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Miracle baby: Meet Beatriz Sandoval, a new
mom after fighting breast cancer. / 3
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Parenthood after cancer

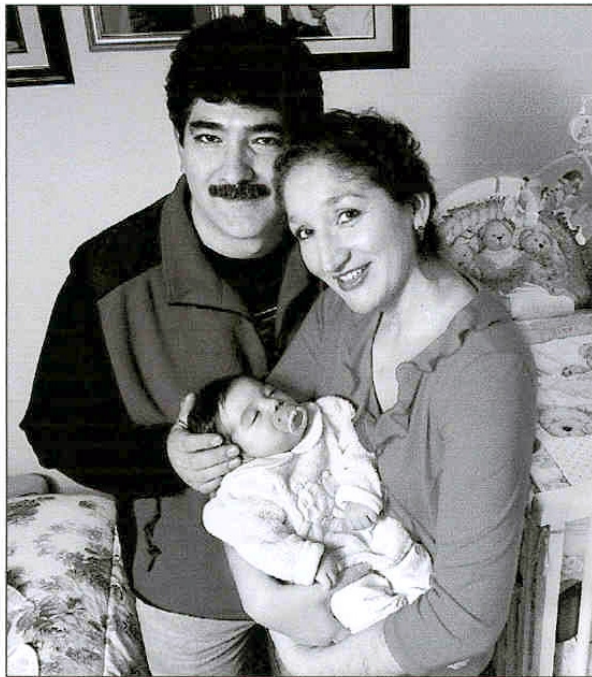
The Sandovals of Brea almost gave up hope when Beatriz was diagnosed with breast cancer. Their frozen embryo made parenthood a reality after successful treatment.

By TERRI DAXON
FOR THE STAR-PROGRESS

She's known as the "miracle baby," but little Sofia Margarita Sandoval, born December 26, 2004, only knows she is very much loved. Her parents, Beatriz Sandoval, 38, and Jorge, 39, nearly gave up hope of ever having a baby, due to Beatriz' battle with breast cancer in 2000.

At 32, Beatriz discovered a lump in her left breast. Doctors and tests confirmed the lump was malignant. A mastectomy and lymphectomy soon followed.

Aware that the Sandovals were anxious to have a baby, Beatriz' oncologist suggested they confer with a fertility spe-



JACK E. HANCOCK / STAR-PROGRESS

Jorge and Beatriz Sandoval hold baby Sofia in their baby nursery. Sandoval delivered a baby after undergoing cancer treatments, using a fertilized embryo.

cialist. His concern was that chemotherapy could cause ovarian damage, and end the couple's hopes of ever conceiving a baby.

"The news was more devastating than learning I had cancer," said Beatriz. That real-

ization brought them to the Dr. Lawrence Werlin, founder and director of the Coastal Fertility Medical Center in Irvine. Dr. Werlin suggested in vitro fertilization using eggs extracted from Beatriz and fertilized by Jorge. Then the

fertilized eggs, or embryos, were frozen and stored at the clinic, awaiting when Beatriz would be cancer-free, and ready to attempt pregnancy.

"We had 11 frozen embryos stored," said Beatriz. But getting pregnant was still a long ways off, if ever. First she had to survive the ordeal of multiple rounds of chemotherapy and radiation treatments. Finally, after nearly five years without cancer reoccurrence, her doctors felt she could safely try to get pregnant.

For six months the Sandovals were unsuccessful conceiving naturally. They returned to the clinic to see if Beatriz could become pregnant through implantation of their frozen embryos. In describing the implantation process Dr. Werlin said, "The embryos are thawed and then transferred into the mother's uterus."

The first embryo transfer resulted in pregnancy, which is somewhat unusual, said Dr. Werlin, who attributed it to the fact that Beatriz's frozen eggs were extracted when she was younger, thus yielding younger, more viable eggs.

Beatriz, however, said their success was from Dr. Werlin commanding. "One, two, three — Beatriz Sandoval you are

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Baby

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pregnant!"

"I had a wonderful pregnancy," said Beatriz, who added that she is nursing Sofia, but supplements with formula.

Dr. Werlin said the clinic

stores hundreds of frozen embryos for patients not yet ready for pregnancy. Two patients have stored frozen embryos at the clinic for more than 13 years.

That most likely will not be the case with the Sandovals who are already thinking about a brother or sister for little Sofia.