

Clowning helps IVF patients become pregnant: study

January 14 2011, by Lin Edwards

(PhysOrg.com) -- Infertility researchers in Israel have found a 15-minute encounter with a clown immediately after fertility treatment dramatically increased the chances of a successful pregnancy.

Dr. Shevach Friedler an [infertility](#) doctor with the Infertility and IVF unit at Assaf Harofeh Medical Center, in Zrifin, Israel, led a study of the effects of a bedside encounter with a professional medical clown on the pregnancy rate of women undergoing [in-vitro fertilization](#) (IVF).

Dr. Friedler and colleagues tracked 219 women undergoing IVF treatment at the medical center and, over a period of a year, treated half of them to a medical clown's 15-minute routine of jokes, magic tricks and other clowning immediately after their [embryos](#) were implanted. The clown's routine was created especially for the study by Friedler and a colleague.

The results showed 36.4 percent of women exposed to clowning immediately after embryo transfer became pregnant, while only 20.2 percent of the controls became pregnant. Dr. Friedler said the reason was probably because the clowning reduced the stress of what for many was many years of grueling IVF treatments, but this is not certain. It is also unclear what role, if any, stress may play in the success of IVF treatments.

Dr. Friedler, who is also trained in movement and mime, originally thought of the research after reading about laughter as an anti-stress

mechanism. He realized that IVF patients are often extremely stressed, and wondered if relieving that stress through clowning at a crucial moment in the treatment could help.

Dr. Friedler and colleagues conclude that medical clowning may be a beneficial adjunct to IVF treatments and it deserves further investigation. Medical clowning is already used to good effect in hospitals in Europe, Australia, North America and Israel, particularly in children's hospitals.

Dr. Friedler also pointed out that clowning is “one of the least hazardous interventions in our field.” Other methods of reducing [stress](#) could also be investigated. The findings are reported in the journal *Fertility and Sterility*.

More information: The effect of medical clowning on pregnancy rates after in vitro fertilization and embryo transfer (IVF-ET), Shevach Friedler, M.D et al., *Fertility and Sterility*, published online 06 January 2011, [doi:10.1016/j.fertnstert.2010.12.016](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fertnstert.2010.12.016)

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