As Couples Delay Parenthood, Father’s Age Poses Risks for Mothers and Babies

A recent study of U.S. births shows the father’s age to be a risk factor for both mothers and babies. Dr. Mark Trolice of Fertility CARE: The IVF Center urges couples to consider the father’s age and health, as well as the mother’s, in making family planning decisions.

ORLANDO, Fla. (PRWEB) April 29, 2019 -- A recent study published in The BMJ shows advanced paternal age to be associated with an increased risk of premature birth and low birth weight. After considering the effects of maternal age, infants born to fathers aged 45 or older had 14% higher odds of premature birth and 18% higher odds of seizure than infants of fathers aged 25 to 34 years. The odds of gestational diabetes were 34% higher in mothers with the oldest partners.[1] Dr. Mark P. Trolice, Director of Fertility CARE: The IVF Center, emphasizes the need for men, as well as women, to consider their age and overall health in making family planning decisions.

The significance of this issue is heightened by an ongoing pattern of delay in Americans’ beginning to have children: the percentage of births to fathers aged 40 or older in the United States has doubled since the 1970s, and as of 2015 accounted for nine percent of births.[2] The risks associated with older fathers go beyond those obvious at birth; earlier studies by the lead author of the new BMJ study linked paternal aging to an increased risk of babies born with congenital diseases like dwarfism (abnormally low height), or developing psychiatric conditions like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, or developmental ones like autism. Other studies found elevated risk of childhood leukemia, breast cancer, and prostate cancer among offspring of older fathers.[3]

Meanwhile, infertility is still widely perceived as an almost exclusively female issue, despite reports such as that in 2017 from the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Harvard Medical School in Boston, showing that sperm quality markedly declines with age, making it harder to sire children.[4] Nor is this issue confined to the United States; in Great Britain, the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority’s 2014-2016 report showed male infertility to be the most common reason (37%) for British couples seeking IVF.[4]

“Conventional wisdom holds that men don’t have a ‘biological clock,’” explains Dr. Trolice, “but recent research implies otherwise, especially where the health of the child is concerned. At birth, women possess all the eggs they’re ever going to carry. Men, however, continue to produce sperm from puberty well into middle age and beyond, creating a more gradual impact on a man’s fertility.”

He notes that Fertility CARE: The IVF Center treats the couple as a whole, focusing on men’s reproductive issues with the same approach and eye on medical breakthroughs as it applies to women’s reproductive issues. His practice counsels, tests and treats male infertility, and offers some guidelines for men seeking to maximize and protect their fertility:

- Maintain a healthy weight. A higher body mass index is linked to decreasing sperm count and motility.
- Don’t smoke. Drink in moderation. Both tobacco smoke and excessive alcohol consumption decrease sperm production. Passive smoke can negatively affect your female partner’s fertility.
- Exercise. In addition to improving general health, exercise increases antioxidant enzymes, which help protect sperm.
- Keep an eye on your prescriptions. Certain medications impact fertility, so discuss your medications with your doctor.
- Don’t panic. Although risks increase with a father’s age, they are not so significant as to preclude fatherhood for older men. The watchword here is caution, not fear.

Dr. Trolice will be a featured speaker at the 2019 South Florida Fertility Expo in Miami on April 27. The event features some of the world’s leading fertility experts offering the best advice, industry development guidance, and expertise for their specialized areas.

About Fertility CARE: The IVF Center
Fertility CARE (Center of Assisted Reproduction and Endocrinology): The IVF Center provides patient-centered, evidence-based, and individually customized reproductive care in a comfortable and compassionate setting. This Central Florida IVF clinic is the most successful facility of its kind in the Orlando area, and consistently earns 5-star patient ratings in online reviews. Established in 2003 by founder and director Dr. Mark P. Trolice, it is the only fertility clinic in the country to offer both male and female testing, evaluation, and treatment. Today, the practice encompasses the Center for Male Infertility, headed by a fellowship-trained male reproductive specialist; the Mind/Body Institute, overseen by a licensed clinical reproductive psychologist; and the IVF Laboratory of Central Florida, led by a Board-certified high complexity laboratory director. Fertility CARE - The IVF Center offers a comprehensive range of infertility tests and treatment options as well as genetic testing, egg freezing with fertility preservation, egg donation, embryo cryopreservation, surrogacy and other services. For full details, visit http://TheIVFCenter.com.

About Dr. Mark P. Trolice
Mark P. Trolice, M.D., is the founder and Director of Fertility CARE - The IVF Center. He also serves as Associate Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology (OB/GYN) at the University of Central Florida College of Medicine in Orlando and Medical Director of the Egg Donor Program at Cryos International, the world’s largest sperm donor bank. Dr. Trolice is Board-certified in OB/GYN and reproductive endocrinology and infertility (REI), and he is a Fellow of the American Colleges of Obstetrics and Gynecology (FACOG), Surgeons (FACS), and Endocrinology (FACE). Renowned as Orlando’s most successful fertility specialist, Dr. Trolice and his wife battled infertility for over 10 years before adopting their children. This journey gave him unique insights into patients’ struggles and is included in his forthcoming book on infertility from Harvard Common Press. Dr. Trolice is a sought-after expert with dozens of broadcasts and print appearances in addition to national acclaim as one of America’s Top Doctors® and repeat recipient of the American Medical Association’s “Physician’s Recognition Award”. In January 2019, he launched his "Fertility Health" podcast interviewing nationally renowned experts on vital topics in reproductive medicine. Learn why he has earned the trust of patients and physicians alike: http://marktrolicemd.com.

2. Mole, Beth, “US dads of newborns are greying—percentage over 40 doubled since the 70s,” Ars Technica, August 31, 2017.
4. Ellen, Barbara, “Male infertility will be ignored as long as conception is seen as a woman’s issue,” The Guardian, March 18, 2018.
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