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### **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN CONCURRENT SURROGACY: SHOULD INTENDED PARENTS BE PERMITTED TO PURSUE SIMULTANEOUS GESTATIONAL CARRIER CYCLES?**

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**Title:**

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN CONCURRENT SURROGACY: SHOULD INTENDED PARENTS BE PERMITTED TO PURSUE SIMULTANEOUS GESTATIONAL CARRIER CYCLES?

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**Preferred Presentation Type:**

Oral or Poster

**Study Type:**

Experimental/ Exploratory

**Category - Subcategory(ies):**

**Mental Health/ Psychosocial:** Third Party Reproduction

**References:**

1. ASRM Practice Committee and SART Practice Committee. Recommendations for practices using gestational carriers: a committee opinion. Fertil Steril. 2022 Jul;118(1):65-74.
2. ASRM Ethics Committee. Consideration of the gestational carrier: an Ethics Committee opinion. Fertil Steril. 2023 Apr;119(4):583-588.

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### Abstract Text:

**OBJECTIVE:** Some fertility clinics in the United States discourage or disallow the practice of concurrent surrogacy, which is when an intended parent (IP) works with multiple gestational carriers (GCs) simultaneously. According to an ASRM Practice Committee opinion, the pursuit of concurrent surrogacy may constitute grounds for rejecting an IP. Meanwhile, other clinics support concurrent surrogacy as an alternative to transferring multiple embryos into a single GC, aiming to reduce the risks associated with multiple gestation for both the GC and offspring. Currently, no federal or state laws regulate concurrent surrogacy, and clinics may not be aware if a patient is working with another GC at a different clinic at the same time. The goal of this study is to consider whether and when concurrent surrogacy may be morally appropriate.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS:** This is an ethical analysis of concurrent gestational surrogacy. Relevant ethical considerations in favor and against the use of simultaneous GCs are examined and weighed against each other. Conclusions are then drawn about the moral acceptability of concurrent surrogacy.

**RESULTS:** There are several reasons why a clinic may limit the practice of concurrent surrogacy. From a laboratory management perspective, it could create confusion in the laboratory to have embryos from one patient or couple affiliated with more than one GC. For this reason, some programs require that parents stagger embryo transfers into multiple GCs, but do not disallow concurrent surrogacy altogether. From an ethical standpoint, concurrent surrogacy may suggest a degree of commercialization regarding the GC and future offspring that raises moral concerns. Relatedly, working with multiple GCs simultaneously could create a power imbalance between the GC and IP. There may also be concern for the well-being of the future child and whether they will receive adequate, individualized care. However, all these considerations are situation-dependent and need not hold true in a given instance. For example, a same-sex male couple seeking to complete their childbearing by having two singletons in a short timeframe most likely avoids the ethical concerns described above. By contrast, an individual seeking to hire a dozen GCs simultaneously to generate many genetically-related offspring in a short period of time would be morally suspect. However, the autonomy of the IPs regarding how to build their family is also an important consideration that must be weighed. Ultimately, as in other cases of third-party reproduction, psychological evaluation should be performed to better understand IP motivations, attitudes and goals prior to deciding whether to proceed.

**CONCLUSIONS:** While there may be ethical concerns regarding concurrent surrogacy in some cases, not all instances are necessarily morally problematic. Decisions regarding the acceptability of concurrent surrogacy should be made on a case-by-case basis after psychological evaluation of the intended parents and gestational carriers.

**IMPACT STATEMENT:** Instances of concurrent surrogacy merit a higher level of scrutiny but may be morally acceptable in some cases.

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