



COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
MEDICAL CENTER

Office of Communications  
701 West 168<sup>th</sup> Street, HHSC 2-206  
New York, NY 10032  
[www.cumc.columbia.edu/newsroom](http://www.cumc.columbia.edu/newsroom)

## News Release

Media Contact: [cumcnews@columbia.edu](mailto:cumcnews@columbia.edu)  
212-305-3900

### **Risks of Pregnancy after Age 50 Similar to Those of Younger Women Using Egg Donation**

(NEW YORK, NY, January 31, 2012) – Although women over age 50 who become pregnant via egg donation are at risk for developing obstetrical complications, their complication rates are similar to those of younger recipients, according to a study by Columbia University Medical Center researchers published in the February 1, 2012, issue of the *American Journal of Perinatology*. This is contrary to epidemiological data that suggested that these women are at greater risk of certain complications of pregnancy, including hypertension, gestational diabetes, premature birth, and placenta abnormalities.

In the largest group of older women achieving pregnancy from egg donation ever studied from a single center, Mark V. Sauer, MD; Daniel H. Kort, MD; and colleagues detailed the outcomes of 101 women age 50 and over who became pregnant. . They compared their pregnancy results to recipients age 42 and younger. The two groups were evaluated for significant differences in perinatal complications, their gestational age at delivery, the baby's birth weight, and the mode of delivery. Although the women all received their fertility treatment at Columbia University Center for Women's Reproductive Care, their prenatal care and delivery often took place elsewhere.

Both older and younger patients experienced similar rates of gestational hypertension, diabetes, cesarean delivery, and premature birth. Interestingly, two women in the older group experienced a serious adverse event. A 56-year-old patient developed heavy vaginal bleeding at 29 weeks of pregnancy and had to deliver by emergency cesarean hysterectomy 2 weeks later. She recovered with no further complications. A 49-year-old woman (who would have been age 50 at term) died following acute cardiac arrest in the first trimester, the cause of which remains unknown. The researchers believe that her death was not directly related to her pregnancy and was more likely attributable to her heavy smoking habit, which she had not disclosed to her doctors.

The study concluded that all women who use egg donation to become pregnant are at risk for developing obstetrical complications, particularly hypertensive disorders and cesarean section delivery; but women over age 50 do not appear to face any additional risk compared to their younger counterparts.

"It is imperative that all older women undergo thorough medical screening before considering pregnancy to ensure the best possible outcome," said Mark V. Sauer, M.D., professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Columbia University Medical Center (CUMC) and Chief of the division of reproductive endocrinology and infertility. "But really that should also apply to younger women, as well."

“Although many social and ethical questions continue to exist regarding the use of assisted reproductive technology in women of advanced reproductive age, the current study confirms the high rate of success and the relative safety of such pregnancies in well cared for women,” said Daniel H. Kort, M.D. a postdoctoral fellow in reproductive endocrinology.

The study’s authors are Daniel H. Kort, MD (CUMC); Jennifer Gosselin, PhD (CUMC); Janet M. Choi, MD (CUMC); Melvin H. Thornton, MD; Jane Cleary-Goldman, MD (Mount Sinai Medical Center); and Mark V. Sauer, MD (CUMC).

No conflicts of interest.

MVS

####

**Columbia University Medical Center** provides international leadership in basic, pre-clinical, and clinical research; in medical and health sciences education; and in patient care. The medical center trains future leaders and includes the dedicated work of many physicians, scientists, public health professionals, dentists, and nurses at the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Mailman School of Public Health, the College of Dental Medicine, the School of Nursing, the biomedical departments of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, and allied research centers and institutions. Established in 1767, Columbia's College of Physicians and Surgeons was the first institution in the country to grant the M.D. degree and is among the most selective medical schools in the country. Columbia University Medical Center is home to the largest medical research enterprise in New York City and State and one of the largest in the United States. For more information, please visit [www.cumc.columbia.edu](http://www.cumc.columbia.edu).