Letters to the Editor

Parental ages and the secondary sex ratio

Dear Sir,

I have read with interest the letter by Orvos, Kozinszky and Bártfai (2001) analysing the univariate effect of maternal age and birth order on the secondary sex ratio of females giving birth at the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, University of Szeged (Orvos et al., 2001). Their results showed a significantly lower univariate effect on the secondary sex ratio among the children of the 234 mothers >40 years old and an univariate effect of birth order.

In our study (Jacobsen et al., 1999) based on all Danish children born in the period 1980–1993 (n = 815 891) we did not find any univariate effect of mothers age or birth order on the secondary sex ratio, but a significant effect of fathers age.

Similar findings have been found in other large-scale studies, with more factors being identified with increasing sample size (Table I in the article).

The discrepancy in our results may be due to small-size sample fluctuations (Ruder, 1985). Also high correlation among age of mother, age of father and birth order are to be expected and analysis of one effect should include the others as possible confounders. In the case of Orvos et al. inclusion of fathers age in a multivariate analysis would be interesting.

References


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