

Medical advice

New techniques determine sex of child

The age-old search for the child that not only has your good looks but is of the desired sex may be over.

The good looks of the child is up to you. The sex of that child can now be determined with a fair amount of accuracy in the clinic.

The basis for this claim is a new technique called sperm separation. The principle it works under is that the male sperm is basically different from the female sperm.

Fundamentally, the male sperm carries a single Y chromosome, while the female sperm (both male and female sperm are made by the male) carries a single X chromosome.

The ovum they will fertilize is a single X chromosome. X plus X yields a female child. X plus Y yields a male child.

A chromosome carries thousands of genes that will determine what the child will look like.

The sperm separation is based on the fact that the male sperm carrying the Y chromosome moves faster, Y chromosomes being about one-third the size of the heavier X chromosomes of the female.

The male sperm also has an electrical charge on its cell being the exact opposite of female sperm and thus they can be attracted to different poles in a magnetic field.

One such sperm separation method has a success rate of 80 percent in producing male children. Newer techniques are also producing comparable success achieving female children.

Ronald Ericsson, Ph. D., has a protocol where first the sperm is diluted, then they swim through a column of human serum albumin. This allows only the faster, more motile male sperm to pass through.

This sperm is then collected,

concentrated and injected directly through the cervical canal into the uterus. The total number of sperm injected, five million, would qualify the man as being infertile, having not produced the normal 100 million sperm per ejaculate.

But these five million sperm are the healthiest and fastest moving sperm and are able to reach the egg without trouble.

Actually this method was conceived as a means to increase fertility and this has been the happy byproduct.

The results have been impressive. Of 110 births, 90 have been males; an 82 percent rate.

The method requires in 80 percent of the cases three or less inseminations for conception.

Now all this has been nice from the male child's perspective. What of the desire for a female child?

A newer technique is being perfected by Dr. James Danielle of

the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, Nashville. It is called convection streaming galvanization and was originally developed by Bhairad Bhattacharya of Applied Genetics, New Brunswick, N.J.

Male sperm are negatively charged and will in cooled solution swim to a positive pole. Female sperm, being positively charged, swim to the opposite negative pole. The purity of this technique is 75 to 80 percent of the desired sperm. More importantly, healthy female sperm have now been isolated.

Marvin Hutchinson has developed a separation technique using antigen sites on the male sperm to bind them up, allowing the female sperm to swim free and be collected. Purity of 92 to 93 percent is achieved this way.

Male sperm can then, by enzymes, be freed up and also collected with 92 to 93 percent purity.

Ethics now enter in as to what if the wrong sex has been conceived. After amniocentesis, the sex can be determined in utero in the second trimester.

If the patient desires then to abort, the ethics of that choice takes on paramount importance for the physician as well.

Some doctors refuse to accept patients who will abort the fetus if the wrong sex is conceived. Others do not care and leave it up to the patient to decide.

Admittedly, patients selected today are more "radical" in their desire for the sex of their child and currently abortion is more of an issue.

As the procedure becomes more common place, much more ordinary patients will be selected for these procedures.

Readers may write to Paul Guilleux, D.O., in care of The Sandy Post, P.O. Box 68, Sandy, 97055.



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