

AUSTRALIA'S FIRST TEST-TUBE BABY TURNS 30

Experts predict a cheaper, safer IVF future with more babies and fewer twins.

As Candice Reed, Australia's first test-tube baby, prepares to blow out 30 candles on June 23rd, experts are predicting IVF will be safer, cheaper and simpler for future infertile couples, with fewer twins and less needles.

'Since Candice's birth in Melbourne in 1980, almost a 100,000 Australian IVF babies have been born and this country still leads the world with some of the best pregnancy rates and lower numbers of multiple births,' says Theresa Miller, author of *Making Babies: personal IVF stories*.

Further improvements in technology will soon enable scientists to more accurately select the strongest and healthiest embryos before implantation. This will mean a higher success rate for single embryos rather than the current gamble of transferring two or more fertilised eggs into the mother's womb to increase the odds.

IVF Australia is using polarised light technology (PolScope) to view the genetic material of embryos as well as gametes.

'Just because a blastocyst (fertilised egg) in a Petri dish, looks tall, dark and handsome, doesn't mean it's the healthiest and strongest,' says Professor Michael Chapman of IVF Australia. 'The PolScope means we can see the micro-structure of embryos and eggs.'

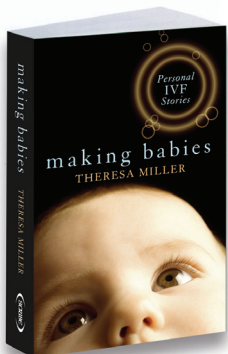
But other scientists are putting their money on talent scouting good-looking sperm rather than eggs to increase the number of IVF babies.

'During a stimulated IVF cycle, a woman produces an average of 10 eggs, while the man ejaculates almost 10 million spermatozoa. Surely there's more potential in choosing the healthiest sperm rather than the best egg,' says Associate Professor Peter Illingworth of IVF Australia.

According to Illingworth advances in hormonal drugs, soon to hit the market, will mean women on IVF can look forward to weekly rather than daily injections – reducing the expense as well as the side effects.

'We've come along way since Candice Reed made headlines. Back then IVF had a one percent chance of working; today at least a third of IVF patients go home with a baby in their arms, and the success rate is as high as 45 percent for healthy women under 35,' says IVF mother, journalist and author Theresa Miller.

Candice's birth was a medical breakthrough for the pioneering team at Monash University, which went on to have other world-firsts with babies from donated, and frozen embryos in 1984.



To commemorate the 30th birthday of Australia's first test-tube baby, Scribe has published the popular anthology *Making Babies: personal IVF stories* as an ebook: http://www.ebooks.com/ebooks/book_display.asp?IID=533616

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