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### OVUM

This reading is titled “Ovum: Designing for Fertility Tracking as a Shared and Domestic Experience”, by Sarah Homewood, Harvey Bewley and Laurens Boer. Like the title says, this is about creating a device to track a woman’s fertility and her biological function in order to help with conception, turning something that would be a medical device into an at-home convenience. In order to develop the most suitable product, they looked at different already existing fertility tracking devices, and then developing their own through the pros and cons of the others.

The three devices looked at before starting their concept were the urine tracking, temperature tracking and saliva tracking. Some of the components stood out for the authors, and helped them determine what was important for the creation of such technology, such as having binary results (fertile or not), the trust factor in the technologies (for instance urine and temperature trackers, which have more of a medical aspect to them, indicating more of a reliable component), real-time information, as well as the “DIY” factor of the saliva tracker, just to name a few.

According to the authors, a home is usually shared between 2 people and while trying to conceive, it also requires two people most likely living together in the home, therefore the tracking device should be a domestic object that the two participants can use, understand and stay involved with together. Overall, there are 3 major components that they aim to improve: changing it from an individual experience to shared, from clinical to domestic, and from “expert” use, to a DIY method. Their creation is based on the saliva tracker: in fact, the woman puts her saliva onto a glass surface, which then projects a light through the sample and a circular shape appears on the wall or ceiling, showcasing the crystals in the saliva. Although this sounds a bit weird at first, the authors mention how the projection almost looks like a moon, adding a romance factor to it, and both participants work together and view the results together. The burden is usually placed on the person trying to get pregnant, and they claim that such an invention will humanize the experience more.

I have mixed emotions about this device. On the positive side, I think it would make fertility tracking a much less stressful experience for the partner trying to get pregnant, as it removes the cold medical factor to it, simply looking at a wall projection. Also, the aesthetic of the object is nice and sleek, showcasing a simple design that can easily blend as a decoration or cute lamp, in case some people might be embarrassed to have someone find their fertility product. In fact, over 6 million people in the United States from ages 15 to 41 struggle with fertility problems, and it is a very heavy subject that many of them don’t want to talk about, and having such a flashy device showcasing their

fertility can be extremely intimidating to someone struggling with such issues. Also, following a survey of 750 women without children, over 30% of them, the majority, claimed they were barely informed about their fertility. To me, the OVUM would be a device that people without children or not necessarily in a relationship would use, more than couples, as a way to educate themselves on their own bodies, developing their self-awareness to their own system and developing a closer relationship with themselves. I don't see that much how projecting your saliva with your partner is a shared experience: you watch it for 10 seconds and you already get the point. In fact, since the year 2000, the average attention span in Canada is now down to 8 seconds, so to me, just waiting for the saliva sample to dry up and then watch a projection of it for longer than a few seconds without being bored seems like an annoying task. Also, one thing that bothered me about this article is the fake storyline the authors wrote as they tried to romanticize the experience. It sounds like a cheesy fan-fiction, which affected the credibility of the article for me. One aspect that I like about this idea though is the use of the bright LED. In fact, I see this device as almost light therapy. Trying to conceive can be very stressful for some people and might cause a lot of anxiety, but light therapy can really help improve the user's mood. Indeed, using a light therapy lamp from only 30 minutes to up to two hours in the morning can actually improve your symptoms in only 3 to 5 days. Maybe this kind of feature can be added to the OVUM: some people also use light therapy in the evening, so it could be an option before bed, to add your sample, and have the light slowly fade and bring you to sleep peacefully.

Overall, I think this product brings up valid issues in the way fertility is approached and talked about, and creating a more user-friendly and peaceful experience could really solve some major issues about how we encounter these situations. This product could make the conversation and approach much more positive and calming, and I like how it can create a more intimate relationship between yourself and your own body, being able to visually see how your system works. However, I don't think this product should necessarily be a shared experience with a partner, I think that in order to appreciate it more, it would be a one-on-one experience, almost like a meditation session to be more in touch with your body.

## Bibliography

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