

When Less Is More

Why transferring fewer embryos is the safest option for in vitro fertilization.

Pressured by anxious patients with their biological clocks ticking, and insurance companies wanting results fast, many fertility specialists were forced to transfer several embryos in patients' wombs in order to increase the odds of pregnancy. Despite the fact that this practice often produced multiple births with all their health risks, these medical specialists felt they had to play "beat the clock" to stay in business.

Thankfully this view is changing. In guidelines released late last year, the American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM) recommends transferring fewer fertilized eggs (embryos) into women undergoing in vitro fertilization.

ASRM took this stand because new research shows that implanting more embryos raises the chances of risky multiple births without actually increasing the chances of pregnancy.

According to a study led by Laura Schieve of the

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CFDCP) and published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, implanting two embryos in women with excess, healthy eggs produced successful pregnancies. She and her colleagues found that implanting any more didn't boost the likelihood of pregnancy.

Armed with this research, ASRM now

recommends that fertility specialists implant only two embryos for women under 35 with plenty of healthy eggs; three or less embryos for women under 35 with fewer healthy eggs; four or less eggs for women 35 to 40; and five or less eggs for women 41 and up.

With two of the septuplets unable to walk and with other disabilities, the risks of multiple births have finally hit the nation at large.

Triplets or larger groups of children suffer from low birth weights and are 13 times more likely to die in their first year, according to CFDCP data. Since many of these babies are born premature, they also carry a greater risk of birth defects and other mental or physical problems. Women who carry three or more fetuses also have an increased chance of premature labor, premature delivery, pregnancy-induced high blood pressure or pre-eclampsia (toxemia), diabetes, and vaginal/uterine hemorrhage.

"This is good news for those of us who have always taken the view that patient safety is the first priority," says Dr. George S. Taliadouros.

"If a normal couple takes six to eight months to conceive a baby without contraception, why should fertility specialists be forced to have IVF patients get pregnant in three months? It may be difficult to stay the course sometimes, but a successful pregnancy will be achieved in due time," he continues. "It might require a strategy and plan, but most of our patients eventually deliver the babies they always wanted."



NEWS You Can Use

HEART DISEASE RISK RISES WITH POLYCYSTIC OVARIAN SYNDROME

A recent study conducted by endocrinologists at the University of Calgary found that women with polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) carry a greater risk of developing cardiovascular disease than women who don't suffer from the condition. Traced most often to chronic insulin resistance, PCOS causes women to develop an excess of male hormones (androgens). This overproduction of androgens suppresses egg maturation and can damage the eggs themselves, causing fertility problems.

This study is important because it concluded that any woman with PCOS is at greater risk of developing both severe heart disease and uterine cancer at a young age, even if she is not overweight. These findings will help physicians screen all PCOS patients for cardiovascular risk and to develop therapies to combat this problem that affects an estimated 6 percent of women worldwide. (DVIFG has been performing this procedure on all PCOS patients for a number of years.)

SPERM COUNTS HOLD STEADY

Despite the effects of pollution, tight underwear, stress, and sedentary jobs, American men have maintained their virility for the past half a century, according to a recent study conducted by researchers at the University of Southern California (USC). The USC study evaluated the sperm quality of 1,347 men whose partners were in treatment for infertility over a three-year period. The samples taken found that 51 percent had sperm that can't move spontaneously (sperm motility), 18 percent had low sperm concentration per milliliter of semen, and 4 percent had semen containing no sperm (azoospermic). The results were similar to findings from a study conducted in 1951 on male sperm count.



OLDER PARENTS MORE LIKELY TO HAVE GIRLS

Using 20 years of birth reports, a team of epidemiologists from Annandale, NJ found that older parents tend to have girls, not boys. With the percentage of women age 35 and older having babies for the first time at an all-time high, the researchers predict a continuing trend of less boys being born in the U.S.

HYDROCARBONS AND MALE INFERTILITY

A recent study conducted by a team of researchers from the Los Angeles County/University of Southern California School of Medicine and the Los Angeles Women's and Children's Hospital found that men who are exposed to hydrocarbons in their work for two or more years are at great risk of becoming infertile. The researchers analyzed the semen of Mexican rubber industry workers exposed to the harmful chemicals for two to 24 years compared to the semen of workers not exposed to the hydrocarbons. Overall, 76 percent of men in the unexposed group had healthy sperm, while only 17 percent of men in the exposed group had sperm considered healthy.

According to an American Society for Reproductive Medicine Study (ASRM), the male factor is the primary cause of infertility in 26 percent of couples using assisted reproductive technologies, like IVF, as a treatment for their infertility.

Have an insurance question?

Call Carla Scott, DVIFG's staff insurance expert, for a free consultation. Call (856) 988-0072, extension 5, to schedule yours today.

Our Little Miracle

How a sister's love helped give a couple the baby they always wanted.

After almost 16 years of waiting to bear a baby of her own, Tina Horsey, 37, of Hammonton, New Jersey, burst into tears when Brent James was handed to her after his delivery on February 16th, 2000.

In the hospital room at West Jersey Hospital-Voorhees with her on that joyous day were her husband, James, known as "Chip," her mother, Mary Robins, and her sister, Lisa Wise, of Spring City, Pennsylvania.

"I was given permission to have an extra person in the delivery room because of what my sister did for me," says Tina. "The gift of her eggs and her support all through the pregnancy brought us even closer than before. What she did for me is a bond that we'll have forever."

Tina's determination to have a baby of her own never wavered, despite years of disappointment and heartache. With the love and support of her doctors and family, she tried everything possible to conceive. At age 24 she learned that she had advanced stages of endometriosis, a major cause of infertility that occurs when tissue fragments from the endometrium (the innermost lining of the uterus) grow outside the uterus. She underwent laparoscopic laser surgery to remove the implants, but one of her ovaries had to be removed. She took medication to produce more eggs. The

couple went through in vitro fertilization (when the egg and sperm are united in a petri dish and then implanted in the uterus) several times. They tried two other methods where the implantation occurs in the fallopian tubes: GIFT

(gamete intrafallopian transfer) and ZIFT (zygote intrafallopian transfer). Still, no baby.

The couple adopted a beautiful baby girl, Samantha, in 1992 and happily took a two-year break from trying to conceive in order to care for her.

But Tina still wanted to carry and deliver a baby of her own. After years of fertility treatments and surgery, she knew that time was running out. She started to experience early menopausal symptoms (perimenopause) making the quality of her eggs less viable for conception. Not willing to give

up their dream, the couple went to the Delaware Valley Institute of Fertility & Genetics (DVIFG) for help. The doctors there suggested egg donation.

With love and support, Tina's sister, the mother of three, offered to donate her eggs, not once but twice. The first egg transfer occurred in 1996 but was unsuccessful. The second egg transfer was performed the Friday after Mother's Day of last year and the successful result now rests in the radiant mother's arms.

"I just knew in my heart it was going to work. Samantha had wanted a sibling from the time she could talk. Now she has the brother she always wanted. He's our miracle baby," says Tina. "Dr. Taliadouros of DVIFG is like a member of our family. He never gave up hope and told us to have faith. He knew it was going to happen for us. Every time I look at my baby I know it was worth it. I would do it all over again."

In fact, that's what Tina and Chip plan to do sometime this summer. "We have eight more embryos frozen. We're going to go for it," she says with a smile.



Samantha Horsey, age 8, loves hugging her new baby brother, Brent James.



Conceptions is published quarterly for a select group of OB/GYNs and their patients. To receive extra copies of the newsletter or to be placed on our mailing list, please call Carla Scott at (856) 988-0072 or e-mail her at: info@startfertility.com.

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Happy Birthday to...



Ellen Katherine Ford, born on November 19, 1999, to Laurie and Tom Ford.

Baylee Hanna Juretzky, born on December 28, 1999, to Karen and Howard Juretzky.

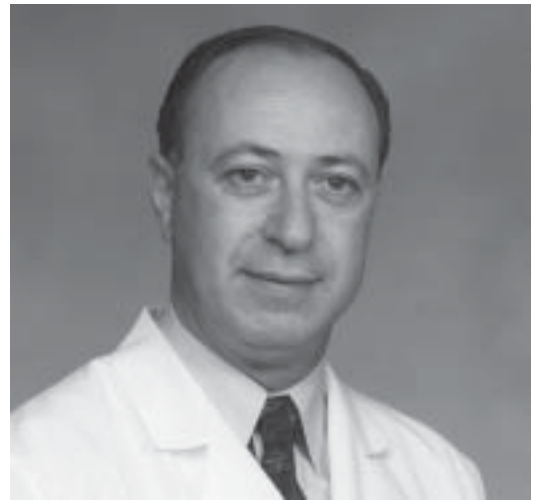
Sarah Marie Kenderdine, born on December 29, 1999, to Wendy Cordrey and Lee Kenderdine.

Dante John Salvatore Casella, born on January 24, 2000 to Dolores and John Casella.

Carlee Jill Cohen, born on January 26, 2000, to Kelly and Michael Cohen

Brent James Horsey, born on February 16, 2000, to Tina and James Horsey.

All the babies and parents are doing well. Thank you , DVIFG!



George S. Taliadouros, M.D., FACOG, the founder and president of the Delaware Valley Institute of Fertility & Genetics, recently attended a "state-of-the-art" meeting on recent developments in embryology. Held in Dana Point, CA, the International Symposium on "ART and the Human Blastocyst" brought world-renowned experts in the field of embryo implantation together to share their successes in achieving healthy pregnancy rates with fewer embryos being transferred. (See cover story, "When Less Is More.") For more news in the world of fertility research, visit our web site at www.startfertility.com.

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