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OF BRAZOS VALLEY

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Thursday, April 15, 2004

Study: Test-tube multiple births declining

By Jeff Donn
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BOSTON — A worrisome national surge in multiple births linked to test-tube technology is easing, largely because doctors are implanting fewer embryos during each attempt to make a woman pregnant, a study suggests.

Doctors routinely place several embryos in the womb at once to improve the odds of producing a baby.

Technical advances and the advent of professional guidelines appear to have led to more sparing use of embryos, the study's researchers reported in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine.

The findings are likely to stoke the debate over whether the government should put a cap on the number of embryos that can be used for each attempt.

"It's so rapidly evolving that, to put it in the hands of legislation, is clearly to temper and limit progress," said Dr. Robert Rebar, director of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine. "The guidelines are working."

Researchers at Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital analyzed federal data on in-vitro fertilization cases in which women had their own eggs fertilized with sperm in the laboratory and then had them implanted. The technique accounts for the vast majority of laboratory-assisted fertility procedures.

The average number of embryos implanted per attempt dropped from four to three between 1995 to 2001, the last year of federal data. In the last five of those years, triplets and greater multiple pregnancies fell from 11 percent to 7 percent of all in-vitro pregnancies. The rate of twins held steady among in-vitro pregnancies, and actually rose among all births in the general population.

Many doctors and parents-to-be hope to avoid multiple births, especially triplets or higher. Such babies are often born dangerously premature and underweight. Such pregnancies can also raise the risk of bleeding, high blood pressure and other complications in mothers. In addition, children from multiple births impose difficult personal and financial burdens on families.

The 7-year-old voluntary guidelines issued by fertility specialists recommend two to five embryos per in-vitro attempt.

In recent years, doctors have been able to cut down the number of embryos per attempt with improved drug regimens for getting women to produce eggs, more skillful methods of fertilization, and better cultures for growing embryos.

Even with the reduction in the average number of embryos used, the success rate for in-vitro attempts rose from 20 percent to 27 percent from 1995 to 2001.

"It took a while, I think, for physician practice to catch up with the results of our own techniques. All of a sudden, it's working really, really well," said Pamela Madsen, director of the parent-supporting American Infertility Association. She is mother of two single-birth children by in-vitro fertilization.

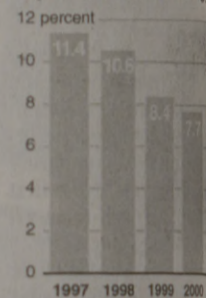
Many countries have limited the number of embryos to two to four per attempt. So far, the United States has left the decision up to doctors and parents.

The Boston researchers said the findings show that the voluntary guidelines are working and

Test tubes bear fewer triplets

Efforts to reverse the surge in multiple births to women who use assisted reproductive technology are working, because doctors are implanting fewer embryos.

Pregnancies with three or more fetuses in women using assisted reproductive technology



SOURCE: New England Journal of Medicine

federal law is not needed to control multiple births.

The study's senior author, Mark Hornstein, sits on the executive council of the Society for Assisted Reproductive Technology. It co-publishes professional guidelines.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Bush endorses Israel's retention of parts of the West Bank in break from U.S. policy

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a historic policy shift, President Bush on Thursday endorsed Israel's plan to hold on to part of the West Bank in any final peace settlement with the Palestinians. Bush also ruled out Palestinian refugees returning to Israel, bringing strong criticism from the Palestinians.

An elated Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said his plan to pull back from parts of the West Bank and Gaza, hailed by Bush, would create "a new and better reality for the state of Israel."

But Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia — with whom the Bush administration deals while boycotting leader Yasser Arafat — called Bush "the first president who has legitimized the (Israeli) settlements in Palestinian territories."

"We as Palestinians reject that," Qureia said.

Arafat earlier called the idea "the complete end of the peace process." And Palestinian Cabinet minister Saeb Erekat said of Bush's statement: "This is like someone giving a part of Texas' land to China."

Ten years later, South Africans still loyal to party that toppled apartheid

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (AP) — An elderly woman wrapped in the colors of the governing African National Congress spoke for millions lined up Wednesday to vote in South Africa's third all-race national election.

"The ANC held our hand and brought us through hell," said Noluthando Nokwando, a 66-year-old woman from the squatted town township of Khayelitsha. "We can give them a chance — and respect — for another five years."

Despite lingering poverty, high unemployment and an AIDS crisis, a debt of gratitude to the party that toppled apartheid a decade ago holds sway in South Africa.

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Check out our "Best of Summer" and "Let's Go" brochures

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APRIL 19-24

Monday, April 19

4-5 pm Opening Reception
Faculty Club, 11th Floor Rudder Tower
speaker: Dr. James Anderson, the Vice President and Associate Provost for Institutional Assessment and Diversity
International Graduate Student Association

5-7 pm Emperor's Pot - Cultural Simulation
Rudder Tower 401
Sam Houston State University, Students on a Quest for Unity and Diversity

7:30 pm "Mr. & Mrs. Iyer" Movie
Evans Library, room 204 E
India Association and the L.T. Jordan Institute for International Awareness

Tuesday, April 20

9:30-10:30 am The Ugly Truth - Art Display, Movie, & Discussion
Library Annex 410
Human Resources Department

Noon-1 pm Navajo Blues Performance
Rudder Fountain
Mr. Blackhorse Mitchell - Caribbean Student Association

5:30-9pm Allies Advance
With pre-registration only. For further information refer to the web site.

7-8:30 pm Reflections of a Native American Author on Literature and Cultural Integrity
Evans Library, room 204 E
Mr. Blackhorse Mitchell and Caribbean Student Association

Wednesday, April 21

11 am-1 pm A Beautiful Mind: One Man's Struggle with an Invisible Disability - Movie & Discussion
Evans Library, room 204 E
Services for Students with Disabilities

3-5:30 pm Jim in Bold - Movie and Panel Discussion
Library Annex 410
Dr. Patrick Slattery & SAFE (Students and Faculty for Equity in Education)

Thursday, April 22

11:30 am-1 pm The Fairer Sex - Movie and Discussion
Evans Library, room 204 E
Women's Center and Multicultural Services

5-6:30 pm Race, the Power of an Illusion - Movie and Moderated Discussion
Evans Library, room 204 E
Multicultural Services

7 pm The Holocaust Through the Soldier's Eye: A Tale of a Survivor
Rudder Tower 301
TAMU Hillerl

Friday, April 23

12-1 pm The Experience - International Concert
Rudder Fountain
Aggie International Ambassadors

5:30-7 pm Albatross - Participatory role-playing simulation
Evans Library, room 204 E
International Programs for Students

Saturday, April 24

UniDiversity Celebration
time & venue TBA
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For more information visit
<http://www.tamu.edu/university>

UniDiversity Week

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