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Heart to Heart

Do NOT submit

With Philip S. Chua, M.D.

Artificial Insemination

There was a time when childless couples were hopeless in realizing their God-inspired dream of having children, either because the wife had cervical mucus problems, or is infertile for some reason, or when the husband had low sperm count, inactive sperm, or sperm antibodies, or when he was impotent.

Today, with the advent of artificial insemination (AI), childless couples have better options and greater chances to have children by artificial insemination, or even by the so-called test tube fertilization. This, of course, is predicated upon the need for the wife to be otherwise able to conceive and maintain a successful term pregnancy. AI is done only after the couples have tried all natural means of conception, and their obstetrician/gynecologist has tried all possible ways to treat the cause of the infertility. Both the husband and the wife must have the desire, psychological, emotional and religious acceptance of this technique as a means for them to have a child or children.

The procedure is as follows:

The sperm is collected, washed, and then injected by syringe either into the vagina (which carries only a 12% success rate) or directly into the uterus (which carries a 10-22% success rate), allowing nature to take its course from hereon.

When a woman undergoes insemination with a donor's sperm, AI is called DI (Donor Insemination). Generally, DI is an ideal option for couples with untreatable male factor infertility, for single women who want children, or older women or couples desiring children. Women undergoing AI must be able to ovulate; be clear of any luteal phase defects in order to have an "embryo-safe" uterus; have a good set of fallopian tubes; have no other pelvic abnormalities or serious infections.

There are three ways to artificially inseminate:

1. Homologous insemination

Also known as "cup insemination", this is when the male partner's semen is washed, separated to improve motility, and placed in a cup at the cervix during ovulation. In order to place washed sperm in the cup, the woman needs to be inseminated at the doctor's clinic.

2. Intracervical insemination (ICI)

ICI is a little more involved. Here, spinning of the semen (via centrifuge) is done to collect the best sperm. It is then placed in a catheter, which is used to pass the semen directly into the cervical canal, done at the doctor's office. It is advisable to combine ICI with the cup to improve the odds between ICI attempts.

3. Intrauterine Insemination (IUI)

IUI yields far better results (10-25%) than ICI or the cup as long as the insemination is timed properly. Just before ovulation, the semen is washed and spun with a sample of the male partner's blood, which creates a pellet of sperm with no semen. The dead or inactive sperm are then separated from the good sperm, placed in a catheter, and placed directly into the uterus. Sometimes fertility drugs are combined with an IUI procedure.

Pertinent to this subject, I would like to state that the grave responsibilities of having children should be taken into serious account when deciding whether to have children or not, by natural means or otherwise. Statistically, parents who have long tried to have children but could not because of “infertility” problem (s), and who, in their desperation, have resorted to adoption, or have children by artificial means, have been found to be great, loving and caring parents. After all, when everything is said and done, we will all agree that procreation, conception, and delivery are only a miniscule part of true motherhood, and providing the sperm, only an iota of what fatherhood is all about. Parenthood is the selfless love, eternal devotion, enduring patience, endless sacrifices and glorious dreams of a mother and a father for their children. ###

Mimi/Niza, here is the quote for my column above:

“...conception and
delivery are only
a miniscule part of
motherhood, and
providing the sperm,
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fatherhood.”

Mimi/Niza: The spelling of “miniscule” could also be “minuscule”, as the dictionary says, although “minuscule” is used commonly and allowed. I will leave the tough job, the final choice, to all of you, my editors.

