

Neue Zürcher Zeitung

Some have Excel spreadsheets

On donorsiblingregistry.com, children of semen donors may, with some luck, find their siblings and also their father. Or she. But some donors fled again as soon as five children have registered.

Anja Jardine
13.7.2018, 05:30 clock

Donorsiblingregistry.com, DSR for short, is the only open- [source](#) web site of its kind in the world and probably the most powerful "family reunification" tool of semen, egg cell and embryo donors and their offspring. It works like this: Under the name of a sperm bank, you will find the numbers of the sperm donors, and in the column next to it are listed the children that resulted from this donation: boy or girl born in the year XY. Usually it is the mothers of the children or the children themselves who register there – in the hope that half-siblings or the genetic parent identify themselves.

But even donors who have remained childless or simply curious, go here on the search for their offspring, even if they once donated anonymously. Some meticulously maintain Excel spreadsheets about their offspring and want to meet every kid; others flee again as soon as five or six children have registered under their number. DSR has just under 60,000 members and since its founding in 2000 claims to have gathered 15,780 children with their genetic relatives – be it brother, sister or parent.

DSR was founded by Wendy and Ryan Kramer. Wendy had gotten Ryan with a sperm donation because her husband was infertile. The doctor recommended the procedure to the couple and selected the anonymous donor. One year after Ryan's birth, the marriage broke up. At the age of two, Ryan first asked about his father and learned from Wendy that he was a sperm donor.

Some meticulously maintain Excel spreadsheets about their offspring and want to meet every kid; others flee again as soon as five or six children have registered under their number.

Only through Ryan did she realize how strong the desire was to know where to come from, says Wendy Kramer. From an early age he had "searched for the second side of his DNA," as he put it himself. It is not about necessarily finding a father, but rather a part of himself.

She first set up a Yahoo group to look for the man; later it became DSR. The response had been enormous from the beginning: so many seekers were erring around. The greater the surprise often, says Wendy: "Many parents believe that their child may have three, four or even seven brothers and sisters; they freak out when they see it's 20 or 30. Often 50, 70 or even 120." And since not all parents listed their children on the website - heterosexual couples almost never do -, their sibling numbers are in Truth often even higher.

The children of 2010

More than 18 years ago, when Julia decided to have a baby on her own, she had no idea that she would become part of a large family that spread across continents, denominations and cultures - unmanageable. Her daughter Amelia has more than 50 half-siblings. Including the son of a single mother in her neighborhood in New Jersey, the twins of a lesbian couple in Colorado, the three children of an Orthodox Jewish woman in Jerusalem. And that's just a small part. They all have one thing in common: their dad is sperm donor 5010 of the New England Cryogenic Center. Does he know of his luck? The NZZ accompanied the family for 16 years - a portrait in five parts.

You can find the articles previously published here: [nzz.ch/5010](https://www.nzz.ch/5010)

This high number of children brings a new risk: incest. The children of a donor often live in the same metropolitan area and could cross each other's path. If they had no knowledge of their descent, that would be dangerous. Once on DSR, six Denver teens who had the same sperm donor found each other. Three of them were 18 years old and lived in the same district; two happened to go to the same school.

Meanwhile, DSR has evolved into a non-profit organization dedicated to addressing the growing number of children born from germ cell donations. The guiding principle of their activities is: "What is the interest of the child born in this way?" "Donation" is the wrong word, says Wendy, "the men sell their seeds".

Among other things, DSR advocates stricter legal regulation of the industry, for uniform health and genetic testing of donors, the prohibition of anonymous donations and a limit on the number of children of a donor. In the UK, France and Sweden there are legal upper limits, at Swiss reproductive hospitals it is 8 children per donor. In America, there is only one recommendation from the American Society for Reproductive Medicine to limit the number of births per donor to 25 per 800,000 people. But in fact, there is Wild West, especially since only 20 to 40 percent of all mothers reported the births to the seed banks.

The high number of children carries a new risk: incest. The children of a donor often live in the same metropolitan area and could cross each other's path.

In addition, DSR collaborates with hospitals and universities to explore various aspects of this type of procreation and related health risks. Also psychology and sociology show interest in the subject: How to make ties to 50 siblings? What does "kinship" mean in the 21st century?

Ryan himself waited in vain for a "match" on DSR.com for many years. At some point, finally, a sister appeared to his delight, highly gifted as himself. Ryan completed his studies of aerospace engineering at the age of 18 at the University of Colorado. At the age of fifteen he had an idea how to track down his father: he sent a swab from his mouth to Family Tree DNA, a private registry of 45,000 DNA samples, to see if his Y -Chromosome passed from father to son is identical to a registrant. He found two men whose Y chromosomes were very similar to his. Now he went to OmniTrace.com and entered the date and place of birth of his sperm donor (this data his mother had received from the doctor) to buy all the names that had been born on the site that day. Lo and behold, a man wore the same last name as one of the two from the DNA registry. Hit. Thus, Ryan has proven that anonymity in the 21st century can no longer be guaranteed.

Read next Friday:

Dvoris children move away from faith. Julia meets the man for life. Big questions and sibling struggles: Puberty causes turbulence everywhere.

nzz.ch/5010

The children of 5010 – Part 2: Why challenge fate?

Anne-Marie gets a second son from another donor. And a bad diagnosis. Julia decides to adopt. Other half-siblings appear: the twins of Karen and Lisa, a lesbian couple from Colorado.

Anja Jardine / 13.7.2018, 05:30



The children of 5010 – Part 1: Julia makes a decision

More than 18 years ago, when Julia decided to have a baby on her own, she had no idea that she would become part of a large family that was growing unmanageably. Her daughter Amelia has more than 50 half-siblings on three continents. They all have one thing in common: their father is sperm donor 5010. Does he know of his luck? A family portrait in five parts.

Anja Jardine / 6.7.2018, 05:30



Newsletter NZZ in the evening

Learn what was important today, what is or will be important! The compact overview in the evening, plus reading recommendations from the editors.

[Here you can register for free with one click](#) .

Copyright © Neue Zürcher Zeitung AG. Alle Rechte vorbehalten. Eine Weiterverarbeitung, Wiederveröffentlichung oder dauerhafte Speicherung zu gewerblichen oder anderen Zwecken ohne vorherige ausdrückliche Erlaubnis von Neue Zürcher Zeitung ist nicht gestattet.