

Picking the Perfect Embryo

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(Ivanhoe Newswire) — For many couples, having a baby can also be a source of great disappointment and emotional difficulties. Now, a new procedure takes away some of the guess work and does away with procedures that are doomed to unknowingly fail.

According to this baby's parents, "He's just amazing." "We call him our miracle baby."

A miracle, however, that almost did not happen. This couple tried for two years to have a baby. Doctors suggested in vitro fertilization. In the midst of their grief, they said no.

"An hour later we came back and we said, okay, we changed our mind, we're going to do it," they say.

Their doctor, Larry Werlin, M.D., offered a procedure that would ease some of their anxiety. He says, "It's made us take another look at how we evaluate things."

Instead of relying on the appearance of the embryos to decide which to implant, pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) tests for chromosome abnormalities -- a major problem in women over age 38, those who have recurrent pregnancy loss, and women who failed in vitro.

Dr. Werlin, an infertility specialist at Coastal Fertility in Irvine, Calif., tells Ivanhoe, "In those groups we have now data that shows that perhaps as much as 70 percent of the embryos they make are abnormal."

Embryos like this one (left photo) that looks perfect but has an extra chromosome or this one (right photo) that had multiple abnormalities.

"This would have been an unsuccessful implantation or a probable early pregnancy loss," says Werlin.

For this mother, PGD proved the emotional winner. She says, "Just to see him and know he's ours, it's just amazing."

For dad, the proof is in the numbers. "Our odds increased 84-fold just by doing the PGD," he says, and for the doctor, it comes down to the end product.

Dr. Werlin points out PGD is not for everyone. His new research will determine who it can help. So far, it seems most effective in women with recurrent pregnancy loss and does not seem to make a difference in woman of advanced maternal age -- over 38.