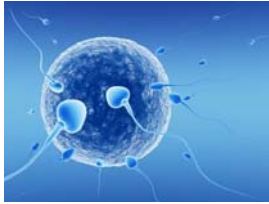


Behavioral risks in children born from IVF

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Since the birth of Louise Joy Brown, the first baby born from in vitro fertilization (IVF) on July 25th, 1978, this reproductive technology has spread throughout the world. In fact, it is estimated that over **3,000,000 IVF babies** have now been born worldwide! Despite the tremendous success that IVF has led to in helping countless numbers of couples experience the joy of parenthood, there still exists the concern about possible increased health and developmental risks in the subsequent offspring. One such area that has received attention is that of behavioral issues in children conceived with IVF. Recently, Dr. Thomas Molinaro reported his data from a study he performed that addressed this very issue.

Dr. Molinaro studied a total of 213 five-year old children, and the findings were based on abnormal childhood behaviors as reported by the children's parents. A validated "Child Behavior Checklist" was used, and the study included 105 children that were born after IVF, and 108 "control" children who were born without IVF treatment. No significant parent-reported differences in overall abnormal behavior were found between the IVF children (10.5%) and those conceived without IVF (10.2%). In addition, there were no significant differences in the prevalence of individual abnormal behaviors, including anxiety (2.9% in the IVF group versus 4.7% in the non-IVF group), attention (1.9% in the IVF group versus 0.9% in the non-IVF group), aggression (1.9% in the IVF group versus 0.9% in the non-IVF group), and depression (1.9% in the IVF group versus 2.8% in the non-IVF group). Finally, the 105 IVF-conceived children were not statistically different than the 108 control children in terms of average gestational age at birth (39.1 versus 39.6 weeks), average weight at birth (3.476 kg versus 3.534 kg), or overall incidence of pregnancy complications (19% versus 15%). The author was reassured by the findings of this study, and concluded that "while the factors involved in childhood development are complex, it is likely that any contribution of assisted reproductive technology is negligible or subtle".

The results of the above research are quite promising in terms of the potential for children born after IVF to experience normal behavioral development as they grow. Further large studies will certainly be needed to confirm these findings, as well as to address other possible developmental issues. However, as with most prior reviews that have been published to date, the benefits of IVF in helping many well deserving patients achieve their dreams of pregnancy still seem to far outweigh any potential small risks of the treatment itself.

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