David Michael Rorvik (1944–) [1]

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David Michael Rorvik is a science journalist who publicized advancements in the field of reproductive medicine during the late twentieth century. Rorvik wrote magazine articles and books in which he discussed emerging methods and technologies that contributed to the progression of reproductive health, including sex determination [7], in vitro fertilization [8], and human cloning [9]. Despite that, some topics were controversial and researchers often questioned Rorvik’s work for accuracy. Rorvik contributed to the field of reproductive medicine by communicating methods of reproductive intervention to the public.

Rorvik was born on 1 November 1944 in Circle, Montana, to Frances Rorvik and Alan Rorvik. In 1962, he enrolled at the University of Montana in Missoula, Montana, where he majored in journalism. During his undergraduate studies, he became editor of The Broadcaster, a student-run newspaper. In 1967, Rorvik published a nonfiction book titled Your Baby’s Sex: Select, Don’t Settle. In that book, Rorvik states that mankind will inevitably alter the course of human evolution [10] through the use of contraceptives. He describes how birth control can be used to combat a lack of resources, which, according to Rorvik, contributes to the rapid increase in human population.

In 1967, Rorvik graduated summa cum laude with a Master of Science degree in journalism from Columbia University [11]. Rorvik began his career as a reporter for The New York Times in New York City. Later in 1967, Rorvik received the Pulitzer Traveling Fellowship and traveled to South Africa to investigate the structure of the country’s press, which was segregated under the government at that time. Upon returning to The New York Times, Rorvik shifted his focus to science writing and worked as a medical reporter for the next two years.

In 1969, Rorvik left Time and began freelance writing.

In May 1969, Rorvik published an article in New York Magazine titled “Your Baby’s Sex: Select, Don’t Settle.” In that article, Rorvik describes how Shettles developed a method that reportedly enabled couples to directly affect the probability of producing a male or a female child prior to conception. According to Rorvik, Shettles claimed that he could accurately predict the sex of a child by observing the size and mobility of the sperm. Rorvik notes that Steptoe and Edwards co-authored the book titled Your Baby’s Sex: Now You Can Choose which they elaborated on the methods that would ultimately enable couples to choose the sex of their fetus [12]. The book consists of various tips for couples to utilize during intercourse to increase their odds of producing a boy [13] of the desired sex.

In 1971, Rorvik published his own book titled Brave New Baby: Promise and Perils of the Biological Revolution. In that book, Rorvik states that mankind will inevitably alter the course of human evolution through the use of contraceptives. He describes how birth control can be used to combat a lack of resources, which, according to Rorvik, contributes to the rapid increase in human population. Rorvik contributed to the field of reproductive medicine by communicating methods of reproductive intervention to the public.

In addition to writing his books, Rorvik often co-authored publications with physicians and researchers on their methodologies. In 1973, Rorvik co-authored a book titled Decompensation Babies with O. S. Heyns, a physician who specialized in obstetrics and gynecology in South Africa. In that book, the authors present the benefits of normal abdominal decompression, which is a method that reduces the atmospheric pressure on a pregnant woman’s abdomen to increase blood flow, and therefore access to oxygen and nutrients for the fetus [14]. The book demonstrates how this method can prevent the development of mother’s high blood pressure during pregnancy, premature birth of the infant, and labor endangerment for both mother and child. At the time of publication, more than 10,000 healthy infants were safely born to mothers who used decompression methods during pregnancy.

On 15 September 1974, Rorvik published an article titled “The Embryo Sweepstakes,” in which Rorvik describes how this method can prevent the development of mother’s high blood pressure during pregnancy, premature birth of the infant, and labor endangerment for both mother and child. At the time of publication, more than 10,000 healthy infants were safely born to mothers who used decompression methods during pregnancy.

In 1978, Rorvik co-authored a book titled In His Image: The Cloning of a Man with Bruce McConville, a scientist and physician who studied micronutrition and the impacts of diet on human evolution. The book demonstrates how cloning technology could be utilized in the near future, were publically invalidating the possibility. In “The Embryo Sweepstakes” Rorvik notes that Bevis rejected Bevis because his claims were not supported by scientific evidence.

In 1987, Rorvik received the Alicia Patterson Foundation Fellowship to study the politics of cancer research in the US. At the time, few journalists each year received that award in the amount of $35,000, which enabled them to pursue independent projects on their topic of choice. With the fellowship, Rorvik traveled around the world and investigated the politics of cancer research in different countries. He published his work in The APF Reporter, a quarterly magazine by the Alicia Patterson Foundation.

Despite the fact that Rorvik was a widely-read writer on reproductive health, the researchers often questioned the validity of his work. In 1978, Rorvik published a nonfiction book titled Your Image: The Cloning of a Man, in which he describes the successful scientific endeavor cloning a human. In that book, Rorvik states that a group of researchers attempting to clone a man recruited him to report on the project. Rorvik’s claims caused a debate within the scientific community on whether or not cloning was realistically possible. Many scientists, who had previously claimed that human cloning was harmless and that the cloning technology could be utilized in the near future, were publically invalidating the possibility.

In 11 May 1978, Synapse, a student-run newspaper at the University of California San Francisco in San Francisco, California, published a statement that Rorvik made in response to the adverse public reaction to his book. In his statement, Rorvik defends all claims and protects the identities of the individuals in the book. He also questions the motives of the scientists, who once supported human cloning, but began speaking out about the dangers and difficulties of the process once Rorvik’s claims were published.

Shorty after publishing In His Image: The Cloning of a Man Rorvik released his book, J.B. Lipincott Company, was charged with a $7 million defamation suit because of the claims made in the book. Derek Bromhall, a British scientist who at the time conducted research on cloning, brought the suit against Rorvik. Bromhall claimed that Rorvik copied the methods described in the book from Bromhall’s dissertation without permission. In a pretrial ruling, the judge said the book was a hoax because Rorvik refused to provide the real names of his sources. The lawsuit lasted four years until 7 April 1982, when Bromhall redressed the causation of privacy and agreed to a settlement of $108,000. J.B. Lipincott Company publicly addressed the lawsuit and announced that they deemed Rorvik’s book was fraudulent. Despite the outcome, Rorvik maintains that the book is legitimate.

In 1983, Rorvik founded a literary agency called Proteus, Inc. and as of 2018 maintains his role as President. He co-authored a second book with Shettles later that year titled Lilies of Life: Scientific Evidence for Life Before Birth, in which they present the argument that developing embryos are living beings and have certain rights. Year 2006 marked the thirty-fifth consecutive year of print for Your Baby’s Sex: Now You Can Choose. Rorvik published a revised sixth edition of the book this time to Choose the Sex of Your Baby: The Method Best Supported by Scientific Evidence by Shettles and Rorvik. As of 2018, Rorvik’s most recent work was in collaboration with Sheldon Saul Hendler, a scientist and physician who studied micronutrition and the impacts of diet on human health.

In 2008, the authors published the second edition of the book PDR for Nutritional Supplements, which provides evidence-based information on nutrient supplements such as vitamins and minerals.

As of 2018, Rorvik lives in Portland, Oregon.

Sources

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- Parenthood
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- Sex Predetermination

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