

# Daily Pilot

Serving the Newport-Mesa community since 1907  
JUNE 15, 2003

## SUNDAY STORY

Sima Abelowitz hugs Dr. Lawrence Werlin while her husband Steven and son Ethan, 2, greet Werlin's wife Sally as they gather for dinner at the Abelowitz's Newport Coast home.

SEAN HILLER / DAILY PILOT



*Newport Beach doctor, the "father of fertility" in Orange County, has helped plenty of men become dads when parenthood looked impossible.*

# Fruitful practice

**Lolita Harper**  
Daily Pilot

**P**apa is still a Rolling Stone. On any given day, in the office of fertility specialist Lawrence Werlin, there is an aura of happiness, hope and overall satisfaction. It's only rock 'n' roll, but he seems to like it.

"You walk in — he takes appointments as early as 6:30 a.m. — so you walk in the morning and you have the Rolling Stones going and it is a happy environment," said Sima Abelowitz, a longtime patient. "It's always the Rolling Stones. He loves the Rolling Stones."

Werlin's musical tastes are just a small example of what makes him a wonderful doctor, she added. He is very positive, very upbeat, very friendly and funny. He always has a smile on his face and a joke to tell.

Werlin, of Newport Beach, is not just an excellent doctor, he also has an excellent person, she said.

"He is like your buddy not your doctor," Abelowitz said.

Not that infertility is a laughable matter, but his relaxed nature puts his clients at ease and reassures them their experience is going to be an encouraging one, she said.

"He says, 'It's OK. You are going to get pregnant,'" Sima Abelowitz said. "He is always so positive and that is very important in fertility."

That attitude comes from Werlin loving what he does. He loves being a father and is thrilled to help other people realize that dream.

"First of all it is a joy, from my perspective, to be a parent," Werlin said. "Everyday I thank God for my wife's and my three beautiful children. To be able to help a couple to realize that goal is by far the most satisfying thing in medicine for me."

### PERSONAL CARE

Werlin has been helping couples for years, long enough to be dubbed the "father of fertility" in Orange County. His history includes years of groundbreaking studies in the field and Werlin was one of the first doctors to bring infertility treatments to Orange County.

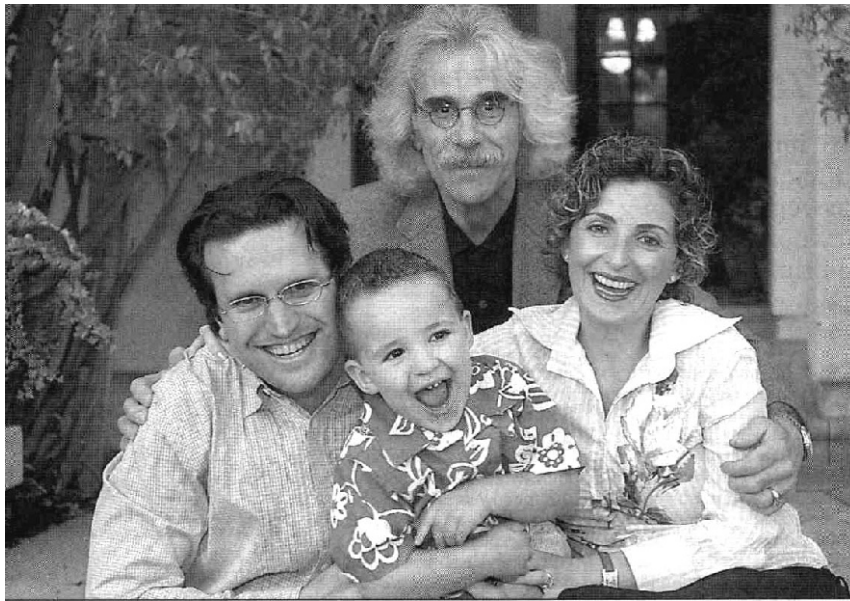
In 1986, Werlin founded Hoag



KENT TREPTOW / DAILY PILOT

Lawrence B. Werlin, is a fertility specialist who has helped countless families have children and has three of his own. Pictured, from left, are Dr. Werlin and his wife, Sally, and his three children: Rachel, 24; Evan, 17; and Emma, 16.

See **PRACTICE**, Page A4



SEAN HILLER / DAILY PILOT

Steven Abelowitz, left, son Ethan, 2, and wife Sima are grateful to Dr. Werlin, for helping them get pregnant with Ethan, as well as their newest edition, who's on the way.

## PRACTICE

Continued from A1

Hospital's Fertility Services Center and directed that program for 10 years. He is now the founder and director of Coastal Fertility Medical Center in Irvine and Aliso Viejo.

Trying to get pregnant after one or more doctors may have deemed it improbable is an "emotional roller coaster," Werlin said, one filled with anxiety and emotional highs and lows. Those lows can get more overwhelming each time an attempt to get pregnant fails.

The key to helping people through those times, he said, is to treat them as people, not clients.

"I look at each patient as an individual," Werlin said. "Just like you deal with everyday people. This is not just a patient who has infertility, this is a person who has many other things going on. My job is to appreciate that there are other stresses in their life that play a role and try very hard to be sensitive to those issues."

"This all comes naturally to him," said colleague Susan Bloom.

And fatherhood comes naturally to Newport Coast resident Steven Abelowitz, his wife, Sima, said.

"Ethan just adores his dad," Sima Abelowitz said. "He plays with him all the time. Over the weekend they are best buddies."

This Father's Day, Steven Abelowitz has a new reason to celebrate. His wife is six months pregnant with their second child, in large part thanks to Werlin, the couple said.

Abelowitz has a distinct perspective on parenting and medicine because he is a pediatrician. For years, he has seen a good percentage of the children in Newport Beach, but did not have any of his own. He knows the proper nutrition, growth rate, healthy weights, what to do for a fever, a rash, a cough or the sniffles but could not administer that knowledge at home.

Not until he visited Werlin, that is.

"I'm seeing things I used to see in other children in my own child and it makes life, and practicing as a pediatrician, even more enjoyable," Steven Abelowitz said.

Sima Abelowitz became pregnant both times by in vitro fertilization, a process that involves removing eggs from a woman, fertilizing them in the laboratory and then transferring the fertilized eggs, or zygotes, into the uterus a few days later. Once successfully implanted, the pregnancy proceeds as it normally would.

"We got pregnant on the first time, both times," Sima Abelowitz said.

### ROUGH TIMES

For other couples, the process is more complicated, Werlin said, with a variety of different options and variables contributing to the success. It can be a nerve-racking process but when couples are successful, almost all those emotions seem to pale in comparison to the elation of being pregnant, he said.

"The important thing to remember is whatever options I offer, it is ultimately, their choice," Werlin said. "I make recommendations but the choice of their final plan is always in their hands. It may be different from what I think is the best choice but that is their option."

Werlin continues his pioneering ways by announcing the results of his study on Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis (more commonly referred to as PGD). The genetic testing procedure has received national medical attention and offers hope to women who have suffered recurrent pregnancy loss, he said. National medical journal *Fertility and Sterility* will publish Werlin's results in the August edition.

Stated simply, PGD allows doctors to check the nine chromosomes in which abnormalities are most likely to

thwart a successful pregnancy. By testing the chromosomes first, doctors can fertilize a woman with an egg that is more likely to result in pregnancy, Werlin said. Results of the study showed the highest success rates in women who suffered from repeated pregnancy loss, he said.

"This will absolutely change [the practice of infertility]," Werlin said. "This is the first randomized [study] that has ever been done in the world to compare whether PGD is successful."

### ABLE TO CELEBRATE

While Werlin is proud of his accomplishments, he knows his research is not a cure-all. People need to understand there is no one therapy that is good for everybody, he said. The technology still has limits, as it can only test nine chromosomes — there are 14 others that go unchecked, he said.

A father, doctor and member of the Newport-Mesa community, Werlin said he will continue the rewarding job of helping people realize one of life's greatest joys: parenthood. And for many Father's Days to come, many who thought they never would be able to celebrate will receive cards, ties and loud, Hawaiian shirts.

"It has definitely enriched our lives seeing life as it is through the eyes of a child," Steven Abelowitz said. "It puts things in a whole different perspective. Things we used to take for granted we don't anymore."

"Without his help this very likely would have never been possible and we are very thankful and grateful."

• **LOLITA HARPER** writes columns Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and covers culture and the arts. She may be reached at (949) 574-4275 or by e-mail at [lolita.harper@latimes.com](mailto:lolita.harper@latimes.com).