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**Discovering Hope**

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| Vol. 17 •Issue 20 • Page 42 Discovering Hope A new physical therapy approach offers hope to infertile women *By Stefanie Carter* In 1995, the CDC's National Survey of Family Growth found that nearly 10 percent of the U.S. population considered of "reproductive age" is affected by infertility. According to the National Institutes of Health, 40 to 50 percent of infertility cases are caused by a "female" factor including scarring, ovulation dysfunction, poor nutrition, hormone imbalance, ovarian cysts, pelvic infection, tumor or transport system abnormality from the cervix through the fallopian tubes. Although physical therapy is not widely considered a treatment approach for women who are affected by infertility, one couple has been working to change that. Belinda Wurn, PT, and her husband Larry Wurn, a massage therapist, have developed an approach they have successfully used to treat infertile women. The new therapy is proving to give hope to some of the most hopeless cases. **A Bit of History** In 1984, Belinda Wurn was diagnosed with cervical cancer. After surgery and radiation therapy, she developed "frozen pelvis"—a condition where the pelvic tissues adhere to one another. She was then informed at 33 years of age that she was infertile and menopausal. In addition, she had significant chronic pelvic pain that kept her from working. "I went to all kinds of specialists and none of them really had any answers or were able to help me," she explained. "Larry and I started searching for alternative methods to address my pain. I traveled around the country and received different kinds of treatments. We took courses in several manual therapy techniques; gradually, we started refining the techniques we learned to develop our own techniques." When Belinda was finally able to return to work in 1989, the Wurns decided go open a private practice clinic called Professional Touch Physical Therapy, or PTPT. The practice specialized in complicated chronic pain cases. Their new practice was soon thriving, and grew into several locations. Then PTPT was referred a workers' comp case: a woman with low back and pelvic pain. Prior to her therapy at PTPT, the woman had a history of ovarian cysts and multiple surgeries; she had been told she would not be able to have children because both of her fallopian tubes were blocked. When she started treatment at PTPT, the woman had asked Belinda Wurn if it were possible to also work on her surgical scars. During therapy, the woman announced to the Wurns that she was surprised to find out she was pregnant. "Apparently we broke up enough adhesions so that she was able to become pregnant and had a beautiful baby," said Belinda Wurn. Subsequently, a physician friend who heard about the woman's situation referred another patient to the Wurns and then referred his own wife, who (after 12 years if infertility) only had one fallopian tube, and that tube was blocked. "All of these women became pregnant and had children, so we went to the chief of staff at the local hospital and started conducting research on the phenomenon," explained Larry Wurn. "Several physicians and researchers encouraged us to create scientific data on our work. We hired a professional researcher from the National Institutes of Health and published several studies. Finally, we sold our five private practices to open Clear Passage Therapies®." A New Approach The therapy has been effective for women with a history of endometriosis, blocked tubes, pelvic, coccyx or intercourse pain, cysts or PID and previous surgery or infection. Traditional medical techniques to treat these cases are surgical and/or pharmaceutical. "There are 6 million infertile women in the U.S.," said Larry Wurn. We are pleased to be able to offer a non-surgical alternative for infertility treatment and to offer evidence-based science to back that up," According to Belinda Wurn, The Clear Passage ApproachSM is a site-specific manual soft-tissue therapy that addresses adhesions and adhered tissues and structures of the female reproductive tract, the abdomen, the pelvis and throughout the body. "We feel that we are breaking down crosslinks in pelvic and reproductive structures. The crosslinks are the building blocks of adhesions. These form as you heal from anything—surgery, trauma, infection or inflammation," explained Larry Wurn. Screening is an important part of the process. Although there has been much success, not everyone is a candidate for the approach. "We screen everyone. There are contraindications to therapy and we turn people down because we are working with very delicate tissues. We don't want to injure anyone," said Larry Wurn. Some examples of contraindications are abnormal cysts, active infection and active cancer. Clear Passage maintains gynecologist advisors to help answer medical concerns. The Clear Passage ApproachSM has begun to pick up steam in the realm of infertility treatment. "A lot of our referrals come from word-of-mouth and our Website. Since we've had more than 150 babies born after [patients were] receiving our therapy, we've gotten quite a bit of coverage in consumer magazines and national television," explained Belinda Wurn. **Backed by Science** Since first developing this work, the Wurns have made efforts to further legitimize it through research and continued success. "We began hearing from more and more patients that they were getting pregnant when they had already tried medical techniques unsuccessfully," said Belinda Wurn. The Wurns were first able to scientifically prove their results by opening blocked fallopian tubes. While many of their clients were becoming pregnant, opening totally blocked fallopian tubes offered a more solid foundation for their claims. "You could tell if the tube opened by an independent diagnostic procedure," said Larry Wurn. "If they hadn't had any other treatment than what we were doing, we could deduce that it was the work we did with them that made the difference," Belinda Wurn added. The Wurns have already published three studies about their approach in the peer-reviewed gynecologic journal Medscape General Medicine. More are due in October of this year, according to Larry Wurn. "The [published] studies showed an increase in natural pregnancies, increase in IVF pregnancies, improved sexual function and significantly decreased intercourse pain," he said. Upcoming and ongoing research examines how the approach helps women with endometriosis pain and possible improvements in hormone levels.  |