

The original article by Sharon Mustard can be found here: <http://www.easibirthing.co.uk/fertility-evidence>.

Fertility Evidence

What does the research say about the benefits of hypnosis and psychotherapy with fertility?

- **Hypnosis increases chance of Natural Conception by 110%**

Infertile women utilizing mind/body techniques such as hypnosis have a 42 – 55% conception rate as compared to 20% with in vitro fertilization (IVF). *The Journal of the American Medical Women's Association 1999 and The Journal of Fertility and Sterility 2000.* (Studies conducted by Alice Domar, PhD, director of the Beth Israel Deaconess Behavioural Medicine Program for Infertility in Boston)

- **Hypnosis and natural conception**

Hypnosis based on imagery and a relaxation strategy was successful in facilitating pregnancy. The treatment was considered to have resulted in beneficial modification of attitude, optimism, and mind-body interaction. *The American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis. (Volume 38, Issue 1, 1995, 22-26): Hypnosis in the Treatment of Functional Infertility.*

Research by experts at the University of California at San Diego and published in *Fertility and Sterility* in 2005 administered a series of questionnaires designed to measure patients' stress levels. The researchers found that **women with the highest levels of stress ovulated 20% fewer eggs** compared with women who were less stressed. Of those who were able to produce eggs, **those who were most stressed were 20% less likely to achieve fertilization success.**

Dr. Peter Quinn, a pioneer in the field of fertility, used hypnotherapy with a group of women between the ages of 26 and 42 who had durations of infertility lasting from 2-12 years. **65% of the women went on to have a successful full-term pregnancy after hypnotherapy.** *Dr P Quinn and M Pawson, "Psychosomatic Infertility," European Journal of Clinical Hypnosis Vol4, 1994.*

- **The positive impact of mind/body interventions**

In recent studies *Journal of the American Medical Women's* (1999) & *Journal Fertility and Sterility* (2000) conducted at Harvard Medical School, 185 women who had been trying to conceive for one to two years were randomized into either a ten week mind/body group, a ten week support group, or a routine care control group. The birth rates during the one year follow-up period were as follows: mind body – 55%, support group 54%, and controls 20%.

In addition, the mind/body patients reported significantly greater psychological improvements than the support or control patients. In four other published studies on several hundred women with average infertility duration of 3.5 years, 42 percent conceived within six months of completing the program and there were significant decreases in all measured psychological symptoms including depression, anxiety, and anger. *Domar, A., Clapp, D., Slawsby, E., Dusek, J., Kessel, B., Freizinger, M (2000) Impact of group psychological interventions on pregnancy rates in infertile women. Fertility and Sterility Vol. 73, no.4 April*

- **Hypnosis Doubles IVF rate**

According to an Israeli study presented to the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology conference in Berlin in July of 2004, hypnosis can effectively double the success of IVF

treatments. The study was conducted by Professor Eliahu Levitas and his team at Soroka Hospital in Beersheva to determine if hypnosis could improve the success of the embryo transfers stage of IVF.

The study of 185 woman found that 28% of the women who were hypnotized for the IVF treatment became pregnant, compared to 14% of the women in the control group. Professor Levitas studied the effects of hypnosis for the IVF treatment and embryo transfer only, because prior studies that demonstrated the stress of the procedure created small contractions of the uterus that prevented the successful implantation of the fertilized egg. The professor indicated that tranquilizers had been used in prior studies, but nothing worked as well as hypnosis.

"Performing embryo transfer under hypnosis may significantly contribute to an increased clinical pregnancy rate," Professor Levitas hopes that this study will spark continued investigation into the use of hypnosis as an adjunct to fertility treatments. Dr. Levitas hypothesizes that hypnosis helped a woman's uterus to remain relaxed, allowing the embryo to implant more easily. It is also possible, he says, that hypnosis produced changes in the immune or hormonal uterine function resulting in "an improvement in the interaction between the blastocyst and the endometrium," or the lining of the uterus.

Dr. Eliahu Levitas of Soroka *Fertility & Sterility*, Journal of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine (March 2006, vol. 85).

- **IVF patients should be offered hypnosis**

As mind/body programs are effective for reducing negative emotions that may impair IVF success, patients should be offered such a program in conjunction with IVF. *Fertility and Sterility Journal*.1998, vol. 69.

- **Psychological counselling increases conception rate**

Poehl (1999) The cumulative calculation of pregnancy rates showed that up to 56.4% of women who had undergone psychological counselling (PSITCO) conceived. In patients who were planning to undergo PSITCO, the pregnancy rate was 41.9%. This study showed that patients who accepted or underwent PSITCO had a higher pregnancy rate than those who did not avail themselves of this possibility. Several methods of psychological support during IVF-embryo transfer treatment were offered to patients especially psychotherapy, hypnotherapy, and relaxation and physical perception exercises.

- **Hypnosis beneficial to IVF procedures**

Hypnosis as an adjunct to IVF procedures could be beneficial to those who are unable to conceive naturally. *Australian Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis*. (Vol. 31, No. 2, 2003, 121-127): *Recipe for a Miracle: Determination, Optimism, Medical Technology, and Hypnosis in IVF*

- **From Depression to Viable Pregnancy**

Women with depression, when treated showed a 60% viable pregnancy rate within six months, contrasting with 24% when depression went untreated. *Journal of American Medical Women's Association*, 1999, vol. 54.