

Carolinas Medical Center

Family Celebration

SUMMER 2010

DEPARTMENT OF OB/GYN • REPRODUCTIVE ENDOCRINOLOGY & INFERTILITY DIVISION

Reproductive Aging

Do you know the first biological change that occurs before menopause? Here are a few hints: it starts about 15 years before menopause, becomes more apparent about 10 years prior to menopause and affects over 90 percent of women five years before menopause. This change occurs prior to hot flashes or night sweats, and even before menstrual cycles become irregular. Give up?

If you guessed reduced fertility or something along those lines, congratulations, you are correct. A woman's fertility slowly begins to decline as early as 27, and falls rapidly after 35. According to the American Society for Reproductive Medicine, over 90 percent of women under age 30 will eventually be able to have a child. The percentage falls to 85 between the ages of 30 to 34, 70 from 35 to 39, and about 35 percent between 40 and 44. By age 45, only 10 percent of women who are trying to conceive will ever be successful.



The statistics are worse when you consider the heartbreak of miscarriage. While miscarriage may occur in any pregnancy, the risk increases appreciably with advancing age. Almost 15 percent of pregnancies are lost in women under age 35, whereas the miscarriage rate is 20 percent for women between 35 to 37, 25 percent from 38 to 40, and 40 percent in women after 40. Because of the high loss rate, it is not unusual for "older" women to experience two or more miscarriages. Each loss takes a greater emotional toll.

We live in a driven society, and are taught at an early age about the importance of an education, career and money. Unfortunately, many of us are consumed by societal goals. A woman may reach the top of her ladder, only to find that life is empty.

Of course, help is available. But once again, the chance of success plummets with age. For example, national live birth rate in vitro fertilization in 2008 was 41 percent for women under 35. By 41-42, IVF is successful in 12 of women. The chance of having a baby with IVF after age 42 is one baby in 25 IVF attempts!

Few realize the marked impact of age on a woman's fertility. So many celebrities have given birth in their 40s and 50s that some may consider this to be the norm. The untold story is that many of these births occur with the help of an egg donor.

CONTINUED ON BACK COVER

CONTINUED ON FRONT COVER

Sadly, many healthcare professionals share in this conspiracy of ignorance. One survey showed that nearly 40 percent of doctors and nurses believe that fertility starts to decline for women at or after age 40!

Every day fertility specialists across the country see patients who have waited too long. Recognizing the decline in fertility with age, the American Society for Reproductive Medicine now recommends starting evaluation and treatment of infertility after six months of trying to conceive for women after the age of 35 years.

At Carolinas Medical Center, your physician is a board certified reproductive endocrinologist trained to find the best pathway to achieve pregnancy and manage complex reproductive problems, including reproductive aging. Throughout our vast network of specialists and facilities, we have unparalleled resources to provide the most comprehensive fertility care to our patients.

Oocyte Vitrification Study

The reproductive medicine physicians at CMC are now enrolling eligible patients for a new study involving oocyte vitrification and IVF. Vitrification is a new method used to freeze eggs, and we are confident with this approach. In addition to this study, we are pleased to report our first successful pregnancy with transfer of a single vitrified embryo.

The current study allows us to immediately assess oocyte vitrification outcomes. In this study, we vitrify a group of oocytes and immediately warm them in a prospective, randomized study of good prognosis patients undergoing IVF. Both "fresh" and "vitrified/warmed" oocytes undergo standard treatment as part of IVF for infertile couples, and embryos from vitrified/warmed oocytes are preferentially transferred. We compare developmental outcomes for vitrified/warmed oocytes and fresh oocytes.

Oocyte vitrification provides many potential advantages over traditional fertility therapies including IVF, fertility preservation in cancer patients, oocyte donation and social fertility preservation.

SAVE THE DATE

4th Annual Assisted Reproduction Family Celebration Day

Saturday, Oct. 9, 2010

Oehler's
Mallard Creek BBQ

Food • Fun • Games for the entire family!

More details to come.

Vitrification of excess oocytes obtained during oocyte retrieval for IVF allows for fertilization of a limited number of oocytes resulting in fewer embryos generated from the IVF cycle. If needed in the future, oocytes may be warmed, fertilized and transferred. Once a woman has completed childbearing, the unfertilized cryopreserved oocytes may be discarded without raising ethical questions.

Insurance Coverage for Infertility

What will my insurance cover? This is a common question and concern for our patients. As a courtesy, we verify your insurance coverage and help explain to you what is covered and not covered. As the insured, this information is available to you as well. Many of our patients like to verify this coverage for themselves as well.

If you wish to check your infertility benefits, call the member service phone number listed on your insurance card. Then inquire:

- What are my infertility benefits? It is important to ask what is covered and what is excluded.
- What are the limitations such as maximum dollar benefit or limited number of attempts?

For our patients who do have infertility coverage it is also helpful to keep track of how much of your lifetime maximum benefit remains. This will help you to prepare in the event that your benefit is close to being exhausted.

Our financial counselors are happy to assist you in understanding your benefits and working through any questions you have.

At Carolinas Women's Institute, we bring together people, technology and compassionate care.



Carolinas Medical Center
Women's Institute

Uncompromising Excellence. Commitment to Care.

1025 Morehead Medical Drive, Suite 500
Charlotte, NC 28204
704-355-3149

www.cmc-womensinstitute.org