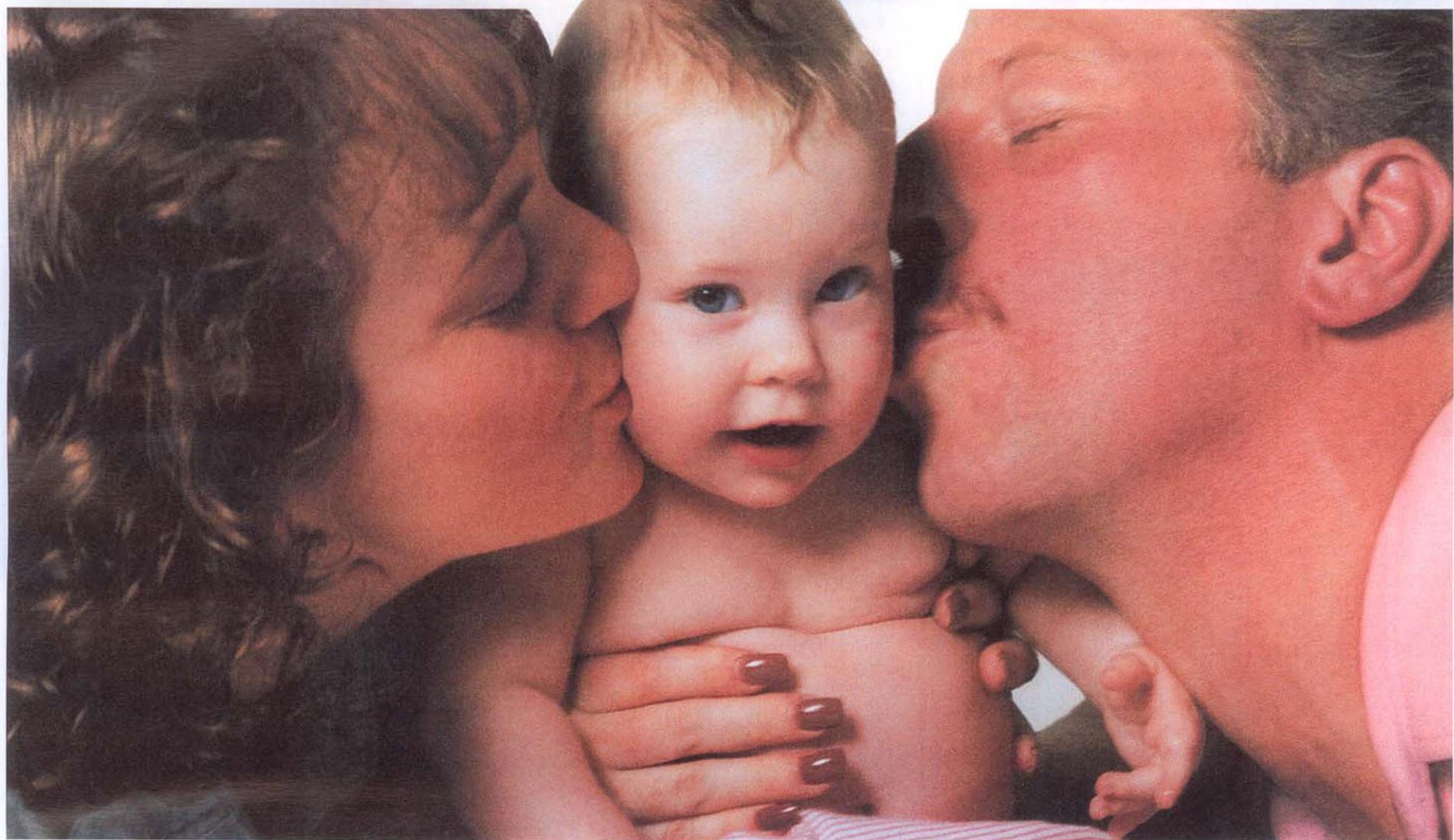


Lifetime *of* Health

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Infertility Treatment Helps Many

De-stress Yourself for a More Serene Springtime

Spring, the season synonymous with new life, will soon burst onto the horizon with fledgling flowers and warming breezes. Why not prepare to welcome it by learning how to handle stress more positively? Our three-part series will show you how.

These classes with Health Educator Sherri Martin of Northwestern Memorial's Wellness Institute begin Monday, May 3. Call 312/926-8400 for more information or to register.

Ovarian Cancer and Your Genetic Risk of the Disease

This session will help women learn who is most likely to develop ovarian cancer and identify those individuals who would benefit from formal genetic counseling.

Attend a session with David Fishman, MD, Northwestern Ovarian Cancer Early Detection Program, and Genetics Counselor Aimee Wonderlick, from 6 to 7 p.m., Wednesday, April 28. Call 312/926-8400 for information or to register.

Couples Fulfill Parenting Dreams

Most first-time parents make a tremendous fuss over their babies – that's as predictable as midnight feedings and baby blankets. But John and Kimberly Witvliet of Crown Point, Ind., are entitled to a lion's share of hugging and kissing. Their daughter Natalie was born on July 8, 1998, almost three years after they began trying to conceive. The couple had tried to become pregnant on their own for a year before seeking guidance from Kimberly's obstetrician in October 1996. When she remained unable to become pregnant after several measures were taken to enhance her fertility, Witvliet and her physician agreed it was time to seek treatment from specialists who had an impressive track record in helping couples conceive.

"Northwestern Memorial's name kept coming up when I did my research," says Witvliet, who was treated by Magdy Milad, MD, a reproductive endocrinologist affiliated with Northwestern Memorial.

The Witvliets' experience is all too common. About one in 10 couples find becoming pregnant to be difficult, frustrating and sometimes impossible. Infertility typically is defined as the inability to conceive after one year of regular unprotected sex.

Infertility rates increase rather dramatically as women age, with 38 being considered an informal turning point, Dr. Milad says. For that reason, reproductive endocrinologists warn women not to delay seeing a specialist in the hopes that the problem will disappear. *Time is a woman's most precious commodity.*

In about 20 percent of cases, the origin of infertility is unknown. The major detectable causes include ovulatory disorders, tubal and cervical problems, endometriosis, and uterine and sperm abnormalities. Many of these obstacles can be overcome.

Recent advances in in vitro fertilization (IVF) technology and minimally invasive surgical techniques have greatly increased a

woman's ability to conceive. IVF is a procedure in which a physician removes eggs from a woman's ovary and places them in a petri dish. A sperm sample is added and, if successful, the eggs will fertilize and then divide. Eventually, after the eggs divide, the resulting embryos are moved to the woman's uterus. If all goes well, at least one egg will implant and mature into a baby.

Ralph Kazer, MD, chief, Reproductive Endocrinology, Northwestern Memorial, says a major recent breakthrough is a process called intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI). When ICSI is used, a single sperm is extracted from a man's sperm sample and injected into a woman's extracted egg for fertilization under exacting laboratory conditions using specially designed microscopes, needles and micromanipulation equipment. Once successful fertilization is evident, the egg is transferred to the woman's uterus.

Laparoscopic techniques also have advanced to the point that if a woman wants a tubal ligation reversed, it often can be done on an outpatient basis.

Couples frequently voice certain concerns when considering infertility treatment. The subject of multiple births is one of the most compelling issues; the multiple birth rate has doubled in the United States in recent years. Certain fertility drugs increase the likelihood of becoming pregnant with multiples. IVF is another contributing factor, because generally two or three eggs are implanted during each in vitro fertilization attempt. Dr. Kazer says recent enhancements in IVF technology may soon lessen the number of multiples born as a result of IVF-assisted reproductive technology.

When choosing an infertility treatment program, investigate its success rate and reputation carefully; don't be misled by focusing on

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John and Kimberly Witvliet of Crown Point, Ind., show their daughter, Natalie, just how happy they are to have her in the family. It took the couple nearly three years to conceive Natalie, who will celebrate her first birthday in July.

Bipolar Disease Often Is Successfully Treated

Bipolar illness, marked by debilitating swings between depression and euphoria and for decades referred to as “manic depression,” is more common than you may think. In fact, psychiatrist John Gottlieb, MD, of Northwestern Memorial’s Norman and Ida Stone Institute of Psychiatry, says that when the full range of the illness is considered, it is as common as clinical depression.



Unlike clinical, or unipolar depression, which is characterized by recurrent bouts of depressed states, bipolar illness swings between two “poles” – extreme highs and lows. Behavior, mood and thought all are affected, disrupting sleep patterns, appetite, concentration, energy and activity levels.

Dr. Gottlieb paints a striking portrait of a person with the classic and more severe form of bipolar illness, or bipolar type I: The manic phase often begins with a sense of well-being, heightened efficiency and enhanced creativity. As the state worsens it often progresses to include extreme anxiety, unfocused and frenzied activity, chaotic thoughts, irritability, aggression, anger and frustration.

The depressed phase of the disorder is the mirror opposite. Thought and action often are slowed down and concentration becomes difficult. Where feelings are abundant during a manic phase, Dr. Gottlieb says that with depression comes profound sadness or a feeling of utter emptiness, “a void, blackness, a frightening sense of falling into an abyss, a sense that no sunlight is filtering into the room.”

Infertility story, continued from page 1

one or two specific numbers. Consider these guidelines: Make sure the programs you’re evaluating offer a broad array of infertility evaluations and treatments; choose a program run by board-certified reproductive endocrinologists; look for a successful track record of five years or more; select a program that does at least 150 in vitro fertilizations a year to ensure adequate quality control; and make certain the program is accessible seven days a week – timing can be crucial!

Remember the importance of behind-the-scenes expertise. For example, Dr. Kazer says, “We have a superior laboratory, and that’s integral to a high-quality program.” John Zhang, PhD, embryologist at Northwestern Memorial, is the caretaker of developing embryos. “You need viable embryos for a successful pregnancy,” he says,

“and for three to five days, the embryos are at the mercy of the culturing conditions.” Precise temperature control, air filtration and the proper mix of nutrients all are essential.

Also essential is coping with the emotional aspect of infertility. Many couples attempting to conceive a baby through Northwestern Memorial’s program have at least one session with Susan Klock, PhD, a clinical psychologist with special training in women’s mental health issues. “We cover a range of issues,” says Dr. Klock, “everything from how to talk to friends and family members about sensitive issues related to infertility to how to cope with the inability to get pregnant when it seems like everyone else does it so easily.”



For Kimberly and John Witvliet, their experience at Northwestern was certainly life changing. “After Natalie was born, Dr. Milad told me I’d ‘graduated’ from the program. Still, it was hard to say good-bye. In addition to the medical expertise we received at Northwestern, we always felt supported by the entire team – physicians, nurses and everyone else,” says Witvliet.

If you’d like to learn more about infertility treatments at Northwestern Memorial, attend a session with Magdy Milad, MD, Reproductive Endocrinology, from 6 to 7 p.m., Thursday, March 25.

For more information, or to register or for a physician referral to an infertility specialist,

stuffy head, often accompanied by a combination of these symptoms: pain or

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