



Women Gain Hope at Texas IVF

by JACKIE KENNEDY • photo by RAYMOND MURRAY

New advancements with In Vitro Fertilization offer female cancer patients a gift they've never had before – the ability to give birth, even after debilitating radiation and chemotherapy treatments.

Offered for the first time in October at Texas IVF on the campus of Texas Health

Presbyterian Hospital of Plano, oocyte freezing of unfertilized eggs opens new possibilities for women who otherwise may forever miss the opportunity to give birth to their own child.

"This is the newest and biggest and best of what's coming around in this field," says Dr. Alfred J. Rodriguez, medi-

cal director of Texas Health Presbyterian Plano's ARTS Program.

While oocyte (egg) freezing up to this point has been available only for fertilized eggs, the new treatment enables freezing unfertilized eggs that may be retrieved later in life, after a woman has recovered from medical treatments that may jeopardize her fertility. (Radiation treatments can destroy a woman's ovaries but not her uterus.)

"This is primarily for cancer patients, for young ladies who have to undergo chemotherapy and radiation that will destroy their ovaries," says Rodriguez. "We retrieve the unfertilized eggs and freeze them in order to preserve the patient's

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reproductive capacity. This is particularly meaningful for the reproductive age cancer patient who undergoes therapy that would threaten or destroy her fertility."

According to Rodriguez, the freezing of unfertilized eggs has only been around for a few years and just recently is being introduced in this area. The success rate has proven to be just as high as that when using fresh eggs. "The protocol has improved so much because the procedure also allows delayed reproduction for women 35 years or older who choose to postpone childbirth.

"This is the biggest, most exciting thing we're doing," says Rodriguez. "These advancements open up a lot of doors and we're so excited about that. It's a major leap forward, taking this technology and actually implementing it in something as common as cancer. This advancement gives women the hope of preserving their genetic mapping. The best thing is seeing this reproductive technology doing something really good for someone, in preserving a woman's fertility."

On the Presbyterian Plano campus since 1996, Texas IVF offers basic to advanced fertility treatments while specializing in In Vitro.

"You'll be treated by experienced, caring professionals who understand your emotional as well as physical needs," says Rodriguez. "Part of our mission is to treat you as a person, as well as

a patient."

In Vitro Fertilization literally means "in a dish" and consists of removing a woman's oocytes and mixing them with sperm from her male partner in order to fertilize the eggs outside of the body.

Another advance at Texas IVF has been improvement of the overall freezing procedure, for both fertilized and unfertilized eggs. The new cryo preservation, vitrofication, enables technicians to freeze an increased number of embryos and unfertilized eggs, therefore providing improved opportunities for success.

"What an exciting time to be practicing medicine in this field," says Rodriguez, adding that yet another advance involves reduction of the number of multiple births. "This is especially important in cases of high order multiples," he says, adding that 50 to 60 percent of mothers pregnant with twins go into premature labor.

"We have another option here," says the doctor. "We can do a single embryo blast transfer and put one advanced stage embryo back in the womb, dramatically reducing the number of multiples. This allows us to only return the best embryo possible and maximizes chances at pregnancy."

Few clinics in the United States utilize this method of egg transfer. "We are proud of our ability to be among them," says Rodriguez.

As with any treatment at Texas IVF, physician and patient make joint decisions after all information is shared and understood, according to Rodriguez who raves about his staff, which includes Office Manager Valerie Howell, IVF Nurse Coordinator Linda Ward, and nursing staff, Angela Hayden and Lorana Worthington. The medical director also raves about the incredible relationship Texas IVF shares with Texas Health.

"It's been absolutely wonderful," he says. "We have a big advantage being in partnership with Texas Health Plano. This partnership enables us to do so much that we could not duplicate without being a department of the hospital. This affiliation provides us with so many resources other clinics don't have."

Visit www.texasivf.com, or call 972.981.7800 for an appointment, or visit Texas IVF at 6200 West Parker Road, Suite 215, Plano, TX 75093-8185.



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