Have you recently been through a failed IVF cycle?

If so, you're probably wondering what went wrong, what caused it to what work and perhaps, what if anything can you do differently next time?

If your IVF cycle failed I have some good news and some bad news.

The bad news is this:

'IVF Cannot Fix You Up'

These are the words of an Australian reproductive biologist Prof. John Aitken quoted in an article published in the Sydney Morning Herald.

*The average age of women in IVF is 36/37 years. If you’re contemplating a family when you’re close to the edge, IVF cannot fix you up.*

- Prof. John Aitken, reproductive biologist, University of Newcastle

Why does he say this?

Because ART procedures including IVF, IUI and ICSI cannot 'fix' the underlying causes of infertility. Rather, ART procedures aim to circumvent the problem and force a successful conception, albeit with mixed results.

The good news?

If you've been through an IVF implantation failure there may be causes we can help you identify and overcome.

And doing so can mean that IVF combined with proper natural pre-conception preparation may help where an IVF-only approach currently does not.

**Why Do In Vitro Fertilization Procedures So Often Fail?**

Our core message is that to optimize their chances of a healthy conception couples need to prepare for pregnancy and address any underlying issues as best they can to increase their chances of a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby.
We believe if more couples did this, fewer would need in vitro fertilization.

In vitro fertilization treatment would be reserved for those with missing fallopian tubes, missing vas deferens, or with severe scarring of the tubes. Or any other anatomical issues where it's not possible for the egg and the sperm to meet.

Many couples seeking IVF treatments seem to believe that an IVF cycle can bypass the health issues preventing them from getting pregnant and make a conception happen.

While in many cases it's true that the egg can be fertilized in vitro or with the aid of Intracytoplasmic Sperm Injection (ICSI), many of those fertilized eggs don't progress to become an embryo. And many of those which do become embryos don't live for longer than a few days. Or don't attach to the uterus.

What if any Effects on the Health of IVF Babies?

Prof. Aitken warns of further health complications in babies conceived with IVF or ICSI, saying that especially male children are prone to health complications such as cancer if the father was of an advanced age, and this risk increases even further if the father was a smoker at the time of conception through IVF.

The problem, according to Prof. Aitken, is that there is a negative payoff;

if you have a son from IVF it is possible that he too will have the same pathology that you had.

This means that there is a higher likelihood that children conceived with IVF/ICSI will also need assisted reproductive technology to have babies.

Not only does this promote propagation of disease carrying genes which mother nature has singled out for extinction - the way evolution works - but it also adds a huge cost to society and the taxpayer if more people get sick and need ART.

Prof. Aitken also warns that there is an upward trend in the use of assisted reproductive procedures. Ten years ago, in Australia, one in 35 births was an IVF baby, now it's one in every 25 babies.

In Denmark, the use of in vitro fertilization treatment is even higher where one in 15 children are IVF procedure babies.

In addition, he criticized the IVF industry for ignoring the fact that failure to conceive often stemmed from male fertility problems, and that 1 in 20 men is infertile. He went on to quote an old lecturer of his saying; "If men were bulls, they would all be taken out the backyard and shot."

This is because the "human male today is not a very fertile individual."

The important message here is that the fundamental biology can't change and therefore we need to change our lifestyle and diets to allow the body to bring everything back to balance to enable natural conception,
enable the egg to select the healthiest sperm so that the best genes are put forward to ensure healthy and robust children for many generations to come.

We can't go against nature, we need to embrace it and work with it. We still don't have all the knowledge nor understand all the processes to be able to replicate nature and natural processes in the body.

**What Are Some Alternative Solutions to Infertility?**

1. Use a holistic approach to find out what's going on in your body that's preventing you from getting pregnant/conceiving a child. There are many causes of failed IVF and infertility generally that can be treated naturally without expensive processes and procedures. Is it toxicity, a nutrient deficiency, a genetic polymorphism that started playing up because of the toxicities and deficiencies, is it poor gut function and inability to assimilate nutrients due to food intolerances?

Or is it poor thyroid function because the adrenals are exhausted and can't keep up with the stress levels and demands you may be putting on your body?

Or perhaps it's the immune system, overworked by cleaning up toxins and fighting food so it's ignoring pathogens and attacking its own tissues.

Or hormonal imbalances caused by PCOS or endometriosis or obesity and insulin resistance, pre diabetes etc…

There are many infertility causes that can be treated naturally without IVF or ICSI procedures.

2. Once you know what needs to be addressed seek help from integrative health practitioners. The right practitioner(s) can help you: adjust your diet, lifestyle and supplementation, manage stress, find a balance between work, exercise, sleep etc. If you're planning more IVF cycles they can give you IVF support and help you overcome the emotional toll of failed IVF.

Don't place all your faith in medical procedures or rely on prescription medication to fix everything. Prescription medicines are great when they are truly needed for specific period of time but once the acute phase is over I recommend you take control of your health (in consultation with your healthcare providers) and make the necessary changes in the above listed areas to improve your chances of the positive outcome you want.

3. When the underlying fertility issues have been addressed you are ready for conception and have the best possible chances of conceiving naturally with your own eggs and sperm and have a healthy baby. This can take as little as few month to few years, depending on the underlying infertility issues, how long you've had them for, how you've treated them in the past - if at all, and how committed you are to making changes and sticking to them until you get the results you are after.

**Why IVF Fails - Why Didn't It Work?**

Natural Fertility is an active process, one where you play the key role and not a passive one like in IVF where the control is handed over to technology believing it can fix all the underlying issues. Sadly it can't.
It's only extracting the egg, placing it in petri dish and adding the sperm plus some nourishing agents to assist their survival. Or the sperm has the tail chopped off and is injected into the egg if the sperm parameters look really bad. Bypassing all the natural selection.

It is falsely believed that the first sperm that reaches the egg is allowed in. Nope. The sperm dance around the egg and the egg is checking each and every one for its quality and DNA to ensure the best genes are put forward. Once it finds the best sperm (or two or three) it allows this sperm to get inside and then seals itself.

By injecting the sperm into the egg that was picked out by a lab technician you bypass all this magic of natural selection. So it's no wonder ICSI success rates are so low and miscarriage rates so high.

A natural fertility program may help you and your partner have a natural pregnancy even after one or more cycles of failed IVF.

And if you need to use in vitro fertilization because of anatomical issues, or you decide to, you can also first address the underlying issues to ensure that the egg and sperm used for IVF will be as healthy as possible to maximize your chances of a healthy pregnancy and healthy offspring.

Have you had IVF cycles that did not work and are wondering what next? We would love to hear from you.