

The field of reproductive biology has taken quantum leaps over the past 15 years. Fertility rates for In Vitro Fertilization have increased from 15 percent to as high as 65 to 70 percent in some patients during this period of time. What has made this significant improvement possible? Several factors, including better fertilization techniques, and improved embryo culture and survival. Infertility clinics have become very good at producing good-looking embryos. The next great challenge facing the field is to figure out why some of these embryos that appear viable do not go on to implant well in the uterus.

Implantation is a complicated cascade of events that can be impacted by any number of factors, including:

- ◆ Sperm quality
- ◆ Oocyte (egg) quality
- ◆ Uterine pathology
- ◆ Endometrial (lining) quality

Sperm quality will influence the

Embryo Implantation

By Dr. Ken Cadesky, Medical Director,
LifeQuest Centre for Reproductive Medicine

viability of the embryo. Factors affecting the quality of the sperm include:

- ◆ Smoking
- ◆ Genetic abnormalities
- ◆ Peer DNA fragmentation
- ◆ Chronic illness
- ◆ Environment exposure
- ◆ Medication

Egg quality, or a compromised oocyte, will also lead to a poor quality embryo that will not likely implant well. Some of these causes include:

- ◆ Increased maternal age
- ◆ Endometriosis
- ◆ Smoking
- ◆ Chronic illness
- ◆ Environmental exposure
- ◆ Medication

Uterine abnormalities that are either congenital or acquired can certainly prevent a healthy embryo from implanting. These abnormalities may include:

- ◆ Polyps
- ◆ Fibroids
- ◆ Adhesions (scar tissue)
- ◆ Uterine septum

Any one of these can act as “natural IUD’s”, that is, birth control. Most of

the time they can be dealt with by simple day surgery.

A healthy embryo has to arrive in a healthy uterus during the optimal window of implantation. The lining of the uterus (endometrium) has to be receptive to allow implantation to occur.

Defects in endometrial lining

include:

- ◆ Thin lining
- ◆ Improper hormonal preparation
- ◆ Absent/abnormal implantation factors
- ◆ Previous surgical damage
- ◆ Inflammation/infection (endometritis)

When implantation defects occur, the above factors are all potentially suspected. Each is considered, investigated, and if possible, treated. Thanks to a greater understanding of these issues, couples previously diagnosed with “unexplained infertility” are now finding explanations, and often treatable causes for their fertility problems.

If you have questions about topics raised in this article, please feel free to discuss them with your LifeQuest physician. ◆

To learn more about LifeQuest and infertility treatment, please visit our website: www.itstime.ca

Afraid of Needles?



We Can Help!

Nobody likes having a needle, but some people are especially fearful and anxious when they need to have an injection or blood taken. If you are one of these people, faced with having a needle you may experience a racing heart, plunge or increase in blood pressure, dizziness, nausea, profuse sweating, shortness of breath, crying, or even fainting. In the days leading up to the needle, you may have sleep difficulties and anxiety. If you are heading toward treatment with injectable medications, giving yourself a needle may feel like an impossible task. The anxiety about an impending needle can be worse than the needle itself!

People with needle phobia are known to avoid medical treatments – but when they need to access testing and treatment at a fertility clinic, they often must undergo a number of injections and blood draws. This can feel like insult added to injury – dealing with infertility is difficult enough without the added stress of needle anxiety!

There is relief available! Many LifeQuest patients have undergone treatment to ease needle phobia, right here with our staff counsellor, Sherry Franz. Patients have been delighted with their results – one referred to the reduction of her needle fear as “magic”. The technique the counsellor uses is called EMDR. This technique was originally developed as a treatment for post-traumatic stress, and is also highly effective for phobias

of all kinds, including needle and pain phobia. The EMDR treatment is quick and long-lasting. A dramatic reduction of needle fear is usually achieved in one or two one-hour sessions. Treatment does not involve hypnosis or exposure to needles themselves.

To book an appointment to help reduce your fear of needles and make your fertility treatment less stressful, call the LifeQuest front desk at (416) 506-0804.

Join IAAC

**Infertility Awareness
Association of Canada**

**and Get Your Free Copy
of Creating
Families Journal**

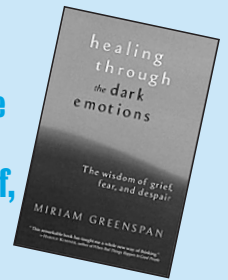
Formerly known as The IAAC Journal, *Creating Families* is IAAC's newest publication that deals exclusively with issues relating to reproductive health. IAAC is all about increasing awareness and understanding of infertility, not only for couples and families directly involved, but also for the general community. *Creating Families Journal* is a must-read.

To find out more about IAAC, or to get a copy of the publication, visit: www.iaac.ca

Book Review

**Healing Through the
Dark Emotions:
The Wisdom of Grief,
Fear, and Despair**

Miriam Greenspan
Shambhala Publications, 2003
Boston, Massachusetts



“Don’t be afraid of your despair. Be gentle with yourself. Take your time with this journey... The more we ignore the darker emotions, the louder they get... [The] human ability to create new meaning out of emotional pain allows us to heal from the past and transform the present.”

This book, while not specifically about infertility or pregnancy loss, is a compassionate guide through painful emotions often experienced by infertility patients.

The LifeQuest Newsletter is a regular publication of the LifeQuest Centre for Reproductive Medicine.

We welcome your questions, comments, or story ideas. Please feel free to contact us at: info@itstime.ca

Expanded Website Offers Visitors More Information

To learn more about LifeQuest, and access resources that will help you understand more about the treatment of infertility, please visit our new and expanded website:

www.itstime.ca



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**When it's time,
we're here.**

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