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INSIDE

THE ANNUAL GUIDE TO LIVING WELL

FERTILITY & THE SINGAPORE WOMAN

RESPECTED FERTILITY
SPECIALIST DR ANN TAN
SPEAKS CANDIDLY
ABOUT REALITY CHECKS,
FERTILITY CHALLENGES
AND GIVING BACK

USEFUL, TIMELY &
ENGAGING INFORMATION
ON HEALTHCARE,
WELLNESS, LIFESTYLE,
HOME, TRAVEL AND
SERVICES FOR TODAY'S
LANDED PROPERTY
HOME OWNER





ZEST FOR LIFE

She is an individual with many interests and pursuits, but the one she refers to as a “calling” is her role as an Obstetrician & Gynaecologist who is also coach and friend to her patients. “I’m always running to after-hours medical emergencies! Of course I feel guilty for not being around as much as I would like for my family and my parents, but this is my calling and not just a job.”

No doubt because she herself is a mother – of three children – Ann is particularly concerned about a worrying trend.

Singapore, she points out, has one of the lowest total fertility rates in the world. “What’s more, pregnancy in women below 30 years has dropped, with peak pregnancies now at 30-34 years, indicating that more women are getting pregnant later in life,” says Ann, a highly experienced fertility expert at Women & Fetal Centre who has won awards in her specialisation, from the Yale School of Medicine, the International Society of Ultrasound in Obstetrics and the Hong Kong Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists.

The reasons cited for this unhappy state of affairs are many and include the lack of a suitable or supportive partner who wants a family, the high cost of living, and career aspirations.

“When they do want to conceive but can’t, they seek second and third opinions, and even go elsewhere for treatment if they feel that local facilities are lacking. To many, the rest of the world is only a flight away.”

DR ANN TAN IS AS PASSIONATE ABOUT CREATING AND SAFEGUARDING LIFE AS SHE IS ABOUT LIVING IT TO THE MAX.
BY LYE KIM SHEONG

PHOTOGRAPHY
JUSTIN LOH
ART DIRECTION
ALEX GOH
STYLING
PHOEBE PONG
HAIR & MAKE UP
ERIC TAN/MANISA TAN
CLOTHES
STRIPED MAXI
DRESS/ STILL
ROBINSONS
THE HEEREN

All of which points to women not being fully aware of a harsh reality: that a woman is at her peak reproductive ability in her 20s. After that, fertility drops at an increasing rate as she gets older.

A woman opting to have a child in her late-30s-early-40s is literally setting herself up. “Many may have no choice but to try in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) despite knowing that there is no guarantee. There can be overwhelming stress and depression when the IVF does

not succeed, or when it does, even greater anxiety throughout the pregnancy worrying over things that might go wrong.”

Then there is the real possibility of a failed IVF pregnancy due to the miscarriage of an abnormal foetus, where the woman risks scarring her uterus during an evacuation procedure. Fear often sets in at that stage – will the same thing happen the next time?

Thankfully, the Internet has done a tremendous job in making

people more aware, and one very healthy trend today is that fertility is increasingly being accepted as a two-person issue, rather than a woman's issue, with more husbands accompanying their wives for consultations than before.

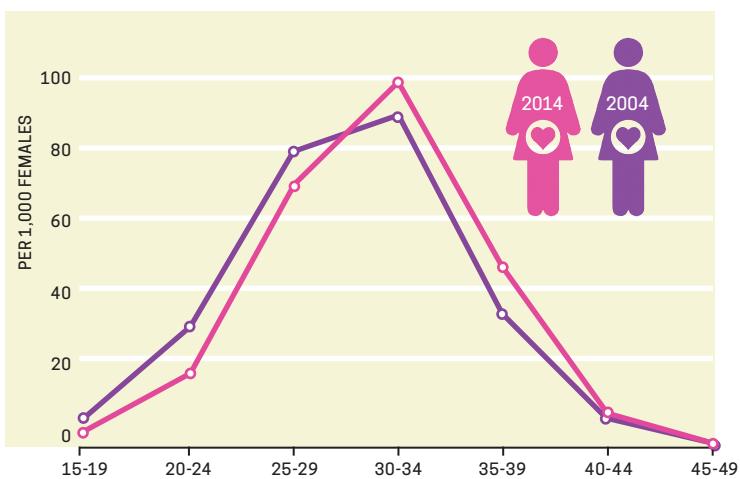
"The involvement of both parties is an important factor for treatment success, offering mutual support to allay anxiety; keeping up the motivation to try and try again – or just taking comfort in having a partner on the journey," she says, pointing out that almost half the couples she's seen do have a male factor cause for the infertility.

Coming across as a sincere and honest person first and foremost, Ann carries herself with intelligence and grace, and not the stiff formality normally associated with a person of authority and success.

"I'm not your typical lab coat wearing doctor," she says. "As a physician who specialises in infertility and high risk

AGE-SPECIFIC FERTILITY RATES

DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS SINGAPORE



DATA CAPTURED IN 2004 AND 2014 REVEALS THAT MORE WOMEN ARE HAVING CHILDREN IN THEIR 30S TODAY THAN BEFORE.

obstetrics, I truly want to help couples achieve their dream of having children to compete their cycle of life, as these areas are closely intertwined. As their clinician, it pains me greatly when they fail, and I am exceedingly grateful when they

succeed. I believe that I am but a facilitator; whether they succeed or not is God's will."

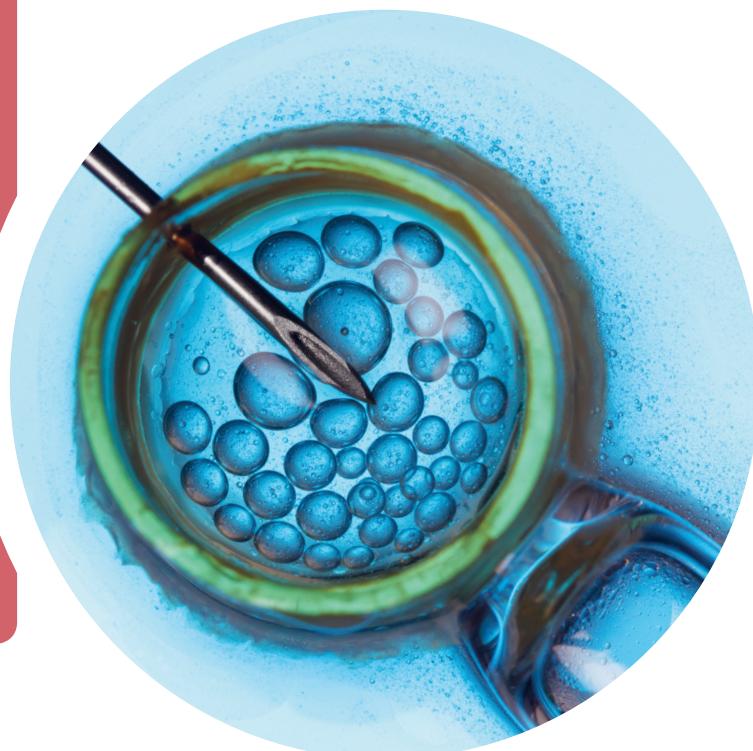
Her patients, she says, "choose to stay with me because we have developed a bond. Whether it is about pregnancy or infertility, they

Did You Know?

FERTILITY & ASSISTED CONCEPTION

About 15 per cent of couples are unable to conceive because one or both parties is subfertile or infertile. Infertility is usually defined by doctors as the inability to conceive after at least one year of trying.

Assisted conception, such as fertility drugs with timed intercourse, is usually the first resort in treatment. If a woman has blocked fallopian tubes, for example, only surgical repair or assisted conception can improve the couple's chances.



I TRULY WANT TO HELP COUPLES ACHIEVE THEIR DREAM OF HAVING CHILDREN TO COMPLETE THEIR CYCLE OF LIFE, AS THESE AREAS ARE CLOSELY INTERTWINED. AS THEIR CLINICIAN, IT PAINS ME GREATLY WHEN THEY FAIL, AND I AM EXCEEDINGLY GRATEFUL WHEN THEY SUCCEED.



THEY ARE ON THE VERGE OF GOING OUT TO SOCIETY TO BUILD THEIR CAREERS AND THEIR FUTURE, YET THEY ARE DOING SO ON AN UNEVEN FOOTING WITH THEIR PEERS. IT IS NOT RIGHT THAT THEY SHOULD BE DISADVANTAGED BY BACKGROUND AND CIRCUMSTANCES VERSUS LACK OF ABILITY.

