

Letter



Response from the Editors: First birth following spindle transfer

From the Editors

In a letter in this issue of *RBMOnline*, [Gleicher et al. \(2017\)](#) articulate a number of points of contention regarding the work of [Zhang et al. \(2017\)](#), which describes the first birth following mitochondrial replacement therapy (MRT) by spindle transfer. The authors of the letter are equally critical of the decision by *RBMOnline* editors to accept this paper and contend that our decision was unethical. We disagree with their suggestion and refer the authors back to our editorial, in which we explain the reasoning behind our decision ([Alikani et al., 2017](#)). Furthermore, our editorial provides a detailed and comprehensive critique of the work described by Zhang et al. for the benefit of the readers of this journal.

We have already stated in the editorial that the informed consent was imperfect and that the failure to apply for approval from the local IRB in the USA was questionable, that parental consent to testing cannot be future-proofed (also addressed in [Johnson, 2016](#)) and that heteroplasmic drift over time is possible. Gleicher et al. claim that our description of this birth as 'a successful case of MRT' disregards potential unknown effects in later life. The fact is that the future health of this child and other children to be conceived through MRT will remain a source of concern until more clinical data and long-term clinical studies demonstrate safety of the technologies and remove such doubts. That is the nature of ART, and indeed of IVF itself, but this does not 'invalidate' any resulting life.

Gleicher et al. do raise an important, though unfortunately misinformed, point that warrants further discussion. This concerns the legality (or otherwise) of the work described by Zhang et al. within

the framework of USA regulations and law. This point is addressed in a separate letter from [Boiani and Cohen \(2017\)](#).

The correspondence on this matter is now closed.

REFERENCES

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