KNOWLEDGE REALLY IS POWER

How genetic testing can make it easier to avoid a difficult outcome

The study of the human genome has had a profound impact throughout the practice of medicine. But it has become particularly helpful for couples seeking to achieve their dream of bringing a healthy baby into the world. (cont. inside)

PHYSICIAN PROFILE
David Schmidt, MD, is board certified in Obstetrics & Gynecology and Endocrinology & Infertility

STRESS & INFERTILITY
Relax. Chill out. Let it happen. HealthCircle offers several programs and support systems for you

COPING & THE HOLIDAYS
Mary Casey Jacob, Ph.D., ABPP offers her advice on getting through the holidays when coping with infertility

ZIKA VIRUS
Important information for you on holiday travel and staying safe

FERTILITY 101 VIDEOS
Educational videos featuring our staff with answers to some of the most commonly asked questions
Now, two commonly used genetic tests in In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) – Pre-Implantation Genetic Diagnosis (PGD) and Pre-Implantation Genetic Screening (PGS) – can spot potential problems before an embryo is implanted, thereby avoiding the likelihood of a miscarriage, the inheritance of a genetically-carried disease, or conditions related to an abnormal chromosome count.

**TWO TESTS WITH ONE PURPOSE**

**PGD:** Thus far, scientists have identified hundreds of life-threatening and debilitating diseases that can be screened before an embryo is implanted in the mother’s uterus. PGD is used during IVF to test for inherited conditions that are called “single gene disorders.” As noted, a wide range of conditions can be detected, but the most common include Cystic Fibrosis (a disease that affects the body’s mucus and sweat glands, often causing chronic lung infections), Sickle Cell Anemia (a disease of the red blood cells that can cause attacks of pain and damage to vital organs and lead to early death), Thalassemia (a group of inherited blood diseases that cause red blood cell deficiencies, the most severe of which results in fetal or newborn death), Tay Sachs Disease (a fatal disease of the central nervous system that destroys nerve and brain tissue leading the blindness, paralysis and death by the age of 5), and Myotonic Dystrophy (a disease that can show up at various stages of life and in varying degrees of severity, affecting different types of tissues and organs). In addition, translocations (when chromosomes break and the fragments rejoin to other chromosomes), that may cause miscarriages can also be detected.

**PGS:** A normal embryo has 46 chromosomes – 22 pairs of non-sex chromosomes and 2 sex chromosomes (X and Y). When an embryo is missing or has extra chromosomes, the condition is called “aneuploidy.” Embryos with aneuploidy are typically not viable, meaning that they will fail to implant in the uterus, or will result in a miscarriage. When embryos with aneuploidy do come to full term, Down Syndrome (a duplication, in part or in full, of chromosome 21) is the most common genetic abnormality.

PGS uses the most advanced genetic testing currently available to screen for aneuploidy and provides the most accurate results possible. PGS [and PGD] are also highly accurate, with 98% accuracy in diagnosing the presence of genetic defects. Both tests have a common purpose: to offer you the greatest chance of successfully bringing a healthy, normal baby into the world.

**SHOULD YOU CONSIDER PGD OR PGS TESTING?**

Many believe that the genetic screening of embryos before they’re transferred can spare couples the emotionally difficult decision of having to consider terminating a pregnancy if a defect is found by the second trimester. Also PGS is an effective tool for sex selection in screening for sex linked diseases or simple family balancing.

The choice of whether or not to consider genetic screening during IVF depends on your specific situation. If there’s a family history of a genetic disorder, or if the mother is over 35 years of age, or if there is a history of recurring miscarriages, or if there is a history of severe male factor infertility, you may want to talk with your physician about the advantages of pre-implantation genetic screening.

As always, our goal is to provide you with the greatest chance of realizing your dream of starting or adding to your family. With an individualized approach to care, we’ll work with you to consider the appropriateness of genetic screening – as well as all other technologies available – to help you achieve success.
De-stressing the situation

Relax. Chill out. Let it happen. As unwelcome as that type of advice may be for women dealing with infertility, evidence does suggest that while stress does not cause infertility, infertility does cause stress.

Developing coping strategies to manage stress factors related to fertility treatment can help patients achieve better overall health and a more positive outlook during treatment.

At the Center, we have developed HealthCircle, a holistic approach to fertility care. This full circle approach offers several programs and support systems that patients can incorporate into their treatment plans including acupuncture, yoga classes, nutrition and weight loss plans, Reiki, health coaching, and individual and group solutions that can provide relief from emotional stress.

Meet Dr. David Schmidt

Dr. Schmidt is a lead physician at The Center and is board certified in Obstetrics & Gynecology and Reproductive Endocrinology & Infertility (REI).

Dr. Schmidt has special interests in IVF, ovulation induction, endoscopic surgery and research. Several of Dr. Schmidt’s research projects have been accepted for national publication or presentation, and he has received numerous awards including the Dr. Spero Neckles Award for Outstanding Resident Research. “The research really ties in state-of-the-art, or the latest advances in our field and brings it quickly to the clinical arena.”

“Each and every patient; it’s very rewarding in the end when we can help them achieve a pregnancy that they otherwise had a difficult time achieving. The reward is really phenomenal. I love what I do.”
“This year we celebrate our fourth holiday with our little gift. We are forever thankful for the care, compassion and expertise that you gave us to help start our family.”

“We often think of our infertility journey. Words cannot express our gratitude and appreciation to the Center for giving us our two miracles. We continue to give hope to others battling infertility.”

In celebration of this holiday season, we’d like to spread some of the joy that our patients share with us. We love receiving their family holiday cards. To others battling infertility.

Hey friends over 40, go ahead and hit snooze on that biological clock! Thanks to the updated law, you're now required to cover infertility treatment for people age 40 and older. After January 1, 2016 are now required to cover infertility treatment for people age 40 and older.

There are limitations and exemptions to the updated law. The best way to determine your specific coverage is to work closely with your insurance carrier to examine all the benefits of your plan.

You can also visit our www.uconnfertility.com for links to documents addressing the benefits of your plan.

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During your visit, you’ll meet members of our staff, including medical assistants, ARNPs, clinical nurse, nurses, fellows, and doctors. Once the exam, consultation and introductions are done, you’ll meet with a financial services representative to discuss your health benefits as it relates to your treatment.

After your exam you will discuss your diagnosis and treatment plan with your doctor. Together you’ll talk about any additional tests or procedures that may be needed.

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It’s our mission to provide the highest standard of individualized care to every patient, beginning with the very first visit.

Egg freezing allows women to store their eggs at a younger age, for future use. Another benefit of egg freezing can help take the pressure off women who are facing this challenge.

Life can be complicated for women who are interested in having children, but just aren’t ready yet. Be it career, education, or health issues, egg freezing can help take the pressure off women who are facing this challenge.

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The Center continues to demonstrate success: Not only in the percent of live births achieved, but also in our ability to lessen the potential for pregnancies with twins, triplets or more. As the largest fertility center in the state with 1,275 IVF cycles in the last year, we continue to lead in both the region and the nation.

To learn more about our success rates and those of other programs, please visit the Society for Assisted Reproductive Technologies website (www.sart.org). Click on IVF Success. A comparison of clinic success rates may not be meaningful because patient medical characteristics and treatment approaches may vary from clinic to clinic.