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Health Problems Spark Search For Child's Father



Reporting
Kate Merrill

BOSTON (WBZ) — Hannah Dudley looks like the picture of health, but she often suffers from severe headaches, dizziness, and blurred vision.

Kathy Dudley-Youngs described when she first heard what was causing her daughter's problems: "I was paged by my pediatrician saying they had found this cyst in the center of her brain that looked like it was putting pressure on something, and an appointment had already been set up with a neurosurgeon."

That would be a devastating diagnosis for any parent, but for Kathy, it quickly became complicated.

Kathy conceived Hannah using a sperm bank. She knows the donor's number, DGM 2598, as well as his date of birth, hair color, and that he likes sports. But she doesn't know his name, however, or how to contact him.

Getting in touch with him, or least getting information, has become important. As Hannah explains, "I want to know, like, if anyone in his family had a cyst like I did, or if it just came. I don't really know if it was from him, or if it was from his family. So I would want to know things like that."

But the sperm bank won't reveal the donor's identity.

At the time, Kathy agreed to keep the transaction anonymous. She regrets that decision today, and has told the bank that she doesn't need to meet him, or even learn his name. "What I am looking for right now is updated medical information. The last bit of information we have on him is from 1989, so I would like to know, has he had children, is he healthy?"

Thousands of families are now flocking to the [Donor Sibling Registry](#) to unravel the mystery of their kids' DNA. They've made about 6,000 matches so far.

Virginia found her donor father all by herself. Unbelievably, she did it through a search on Facebook.

Now, she is an e-buddy with Hannah, answer questions she might have about the search for her donor father.

Virginia knows the value of unlocking her past. "I am glad to know my grandfather died at 60 of a heart attack, so I'm at risk for that. So I'm going to be very careful about that, and my eating habits."

This is another example in which laws are having a hard time keeping with technology, but that is starting to change. For example, anonymous donation is no longer allowed in Great Britain or Canada. The father's identity is released when the child turns 18.

Wendy Kramer started the Donor Sibling Registry because of her son Ryan's curiosity about his past. She says the industry needs to adapt more, particularly as donor conceived children get older. "Donors, when they donate, give a medical information sheet. The problem is that that is one snapshot of one day of that donors medical information. So families don't know what happened the next year, or with his father, or did someone get diabetes or have an early heart attack?"

It's those types of questions that can cast a cloud over an otherwise happy and well adjusted family like Hannah's. The 11-year-old thinks that all people "have a right to



Hannah Dudley
WBZ

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know how there family is."

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Although it is possible for donor conceived children to get this medical information without revealing the donor's identity, many donors are not interested in being contacted.

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For example, many of the donors, like the one in this case, made the donation when they were relatively young and it might be news to the current families.

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