

Keep brain-dead women alive and use them as surrogate mothers, suggest doctors

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Colombia's medical association has been forced to apologise after being accused of endorsing the controversial idea of keeping brain-dead women alive so their bodies can be used to have babies as surrogate mothers.

The Colombian Medical College published an article focusing on a recent paper about whole body gestational donation (WBGD), which involves women who have given prior consent being used as would-be surrogacy mothers after being declared clinically brain dead.

“What about all those brain-stem dead female bodies in hospital beds? Why should their wombs be going to waste?” asks the article, written by Norway-based academic Anna Smajdor.

Proj Smajdor, a professor of practical philosophy at the University of Oslo, argues that WBGD could become a common way to bring new children into the world as it avoids health risks for the eventual mother and some of the difficult social issues surrounding surrogacy as it is practised today.

“States and health services should adapt their policies and procedures to allow for WBGD among other donation options,” wrote Prof Smajdor in the paper, published by Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics.

Not the first time this has happened

Women have previously given birth after being declared brain dead.

Prof Smajdor argues that there is no moral difference in such circumstances between organ donation and surrogacy.

She also says that male bodies could potentially be adapted to give birth, “thereby circumventing some potential feminist objections”.

The Colombian Medical College's decision to publish a Spanish translation of the piece has been met with fury.

'Women are not utensils'

Colombian member of Congress Jennifer Pedraza described it as misogynistic.

She said: “Women are not utensils to be thrown away after use, women have human rights, even if some people forget this.”

After initially defending the article as not representative of the association’s own views, on Wednesday the medical college issued an apology and claimed that its only interest was “medical progress at the service of humanity with the highest bioethical standards”.

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