

World news

Fertility doctor revealed as father of 49 children

Lengthy court battle by offspring confirms that 'pioneering' clinic chief used his own sperm

By David Chazan

A DUTCH fertility doctor secretly fathered at least 49 children by inseminating female patients with his own sperm, telling the women that it came from anonymous donors.

DNA tests have confirmed suspicions that Jan Karbaat, who died in 2017 aged 89, used his own semen without his patients' consent.

The tests, carried out by a hospital in Nijmegen, have now proved that "49 children in this case are direct descendants of the late Karbaat", the Defence for Children organisation said.

"The results confirm suspicions that Karbaat used his own sperm at his clinic."

The non-governmental organisation represents parents and children born after treatment at his clinic in the Rotterdam suburb of Barendrecht.

The clinic was closed in 2009 amid allegations that Karbaat had falsified

data, analyses and donor descriptions and exceeded the permitted number of six children per donor.

Karbaat, who described himself as a "pioneer in the field of fertilisation", admitted before his death that he had used his own sperm to father about 60 children.

He said he had sometimes mixed his sperm with that of other donors. Defence for Children said his semen was

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also distributed to other clinics. Most of the children were born in the Eighties. Earlier attempts to investigate the cases were blocked by Karbaat's widow, who refused to allow the use of his DNA profile.

After the doctor's death, dozens of people came forward to say they suspected that he had used his own sperm to impregnate their mothers.

A group of donor children and their parents took legal action to find out the truth in 2017. Some plaintiffs bore obvi-

ous physical resemblances to Karbaat but appeared markedly different from their supposed sperm donors, the court was told.

Judges ruled that materials containing Karbaat's DNA could be collected from his home, but said his DNA profile had to remain sealed pending the outcome of further court cases.

The case attracted enormous public attention when a group of suspected "Karbaat children" took his relatives to court to force them to release the profile, which was locked in a safe.

Rotterdam district court overruled his widow's objections in February and ordered the profile to be made available to parents and children who wished to compare their own DNA with the doctor's.

Eric Lever, one of the doctor's biological children, said he felt no anger towards Karbaat.

"I don't get the feeling that he cheated my mother," he said. "She really wanted a child and could not have one with my parental father."

Iara de Witte, a Defence for Children adviser, said: "After years of uncertainty, the plaintiffs can finally close a chapter and start processing the fact they are one of Karbaat's descendants."