



THE CHR VOICE

CLINICAL CARE • RESEARCH • EDUCATION

23 Years Leading In Infertility Care

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CHR Differentiators

Few people know that CHR is one of the country's oldest infertility programs. When CHR's founder, Norbert Gleicher, MD, established CHR's first Center in 1981 in Chicago, the world's first in vitro fertilization (IVF) baby, the famous Brown baby, had just recently been born in Great Britain. Only a handful of IVF centers had opened their doors in the United States (U.S.) in the year after that seminal event and CHR was amongst them.

Dr. Gleicher had just been appointed as the Chairman (youngest in history) of the OB/GYN Teaching Department at Mount Sinai Hospital Medical Center and Professor at Rush Medical College when IVF burst on the scene. Training in IVF in the U.S. was, at that time, available only at the nation's first established program in Norfolk, Virginia. As the waiting periods were excessively long, Dr. Gleicher went for training to Europe, where, in those early days, most of the world's successful programs were located.

Upon his return, he established the Midwest's first IVF program, which very quickly led to the Midwest's first IVF baby (in other parts of the country a small number of IVF children had been born earlier) and many other firsts, which have established CHR not only as a clinical leader in the field, but as one of the major innovators, as well. For example, vaginal egg retrieval is now routine during the IVF process. Most people do not recognize, however, that it was Dr. Gleicher and CHR who performed the first successful vaginal egg retrieval in the world (and published this experience in the noted scientific

The treatment of infertility has always been part science, part art. Over the last two decades, especially since the advent of in vitro fertilization (IVF) as a mainstay of infertility therapy, science has assumed superiority. However, even in this increasingly science-driven field, the "art" in medicine is still alive. Despite unprecedented progress in all scientific aspects of infertility treatment, the artist in each physician has remained of crucial importance. As modern medicine attempts to integrate new scientific knowledge with empirically gathered experiences, responsible physicians will not continue the old, anecdotal ways medicine has been practiced and are moving towards a more evidence-based medicine. *Yet, most physicians will acknowledge the utility of selected non-traditional medical therapies in some carefully chosen medical conditions.*

Infertility is one arena where non-traditional medical treatments have received considerable prominence in recent months and years. Whether

journal *The Lancet*) at a time when egg retrievals were universally performed by laparoscopy, requiring general anesthesia. Scandinavian colleagues came to Chicago to

acupuncture, traditional Chinese medicine (i.e. herbal products) or specific relaxation and exercise regiment, an increasingly busy Internet chatter vividly demonstrates that these treatments have found a significant following and have engaged the imagination of many infertility patients. It is necessary for us to advise patients of such non-traditional medical remedies, as they may be integrated with more traditional approaches towards infertility.

Since specific scientific data in the medical literature are sparse, one has to proceed with caution. "Better safe than sorry" and "first, do no harm" are two basic principles of good medical practice, which are strictly followed at CHR. If we cannot be sure about a treatment's efficacy, we at least have to be certain it will do no harm.

Relevance of Stress

A universal belief amongst patients, as well as physicians, holds that stress adversely affects fertility (and fertility-related



treatments). The scientific data in support of such a belief has, however, remained sparse. While a few studies suggested that stress may adversely affect fertility treatment, they generally lacked the hard-edged, quantitative parameters that would allow for a serious assessment of stress levels and how they relate to specific infertility treatment outcomes. Paradoxically, while everyone believes that stress is bad for fertility, no one really knows how to quantitate stress reliability and how to establish "healthy boundaries". Stress is generally considered as "unhealthy" and appropriate stress reduction will most certainly be of no harm.

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observe such a vaginal egg retrieval and went on to develop vaginal ultrasound probes for that specific purpose and the rest is history. We are often asked, either in person

or through our website, what differentiates CHR from other programs. At a time when IVF has found increasingly wide utilization at an ever growing

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Alternative Medicine (Cont. from page 1)

In additional consideration of the fact that fertility treatment has to be considered as “stressful”, stress reduction, in conjunction with traditional fertility treatments, should not be discouraged and may be useful.

Treatment Options

Since we cannot quantitate stress reliably, we also cannot comparatively judge various remedies in regards to their efficacy. Anecdotal experience suggests that successful stress reduction can be achieved in a number of ways, utilizing a variety of techniques. In working with many alternative health care providers, we have seen successful stress reduction in CHR patients, utilizing various methods of *biofeedback*, *acupuncture*, *yoga* and most recently, the *Pilates technique*.

Acupuncture has received most visibility in conjunction with in vitro fertilization (IVF), when a German study reported higher pregnancy rates in women co-treated with acupuncture. Unfortunately, size and the quality of the study’s design do not allow for the uncritical acceptance of these findings and it remains to be seen whether acupuncture improves outcome with fertility care. Why acupuncture should affect outcome is unknown and the authors of the German study suggested both, potential physical as well as mental explanations. We have no hesitation in collaborating with acupuncturists. While we are not in a position to warranty that acupuncture

does make a difference, our overall impression has been favorable and we quite frequently refer interested patients to licensed acupuncturists who have shown a special interest in infertility patients.

Yoga and various *exercise regiments*, possibly due to a generally increased interest in physical exercise, have exploded on the scene. Our preference in exercise regiments lies with the *Pilates technique*, since it appears least traumatic and achieves symmetrical stretching as well as strength in all parts of the body. Like yoga, Pilates results in greatly increased flexibility of the body, a very useful outcome for any impending mother. We have also observed remarkable success with this technique in women with some forms of chronic pelvic pain, vaginism (the inability to allow vaginal entry) and other sexual dysfunctions.

Psychotherapy, by a qualified health care professional, is still the treatment of choice for a majority of couples who have difficulty coping with their infertility problems and/or treatment. Such therapy is available in private or group sessions, given by psychiatrists, clinical psychologists or other mental health care providers interested in this particular area. We strongly recommend at least transitional therapy to patients who we recognize to experience coping problems with their fertility issues. Group therapy sessions are also offered by some national lay

organizations, such as RESOLVE and we strongly advise participation to everyone who does not wish to go through the experience of infertility treatment on their own.

Herbal Medicines

We have seen rather remarkable anecdotal successes following treatment of some infertility conditions with Chinese herbs. As in many other medical conditions, traditional Chinese medications appear to have considerable value in selected medical circumstances. Chinese academic medicine recognizes that their traditional ways will often, but not always, be successful. When traditional medicine is to be utilized is carefully determined and, should it fail, there is no hesitation to turn towards modern, Western medicine. In many Chinese hospitals, the Western medicine ward is across the hall from the traditional, Chinese medical ward and the modern pharmacy right next to the dispensary of traditional Chinese medicines.

CHR has no objections to a similar approach towards infertility. If simple, traditional, Chinese medicines can do the work, why go with much more expensive and invasive, high tech medicine? However, if these remedies fail, it is time to go on. ***CHR does not condone the concomitant use of Chinese medications while receiving***

fertility treatment. The principle reason why we do not allow such parallel treatment is that many medicines, derived from so-called natural products, contain “natural hormones”, which can interfere with the hormone treatments and evaluations routinely performed during modern infertility care. We also ***advise against treatment with Chinese medications at advanced female age or in cases of prematurely aging ovaries.*** The reason for our recommendation lies in the fact that older women and women with prematurely aging ovaries may not have the time to fail traditional Chinese medical treatments. The time lost with such treatments may have represented their last opportunity to conceive with the help of modern fertility therapies.

The public is now offered a vast array of “natural” health care products. We generally discourage their use once fertility treatment has commenced. Many of these products are uneven in the content of their active ingredients. Some of the ingredients may be unknown or may have hormonal effects that will interfere with our infertility diagnostics and treatments or may be outright dangerous. Since infertility treatment, hopefully, leads to pregnancy and since early pregnancy is the most dangerous period in regards to exposure to hazardous

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STAFF UPDATE

We are pleased to announce that Dr. Michael Snabes has joined CHR as the Director of Clinical Research. Dr. Snabes completed his residency in OB/GYN at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas. He also completed his fellowship in Reproductive Endocrinology and served as an Assistant Professor.

Dr. Snabes' most recent academic appointment was Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of OB/GYN at the University of Texas, San Antonio. He is a diplomate of the American Board of OB/GYN, with special qualifications in Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility. Dr. Snabes is the author of over 100 scientific articles, has lectured internationally and was awarded the Reproductive Scientist Development Award from the NIH.

Center for Health Research

CHR is pleased to announce its affiliation with the **Center for Health Research**, a new clinical research center, located in Chicago. This clinical trials center cooperates with physicians of all specialties in medicine to conduct high quality clinical research on behalf of pharmaceutical and device companies. The new center is headed by Michael Snabes, M.D. and has already started enrolling patients for clinical trials in the following areas:

- Stress urinary incontinence
- Polycystic ovarian disease
- Post-herpetic neuralgia
- Osteoarthritis of the knee
- Hypercholesterolemia
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)

Physicians who wish to enroll their patients in any of these trials, please call Dr. Snabes directly at 312.397.8226. If you are an interested patient, please call 312.397.8100.

CHR IN THE MEDIA

The Chicago Sun-Times reported on our successful infertility clinic on January 8, 2004 in an article entitled, "Baby Steps". This article can be viewed at www.suntimes.com. It covers the IVF process and clinical success rates.

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) conducted a live interview with Dr. Gleicher regarding his view on Gender Selection. The occasion was England's announcement of new rules in regards to gender selection.

"CHR arranges between 15 to 30 embryo donations a month." Chicago Sun-Times — We also help 10 new patients a month find a perfect egg donor match.

Message from a Patient

"In August of 2001, I began my first cycle of in vitro fertilization (IVF). Dr. Gleicher and I were very optimistic that I would become pregnant. I had done my homework and learned that most women who were able to become pregnant did so within the first year of treatment. I was disappointed that the first transfer did not result in a positive pregnancy and decided to start a second treatment. This transfer was unsuccessful as well. By this

point, my optimism had faded. I decided that being pregnant was not in my hands, but in God's. Worrying was not going to get me anywhere. Although the second transfer had not resulted in a positive pregnancy, Dr. Gleicher still remained optimistic. His optimism is what kept me going. I realized I had the best fertility specialist in Chicago, as he had been featured in Chicago magazine and had appeared on the evening news. In April 2002, I

decided to try again. In comparison to the first retrieval, most of the embryos did not survive and only one was transferred. Since the other transfers were two embryos and they did not survive, I was sure this one would not. To my surprise, but certainly not Dr. Gleicher's, Miracle survived and is now 10 months old. I am proud to tell people how I had one of the best doctors in the field as my physician."

Valerie Britts - Miracle's Mom

Alternative Medicine (Cont. from page 2)

substances as they relate to the occurrence of birth defects, we in general discourage the use of any medication during fertility treatments, unless first determined by us to be useful and safe. CHR practices the most state-of-art infertility medicine

available in the U.S. We strongly believe in a holistic approach towards infertility care, though not at the expense of treatment success or in a gimmicky way. In our attempts to offer such a holistic approach towards the treatment of infertility,

we embrace alternative treatment modalities with open arms, as long as they do not interfere with the ultimate goal of why patients choose CHR as their fertility center: **To have a healthy baby!!!**

ALTERNATIVE HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS *

New York	New York	Illinois
Dr. Zhi Nan Yang/ 212.965.1057 Chinese Medicine/Acupuncture 33 Bowery, C201, NY, NY 133-38 41 Rd., Flushing, NY	Dr. Zhuang Cai/ 212.962.5417 Chinese Medicine/Acupuncture 4 Bowery, 2nd Floor New York, NY	Dr. E. Diamond/ 847.433.3815 Infertility/Stress Clinical Psych. 735 St. Johns, Ste. 200 Highland Park, IL
Dr. Guo P. Zheng/ 718.897.8952 Chinese Medicine/Acupuncture 250 W. 57th St., NY, NY 63-07 Dieterle, Rego Pk, NY	Optimalbody/ 212.861.6800 L. Goldberg - Pilates Instructor 10 E. 68th Street New York, NY	Healing Junction/ 773.880.9120 K. Moulpon - Acupuncture 2622 N. Halsted Chicago, IL

*All listings in this table represent independent practices and businesses with no commercial relationship to CHR. The inclusion of these alternative health care providers into this listing

does not indicate an endorsement of their medical practices by CHR and is simply meant to reflect on the special interest of these providers in patients with infertility problems. CHR welcomes

information from other alternative health care providers in the New York City and Chicago areas, who have developed special interests and expertise with infertility patients.

Center For Human Reproduction

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CHR Differentiators (cont. from page 1)

number of fertility centers, this question is, indeed, more relevant than ever. While there is no simple, single answer, there can be no doubt that CHR has obtained a rather unique and unprecedented national, as well as international, level of recognition.

Having started as an academic, hospital-based fertility program, CHR pioneered IVF's move out of the hospital, and, later, the transition from an academic to a private practice set-up. Both of these moves have since almost become the standard, with most successful IVF programs being free-standing, and outside of hospital walls, and, in most cases, under private administration. Yet, in contrast to most other such programs, CHR never abandoned its academic roots.

CHR's slogan of *Clinical*

Care - Research - Education is a reflection of CHR's commitments to academic excellence, not only as we relate to the daily clinical care of our patients, but also as we, on a daily basis, strive to drive the progress in our field and then make sure that our peers and colleagues are well informed about such progress through appropriate education programs.

If you research CHR at www.centerforhumanreprod.com, you will probably be surprised to see the number of original research papers published by CHR investigators in many of the most prestigious research journals in the world. No wonder, then, that CHR and its founder, Norbert Gleicher, MD, are so well known all over the world. In recognition of his position as one of the pioneers in the field of IVF, Dr.

Gleicher was appointed Founding Editor of what has become one of the leading scientific journals in the field, *The Journal of Assisted Reproduction and Genetics* and has remained in this position for over 20 years.

Finally, it is also not very widely known that CHR is probably the only fertility center in the country fully accredited to award *Continuing Medical Education (CME) Credits* to physicians. This accreditation has placed CHR's education program into a very unique position amongst peers and has led to a highly successful monthly *Grandrounds Program*, both in Chicago and New York City, consistently resulting in oversubscribed events.

There is a perception in the public that high strung, experimental and/or state-of-the-art medical care can be found in only big, usually university-

affiliated, medical centers, while individualized and, more importantly, personalized care can be obtained only in private, non-academic, settings. CHR demonstrates that clichés do not necessarily have to apply. Even though private, CHR has maintained an academic tradition of research and education second to none, major academic institutions included. Yet, CHR also places major emphasis on high quality, cutting edge, yet highly personal and individualized clinical care. Indeed, it is exactly this ability to marry the best of the academic (our physicians often hold academic appointments at major medical schools) with the best of the private practice world, that has made CHR so unique a fertility center and differentiates us from most, if not all, other such programs.