to meet the obligations of maternal love, of conjugal fidelity and of responsible motherhood; it offends the dignity and the right of the child to be conceived, carried in the womb, brought into the world and brought up by his own parents; it sets up, to the detriment of families, a division between the physical, psychological and moral elements which constitute those families. (*Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, The Gift of Life*)

Resources

- ★ **Life-Giving Love in an Age of Technology**, created by the USCCB, provides information on in-vitro fertilization and related issues (www.usccb.org/LifeGivingLove/)
- ★ **National Catholic Bioethics Center** (NCBC) conducts research, consultation, publishing and education to promote human dignity in health care and the life sciences, and derives its message directly from the teachings of the Catholic Church (www.NCBCenter.org)
- ★ **In-Vitro Fertilization / Reproductive Technology** - resource page of the USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities (www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/ivf/index.shtml)

The Texas Catholic Conference (TCC) is the association of the 15 Roman Catholic dioceses of the State of Texas, and is the Official Public Policy Voice of the Catholic Bishops of Texas.

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Regulatory Standards for In-Vitro Fertilization Clinics

The Texas Catholic Conference supports the creation of regulatory standards for in-vitro fertilization (IVF) clinics as means to protect the families, women, and children involved the process, and as a gradualistic means to ending the immoral practice of artificially creating human life. Specific standards we support include: prohibiting research on a live embryo or fetus, restricting the number of embryos that can be implanted in a woman during an in vitro fertilization procedure, providing informed consent for surrogate mothers, and making it illegal to create more embryos in one cycle than the number to be transferred, a practice which creates “spare” embryos.

In Vitro Fertilization: The Human Cost¹

In vitro fertilization (IVF) is marketed as a safe and effective way to help couples have children. However, it is responsible for well-documented injuries to children before and after birth, as well as to the health of women and the well-being of families.

I. High Death Rates for Embryonic and Fetal Human Beings

IVF clinics usually report their “success rates” in terms of births or pregnancies per 100 reproductive cycles. They boost their reported rates, and obscure the high death rate of embryos, by transferring two or more embryos per cycle to attempt one live birth. Deliberate destruction of unborn human beings may also occur before any attempt to transfer embryos to the womb (discarding embryos that do not appear to be of the highest “quality”), and after implantation in the womb through “selective reduction” (targeted abortion) if more embryos survive and develop than were wanted.

II. Risk of Birth Defects for Children Conceived by IVF

When IVF became available in 1978, critics warned that there had been inadequate animal testing and that risks to children were largely unknown. Enough children have now been conceived and born from the procedure to produce statistically significant data on the risk of birth defects. The higher incidence of such defects was once attributed largely to the higher incidence of twins and triplets from IVF pregnancies due to transfer of multiple embryos (as carrying more than one child increases the risk of preterm birth); but recent studies find an independent effect from the procedure. Another factor is the common use today in IVF clinics of intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI), the direct injection of a sperm into the egg to boost success rates; this bypasses all the natural safeguards that prevent damaged or defective sperm from reaching the egg in a woman’s body.

III. Health Risks to Women

While some studies indicate increased risks during birth to women who conceive by IVF, the chief health risk is the use of superovulatory drugs to stimulate women’s ovaries to produce many eggs at one time for the IVF procedure. These drugs have been associated with an increased risk of some cancers, and may lead to a condition known as ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome (OHSS), whose effects can include reproductive problems, kidney failure and even death.

IV. “Mix-ups” and Scandals Harming Families

By producing human embryos outside the womb, IVF clinics expose them to various forms of harm and manipulation, including the risk that they will be lost, discarded or “mixed up” between families without parents’ knowledge or consent. This has led to scandals, aggrieved parents and lawsuits.

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¹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities. *In Vitro Fertilization: The Human Cost. In Vitro Fertilization: The Human Cost*. 16 Nov. 2009. Web. 3 Aug. 2010. <www.usccb.org/LifeGivingLove/IVF-The-Human-Cost.pdf>.