

today's woman

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Meet an extraordinary doctor

...who defines the meaning of "woman to woman care"

Is your spouse cheating?

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What do they really want?

L to R: Julianna Micallef, Olivia Botana, Luke Flowers, Kaya Bachelder, Brandon Bright and Dr. Patricia Faraz

PARENTING

Conception is a complicated process

Infertility may be caused by a number of problems.

BY BASIA CHRIST

A woman's most basic function, the conception of children, depends on many factors: on the production of healthy sperm by the man and healthy eggs by the woman; unblocked fallopian tubes that allow the sperm to reach the egg; the sperm's ability to fertilize the egg upon meeting; the ability of the fertilized egg (embryo) to become implanted in the woman's uterus; and sufficient embryo quality.

For the pregnancy to continue to full term, the embryo must be healthy and the woman's hormonal environment adequate for its development. When just one of these factors is impaired, infertility can result.

What causes infertility?

Approximately one-third of infertility cases can be attributed to male factors and one-third to women. The remaining one-third is a combination of problems in both.

The most common male infertility factors include *azoospermia* (no sperm cells are produced) and *oligospermia* (few sperm cells are produced). Sometimes sperm cells are malformed or die before they reach the egg. In rare cases, male infertility is caused by a *genetic disease*, such as cystic fibrosis or a chromosomal abnormality.

The most common female infertility factor is an *ovulation disorder*. Other causes of female infertility include blocked fallopian tubes, which can occur when a woman has had *pelvic inflammatory disease* or *endometriosis* (a sometimes painful condition causing adhesions and cysts). *Congenital anomalies* (birth defects) involving the structure of the

uterus and uterine fibroids are associated with repeated miscarriages.

How does a couple determine if they have an infertility problem?

A woman is born with the total number of eggs she'll ever have, 1-2 million at birth. By the time she begins menstruating, she has between 100,000-200,000 left. Fertility is age-specific. For example, a woman in her 20s has the best chance of conception. With age, the percentage decreases. If a woman in her 20s has been trying to conceive for a year and hasn't been able to become pregnant, she should seek the help of a specialist. For someone in her 30s, she should consider help between 6-9 months and for a woman in her 40s, she should seek help before she tries to conceive because at this point she will have fewer eggs. And the fewer number of eggs means she will have a fewer number still that are normal.

Dr. Robert Anderson, who specializes in Reproductive Endocrinology with *Southern California Center for Reproductive*

Medicine states, "Most doctors don't realize the extent of the problems that age causes. The significant decline in fertility with increasing age has nothing to do with the uterus. There is no blood test that can determine if a woman's eggs are genetically able to produce a baby. The percentage of eggs that are genetically normal dramatically decreases as women age. Approximately 40% of younger women's eggs can produce a child and by the time a woman is in her 40s, it's only about 10%. By the age of 45, it's basically zero. Another factor that decreases a woman's chance of conception is smoking. Smoking decreases the chance of conception by half."

But what about these high profile cases where women in their 40s and 50s are having children?



"These women have had in vitro fertilization and are most likely using someone else's eggs," Dr. Anderson says, "although I do have a 47-year old patient who is pregnant with her own eggs. My oldest patient is 54, but she is using an egg donor."

There is also a trend of single women who decide to have children. They've pursued a career and haven't found a husband, but want to become a parent with the help of sperm donation. Dr. Anderson has many treatments to help these women as well

What about freezing eggs if a woman isn't ready to conceive and wants to wait?

"This is still somewhat controversial, and can be quite expensive. The charge for this service is approximately \$15,000 and the chance of success is low. For example, if you freeze 10 eggs, probably only one will be able to be fertilized. Freezing and thawing causes damage. However, there is no problem with sperm freezing as this practice has been done for years," Dr. Anderson continues.

What should someone look for when seeking a fertility specialist?

"The most important thing is to ensure the person is Board Certified by the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

That's true for any doctor in any specialty. This means the doctor is double boarded in OB-GYN and has a sub-specialty in Reproductive Endocrinology. There are still a significant number of Reproductive Endocrinologists who are treating patients for infertility, but aren't board certified. Ask where they received training and if they're board certified in Reproductive Endocrinology."

situation and fit the treatment. We are on call 24/7, even though it's inconvenient for us. We don't make our patients fit into our schedule; it's the other way around. Nor do we put our patients on a conveyor belt, trying to see as many as we can in a day. Some centers provide the same treatment and medication for all their patients."

Last summer, Dr. Anderson held a reunion for the families

hours, a steady line of people hugged him and thanked him for all he's done. "I felt like I was Santa Claus," Dr. Anderson remembers with a smile.

He began his practice before he had children of his own and didn't fully appreciate the agony of couples who were having difficulty conceiving. Now that he has a family, he feels he has a much greater empathy. "My greatest pleasure is helping a couple have children of their own when they had just about given up hope."

Today, seven million women suffer with infertility, yet only 9% seek treatment because of misperception. They might think it's cost-prohibitive, nothing can be done for them, there's a low chance of success, it's painful or requires surgery. The truth, according to Dr. Anderson, is that only a Board Certified fertility specialist can answer your infertility questions, and it may be a lot more possible than you imagine.

If you want to find out more about the *Southern California Center for Reproductive Medicine*, please visit their website at www.socalfertility.com, or call 949.642.8727 and schedule a consultation today. **tw**



Joyce Kingsbury, RN, and Tory O' Cairns, ORT, assist Dr. Anderson in his practice.

There are many infertility centers - so what differentiates Southern California Center for Reproductive Medicine?

"We know not everyone's situation is the same," Dr. Anderson tells us. "We don't offer any 'one-size-fits-all' solutions. We spend a lot of time getting to know our patient's

the center has helped. He didn't know how many would come and figured he would just circulate for the afternoon. Twelve hundred showed up; 650 of which were children he had helped to conceive. At the beginning of the reunion, he stopped to speak with one couple and for the next five

Infertility Facts

Infertility is officially defined as the inability to conceive a viable pregnancy after one year of unprotected intercourse. This "official" definition, however, does not begin to define what infertility really means.

Infertility can become associated with failure or feelings of isolation from the fertile world. It can get quite difficult when pregnancy announcements from others don't necessarily bring joy, but may instead bring feelings of jealousy and resentment. This is a natural feeling and hard to put aside. Here are some facts about infertility that might help you or a loved one:

1. Infertility affects 6.1 million American women and their partners - about 10 percent of the reproductive age population.

2. Infertility is a disease that affects the male or female reproductive system with almost equal frequency.

3. Twenty-five percent of infertile couples have more than one factor that contributes to their infertility.

4. The average age of people who seek a treatment for their infertility is 32 years old.

5. Advances in infertility treatments mean that many people can be helped through inexpensive methods.

6. Recent improvements in medication, microsurgery and in vitro fertilization (IVF) techniques make pregnancy possible for over 50% of the couples pursuing treatment.

7. More than 70,000 babies have been born in the U.S. as a result of all assisted reproductive technologies, including 45,000 as a result of in vitro fertilization.