From the Directors

Dear Friends

It is just over one year since the first meeting of the Partnership for Families Leadership Board. In this single year, the Partnership for Families Program has gone from an idea to a reality. We have a unique mission, helping give couples a second chance to have a family.

Infertility affects a huge number of couples – about 15 percent of couples are unable to conceive without medical intervention. The pain of not being able to have a family is overwhelming and affects nearly every aspect of a couple’s life. In Vitro Fertilization (IVF), the most involved infertility treatment offered, costs approximately $10,000 a treatment. You can imagine the disappointment that occurs when a couple has saved, borrowed or mortgaged their house to go through a single, unsuccessful IVF treatment and cannot afford a second cycle.

The Partnership for Families Program was established to pay for a second IVF treatment for these deserving couples. Thus far, the program has paid for 10 couples, who otherwise could not have undergone a second cycle of IVF. Six of these couples have successfully conceived, with a total of nine babies on the way. Written words cannot express how grateful these couples are for the second chance to have a family.

The main purpose of the Partnership for Families Program is to raise funds to give qualifying couples a second chance to conceive with IVF. Thanks to the hard work of the Partnership for Families Leadership Board and the overwhelming generosity of many people, the fundraising has gone well. However, many couples need financial assistance, and we will continue our fundraising efforts to help others.

Being involved with the Partnership for Families Program at any level is a rewarding experience. It is unbelievably satisfying to help couples gain a second chance to have a family. In addition, it has been a pleasure to work with and get to know members of the Leadership Board who are passionate and energetic in their efforts to help deserving couples.

If you are not already involved with the Partnership for Families Program, we hope you will consider helping out in any way you can. Please do call the Partnership for Families Program at 216/839-2929 if you would like further information about the program or would like to receive a DVD that shows, better than words, the passion of the couples who are helping and who have been helped by the Partnership for Families Program.

Nancy Lerner
Chair, Partnership for Families Leadership Board

Jim Goldfarb, M.D.
Director, Cleveland Clinic Fertility Center at Beachwood

To Learn More
If you would like more information about our fund, please contact:

Partnership for Families Fund
Cleveland Clinic Fertility Center at Beachwood Leadership Board
26900 Cedar Road, Suite 220 South Beachwood, Ohio 44122
216/839-2929
www.ccf.org/partnershipforfamilies

(continued on page 4)
Assisted Reproductive Technology: From the Early Days to the Present, a Nursing Perspective

Sandra Stewart, R.N. Nurse Manager
Cleveland Clinic Fertility Center at Beachwood

For the past 21 years I have had the good fortune to work as a Clinical Nurse Specialist in the field of assisted reproductive technology. It has been a privilege to participate in the evolution of this field and truly an honor to be a member of our team at the Cleveland Clinic Fertility Center at Beachwood, whose every member is dedicated to helping couples have the families that they desperately desire.

When I assumed the role of infertility and In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) nurse in early 1984, it had only been six years since the world’s first IVF baby, Louise Brown, was born. IVF programs were scarce in the United States and success rates were very low. As I look back over my career, I am in awe of how far IVF has come in a relatively short time. It is immensely satisfying to me that through IVF we are now able to help so many couples for whom not very many years ago there was no hope. Today IVF is among an array of treatments available, such as drug therapies and Intra-Uterine Insemination.

When a couple reaches our office, often they have already endured months or years of disappointment and failure. Unfortunately, human beings simply are not efficient as reproducers. The conception rate for a couple with “normal fertility” is about 20 percent per cycle. Most fertility treatment strategies improve per cycle pregnancy rates, sometimes approaching but never surpassing that 20 percent. IVF is the only treatment that provides success rates that are higher that the natural conception rate, between 30 and 60 percent, depending on a woman’s age and the cause of infertility.

As conception rates rise with the various treatment options, so do the physical, financial and emotional costs. My nurse colleagues and I serve as educators, guides, supporters and counselors for patients as they go through each treatment cycle.

Many couples in Ohio do not have insurance that covers fertility mediation and treatment. Our patients are dealing with the financial and physical cost of fertility treatment, in addition to anxiety about the ultimate question of whether the treatment will result in pregnancy. We are pleased to help alleviate the financial pressures for couples in need of assistance through the Partnership for Families Program. We know that our patients need our knowledge, time, support and compassion. We rejoice as they achieve success, and we suffer as our patients experience failure. In the safety of our company, they feel free to vent their frustrations and fury, their anxieties and grief.

Our days are filled with so much joy and so much sorrow as we celebrate our patients’ successes and mourn their losses. Helping our patients to achieve their dreams of having children and cope with the failures on their way is what brings us to work every day.

For more information about IVF, please visit www.clevelandclinic.org/ivf or complete and return the enclosed reply card.

Meet Sandra Stewart, R.N.

Since 2000 Sandra Stewart, R.N., a Clinical Nurse Specialist, has practiced at the Cleveland Clinic Fertility Center at Beachwood and currently serves as Nurse Manager. She recently celebrated her 21st anniversary of working in the field of infertility and In Vitro Fertilization.

Mrs. Stewart graduated from Duke University in 1968, with a bachelor’s degree in Spanish. She moved to Cleveland in that same year with her husband of now nearly 37 years, Bill Stewart. She attended graduate school at Kent State University and received a Master of Arts in Teaching in Spanish in 1971. After one year of teaching Spanish she made the career-altering decision to attend nursing school. She graduated from the Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing of Case Western Reserve University in 1981 with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and in 1986 with a Master of Science in Nursing.

Before coming to The Cleveland Clinic, Mrs. Stewart worked on the postpartum floor at MacDonald Women’s Hospital, and in 1984 joined the newly formed In Vitro Fertilization program at University Hospitals.

Mrs. Stewart gives thanks for the good fortune that brought her to this field, her wonderful team and all of the patients she has helped to achieve the dream of parenthood.

THE CLEVELAND CLINIC
9500 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44195
The Cleveland Clinic is an independent, not-for-profit, multispecialty academic medical center. It is dedicated to providing quality specialized care and includes an outpatient clinic, a hospital with 956 staffed beds, an education division and a research institute.

Partnership for Families is published by The Cleveland Clinic. The information in this publication should not be relied upon as medical advice. It is not intended to replace a physician’s medical assessment and medical judgment.

Editor: Laura Gillespie, Liz Lear; Physician Editor: Cynthia Austin, M.D.; Photography: Cleveland Clinic Photography

The Cleveland Clinic realizes that individuals would like to learn more about its particular programs, services or developments. At the same time, we fully respect the privacy of our patients. If you do not wish to receive any materials containing this information, please write to us at the Office of Development/UAE, The Cleveland Clinic, 9500 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44195.

© The Cleveland Clinic Foundation 2005
Q&A:
Stress and Infertility
Cynthia Austin, M.D.
Cleveland Clinic Fertility Center at Beachwood

Q: Does stress cause infertility?
A: Studies have not shown that stress by itself causes infertility. This is an important question because our lives are full of stress, and there is no doubt that infertility and associated treatments cause additional stress.

Q: Can reducing stress help someone become pregnant?
A: Well-meaning family and friends frequently suggest to couples that they are "just trying too hard." They may even make suggestions to, for example, quit a job, take a long vacation or adopt a baby. While there is almost always a chance that a couple can achieve pregnancy on their own, there is no evidence that these suggestions can increase the chances. For instance, studies clearly show that the chance of a couple becoming pregnant on their own is no higher after adoption than if they do not adopt. The choice to adopt should be based only on the desire to make the adopted child part of the family.

One study that suggests couples being treated for stress may become pregnant faster than couples not in treatment. These results may not be reliable because the study did not account for which couples were also being treated for infertility. Still, I have known couples who became so stressed by the demands of fertility treatment that they were unable to continue. Stress management may make it easier to comply with the demands of a treatment plan.

Q: If treating stress doesn't help a couple conceive, isn't it just a waste of time and money?
A: Even if treating stress does not improve the chance of getting pregnant, it is important for couples to attend to their emotional health and maintain a healthy relationship. I do not consider fertility treatment successful if a couple ultimately achieves pregnancy, but their marriage or relationship is not stable.

Q: What is the best treatment for stress?
A: Although the studies on the value of stress management are controversial, one result is clear. No one approach to stress reduction has been found to be any better or less effective than another. In addition, most couples in each type of treatment for stress responded that participation made them feel better.

Couples should choose whichever treatment approach appeals the most to them. Individuals may choose to be part of a group, or seek couples or individual therapy. Some find it helpful to participate in therapy that focuses on discussion of infertility and treatment. Alternatively, some prefer generic stress management that doesn’t specifically involve the issue of infertility. Even working out regularly can be helpful in reducing stress levels. For example, one patient successfully reduced the effects of stress by exercising moderately but religiously and practicing transcendental meditation once each week.

Ten “Stress Hardiness” Suggestions for Couples in Fertility Treatment
Lynne M. Norrie, R.N., M.S.N., Nurse Counselor

Couples facing infertility often find that the grief process and recurrent cycle of loss requires extra efforts to strengthen themselves throughout their treatment. In addition to physical and emotional strain, couples frequently face spiritual dilemmas, question their beliefs and face communication breakdowns, both with each other and with family and friends.

The accumulation of stressors that impact a couple undergoing treatment is the main reason that the Cleveland Clinic Fertility Center at Beachwood encourages families to increase their self-care activities early on. Below is a list of suggestions individuals undergoing the stress of infertility, or any stressful period, may want to consider. It is important that individuals and couples select several activities that they think will be most helpful to them and the easiest to initiate right away.

Tip for individuals
- Increase your familiar exercise or begin a stretching or brisk walking plan. Hire a coach or join a class.
- Get plenty of rest. Sleep is energizing and expands coping ability.
- Purchase a journal and write “from the heart” several times per week. This is helpful in expressing grief.
- Utilize “positive self talk” to combat fearful thoughts, “I deserve to be a parent” is calming. Try a guided imagery tape containing positive affirmations.
- Go slow. Listen to relaxing music at key transitions in your day and add deep breaths, especially the “releasing out” breath. Feel grounded before the next activity.

(continued on page 4)
Without this assistance, they would not be expecting a child today.

Originally, the couple planned to have children soon after their wedding in 2000, when Mr. MacMichael married the young woman whose high school band portrait had caught his eye several years prior. When Mr. MacMichael’s military term was up, they settled near family in Geneva, Ohio. As time went on and they had not conceived, they made the tough decision to seek diagnosis and treatment at the Cleveland Clinic Fertility Center at Beachwood.

“Financially, the decision to do infertility treatment was very hard. But, we decided it was something we really wanted. We were so devastated when it didn’t work,” says Mrs. MacMichael.

IVF also took an emotional toll. The involved commitment entailing injections, blood tests, office visits and ultrasounds, along with a general lack of understanding from others, compounded their sense of loss. While their story might have ended here in disappointment, the generosity of others instead has offered a bright beginning.

Thanks to those who support the Partnership for Families Program, the MacMichaels gained renewed hope and a second, unexpected chance to have a family.

To learn more about the Partnership for Families Program, please call 216/839-2929, visit www.clevelandclinic.org/partnershipfamilies, or complete the enclosed reply card.

You’re Not Alone

Fifteen percent of all couples face infertility issues. If you or someone close to you is affected by infertility, please consider the Cleveland Clinic Fertility Center at Beachwood for a wide range of fertility services, support and expert information. Call 216/839-2929 or visit online at www.clevelandclinic.org/ivf.

Ten “Stress Hardiness” Suggestions

To learn more about coping with the challenges of infertility, please call the Cleveland Clinic Fertility Center at Beachwood at 216/839-2929, log on to www.clevelandclinic.org/ivf, or complete and return the enclosed reply card.
For More Information

☐ Please send me a brochure about helping couples become families through the Partnership for Families Fund.

☐ Please send me a DVD that shows couples who are helping and who have been helped by the Partnership for Families Program.

☐ Please send me information about fertility treatments at the Cleveland Clinic Fertility Center at Beachwood.

☐ I prefer to have my name removed from the Partnership for Families mailing list.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

PHONE E-MAIL