

# NEW YORK POST

## DON'T BANK ON NYC'S BAD SEED

By JANON FISHER

*February 17, 2008* -- Conditions at New York City sperm banks are inconceivably bad - with some offices not testing samples for some diseases, and others using sperm from donors who engaged in high-risk sexual behavior.

Despite the shocking violations, the reproductive-tissue storage facilities are relatively unchecked by state regulators, who haven't inspected four of the city's six licensed sperm banks since 2004.

In one instance, a couple is suing a clinic for \$3 million for misplacing six embryos. Another woman has posed serious questions about a sperm sample from another clinic, which resulted in an autistic child.

"It's more evidence that nobody's watching," said Wendy Kramer, director of the Donor Sibling Registry, a group that tries to connect offspring of donor sperm. "That is why it's an industry that's completely chaotic."

About 30,000 people use sperm banks in New York each year.

Idant Laboratories, located at 350 Fifth Ave., failed to pass along information about "high-risk social and sexual behavior" of a donor to a woman seeking in vitro fertilization, records from the May 2004 inspection show.

The sperm bank, which was shut down temporarily by the state for the same violation in 1995, claims that the woman was aware of the donor's sketchy history, but that they had failed to document her written consent.

The clinic also ignored a state requirement that sperm donors be tested before donating and again six months after, to ensure they were not carrying any sexually transmitted or genetic diseases.

Idant correction reports show that they have since improved their record keeping. The same facility settled a suit filed against it by a white woman who gave birth to a black baby in the 1990s.

Director Joseph Feldschuh said the state inspected again in 2006 and found no deficiencies. He said that no report or record exists of the bank's better grade.

The state Department of Health says that it had inspected Idant's blood bank more recently, but that the sperm bank hasn't been inspected since

2004.

There have also been complaints about unresponsive or unhelpful clinics.

One woman - the mother of an autistic boy, who got her sperm from Idant - was repeatedly refused information on the donor.

Another family also had an autistic child using the same sperm, she says. When the woman asked the bank to contact the donor on her behalf, they refused because she was told that the condition was not life-threatening.

"I understand and value the importance of confidentiality . . . however, there may be related families who would like to help each other," she wrote by e-mail.

Other state reports showed lapses in testing donor sperm.

The Sperm Bank of New York failed to test all donors for hepatitis B, state inspectors found during a 2004 inspection.

Albert Anouna, the bank's director, said that they now test all donors for the liver disease.

Park Avenue Fertility director Nancee Novak accused the state of paying obsessive attention to minor problems. The state found in November 2005 that Novak's facility did not properly calibrate their thermometers. Sperm must be kept at minus-202 degrees.

"If someone told you that you had no deficiencies, they're probably lying," Novak said. "If there is an un-initialed form somewhere, they will find it."

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