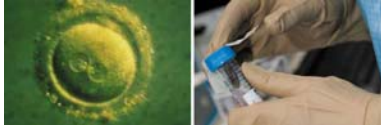


Fertility Drugs and Ovarian Cancer Risk

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Despite the fact that most studies have found no strong link between the use of fertility medications and the risk of ovarian cancer, this controversial topic still receives much attention. Recently, Dr. A. Jensen and colleagues from the Danish Cancer Society have re-examined this issue using data from over 54,000 women referred to all Danish fertility clinics between 1963 and 1998. The most commonly used medication was clomiphene citrate (Clomid), followed by human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG), gonadotropins (including "FSH" and "hMG" injectable medications commonly used in fertility therapy), and gonadotropin-releasing hormone. Several interesting findings were revealed.

The authors found that women who have had children have a lower risk of ovarian cancer than those who have not. The age of the mother at the time of the birth of her first and last child had no significant effect on the risk. Therefore, women having children were found to have a lower risk of ovarian cancer than those who did not, irrespective of at what age they did so. Furthermore, the study found that the risk of ovarian cancer was not affected by the use of any fertility medication, nor was this risk different based on the number of years of use, or, the number of treatment cycles undergone by the patients. Finally, when looking at women who had used combinations of multiple different fertility drugs, the five most common combinations used were analyzed and none were found to affect the risk of ovarian cancer either. In fact, when the risk was compared between women who used one type of fertility drug and those who had not used any, once again, the results were not different.

In conclusion, as with most prior reports on the subject, the authors of this large and well-done study found that **no link exists between the use of fertility medications and the risk of a woman developing ovarian cancer**. Certainly, this issue needs to be continually monitored given both the severity of this disease, as well as the fact that in their study, the authors documented a higher risk of ovarian cancer in women who are infertile compared with those in the general population. This finding has previously been identified. Dr. Jensen and his colleagues suggest that biological, genetic, or other factors related to the infertility itself, and *not* the use of fertility medications, are what may increase the risk for some women.

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