

Gestational Surrogacy in Iran

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Abstract

Introduction: Practice of gestational surrogacy, in which the surrogate mother is not the biological contributor of the egg, has attracted the attention of many infertile married couples in Iran as a solution to infertility, and among the majority of Shiite legal authorities, it is an accepted form of assisted reproduction.

Materials & Methods: Data used in this paper has been drawn from a larger study undertaken in Tehran, Iran in 2006 for the author's master's degree. Ethnographic methods for research were used in infertility centres and clinics, e.g. in-depth interviews with surrogates and intended parents, with medical doctors and counsellors, and interviews with Islamic scholars as well as many hours of participant observation in different infertility clinics in Tehran. This paper discusses the process by which surrogate mothers in their social environments participate in surrogacy arrangements. The way they redefine the process of making kinship in the field of assisted reproduction to fit their decision into a moral and religious framework and to achieve their respective goals_ altruism, financial interests, gift exchange or reproduction_ enable them to reshape definitions of pregnancy, motherhood and the process of conception in their respective social contexts. Evaluating local knowledge and decision making processes and the role they play, are important issues in finding legitimate solutions to transform surrogacy from a controversial issue into a normative concept in infertility treatments.

Key Words: Gestational surrogacy, Kinship, Maternity, Local knowledge, Traditional knowledge, Milk kinship, Iran.

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