

Telling the Truth about Surrogacy in the United States

by Jennifer Lahl, R.N., M.A., *CBC President*

In our coalition work with the countries and leaders of the [StopSurrogacyNow](#) campaign, and our travels and interactions with many groups working to prohibit surrogacy outside of the U.S., we often hear that they must fight against the narrative that the United States is a shining example of how to ethically permit surrogacy. Of course the industry here in the U.S. also wants to offer themselves as the exemplar for other countries to model—it's a lucrative enterprise, costing between [\\$100,000 - \\$150,000](#) U.S.D. Sadly, you are hearing only one side of the story. The U.S. is anything but a country to follow on surrogacy contract pregnancy. ***The truth is...***

Surrogacy in the United States Has Medically Harmful Outcomes

- Due to the high costs involved in surrogacy and the strong desire to boost success rates, multiple embryos are often transferred into the surrogate mother. In addition to the increased risk of caesarian sections and longer hospital stays, the [British Journal of Medicine warns](#), “Multiple pregnancies are associated with maternal and perinatal complications such as gestational diabetes, fetal growth restriction, and pre-eclampsia as well as premature birth.”
- [Studies show](#) that women pregnant with donor eggs, common in surrogate pregnancies (the definition of gestational surrogacy), have a more than three-fold risk of developing pregnancy induced hypertension and pre-eclampsia.
- [Multiple studies](#), most notably at Loma Linda University Medical Center in California, have found “an increase in multiple births, NICU admission, and length of stay with hospital charges several multiples beyond that of a term infant conceived naturally and provided care in our nursery” for surrogate pregnancies.
- Surrogacy often involves the use of donor eggs, and there have been no long-term studies of the effects of egg harvesting on the health of the young women who provide their eggs. This makes it impossible for women to give true, meaningfully informed consent relative to the health and psychological risks involved. In addition, the medical process required for egg retrieval is lengthy and there are known medical risks associated with each step. [Risks include](#) Ovarian Hyper Stimulation syndrome (OHSS) due to superovulation, loss of fertility, ovarian torsion, stroke, kidney disease, premature menopause, ovarian cysts, and in some rare cases, death.

Surrogacy in the United States Fails to Protect Surrogate Mothers

As we profiled in our film [Breeders: A Subclass of Women?](#), the practice of surrogacy often treats women as second class citizens. Consider the following recent stories:

- [Brooke Brown](#): A surrogate mother in Idaho who died from pregnancy complications, along with the twins she was carrying for a couple in Spain, just days before she was due. Major media outlets refused to investigate this story. Brooke had [carried five surrogate babies](#).
- [Melissa Cook](#): A California surrogate mother pregnant with triplets. The intended father demanded that she abort one of the children. Following the pre-term delivery of the children, she has been in an ongoing custody battle with the intended father.
- [Brittneyrose Torres](#): Another California surrogate mother pregnant with triplets, she was also under pressure from the intended parents to abort. She required weeks of hospitalization due to pregnancy complications. At this time, she has yet to deliver the triplets.

Surrogacy in the United States Harms the Children Conceived from the Practice

- Children born through surrogacy are much [more likely to suffer](#) from low and very low birth weights. In addition, a [2014 study](#) from the *Journal of Perinatology* found a 4-5 fold increase in stillbirths from pregnancies through assisted reproductive technologies.
- Young adults born via anonymous gamete donation suffer serious genealogical bewilderment according to [empirical studies and actual testimonies](#). A study in the journal *Human Reproduction* [concluded](#), “Disclosure to children conceived with donor gametes should not be optional.”
- Consider the example of Jessica Kern who was born of surrogacy. She writes compellingly on [her blog](#), “I am a Product of Surrogacy.”

In the United States there is currently a patchwork of laws on surrogacy, 12 states permit commercial surrogacy, 14 states permit altruistic surrogacy, six states either prohibit surrogacy with fines and jail punishment not recognizing the contracts as enforceable. However, the laws of most states are silent. It is only in the states where surrogacy is prohibited in all forms that women and children alike are protected. Regulations will not mitigate health risks, will not remedy the breaking of maternal-child bonds, and will not protect children.