

## **7. Baby, Baby, Baby**

Nadya Suleman told her fertility doctor she wanted more children. He implanted six embryos and, with much media attention, she subsequently gave birth to eight premature infants some months later.

Concerned observers raised a number of problematic issues. They contended that women's bodies did not evolve to hold so many fetuses, posing a real danger to the mother. They pointed out that Suleman, single and unemployed, was unable to support the six children - some with disabilities - she had already, and that the cost for care for the inevitably premature infants would fall on society. Further, they provided data that indicate premature multiple infants often have serious health and developmental problems that affect their quality of life.

The multibillion-dollar U.S. fertility industry is largely unregulated. The Suleman case has raised interest in many states in regulating in vitro fertilization. The American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM), to which most clinics belong, recommends implantation of a maximum of two embryos. ASRM member clinics agree to follow ASRM professional guidelines, which change as medical knowledge advances. The Association may expel a clinic that fails to follow the recommendations, but that action is rare.

Consequently, states have been trying to find ways to avoid some of the dilemmas highlighted by the Suleman case. A Missouri bill requires doctors to follow ASRM guidelines that limit the number of embryos that may be implanted, under penalty of losing their state medical licenses. Other states have considered requiring means tests and psychological evaluations of potential implantation recipients. These suggestions, however, raise privacy and autonomy issues.