

Sex will soon be just for fun not babies, says father of the Pill

Prof Carl Djerassi claims advances in fertility treatment make it safer for parents without fertility problems to consider IVF

By [Sarah Knapton](#), Science Editor (Daily Telegraph, London)

7:00AM GMT 09 Nov 2014

 [24 Comments](#)

Sex could become purely recreational by 2050 with large numbers of babies in the Western world born through IVF, the professor who invented the contraceptive pill has claimed.



Prof Carl Djerassi, the Austrian-American chemist and author, said he believes that the Pill will become obsolete because men and women will choose to freeze their eggs and sperm when young before being sterilised.

He also claims it will end abortions, as no children will be unplanned or unwanted.

In an interview with The Telegraph, Prof Djerassi said that advances in fertility treatment made it much safer for parents without fertility problems to consider IVF.

The progress will give rise to a 'Manana generation' who are safe in the knowledge that parenthood can be delayed without repercussions, he claims. They may even have healthier children because their eggs and sperm would be younger.

"The vast majority of women who will choose IVF in the future will be fertile women who have frozen their eggs and delayed pregnancy," he said.

“Women in their twenties will first choose this approach as insurance, providing them with freedom in the light of professional decisions or the absence of the right partner or the inexorably ticking of the biological clock.

“However I predict that many of these women will in fact decide to be fertilised by IVF methods because of the advances in genetic screening. And once that happens then IVF will start to become a normal non-coital method of having children.

“Over the next few decades, say by the year 2050, more IVF fertilisations will occur among fertile women than the current five million fertility-impaired ones.

“For them the separation between sex and reproduction will be 100 per cent.”

Prof Djerassi, 91, an emeritus professor of chemistry at Stanford University, who now lives between London and Vienna, was crucial in the development of the oral contraceptive pill in 1951.

They originally created the medication for neurological disorders and to help infertile women. Progesterone, the active ingredient in the Pill, is produced by pregnant women and helps an embryo to implant in the womb.

It works as a contraceptive because it tricks the body into thinking it is pregnant, triggering a natural contraceptive response in the body.

“But in 1950 nobody was asking about birth control,” he said. “It was just after World War 2 and people needed to have children.

“However the 60s came and suddenly there was rock n roll and the hippy movement, and the first real flowering of the women’s movement and they all had a sense of sexual liberation.

“The technology just happened to be around at the right time. If it had taken an extra 15 years to develop I don’t think we would have a contraceptive pill today.”

He believes that a male contraceptive pill is unlikely because it would take far too long to prove there would be no impact on sperm quality. Men are able to father children for much longer than women, so trials would need to last decades.

Similarly, it is still not clear how long frozen sperm can be kept for. Prof Djerassi believes that the army could take part in a huge experiment to determine the safety of keeping sperm long term.

“With little difficulty and relatively minor expenditure tens of thousands of volunteers could collect their own semen to be cryopreserved for many years,” he said.

“This step alone would generate an invaluable resource for studies on male fertility.”

“Fertile male sperm has already been preserved inexpensively for years. Provided one first demonstrated that such storage is possible for several decades rather than just years many young men might consider early vasectomy, as a viable alternative to effective birth control.

Prof Djerassi, gave up his scientific work decades ago, and now writes books and plays. His new autobiography ‘In Retrospect: from the pill to the pen’ has just been published by Imperial College Press.

He has had several plays published and performed on the BBC World Service and at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

His wife Diane Middlebrook died in 2007. He has one son Dale, a filmmaker and a daughter Pamela, who died in 1978.