



Issue 5, April 2008

## Celebrating motherhood

Welcome to the Nurture newsletter. Mother's Day is fast approaching, and while we know it can be a difficult time for those struggling to conceive or sustain a pregnancy, we're going all out this year to celebrate mums and motherhood with our inaugural Run 4 Mums fundraising event.

Run 4 Mums is about helping New Zealand women become mothers. It's not just for women – it's an event for the whole family. So gather up a big group of friends and family and come and join us at Cornwall Park in Auckland on Sunday May 11<sup>th</sup> for a fun walk or a competitive run – the choice is yours. Even if you're still on the journey to creating your own family, this is a positive and creative way to spend Mother's Day.

Visit [www.nurture.org.nz](http://www.nurture.org.nz) to enter – and then why not get friends and family to sponsor you to help raise more money for Nurture on the day? Just go to [www.fundraiseonline.co.nz](http://www.fundraiseonline.co.nz) to set up your own page. It's really easy – even I have created a fundraising page and asked friends and colleagues to sponsor my 5km run. So far I have raised more than \$600 through Fundraise Online!

A big thank you to our Run 4 Mums sponsors – New Idea; Andrew Simms Mitsubishi, More FM, Carnation Milk and IVF Auckland.

Nurture continues to be very active through a range of fundraising events including the recent auction of Steiff collectable teddy bears at Smith & Caughey's in Auckland and the annual Teddy Bear's picnic at the Auckland Domain. To date our minimal resources have meant that fundraising activities have been confined to Auckland, but we are very aware that we have supporters right across New Zealand. We would encourage supporters in other parts of the country to consider how they can actively support Nurture either through fundraising events or awareness raising.

We'd love to hear your ideas, and will do what we can to help you get local events off the ground.

Cindy Farquhar  
Nurture Foundation Trustee

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## Run 4 Mums this Mother's Day

The Nurture Foundation is holding its inaugural Mother's Day fun run on Sunday May 11<sup>th</sup> – and it's not just for mums, everyone's welcome.

Nurture's goal is to help more New Zealand women become mothers; to highlight this we are holding a fundraising event on Mother's Day itself. It's an opportunity to raise awareness of the need for reproductive research and to give individuals and families a way to support Nurture through a healthy and fun activity.

So why not gather your friends and family together and celebrate Mother's Day with a fun run or walk through Cornwall Park, followed by a picnic at One Tree Hill Domain with music and kids' entertainment. There are lots of spot prizes to be given away as well, including a day with the Chris West rally team, two nights at CityLife Hotel, Brooks footwear and double passes to the Auckland Luge!

For a small registration fee you can take part in a 5 or 10km run or a 5km walk; all runners and walkers will be timed, so it's a great family challenge. Prams are welcome on the walk, and

only the person pushing the pram needs to register. Every participant gets a great goody bag too. Please encourage your friends, colleagues and family to take part in this fun run – we look forward to seeing you there.

For more information or to register visit [www.nurture.org.nz](http://www.nurture.org.nz)



## Teddy Bears Picnic

Sunday March 2<sup>nd</sup> saw a team of Nurture Trustees and volunteers enjoying an afternoon at the annual Teddy Bears Picnic in the Auckland Domain. Nurture was the 'official

charity' for the Picnic again in 2008 – and our volunteers were out and about selling long-stemmed teddy bear lollipops and collecting donations.

Linda Adamson and the Love to Sing kids performed on the main stage to support Nurture, with a fantastic concert enjoyed by families and teddy bear enthusiasts alike!

Nurture volunteers manned the Tip Top ice cream vans and Café L'Affare generously donated 30% of their coffee sales to Nurture. It was a great day – and while clouds threatened during the morning, it didn't rain on the Picnic.



*Linda Adamson and the Love to Sing kids*



*A brisk trade in teddy bear lollipops*



*Nurture volunteers man the Tip Top cart*

Our sincere thanks to Linda Adamson and Café L'Affare - and to all the volunteers who sold ice cream and lollipops. Photos were taken on the day by Poppet Photography, proud sponsors of the Nurture Foundation.

## Charity auction of Steiff teddy bears

Nurture was recently invited to be the beneficiary of a charity auction of twelve limited edition or collectible Steiff teddy bears. These gorgeous bears are hand crafted in Germany from the finest alpaca and mohair – and several had never been available in New Zealand before.



*MC Claire McLintock with NZ Herald prize winner*

Smith and Caughey kindly hosted the auction in the childrenswear department of their Queen Street store on Saturday March 15<sup>th</sup>, with Peter Webb from Webb's auctioneers presiding. All twelve teddy bears were sold at auction and close to \$4,000 raised for The Nurture Foundation.

Our thanks to Smith and Caughey's, Webb's and Steiff for supporting Nurture through this exciting charity auction.



*Steiff teddy bears awaiting bids at the auction*

## Research: Lipiodol Uterine Bathing Effect (LUBE)

Lipiodol, a poppy seed oil, has been used for many decades as a contrast medium to outline structures during radiological investigations. In hysterosalpingography, Lipiodol – or another contrast media – is flushed through a woman's fallopian tubes enabling the radiologist to see any obstructions or blockages.

The concept of 'tubal flushing' to enhance fertility has been 'an old clinician's tale' for many years, but until recently it was not known how effective this really was. Neil Johnson has been at the forefront of several studies that show Lipiodol is more than a contrast media for diagnostic investigations - it is a fertility treatment in itself.

The FLUSH trial showed that flushing the fallopian tubes with Lipiodol enhanced fertility two-fold in women with unexplained infertility and four-fold

for women with mild endometriosis – suggesting it might be more effective and less invasive than laparoscopic surgery for endometriosis.



The researchers were surprised to discover that some of the women in the FLUSH trial became pregnant even though Lipiodol only bathed their uterus, and did not reach their fallopian tubes. This suggested that Lipiodol might have fertility enhancing benefits on the uterine environment itself – and so the LUBE pilot study began.

The LUBE study aimed to link changes in the endometrium (after bathing the uterus with Lipiodol) with clinical pregnancy and live birth. Microarray techniques were used to see whether Lipiodol changed endometrial immunobiology, which could improve uterine receptivity and help embryos to implant. The LUBE pilot study suggests that Lipiodol may help to regulate endometrial genes involved in cell signalling and immune function. In this way Lipiodol may play a role in enhancing the uterine environment for embryo implantation.

Neil Johnson hopes to begin a larger study, when funding is available, to confirm these initial results. He also plans to investigate whether women undergoing IVF who have endometriosis or recurrent implantation failure might also benefit from Lipiodol bathing.

## Researcher: Neil Johnson

Neil Johnson is an Associate Professor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University of Auckland. He is also a consultant at Fertility Plus, National Women's Health, IVF Auckland and Endometriosis Auckland.

Neil became interested in infertility largely because it enabled him to combine his interests in surgery, medicine and academic science – and he enjoys the reward of successfully treating infertile couples. While working in the UK, Neil attended a fertility conference at which the results of a small pilot study on Lipiodol were

presented. Although only a small pilot study, the results were compelling and Neil could immediately see the benefits of such a simple, low invasive and inexpensive alternative to more advanced fertility treatments like IVF. He resolved to undertake a bigger trial when he returned to Auckland – which became known as the FLUSH trial.



*Associate Professor Neil Johnson*

The results of Neil's LUBE pilot study were presented at the World Congress on Endometriosis in March 2008, and Neil is now on the Board of the internationally renowned World Endometriosis Society.

## International research round-up

### Acupuncture may increase IVF success rates

Doctors from the University of Maryland claim acupuncture may increase the success of IVF by up to 65%. A team of researchers reviewed studies published since 2002, with a total of 1366 women undergoing IVF. Acupuncture was given either just prior or just after embryo transfer. The team concluded that women who had acupuncture pre or post embryo transfer were 65% more likely to become pregnant compared with those who did not have any acupuncture or those who had fake acupuncture, where needles were put in the wrong places.

Acupuncture is believed to increase blood flow to the uterus and stimulate hormone production. It has been used in Chinese medicine to regulate fertility for hundreds of years.

Some experts are still sceptical, believing the placebo effect of acupuncture made women more relaxed and that this improved implantation rates. But the researchers dismiss this theory because the women receiving fake acupuncture did not experience increased pregnancy rates.

Previous studies have indicated that women are less likely to conceive after having acupuncture, but this could be due to women with a poor response to IVF proactively seeking acupuncture rather than being randomly selected for the study.

### Novel embryo transfer method may improve pregnancy rates

A small study in Japan investigated whether injecting a small amount of the embryo culture solution into the uterus before embryo transfer would improve implantation and pregnancy rates for women undergoing IVF. This method of embryo transfer is called 'stimulation of endometrium embryo transfer' or SEET.

Communication between the embryo and the endometrium (cross-talk) plays an important role in implantation – and with IVF, cross-talk cannot occur until the embryos have been transferred to the uterus. In addition, several embryonic factors that affect endometrial receptivity have been found in the embryo transfer solution.

To overcome the absence of cross-talk in IVF, researchers injected a small amount of the embryo transfer solution into the uterus before embryo transfer. This was intended to stimulate the endometrium and provide an optimum environment for implantation when the embryos were transferred.

The implantation rates, pregnancy rates and bhCG levels in the SEET group were significantly higher than the control group. This suggests that this novel method of embryo transfer may be an effective way to improve implantation and pregnancy rates for couples undergoing IVF.

### Effect of fibroids on IVF

The benefit of myomectomy (surgically removing uterine fibroids) prior to starting IVF is controversial. A recent 4-year study undertaken in Italy was designed to assess clinical outcomes of IVF cycles in women with uterine fibroids. 51 patients with fibroids, 63 patients with previous myomectomy and 106 infertile women without fibroids took part in the study. No significant difference was found for pregnancy and live birth rates between the three groups. However, women with fibroids greater than 4 cm needed more IVF cycles to achieve an ongoing pregnancy compared with other groups. The study did not support myomectomy prior to undergoing IVF in women with small to moderate fibroids, regardless of their location within the uterus.

## International Research Round-up

### Folate levels may affect sperm quality

Scientists in California have found a possible link between low dietary folate levels and abnormal sperm in men. Folate is a soluble B vitamin found naturally in foods such as citrus fruits, green leafy vegetables and pulses. High folate levels in women are well known to help prevent birth defects, but this study has shown a reproductive benefit for men as well.

The researchers looked at the diet and supplementary intake of 89 healthy, non-smoking men aged between 22 and 80, and found that men who ingested a high level of folate – between 722 and 1150 mg a day – had 20-30 per cent lower levels of abnormal sperm than men with low folic intake. If abnormal sperm fertilise an egg, the fetus can have the wrong number of chromosomes which can lead to disorders such as Downs syndrome or the risk of miscarriage.

Previous studies have shown that the father's micronutrient intake could play a role in successful conception, but this study suggests that the father's diet may also impact on the development of a healthy baby.

### Trial of 'more natural' alternative to IVF

Researchers in the UK are to trial a new device that allows IVF embryos to develop in the womb rather than a laboratory dish. It is hoped that the treatment, named in vivo development, or IVD, will prove more natural than IVF and lead to fewer embryos with genetic abnormalities being produced.

In normal IVF eggs are fertilised with sperm and allowed to grow for several days in a laboratory dish containing chemicals and nutrients before being transferred to the woman's womb. With IVD, fertilised embryos are put into a small silicone capsule, which is placed in the womb. Perforations in the capsule allow the woman's natural chemicals and hormones to surround the embryo, without it being able to attach to the lining of the womb. The capsule is removed a few days later, and the embryos transferred to the womb as in normal IVF.

Anecdotal evidence so far suggests that embryos produced in vivo are of higher quality than those produced in vitro, and so have an increased chance of survival. A trial of 40 women in the UK will compare embryos grown through IVD and IVF to see which procedure produces the healthiest embryos.

Some fertility experts point out that the womb is not the natural place for new embryos to develop; when conception occurs naturally embryos are located in the fallopian tubes, not the uterus. So while the uterus may be more natural than a laboratory dish, it is still not the natural environment for a new embryo.

### Treatment of hydrosalpinx prior to assisted reproduction

Hydrosalpinx are fluid-filled cysts on the fallopian tubes. Women with hydrosalpinx are less likely to become pregnant through IVF because fluid in the cysts leaks into the uterus, making the endometrium less receptive to implantation.

Treatment is aimed at stopping the hydrosalpinx fluid from leaking into the uterus. A recent review of treatments in Sweden looked at the effects of proximal tubal ligation, laparoscopic salpingectomy (removal of fallopian tube) and transvaginal drainage. The review found that salpingectomy prior to IVF was the only treatment that has proved effective in restoring birth rates for women with hydrosalpinx.

## Shop to support Nurture

You can support Nurture when you purchase Leaping Frogs pegs and baskets, Babybliss nursery furniture or have a photography sitting with Poppet Photography. With each purchase a donation is made to The Nurture Foundation to support reproductive research. For more information about products that support Nurture please visit:



[www.poppet.co.nz](http://www.poppet.co.nz)



[www.leapingfrogs.co.nz](http://www.leapingfrogs.co.nz)



[www.babybliss.co.nz](http://www.babybliss.co.nz)

## Fundraise Online for Nurture

If you're planning to take part in New Idea Run 4 Mums – or any other event – you can raise funds for Nurture by asking your friends and family to sponsor you. With Fundraise Online you can set up your own personal fundraising webpage, complete with secure credit card donation processing facilities. All the money you raise is passed directly and automatically to your nominated charity. You can upload your own photos, keep a Blog, email your webpage address to friends in New Zealand - and around the globe - and encourage them to get behind the event you are taking part in to raise funds for your chosen charity.

To set up a fundraising page for New Idea Run 4 Mums visit [www.fundraiseonline.co.nz](http://www.fundraiseonline.co.nz) and click on "Create fundraising page". Then select New Idea Run 4 Mums as the event, and Nurture as your chosen charity. Then simply email your friends and family to ask for their support. It's that easy!

## Nurture tees now available at The Baby Factory

If you're looking for a gift for a new baby or a mother-to-be, a Nurture t-shirt could be just the answer. Made of 100% cotton and featuring the international symbol for male or female in blue or pink, the t-shirts retail for \$15 each – with \$7 donated to Nurture with every purchase.

These gorgeous tees are now available at all Baby Factory locations in Auckland for a limited time. To find the nearest Baby Factory location in Auckland please visit [www.babyfactory.co.nz](http://www.babyfactory.co.nz)

If you live outside of Auckland you can shop online for a Nurture t-shirt at [www.ohbaby.co.nz](http://www.ohbaby.co.nz)



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