

How do parents and children experience family communication around donor conception after medically assisted reproduction? A multi-perspective qualitative study

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Recent ways of constructing parenthood and families through gamete donation challenge our way of thinking about the meaning of social and genetic parenthood. The views of family members on their roles in the family and their beliefs about kinship, are topics relevant to today's family therapy practice. This workshop consists of three parts. In part one, we report on a qualitative evidence synthesis of research about parents' experiences of family relationships after medically assisted reproduction using donor gametes. In part two, we present the findings of our own qualitative research project including both parents and children's voices with regard to the family communication about donor conception. Participants were recruited via the Department of Reproductive Medicine of the Ghent University Hospital. First, the narratives of ten lesbian couples with children aged 7 to 10 years old were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Second, interviews with their children focusing on the child's understanding of the donor conception and the way the child experiences family communication about this topic, were analyzed. Subsequently, dyadic interview analysis was used to compare both accounts of parents and children in each family. The third and final part of the workshop consists of an interactive exercise on dyadic interview analysis using data of part two. In conclusion we relate this qualitative systemic study to the broader issues of family secrets and selective disclosure in families and discuss how it can inspire family therapy practice.