

The Private Pain of Infertility

By M. Patrice McCarthy

As women focus on education and establishing a foundation for a successful career, they frequently postpone starting a family assuming that when they are ready they will easily become pregnant. While this seems like a responsible approach to planning for a family, women may not be aware of the changes in their biological capacity to become pregnant. The probability of achieving a pregnancy within one menstrual cycle is on the average only 25% for normal, young, and healthy couples; these couples have approximately an 85% chance of conceiving within one year and 93% in two years. Unfortunately, this probability decreases dramatically by one third to one half as women approach their mid 30's and early 40's. Recent studies indicate that men may start los-

ing their fertility as early as 35 years of age.

For most people, having children is regarded as an essential part of life and societies place a great value on having children. However, 6.1 million couples in the U.S. are confronted with problems conceiving a child. Advances in diagnostic testing make it more likely that couples can find answers to their questions and identify treatment options to support their efforts to conceive.

Couples who elect to take advantage of medical treatment describe their experience with a mix of emotions. While grateful for the treatment options and the hope it offers, women and their partners often experience an emotional roller coaster as they face the challenges and financial costs associated with treatment for infertility. While treatment holds promise for

many infertile couples, it is not always successful. Up to 50% of the couples that seek treatment will not give birth to a child. Treatment success is greatly influenced by the age of the couple. When treatment is not successful, couples are faced with an experience that profoundly alters their anticipated life course. The adjustment to being childless takes time and energy as couples grieve the losses associated with infertility. A difficult aspect of the infertility experience is that couples often grieve in private. And women who are either willingly or unwillingly childless often feel the additional burden to explain their childless status.

Research is currently being conducted to identify the support women need in the aftermath of unsuccessful treatment. The researcher has personal experience with infertility, ap-

preciates the challenges that women experience, and has established the Infertility Care Project through the College of Nursing at the University of

Akron to address this important issue in a woman's life.

Additional online resources: InfertilitySpecialist.com and WomensHealth.gov.

Research Study on Women's Experience with Infertility



The purpose of this study is to explore the support needs for women related to infertility in the aftermath of unsuccessful treatment. Participants will be offered an opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings about their experience during private interviews with the principal investigator.

This study may be appropriate for you if you:

- Are age 25 to 50
- Are English speaking
- Had treatment in the last one to five years

Volunteers will be compensated for taking part in this study.

To learn more about this study or to discuss questions regarding eligibility, please contact:

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