

Fertility Success Story

By Teri Brown

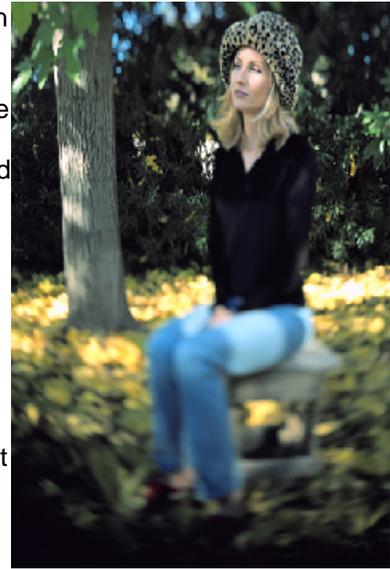
Infertility is a condition that can't truly be understood by those whose pregnancies were simple and spontaneous. Basal temperatures, assisted reproductive therapy and in vitro fertilization are only a few of the terms those dealing with fertility problems live with every day. Patrisha Wilson was one of those women.

Wilson was diagnosed with a severe case of endometriosis when she was a mere 17 years old. She was told that pregnancy wasn't likely. At 25, after several years of unprotected sex with her boyfriend, she was convinced the doctors were right, and she began considering her options. What followed was a long, heartbreaking search for some procedure, somewhere that would give her a child.

The Doctor Will See You Now

Wilson began her journey like many women with fertility issues do – by making doctor appointments.

"I invested a lot of time, both emotionally and financially, visiting a number of doctors," she says. "One clinic told me my FSH levels (follicle stimulating hormones) were so far off the chart that I would never conceive a child, and they stated this very plainly and coldly."



Wilson continued to pursue a variety of options, including artificial insemination and various donor programs. As an unmarried woman, many people wondered why she was trying so hard for a child, but there was never any doubt in Wilson's mind; she wanted a baby, whether she was married or not.

Four years ago, Wilson took a fall at her parents' house that crushed a disk in her lower back. The subsequent treatment and surgery killed all of Wilson's remaining eggs.

"After that, I was told I had no chance of conceiving, but I wanted a child more than life itself," she says.

Finding Other Options

A frustrated Wilson turned to adoption. "When I first tried adoption, I was offered a baby that was born addicted to crack cocaine," she says. "I was told the mother changed her mind, and the baby was then given to the mother's aunt."

The second attempt at adoption was a whirlwind process. Wilson was told that she could have the child, met with the mother and went to see the baby. After being given parental rights, Child Welfare Services intervened and took the child four hours before Wilson was to leave with the infant.

"After investing so much financially and emotionally, I was devastated," she says.

This devastation left Wilson emotionally spent, and she ended up quitting her job. After a brief recovery period she continued to search for the answers that would lead her to a child. Approaching 40, Wilson knew she didn't have a lot of time.



"In the end, this fueled me to work harder to find a way to have a baby," she says. "This is when I looked up a Web site and learned of Dr. Werlin at Coastal Fertility Medical Center in Irvine, California."

Wilson hadn't given up hope, but she was becoming a bit skeptical. When a representative of Coastal Fertility called with the news that they believed they could help her, she wasn't sure what to believe.

"I actually called the woman a liar!" says Wilson, laughing. "I just couldn't believe it."

Wilson was on waiting lists for frozen embryos at other clinics and was told that the waits could be over two years long.

"At first, I didn't believe Dr. Werlin's confirmation that donor, frozen embryos were available," she says. But the minute she met Dr. Werlin in person, Wilson knew something was different.

"When he saw my mother and me, he asked me why I wanted a child," she says. "We hit it off well. He was very kind and the first person who said, 'I can help you,' and explained in detail how he could help. This was not like the other doctors who first asked for financial fees or others who would break terrible news to me over the phone."

She went to Coastal Fertility Medical Center's facility in March 2003, and Dr. Werlin told her he would do everything in his power to help her achieve her dreams of motherhood. On Mother's Day 2003, she received the special news that she would be able to conceive a baby through donor embryos. The implantation of the donor embryos would take place in June.

"I was excited and nervous and concerned, because I almost didn't get off work to be able to do the procedure," Wilson says. "I had the support of my sister and mother, who came along with me to California for the procedure. We rented a hotel room to stay over the weekend, following the procedure. We arrived on Tuesday [and] saw Dr. Werlin on Wednesday, who said everything looked fine to do the procedure on that Friday."

And They Said It Couldn't Be Done

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Wilson's story is the fact that the donor embryos were 14 years old. Dr. Lawrence Werlin, founder and director of Coastal Fertility Medical Center and cofounder of GENESIS Network for Reproductive Health, remembers Wilson well.

"Patrisha was offered the chance to use 14-year-old frozen embryos donated by another couple from our clinic," says Dr. Werlin. "Statistically, fertilized, frozen eggs can last indefinitely and, according to Patrisha, this was the miracle she was looking for after being placed on a series of waiting lists at other centers." Dr. Werlin says the oldest embryos he has come in contact with are the embryos Patrisha used.

Wilson says that one of the happiest days of her life was when she found out she was indeed pregnant – and pregnant with twins, no less. But because of her age, pregnancy was hard on Wilson, and she miscarried one of the twins at 7 weeks.

"I was crushed, but thought of the other baby inside me to keep on going," she says.

After the miscarriage, Wilson became highly allergic to progesterone and also developed pre-eclampsia, which many attributed to her age at the time. But, Dr. Werlin says that Wilson was determined. "Throughout it all, Patrisha focused on the end goal of achieving motherhood," he says.



That end goal was achieved on January 14, when Wilson gave birth to a tiny baby boy. She delivered at 33 weeks because of conditions associated with her pre-eclampsia. The baby was in the ICU for 10 days, and Wilson was told he was the healthiest baby there.

"We just celebrated Nathan's 6-month birthday," she says. "He's just amazing. He sat straight up on the couch the other day. I have never seen anyone laugh or smile as much as Nathan. He now weighs 17 pounds, 9 ounces and is 25 1/4 inches long, which I am told is good for a 'preemie.'"

Motherhood has far exceeded Wilson expectations, and she feels her baby, Nathan, was worth all the trauma she withstood. "I love being a mother," she says. "I cannot stress enough just how wonderful motherhood has been for me. He is just a beautiful child."

It is Wilson's hope that her story will encourage others to keep trying to find ways to make their dreams of motherhood come true. "I hope others would have the opportunity to interact with a staff such as Dr. Werlin's," says Wilson. "I want people to be aware of different options available to them."