



FERTILITY CLINICS

Turning back the biological clock

From the time she was 34, New Yorker Mamta Shah began to feel her biological clock ticking. On dates, she would worry she might be wasting her time with the wrong man. When she wasn't dating, she felt she should be out socializing and making time to meet the right man. And so, starting in September 2005, Shah started flying to Montreal every six months to gain a few years of fertility. Freezing her eggs at the McGill Reproductive

can cause damage to the cell. At the McGill centre, the cells are frozen at 20,000° C per minute. At this speed, there isn't enough time for the ice crystals to form, and a far higher proportion of the eggs survive, says Dr. Seang Lin Tan, who helped pioneer the technique. It was those statistics that persuaded Shah to choose McGill, as well as the prices. The drugs and treatment are a lot cheaper this side of the border, says Beverly Hanck, executive director of the Infertility Awareness Association of Canada.

One in six Canadian couples are infertile: the cause is divided fairly equally between the sexes. Some technologies focus on the male: intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) injects a single sperm right into an egg, a treatment used for men with low sperm counts. Other advances, such as sonographically guided needles to collect eggs without the use of surgery, have made the procedure less

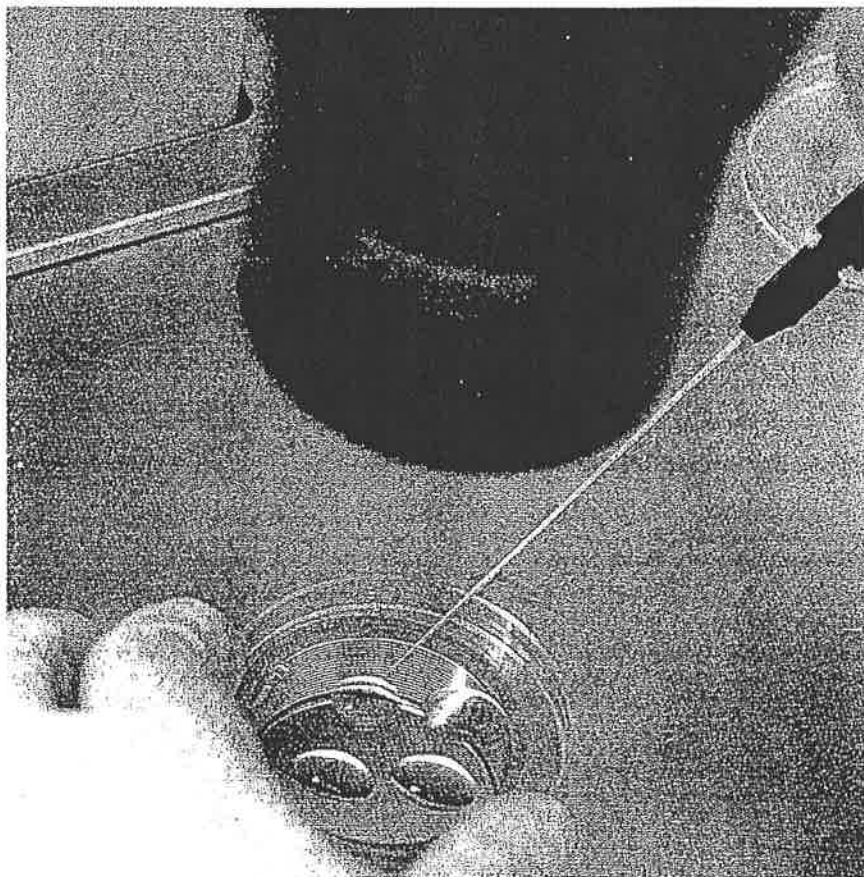
to the mother's age: the average pregnancy rate for women aged 35 to 39 is 31 per cent, and for women 40 and over, 19 per cent. For this reason, there is high demand and long wait-lists for the donated eggs of younger women. Since 2004, it has been illegal to pay donors for their eggs or sperm, and consequently there is a shortage of both at the fertility clinics. Patients who can't use their own sperm or eggs are asked to bring their own donors.

In Canada, it is also illegal to pay a surrogate mother to have a baby for you. Clinics that offer surrogacy services usually ask couples to supply their own "gestational carrier." At the Regional Fertility Clinic in Calgary, couples can receive donated embryos if they have been unsuccessful with other fertility treatments. The McGill Reproductive Centre has a different solution. It provides a contact list of clinics in South America where egg purchasing is legal and will monitor the pregnancy once the couple has returned home.

HOW MUCH?

- In vitro fertilization: one cycle, including drugs \$6,500 to \$9,000
- In vitro fertilization: three cycles, including drugs \$15,000 to \$25,000
- In vitro maturation: one cycle \$3,975
- Pre-implantation genetic testing for disease \$1,500 to \$3,000 depending on the test

—A. S.



IN VITRO FERTILIZATION: Medical advances assist the one in six couples that are infertile

Centre removed the enormous pressure she felt about being a late-thirtysomething single woman. "Since I had it done, I don't feel so worried that I haven't found the right guy and started a family already," she explained from her Manhattan apartment.

Shah chose the Montreal clinic because it is one of the few places in North America that does rapid egg freezing. Normally, when eggs are cooled, the water forms ice crystals that

invasive for women. In vitro maturation (IVM) is a new technology that matures the eggs outside of the womb, and can help cancer patients who have become infertile because of radiation and chemotherapy. None of these treatments come cheap, and none are covered by the public purse. Only Ontario pays for IVF, and only when both a woman's fallopian tubes are blocked.

The success rate for IVF varies according



PREVENTIVE

The best cure, at executive prices

The comprehensive physical offered by executive wellness clinics is designed to detect developing problems. The examinations are usually long and involved; for example, the Medcan assessment, which includes an abdominal ultrasound and fitness appraisal, takes four hours. After the physical exam, clients have access to a range of services designed for people who don't want to wait in line. Many of the clinics offer 24/7 access to doctors. Most promise to expedite your access to any type of specialist doctor you need. A second opinion from a U.S. doctor is another popular option.

These services are usually bundled together as a package, and are available to people who have completed the extensive physical exam. Medisys, for instance, a national executive health provider, offers a 24-hour travel line

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AGE LIMIT

Based on scientific and medical evidence, and on the fact that a woman's age is an important variable affecting success of treatment, we have revised our age limit for IVF as follows:

- We provide IVF treatment with their **own eggs** to women who are **43 years or less**. Therefore, we no longer see new patients who are more than 42 years of age unless for treatment with donor eggs.
- We provide IVF treatment with **donor eggs** to women who are between **44 and 50 years**. Therefore, we no longer see new patients who are more than 49 years of age.

DONOR SPERM

The government of Quebec has signed contracts with three sperm banks to provide Quebec patients with **anonymous washed** donor sperm within its funded program for medically assisted reproduction . Please check with the staff at the andrology lab of the MUHC Reproductive Centre on how to place your order.

The Calendar Hotline to book appointments for treatment calendars for **New Patients** is active since **November 1, 2010**. [click here for details and instructions \(PDF\)](#).

Returning Patients can get a treatment calendar at their review appointment with their physician.

GOVERNMENT OF QUEBEC FUNDING FOR ASSISTED REPRODUCTION BEGINS

MONTRÉAL, August 5, 2010 - The McGill University Health Centre (MUHC) welcomes the start of the Quebec government's funding of fertility treatment today – a move that will bring new hope to many Quebec residents struggling with infertility. The new program may also result in the improved health of newborns through a reduction in multiple births, as well as translate into cost-savings for the healthcare system.

Since the government's announcement on July 13, 2010, the MUHC has received an increased volume of calls. Healthcare workers at the MUHC Reproductive Centre are scheduling initial appointments for new patients who meet government criteria for RAMQ coverage of assisted reproduction. The current wait time for the first consultation with a fertility specialist is up to eight weeks. Priority is currently being given to cancer patients and people already undergoing fertility treatment prior to August 5.

In the past year the MUHC has been able to provide 1,000 cycles of treatment, making the MUHC Reproductive Centre the largest in Quebec. We are working to increase our capacity. The government has committed \$2 million to enhance MUHC facilities and supply equipment needed to optimize delivery of care and increase the number of cycles. This work will be conducted progressively over the coming months.

If you are a new patient interested in the government funded program, please call the MUHC Reproductive Centre call centre on 514-843-1650. Please do not call the hospital operator and do not visit the centre as appointments can only be made over the phone. We are working to increase our call centre capacity and this could take several days.

You will find additional information in the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) section of this website. Please [click here](#) to access the Ministry's press release, distributed on July 13, 2010 (available in French only).