



For Immediate Release
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Behind the Biological Clock: Why So Many Women Over 35 Can't Conceive

What Women Need to Know Now About Ovarian Aging, FSH, the Research and New FDA Regulations.

New York, NY, April 24, 2002 – Amid the simmering controversy over reproductive politics and the biological clock, little is said about the facts that underlie this debate: ovarian aging, FSH (Follicle-Stimulating Hormone), the need for research and controversial new FDA regulations.

For many women in their 30's, an elevated FSH level is the first marker of biological reproductive aging. It means fewer eggs, and eggs of diminished quality. And it's not discussed.

"The first time they ever hear about 'elevated FSH' is when an infertility doctor tells them that's why they're not getting pregnant and most likely won't without using a donor ovum," said Pamela Madsen, Executive Director of The American Infertility Association (AIA).

"If repeat FSH levels are elevated to a high degree, then there's no point in pursuing either high or low ART. The body is already at its limits and leaves only egg donation," says Dr. Zev Rosenwaks, Director of The Center for Reproductive Medicine and Infertility at Cornell University Weill Medical Center in the first issue of In Focus, a new quarterly newsletter from The AIA.

"As a society, we encourage people to have families in a responsible manner," continued Ms. Madsen "Yet, we don't invest in the research that will enable them to make those responsible decisions without risking age-related infertility. Beyond the hype and the headlines is a biological reality science has yet to conquer."

While research is on the cusp of developments that may help "high FSH" women pass their DNA to their offspring, more needs to be done. No proven treatments have yet surfaced. Funding for research is needed today so that women's reproductive potential can keep pace with societal and cultural changes that have made delayed childbearing a reasonable, sometimes unavoidable, choice.

"Human embryo research, at the fertilization and pre-implantation stages, can only be performed if privately bankrolled; there is a moratorium on government funding. But private funding doesn't insulate research facilities from FDA regulations. What the FDA is doing now directly affects older and younger women with elevated FSH by denying possible treatments that might enable them to use their own DNA," said Dr. Jacques Cohen, Ph.D., Scientific Director of the Institute for Reproductive Medicine and Science of Saint Barnabas, and Dr. James A. Grifo, M.D., Ph.D., Director of the Division of Reproductive Endocrinology; Professor Obstetrics and Gynecology, NYU School of

Medicine, in the first issue of In Focus.

"We cannot do innovative things and not guarantee the strictest oversight from the institution," responded Dr. Phillip Noguchi, Director of the Division of Cellular and Gene Therapies at the FDA, in a separate In Focus article.

"This is more than a political debate. Ovarian aging and FSH need to be recognized as part of every woman's health agenda. We agree that responsible research and oversight is a non-negotiable necessity. But it has to be done in a swift and caring manner," said Ms. Madsen.

The AIA has released In Focus, a special interest quarterly newsletter aimed at educating the public about infertility issues, including treatments, support, and alternative family building options, beginning with the Spring 2002 issue focusing on FSH and ovarian aging. To receive an advance copy of In Focus or additional press materials, contact Jason Langer at (212) 714-3537.

These issues also will be addressed at The AIA Symposium this Sunday April 28, 2002 at the Marriott Marquis Hotel. Information sessions and workshops at the Symposium will cover age and infertility, embryo research, ovarian aging, FSH, getting pregnant over 40, ovum donation as well as advocacy alert: the relationship between government policies on embryo research, and much more.

The American Infertility Association is a national organization dedicated to assisting women and men facing decisions related to family building and reproductive health--from prevention and treatment to social and psychological concerns. The mission of the AIA is to serve as a lifetime resource for men and women needing reproductive information and support and to forward the causes of adoption and reproductive health through advocacy, education, awareness building and research funding.

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