

# Reproductive

## MEDICINE MATTERS

Fall 2006

### ASK ABINGTON

Dear Abington Reproductive Medicine,

I'm a 39-year-old woman about to undergo my first IVF cycle. While my husband and I want a biological child more than anything, we're concerned about the risk of a multiple pregnancy. We keep hearing all these stories about people undergoing fertility treatments and giving birth to twins, triplets and even quadruplets. How often does this really happen? And is there any way to reduce our risk of a multiple pregnancy?

Sincerely,  
E.W., Cheltenham

Dear E.W.,

You raise an excellent question, and one that has been a source of intense debate within the medical community. As fertility specialists, we want to fulfill our patients' hopes and dreams, but we can't let that desire cloud good medical judgment. While the prospect of twins or triplets may sound appealing to some couples, there are serious risks involved, especially for women over age 40. For example, women carrying multiples (more than one fetus) are more likely to experience maternal and fetal complications, such as miscarriage or preterm labor. Multiples can also place significant, and often unexpected, stress on the parents, from financial difficulties to physical exhaustion. This certainly doesn't mean we're against multiple pregnancies, but we need to stay mindful of the potential health risks.

The risk of conceiving multiples is directly related to the number of embryos transferred

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### ABINGTON TO WELCOME IVF EXPERT ANNETTE LEE, M.D., IN JANUARY

Abington Reproductive Medicine will ring in the new year with a new physician, Annette Lee, M.D. A board-certified reproductive endocrinologist, Dr. Lee comes to our practice from Reproductive Medicine Associates of New Jersey, one of the world's largest and most experienced infertility centers.

"I've been practicing reproductive endocrinology for over ten years. For the last six years, I was part of a large, high-volume—but extremely successful—IVF [in vitro fertilization] practice. I'm well versed in all the latest fertility techniques, and I would like to apply my experience and training in a more personalized environment...one where I actually get to know the patients I'm treating," says Dr. Lee.



Annette Lee, M.D.

Dr. Lee graduated in the top ten percent of her class at Hahnemann University School of Medicine. Following her residency training in obstetrics and gynecology, she completed a fellowship in reproductive endocrinology and infertility at Oregon Health Sciences University, where she worked under Leon Speroff, M.D., one of the world's preeminent fertility specialists. A prolific author and researcher, Dr. Lee has co-written articles for *Fertility and Sterility* (official publication of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine), *Human Reproduction* (official journal of the European Society for Human Reproduction & Embryology) and the *Journal of the Society for Gynecological Investigation*. In addition, she has co-presented at the Tenth World Congress on In Vitro Fertilization and the Ninth World Congress on Human Reproduction.

Since 1999, Dr. Lee has served as moderator of the Donor Gamete Board, an Internet infertility support group sponsored by the InterNational Council on Infertility Information Dissemination. She is also the founding physician moderator of WebMD's Infertility Community message board. Her research interests include IVF, third-party reproduction (e.g. donor egg, donor sperm and gestational carrier), polycystic ovarian syndrome and the impact of complementary medicine, such as nutrition and acupuncture, on IVF outcomes.

"We're thrilled to welcome a physician of Dr. Lee's caliber and expertise," says Jay S. Schinfeld, M.D. "Her compassion and advanced training will be a tremendous asset to our practice. Adding another physician will also allow us to continue providing timely, personalized care." ♦

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# LARRY BARMAT, M.D., NAMED DIRECTOR OF GYNECOLOGIC ROBOTIC SURGERY



Larry L. Barmat, M.D., prepares to perform surgery using the da Vinci robotic system.

Abington's own Larry Barmat, M.D., is now one of only a handful of reproductive surgeons in the tri-state area able to perform gynecologic robotic surgery. To master this state-of-the-art technology, Dr. Barmat completed an intensive da Vinci® robotic surgery training course at the University of Michigan.

With conventional reproductive surgery, patients typically endure large abdominal incisions, four- to five-day inpatient hospital stays and four to six weeks of post-operative recuperation. The da Vinci system—currently the world's most technologically advanced surgical robotic system—allows surgeons to operate with extreme precision and accuracy, resulting in smaller patient incisions and much faster recovery times (typically a few days). What's more, patients can receive this type of surgery on an outpatient basis.

Dr. Barmat has used this revolutionary technology to perform myomectomies (removal of fibroids) and tubal ligation reversals.

Recently, Dr. Barmat was appointed to the Robotic Surgery Committee at Abington Memorial Hospital and named director of gynecologic robotic surgery in the hospital's department of obstetrics and gynecology. He is actively involved in the hospital's laparoscopic and robotic surgery resident training program as well. ♦

## EGG DONORS NEEDED!

For women with absent or non-functioning ovaries, cancer, a history of genetic abnormalities or premature ovarian failure, egg donors may be their only hope of starting or continuing their family. Abington Reproductive Medicine is seeking healthy women between the ages of 21 and 32 to help these women and their partners realize their dream.

Interested individuals must first complete an Egg Donor Program application. Approved applicants will then be required to undergo a physical exam, medical/social screening, infections screening, psychological evaluation and an in vitro fertilization consult. In

addition, all egg donors must provide informed consent. Monetary compensation (approximately \$5,000) is provided to all egg donors upon completion their donation treatment cycle, which concludes with egg retrieval.

For more information, call 215-481-3530 and ask for the nurse coordinator of the Egg Donor Program. Or, you can visit [www.abington-repromed.com](http://www.abington-repromed.com) and click on the "Egg Donors Wanted" link (located at the bottom right-hand corner of the page) to complete and submit your application online. ♦

## ABINGTON PHYSICIANS PLAY KEY ROLE IN RESIDENT'S AWARD-WINNING RESEARCH PAPER AND ASRM/SMRU TRAVEL AWARD

Namita Kattal, M.D., a resident at Albert Einstein Medical Center, has three physicians to thank for her first-place award in the Philadelphia Area Reproductive Endocrine Society resident research contest. Jay Schinfeld, M.D., Stephen Somkuti, Ph.D., M.D., and Larry Barmat, M.D., all of Abington Reproductive Medicine, helped Dr. Kattal research and present her award-winning paper, titled "Role of Coculture in Human In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF): A Meta-Analysis."

Our physicians later joined Dr. Kattal in New Orleans to present the paper at the American Society of Reproductive Medicine's (ASRM's) national meeting, where she also received the prestigious Society for Male Reproduction and Urology (SMRU) Travel Award for her work. ♦

## Have a Question or Concern?

*E-mail our Physicians!*

Attention Web users: We've added a special link to our home page, [www.abington-repromed.com](http://www.abington-repromed.com), to make it easy for potential patients and other interested individuals to submit questions directly to our physicians.

After clicking on this link (titled "Have a question for our physicians?"), a pop-up window containing an information form will appear on your screen. You will find a question/concern box, where you can elaborate on your particular issue. You can also click on the link at the top of the form to e-mail one of our physicians directly about a more specific matter. Either way, a physician will contact you shortly regarding your concern. And rest assured that any information you submit will remain confidential. ♦

# ABINGTON PHYSICIANS PRESENT RESEARCH AT ASRM CONFERENCE

In October, our physicians traveled to the 62<sup>nd</sup> annual meeting of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM) in New Orleans to co-present the following research studies:

- “Characterization of Human Semen Electrical Resistance (ER) Using the Fertilitrac® Ovulation Predictor Device”: This groundbreaking study showed that the presence of semen in the vagina following intercourse might affect the accuracy of ovulation predictor devices.
- “Role of Coculture in Human In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF): A Meta-Analysis”: Winner of the Philadelphia Area Reproductive Endocrine Society resident research contest, this study explored the potential benefits of Coculture. Co-developed by Abington’s own Larry Barmat, M.D., this technique involves placing the female patient’s fertilized eggs on top of a layer of cells from her own uterine lining, creating a more natural environment for embryo development and maximizing the chance of conception. The study demonstrated a significant improvement in pregnancy rates among patients who underwent Coculture.
- “Embryo Transfer: Variables Affecting Success”: Previous studies suggest that the presence of blood on the embryo transfer device is associated with a reduction in pregnancy rates. This study, however, recorded higher pregnancy rates when mucus and microscopic blood were found on the inside of the transfer device.
- “Prospective Randomized Trial of Autologous Endometrial Coculture Versus Traditional IVF: An In-Term Analysis”: While preliminary data for this study has demonstrated outstanding pregnancy rates overall, researchers have detected no significant difference in outcome at this time between patients who received Coculture with IVF versus those who received IVF alone. ♦

## PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR STUDY EVALUATING NEW INFERTILITY DOSAGE AND DRUG DELIVERY SYSTEM

Abington Reproductive Medicine is seeking female participants for a study evaluating a promising new infertility dosage and drug delivery device, called the Follistim Pen®. Our practice is one of only eight fertility centers in the nation selected to participate in this landmark study.

Traditionally, injectable infertility medications have only been available in 75 IU vials, which limits physicians to prescribing the medication in 75 IU increments. For patients who do not require a full 75 IU dose, physicians can instruct them to inject a half dose (37.5 IU). But since the remaining dose loses its effectiveness once opened, patients are forced to pay for more medication than they actually need, contributing to unnecessary—and costly—medication waste.

Recently, the FDA approved the Follistim Pen®, a pre-mixed, pre-filled infertility dosage and drug delivery method. Essentially an adapted insulin pen, the device is equipped with a “dial-a-dose” feature, allowing users to customize the dosage to their unique needs and physician’s instructions. Doses are administered in 25 IU increments, and any unused medication is safely stored in an accompanying cartridge for later use. Preliminary research also shows that the Follistim Pen® delivers medication with greater efficiency and accuracy than traditional syringes and needles.

For the research study, participants will be randomly assigned a medication dosage and schedule for one complete in vitro fertilization cycle. Medication will be provided free of charge.

To learn more about this study, call 215-887-2010. ♦

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to the woman’s uterus. Fertility programs with lower success rates often transfer the maximum number of embryos (sometimes five or six) to boost their results. In their eyes, a pregnancy is a pregnancy, regardless of whether multiples are in the patient’s best interest.

Abington Reproductive Medicine has one of the lowest rates of multiple pregnancies in the nation. If a couple is going to conceive, the best embryo will make that possible; additional embryos simply increase the chance of a multiple pregnancy. Though experts advocate single embryo transfer, only a handful of fertility centers can offer this option and still achieve high pregnancy rates. Abington is one of them. Using state-of-the-art equipment, careful patient monitoring and our extensive expertise, we’ve performed many successful single embryo transfers.

Keep in mind, however, that not all patients are good candidates for single embryo transfer. A number of factors come into play, including the patient’s age, fertility history and unique wants and desires.

Best,  
Stephen G. Somkuti, M.D., Ph.D.

Do you have a question for the Abington Reproductive Medicine physicians? E-mail us at [info@abington-repromed.com](mailto:info@abington-repromed.com) with your inquiry, and your question may appear in a future issue of *Reproductive Medicine Matters*.

## ABINGTON APPEARANCES

Potential patients are invited to join us for the following free informational seminars on in vitro fertilization (IVF). All seminars are held from 7 to 9 p.m., at the Frobese Conference Center (classroom 1) in the Lenfest Pavilion of Abington Memorial Hospital.

### 2007 Seminar Dates:

Monday, January 15	Monday, April 9
Monday, February 26	Monday, May 21

Each seminar is led by an Abington Reproductive Medicine physician and features staff members from Abington IVF & Genetics and the Toll Center for Reproductive Sciences.

For more information or to register (required), call 215-887-2010.



## Media Mentions

### Several of our physicians were recently featured in print and on air:

- Jay Schinfeld, M.D., was interviewed for the article, "Delaying Fatherhood Has Risks, Too," by Fay Flam. The article appeared in the September 25, 2006, issue of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.
- Larry Barmat, M.D., was quoted extensively in Linda Finarelli's article about Autologous Endometrial Coculture, "To Your Health: Abington Practice Offers State-of-the-Art Fertility Procedure." The story appeared in several Montgomery newspapers in August 2006.
- Dr. Barmat was also featured in the August 2006 issue of *Parents Express*, which included an article on Autologous Endometrial Coculture in its "health & safety" section.
- On May 31, 2006, Stephen Somkuti, M.D., Ph.D., was a special guest on Conceive on Air for a segment titled, "The Next Steps in Infertility Evaluation." Conceive on Air is produced by the VoiceAmerica™ Network, an online talk radio station. Dr. Somkuti will be a featured guest on the program again in December. ♦

## ABINGTON PHYSICIANS SECURE STAFF PRIVILEGES AT GRAND VIEW HOSPITAL

The physicians of Abington Reproductive Medicine now have staff privileges at Grand View Hospital, a nonprofit, 207-bed community hospital located at 700 Lawn Avenue in Sellersville, Pennsylvania. This designation allows our physicians to perform fertility treatments at Grand View Hospital.

For your convenience, our physicians also have staff privileges at Albert Einstein Medical Center and Abington Memorial, Doylestown, Jeanes (Larry Barmat, M.D., only), Holy Redeemer and Lower Bucks Hospitals. ♦

**VISIT US ONLINE: [WWW.ABINGTON-REPROMED.COM](http://WWW.ABINGTON-REPROMED.COM)**

### CONTACT OUR PHYSICIANS

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