

## **First frozen egg pregnancy in Chattanooga**

by Tina Smith

For decades, fertility clinics around the world have achieved pregnancy success through assisted reproduction using frozen sperm as well as frozen embryos. Now, Chattanooga's own Fertility Center reports the area's first patient using frozen eggs who is now expecting.

The woman was referred to the Fertility Center, which also has an office in Knoxville, to benefit from advanced reproductive technologies. Her pregnancy is progressing on schedule, and she has been returned to her doctor for obstetrical care. The patient's identity is protected by privacy laws.

This milestone conception is the result of a partnership between the Fertility Center and the Frozen Egg Bank (see *EggFreezing.com*), a leading expert in oocyte cryopreservation responsible for fine-tuning the freezing process that formerly was not successful in the research world. Traditionally, attempts to freeze a retrieved female gamete turned the egg into a fragile, glass-like state that could not survive thawing or be viable for fertilization.

Breakthrough technology from the Orange County, California specialists was shared with the reproductive endocrinologists and embryologist at the Fertility Center, who learned the new method and now have achieved confirmation in their Chattanooga laboratory for freezing eggs before fertilizing with sperm.

In years past, a couple undergoing in vitro fertilization typically would choose to fertilize all available eggs in the lab in order to maximize chances for pregnancy success. Resulting embryos grew outside the body for several days, and the two or three strongest were then placed in the uterus for implantation. Any embryos not transferred were frozen to allow for future pregnancy attempts without having to repeat the process of obtaining more eggs to fertilize. However, some couples ended up with more embryos than they could use and were faced with what to do with the "extra" ones.

Today, eggs can be thawed and fertilized as needed to create embryos for transfer. Very few or none at all may need to be stored. More and more patients are favoring this option that avoids some of the ethical dilemmas surrounding frozen embryos.

Pregnancy rates with frozen eggs compare very favorably to frozen embryo success rates, which exceed 60 percent for certain age groups. Cryopreservation can suspend the biological clock for eggs and keep the quality of those eggs from diminishing while in frozen storage.

In addition to infertile couples, those finding hope through egg freezing include woman who have not yet found a life partner or are not ready to conceive but are concerned about their decreasing chances for pregnancy. Egg freezing also allows cancer victims a chance to safeguard their motherhood before undergoing surgery, radiation or chemotherapy treatments that might damage the ovaries or even cause sterility. To find out if egg freezing might be an option for you, call 423.899.0500.

*Tina Smith is a communications specialist and patient support coordinator for the Fertility Center in Chattanooga and can be reached at 423.899.0500 or [tina@myfertilitycenter.com](mailto:tina@myfertilitycenter.com). Tina speaks openly about her long struggle with infertility and hopes to encourage other women who have not yet become moms. Reproductive Endocrinologists **Joey Bird** and **Barry Donesky** along with Embryologist **Susan Walker** at the Fertility Center are available to discuss cutting-edge fertility treatments and related procedures. For more information, go to [MyFertilityCenter.com](http://MyFertilityCenter.com).*