

Conception in a Capsule?

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(April 22, 2008) A new method of in vitro fertilization (IVF), which involves mixing egg and sperm in a pill-like container that is implanted in a woman's body, will make artificial reproduction less expensive but will still employ the same destructive embryo "screening" process as traditional IVF procedures.

The specially made capsule, called the INVOcell, was developed by Medelle Corporation of Woburn, Massachusetts. After eggs and sperm are harvested, they are placed in the two-inch capsule which contains a culture-like medium. The capsule is then implanted in the woman's body for three days. After the three days, the capsule, which can hold up to 10 embryos, is removed.

Clinic workers inspect the embryos and transfer one or two of the most viable into the mother's womb. The rest are either destroyed or frozen for future use.

The usual method is to grow embryos in a temperature-controlled incubator for a few days. In the new technique, the woman's body becomes the "incubator" for the process with fertilization taking place inside the capsule.

Veronica Jordan, CEO of Medelle Corporation, says the device has important psychological benefits for women.

"Having fertilization occur in their body is a motivating factor for women," Jordan told the *Chicago Sun Times*. "They feel more involved and more connected with the procedure."

The capsule technique was developed in the 1980s and had pregnancy rates comparable to traditional IVF techniques. However, there were technical difficulties with the capsule, and the technique didn't catch on. Medelle developed the new capsule that does not have the technical problems of the old device.

Some fertility experts are saying the new technique is quicker and cheaper because it bypasses the costlier incubation period, which makes it possible for women to undergo the procedure during their lunch hour.

While most people focus on the use of IVF for creating life, what is not well known is that the same process also involves the enormous destruction of human life. Thousands of embryos are destroyed in IVF clinics every day during a routine "screening" process that eliminates embryos deemed to be of lesser quality than others.

For this reason, pro-life leaders such as John Smeaton, the director of the British-based Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, are calling the news about the INVOcell "frightening."

“These are our fellow human beings and they are treated as disposable commodities created via a manufacturing process to be sold to the highest bidder,” he told *LifeNews*. “The pro-life movement must work tirelessly to build public opposition to this kind of reproductive technology in which human subjects are treated as things.”

The Catholic Church condemns the use of IVF as gravely immoral because these methods lack the unitive and/or procreative aspects of the marital act. Pope Paul VI explains in *Donum Vitae* that there is an “inseparable connection, willed by God, and unable to be broken by man on his own initiative, between the two meanings of the conjugal act: the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning.”

Medelle is now funding a clinical trial of the capsule device at several fertility centers in the U.S. If the new study shows INVOcell is safe and effective, they will seek U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval to market the device late next year.

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