

November 4, 2008 4:29 PM

Credit crunch is driving increase in egg donation

Talk about re-evaluating your assets. An increasing number of cash-strapped American women are starting to [see their ovaries as a resource](#), capable of producing eggs that can be sold for [thousands of dollars per dozen](#).

Nancy Block, founder and owner of the [Center for Egg Options](#), an egg broker based in Northbrook, Illinois, says there's been a dramatic increase in the number of women applying to be egg donors. She claims she has seen a steep increase in the number of new donors, as well as an increase in former donors who have decided to come back and donate again.

Until now, her agency would typically get 25 applicants per week for egg donation and one or two for gestational surrogacy. That's recently risen to about 32 egg donors and three or four gestational surrogate applicants per week.

Cathy Ruberto, president of [Our Fairy Godmother](#), based in Naples, Florida, has noticed the same trend. She had 18 new applicants in August this year, and 33 in September. In October, they had 36 women apply in two days alone.

Ruberto has been involved in assisted reproduction for 18 years and says she has never seen such a huge increase in the numbers of applications to be egg donors, sperm donors and surrogates. "I can find no other explanation other than the fact that the current state of the economy is prompting people to find other ways to offset their loss of income," she says.

Donors at Block's clinic are compensated \$7000 per retrieval, which includes several weeks of taking drugs and a few hours in clinic on the day of the actual [harvesting of the eggs](#). Although many of the women are motivated by wanting to help others, says Block, she thinks the monetary compensation is compelling. "Honestly, I think that's why," she says. "They're struggling. They're living month to month."

There is no guarantee that the new applicants will be successful, of course. Only about 25% of people applying actually meet the requirements regarding health, genetics and psychological suitability, says Ruberto. Also, there is currently no shortage of eggs available for fertility treatment in the US, says Block, so the new surplus has simply made it easier for commissioning parents to be choosy. Eventually, she concedes, bad economic times may drive down the demand for expensive procedures like IVF with egg donation, but there's no evidence of that yet.

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