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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 68th ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR REPRODUCTIVE MEDICINE

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Fertility Experts Issue New Report on Egg Freezing; ASRM Lifts "Experimental" Label from Technique

San Diego, CA - The Practice Committee of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM) issued a new report today stating that in young patients egg freezing techniques have been shown to produce pregnancy rates, leading to the birth of healthy babies, comparable to IVF cycles using fresh eggs.

The report entitled "Mature Oocyte Cryopreservation" replaces a report released in 2008 which had stated that the technique was experimental and should only be offered in that context. The current report examined nearly 1000 published papers on the topic. While randomized controlled studies were rare, the Committee found sufficient evidence to "demonstrate acceptable success rates in young highly selected populations."

The report does urge caution, however. The Committee points out that the age of the woman at the time of egg freezing is a very important factor. "Success rates with oocyte cryopreservation appear to decline with maternal age consistent with the clinical experience with fresh oocytes."

The report proposes that egg freezing could provide a viable alternative source of tissues for couples needing donor eggs to build their families. In addition, among the medical indications for its use are fertility preservation for patients who may be left infertile following medical treatments for other diseases, some genetic conditions, or IVF treatment interrupted by the unexpected inability to obtain sperm.

The ASRM Practice Committee is not yet ready to endorse widespread use of egg freezing for elective use. Citing a lack of data on safety, efficacy, cost-effectiveness, and potential emotional risks, the report states, "Marketing this technology for the purpose of deferring childbearing may give women false hope and encourage women to delay childbearing. Patients who wish to pursue this technology should be carefully counseled."

"Oocyte cryopreservation is an exciting and improving technology, and should no longer be considered experimental. Pregnancy rates and health outcomes of the resulting children are now comparable to those of IVF with fresh eggs," said Eric Widra, MD, Chair of the Society for Assisted Reproductive Technology (SART) Practice Committee. Samantha Pfeifer, MD, Chair of the ASRM Practice Committee said, "While a careful review of the literature indicates egg freezing is a valid technique for young women for whom it is medically indicated, we cannot at this time endorse its widespread elective use to delay childbearing. This technology may not be appropriate for the older woman who desires to postpone reproduction."

"The work of our Practice Committee is testament to our commitment to advancing science and clinical care in reproductive medicine. We are pleased that this report was developed in accordance with the new Institute of

Medicine standards for clinical practice guidelines and will be submitted to the National Guidelines Clearinghouse,” said Dolores J. Lamb, PhD, President of ASRM.

The American Society for Reproductive Medicine, founded in 1944, is an organization of more than 7,000 physicians, researchers, nurses, technicians and other professionals dedicated to advancing knowledge and expertise in reproductive biology. Affiliated societies include the Society for Assisted Reproductive Technology, the Society for Male Reproduction and Urology, the Society for Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility, the Society of Reproductive Surgeons and the Society of Reproductive Biologists and Technologists.

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