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MEN: The Forgotten Factor in the Fertility Equation

New York, NY October 4, 2002 - With National Infertility Awareness Week upon us from September 21 - 29, it is imperative to address the issue of the “neglect” men experience due to the myths and misconceptions surrounding infertility. Infertility is a nationwide problem affecting over 5 million Americans and contrary to popular belief, the problem is very often not with the women. Half of the time, men contribute to the infertility problem, and twenty percent of the time they are solely responsible for it.

“When a couple is screened for infertility, men are not given a fair share of the process and as a result, serious conditions often go undiagnosed and untreated,” according to **Phillip Werthman MD, male infertility expert and Director of the Center for Male Reproductive Medicine in Los Angeles, CA.** The usual test doctors use in determining fertility is the semen analysis. If the sperm count is low, most doctors neglect conduct further analysis and often suggest IVF as the best route to take for conception. Yet, Dr. Werthman states, “If a man has a low sperm count, he should undergo a full medical evaluation. In many cases, the condition can be corrected and in other cases, life-threatening condition such as testicular cancer can be treated.”

For instance, a patient undergoing IVF treatment with his wife came for sperm aspiration or in other words to collect sperm. “In the process, a tumor in the testicle was found that had to be removed immediately,” said Dr. Werthman. “Had we not caught it at this juncture he could have lost his ability to have children.”

The American Urological Association and the American Society of Reproductive Medicine in an unprecedented joint research effort has published guidelines for screening infertile males. The goals of the evaluation permit doctors to:

1. Reverse correctable conditions
2. Prevent life-threatening conditions that might be the cause of infertility
3. Give options of artificial insemination and adoption if the condition is irreversible

Too often, doctors are pushing IVF when a couple cannot become pregnant, which is both time consuming and quite costly. “Physicians are not being educated properly,” according to Dr. Werthman, “They are being told that treatments for infertility in men are not effective, which is not true; what we do is extremely successful. If time and the biological clock are not the foremost issues, a couple should not undergo IVF after just one year of trying to conceive.” It is important for infertile men to find out the cause of their condition. In cases such as hormonal imbalances or varicose veins in the testicles, male infertility can be easily treated. In other cases, the right evaluation can save a life.

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