

Life can't do it alone

# Childless couple needs equal help

By CAROL MAHONEY

If infertility is the problem in a marriage, both partners must seek a solution. The wife can't do it alone. Dr. Asghar Afsari is so adamant about this that he will not accept a patient if the husband refuses to attend with her.

"Because it involves two people, an evaluation of infertility should be done with two people," said Dr. Afsari, a specialist in reproductive endocrinology.

"If a husband comes with a wife, it shows his interest and motivation," he said.

Afsari concedes that the masculine ego may play a part in a husband's reticence. "Right from the beginning, all attention has been paid to the female with her as the target of evaluation while 35-40 per cent of the problem may involve the male," he said.

Afsari, a gynecologist and obstetrician whose office is in West Bloomfield, believes the role of the physician is to counsel the couple.

He also believes it is important that the doctor be familiar with the investigative procedure and treatment of infertility, which may sometimes involve surgery.

"Success depends on the doctor who does this frequently," he said. "He will be more confident about the work he does, will have seen more pathology and will be able to outline the treatment with more experience than someone who does

this only three or four times a year. INFERTILITY, which afflicts some 15 per cent of the married couples in the United States, has been treated with a high degree of success, according to Dr. Afsari. Likewise, current testing procedures have shortened the time spent exploring the problem.

"In two to three months we usually know what the cause is," he said. "Three or four years ago it used to take six to nine months."

In the small percentage of cases where there seems to be no physical impediment to conception, the doctor said, "It doesn't mean they don't have a problem. It just means that with the information we have now we can't pinpoint it." This attitude on the part of the physician helps to relieve the couple of any sense of inadequacy.

How long should a couple wait before seeking help?

"Up to eight years ago, couples were advised to wait two to three years before seeking treatment," Afsari said. "Now most doctors would advise a couple who have attempted to conceive a child for more than a year with no resulting pregnancy to come in for consultation."

Dr. AFSARI explained that on their initial visit, a couple will be given a lengthy interview. Both husband and wife will undergo physical examinations and their medical histories noted. Generally, he explained, a sperm analysis and

tubal X-ray are standard procedure.

If a tubal X-ray does not identify the trouble, a laparoscopy is sometimes deemed necessary later in the treatment.

Afsari described the laparoscopy as a fine telescope which is passed through a one-inch skin incision below the navel. Through it, all the female pelvic organs can be observed. It allows the physician to look at the ovaries, tubes and uterus in their relationship to the environment around them. If there is some obstruction, it will be detected.

Afsari compared the release of an egg from the ovary to the ring of a telephone. "If my arm is not restrained, I can reach over and pick up the receiver," he said. "In the same way, if a tube is not blocked by scar tissue or adhesions, it will pick up the ovum."

The laparoscopy is a surgical procedure which is performed faster and with less inconvenience to the

patient than previously. Afsari explained that four years ago the operation was performed with the patient under general anesthesia and a hospital stay of two nights was the rule.

Afsari says he now performs this surgery in the outpatient clinic at Henry Ford Hospital's West Bloomfield Center. The patient has a local anesthetic, spends two hours in the recovery room and can go home the same day.

"Shortly after the operation, the patient is sitting up, sipping coffee, and I can discuss the results of the surgery with her," he said.

Dr. Afsari urges childless couples not to shy away from an evaluation. He believes success rates of 60-70 per cent are encouraging.

For those few cases which don't respond to treatment or where the causes of infertility can't be found, Afsari believes the evaluation is still important in terms of the couple themselves.

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—Asghar Afsari, MD

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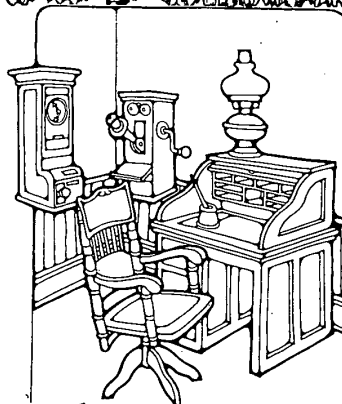
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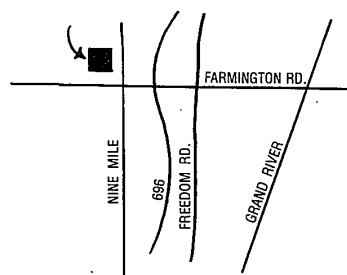
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