

My name is Madison McCallum and I support fertility fraud legislation. I was born in 1992 in Portland, Oregon, was raised in Grants Pass, Oregon, and currently reside in San Francisco, California. My biological father is a victim of fertility fraud at the hands of Oregon Health Science University (OHSU).

When I was 19 years old my mother told me the truth about my conception – that my father that raised me (my social father) was not my biological father. She explained that my social father had had a vasectomy before meeting her, and they had used an anonymous sperm donor from OHSU to conceive me. With my newfound knowledge and donor number in hand, I went in search of my biological half siblings. I waited over a year before connecting with my half-sister Allysen. She too had just discovered the truth about her conception and was eager to know more. As a newly formed team, Allysen and I set on a journey to find any other half siblings. We bought over-the-counter DNA tests, which have, to date, matched us to 8 siblings as well as our biological father.

In the early days of our search, and before we'd been connected with our biological father, Allysen and I went to OHSU and sat down with a staffer at their andrology clinic, who I will call "B". We asked B many questions about OHSU's sperm donation practices, as well as our own case. B was able to tell us that our donor has been "capped" – meaning his sperm had resulted in at least 12 births in the Southern Washington / Northern Oregon region. B went on to explain that once a donor had reached their "cap" in that area, OHSU would then ship sperm to other parts of the state or country. This was true in the case of one of our brothers, J whose mother conceived in Nebraska. It is unclear as to whether or not OHSU keeps any record of how many children are conceived from those shipped donations. It was then that Allysen and I realized that due to OHSU's failure to keep accurate records, there is no way for us to know how many siblings we may have or where they might be.

A few years later, after connecting with our biological father via DNA testing, my sister Robyn reached out to him. He told her that when he had donated sperm as a young medical student, OHSU promised him that no more than five children would be born from his donation. What's more, he was also promised that those five children would be born on the east coast, away from him and the family he planned to establish in Oregon. When Robyn shared this news, my siblings and I were horrified. Clearly our biological father was not aware of the 12 child "cap" that he had hit in his own home state. When I told my own mother about OHSU's promise, she too remembered being told there would only be a small handful of children born from the same donor. My siblings' mothers remember similar promises as well.

Our biological father did go on to create a family of his own in Corvallis, Oregon. He had four natural born sons and practices family medicine. All the while, unknown to him, offspring from his sperm donations were living close by. Here are just a handful of times in which me, my siblings, and our biological father's paths crossed unknowingly:

- My sister "R.M." lived in Corvallis, OR and worked in the medical field. The same town and field of work as our biological father. R.M.'s partner sought medical care from our biological father, obviously not knowing who he was.
- Two of my sisters, "S" and "L", lived in Grants Pass, OR for at least two years at the same time as me.

- My brother “H” and I both lived and worked in Eugene, OR at the same time for at least four years. My brother says he used to frequent the coffee shop where I worked, during the years I worked there.
- One of our biological father’s natural born sons was a customer at my brother “H”’s work in Eugene, OR.
- I visited Corvallis, OR numerous times during college, at the same time that my biological father’s natural born son was a student at OSU. It is possible we may have attended the same gatherings.

The above facts are extremely disturbing to me for two reasons:

1. There are far too many times at when my siblings and I could have come in close, even sexual, contact with one another as young adults without knowing we were related. Had our parents known how many of us were out there, they would have very likely taken all precautions possible to warn us of this possibility. Had our biological father known how many of us were out there, and where we may have been born and raised, he would have no doubt also taken similar precautions.
2. With our biological father and at least one sibling living in the same town, it is quite possible that he may have medically treated his own biological children without knowing, potentially compromising his ethics as a physician.

Today the exact number of my sibling group remains unknown as OHSU cannot tell us for certain how many people were born from our biological father’s donations. This is not because of HIPPA protections, it is because OHSU – a teaching hospital – does not know how many humans they created. Lack of regulation of fertility clinics and OHSU’s disregard for their own rules has caused myself, my siblings, and our biological father immense emotional distress, which we will no doubt spend the rest of our lives working through. Because I will never know for sure who my brother and sisters are, my nieces, nephews, and my own future children will someday be forced to decide whether to get a DNA test before becoming sexually intimate with someone or risk the possibility that their partner may be an unknown cousin or other relation.

From my experience fertility clinics cannot hold themselves to a sufficient ethical standard and legislation is necessary immediately to prevent anyone else from experiencing the irrevocable harm I have. While the intent of fertility clinics is altruistic, they have succeeded in harming many of their patients, donors, and those conceived through assisted reproductive technologies.

Sincerely,



Madison McCallum

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