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First FDA Approved Male Fertility Test Could Cause More Heart Ache for Those Trying To Conceive

New York, NY November 12, 2002 - Experts everywhere are agreeing that the FDA approved male fertility home test cannot substitute for a professional semen analysis. The current screen for infertility is to try for 12 months and then seek medical advice. About 40 percent of the time, the problem is the man's.

With the Male Fertility Home Test men can gauge the concentration of sperm in a semen sample. However, the characteristics one normally looks for in a semen analysis are sperm count, motility, speed, and morphology. These distinctions cannot be identified by chemical tests.

"A very rough idea of sperm count, but no other factors can be judged by the clarity of the home test sample," according to Dr. Philip Werthman, male fertility expert and Director of Male Reproductive Medicine Center in Los Angeles, CA. "Men may be fooled into thinking there is no problem because this test is normal but indeed there may be a very big problem and it can delay treatment for the couple. It can give men a false sense of security"

About 30 to 40% of all infertility cases have a male factor as the main cause and 40-50% as a contributing cause. The bottom line is that just because a sperm moves does not mean it is capable of initiating a live birth. As Dr. Werthman explains, what matters is not only the sperm count, percentage of sperm that are swimming, how they appear and whether the sperm can penetrate and fertilize an egg, but also the health of the sperm, and the amount of DNA damage inside. This is really a biochemical issue at the molecular level. Looking at sperm underneath a microscope is very important, but not a perfect way of assessing the ability of sperm to fertilize a woman's eggs or contribute to a birth."

Dr. Werthman is at the forefront of a small group of physicians who offer male patients a revolutionary Sperm Test called SCSA, which stands for Sperm Chromatin Structure Assay, which is actually able to screen a man for sperm DNA damage, and possible infertility. Reproductive experts use to think that all that was needed in this era of IVF were several live sperm to make a baby. Experts now know that this is not entirely the case.

The test is painless, non-invasive, and cost efficient in the sense that it can screen men who might have very unhealthy or damaged sperm before their spouses go through infertility treatments that may have low chances of succeeding. It entails the man producing a semen sample just like for a semen analysis. A standard semen analysis is done on one part of the sample and the other portion is frozen and sent to the specialized lab in South Dakota that performs the assay. The percentage of damaged sperm is calculated and the fertility potential is determined to be good, fair or poor fertility potential.

Dr. Werthman says that this test is for men who have had an abnormal semen analysis or have unexplained infertility. All of the same factors that have been known to cause male infertility may cause DNA sperm damage such as infections, varicocele, smoking, and exposure to chemical toxins to name a few. The damage is potentially reversible when the stress triggers are removed."

- Many couples today are unnecessarily going the route of IVF because the SCSA test is not widely known and mysteriously has not received much attention in the media to date. It routes are in animal husbandry and traditionally used by those who purchased animals and wanted to assure sperm quality for reproduction. The test has been used for years as a research tool, but it is only in the last six months to a year that doctors are realizing the important information the test can yield in a clinical setting. If more potential patients can become aware of this medical breakthrough, countless numbers will be spared the heartache and cost of buy incomprehensive home sperm testing kits.

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