GLOSSARY OF FREQUENTLY USED TERMS IN INFERTILITY

ABORTION:

Complete - a miscarriage in which all of the products of conception have been expelled and the cervix is closed.

Habitual - miscarriage occurring on three or more separate occasions.

Incomplete - A miscarriage in which only a portion of the products of conception have been expelled, usually requiring dilation and curettage.

Induced - Intentional termination of pregnancy.

Inevitable - a miscarriage that cannot be halted.

Missed - A miscarriage in which a dead fetus and other products of conception remain in the uterus for four or more weeks.

Selective (Selective Reduction) - Often used to refer to intentional termination of one or more gestational sacs within the uterus, usually in the case of multiple pregnancy (quadruplets or more).

Spontaneous - A miscarriage or the unintended termination of a pregnancy before the twentieth week.

Therapeutic - Intentional termination of pregnancy for the purpose of preserving the life of the mother.

Threatened - Symptoms such as vaginal bleeding, with or without pain, which may end -with a miscarriage or with continuation of a normal pregnancy.

ADHESION: An abnormal attachment of adjacent serous membranes by bands or masses of fibrous connective tissue.

ANDROLOGY: The science of disease peculiar to the male sex, particularly infertility, spermatogenesis and sexual dysfunction.

ANOVULATION: Total absence of ovulation. Note: This is not necessarily the same as "amenorrhea." Menses may still occur with anovulation.

ANOVULATORY BLEEDING: The type of menstruation often associated with failure to ovulate. May be scanty and of short duration or abnormally heavy and in irregular patterns.

ANTIBODY: A protective protein produced in the body that fights or otherwise interacts-with a foreign substance in the body.

ART: Assisted Reproductive Technology. Technological procedures usually including superovulation and the manipulation of sperm and eggs.

ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION BY DONOR (DI): The instillation of donor semen into a woman's vagina for the purpose of conception.

ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION BY HUSBAND (AIH): The instillation of a husband's semen into the wife's vagina for the purpose of conception.

ASPERMIA: The absence of semen and sperm.

ASSISTED HATCHING: A technique where a slit is made in the zona of the shell of the embryo prior to the transfer to increase the possibility of implantation.

ASTHENOSPERMIA: A condition in which the sperm do not move (swim) at all or move more slowly than normal.

AZOOSPERMIA: The absence of sperm in the ejaculate.

BASAL BODY TEMPERATURE (BBT): The temperature of the woman taken orally upon waking in the morning before any activity. Used to help determine ovulation.

BIOCHEMICAL PREGNANCY: A pregnancy that begins and ends almost immediately and usually diagnosed by a beta subunit test.
CERVIX: The lower section of the uterus which protrudes into the vagina and dilates during labor to allow the passage of the infant.

CERVICAL MUCUS: Mucus produced by the cervix which permits passage of sperm to the uterus and fallopian tubes. This mucus changes in volume and quality at the time of ovulation.

CHILD-FREE LIVING: A resolution to infertility in which the couple opts for a life-style without parenting, either temporarily or permanently.

CHLAMYDIA: A sexually transmitted disease that may cause impaired fertility or sterility.

CHROMOSOME: Rod-shaped bodies in a cell's nucleus which carry the genes that convey hereditary characteristics.

CONCEPTION: The fertilization of a woman's egg by a man's sperm resulting in a new life.

CONGENITAL: A characteristic or defect present at birth, acquired during pregnancy but not necessarily hereditary.

CRYOBANK: A place where tissues (i.e., sperm, oocytes, embryos) are stored in the frozen state.

CRYOPRESERVATION (EMBRYO FREEZING): A procedure used to preserve (by freezing) and store embryos or gametes (sperm, oocytes).

CRYPTORCHIDISM: Undescended testicles.

CULDOSCOPY: Direct visualization of the ovaries, the exterior of the fallopian tubes, and the uterus by means of an instrument inserted through a small incision in the vagina. A diagnostic study in the infertility workup.

DIETHYLSTILBESTROL (DES): A synthetic estrogen used occasionally as a "morning-after pill." Formerly thought to prevent miscarriage, it may have caused fertility problems in the offspring of women who took it.

DILATION AND CURETTAGE (D & C): Dilation of the cervix to allow scraping of the uterine lining with an instrument (curette). Done as a therapeutic measure in infertility. Also, a means to induce abortion in the first trimester of pregnancy.

DILATION AND EVACUATION (D&E): A method of induced abortion in which the cervix is dilated and the uterine contents removed by a suction device.

DONOR INSEMINATION: The introduction of sperm from a donor into a woman's vagina or cervix using instruments, in order to achieve a pregnancy.

DYSPAREUNIA: Painful intercourse for either the woman or the man.

ECTOPIC PREGNANCY: A pregnancy in which the fertilized egg implants anywhere but in the uterine cavity (usually in the fallopian tube, the ovary or the abdominal cavity).

Egg (Oocyte) Donation: Surgical removal of an egg from one woman for transfer into the fallopian tube or uterus of another woman.

Egg Retrieval: The process of removing eggs from the ovaries.

Ejaculation: The male orgasm during which approximately two to five milliliters of semen (seminal fluid and sperm) are ejected from the penis.

Embryo: The term used to describe the early stages of fetal growth, from conception to the eighth week of pregnancy.

Embryo Adoption: Process by which artificial insemination of a women with donor sperm results in an embryo that is implanted into a second woman (also called artificial embryonation).

Embryo Transfer: Introduction of an embryo into a woman's uterus after in vitro (or in vivo) fertilization.

Endocrine System: System of glands including the thymus. pituitary, thyroid, adrenals, testicles or ovaries.
ENDOMETRIUM: The mucus membrane lining the uterus.

ENDOMETRIAL BIOPSY: The extraction of a small sample of tissue from the uterus for examination. Usually done to show evidence of ovulation or to diagnose endometrial hyperplasia.

ENDOMETRIOSIS: The presence of endometrial tissue (the normal uterine lining) in abnormal locations such as the tubes, ovaries and peritoneal cavity, often causing painful menstruation and infertility.

EPIDIDYMIS: An elongated organ in the male lying above and behind the testicles. It contains a highly convoluted canal, four to six meters in length, where, after production, sperm are stored, nourished and ripened for a period of several months.

ESTRADIOL (E2): A hormone released by developing follicles in the ovary. Plasma estradiol levels are used to help determine progressive growth of the follicle during ovulation induction.

ESTROGEN: A class of female hormones, produced mainly by the ovaries from the onset of puberty and continuing until menopause, which are responsible for the development of secondary sexual characteristics.

FALLOPIAN TUBES: A pair of narrow tubes that carry the ovum (egg) from the ovary to the body of the uterus.

FERTILIZATION: The penetration of the egg by the sperm and fusion of genetic materials to result in the development of an embryo.

FETAL DEATH: The term often used to include both miscarriage and still-birth.

FETUS: The developing baby from the ninth - week of pregnancy until the moment of birth.

FIBROID TUMOR (LEIOMYOMA): A benign tumor of fibrous tissue that may occur in the uterine wall. May be totally without symptoms or may cause abnormal menstrual patterns or infertility.

FOLLCLE: The structure in the ovary that has nurtured the ripening egg and from which the egg is released.

FOLLICLE STIMULATING HORMONE (FSH): A hormone produced in the anterior pituitary that stimulates the ovary to ripen a follicle for ovulation.

FOLLICULAR PHASE: The first half of the menstrual cycle when ovarian follicle development takes place.

GAMETE: The male or female reproductive cells - the sperm or the ovum (egg).

GIFT (Gamete Intrafallopian Transfer): A procedure where eggs and sperm are transferred into the fallopian tube where fertilization may take place.

GENETIC: Pertaining to hereditary characteristics.

GENETIC ABNORMALITY: A disorder arising from an anomaly in the chromosomal structure which may or may not be hereditary.

GENETIC COUNSELING: Advice and information provided, usually by a team of experts, on the detection and risk of recurrence of genetic disorder.

GESTATION: The period of fetal development in the uterus from conception to birth usually considered to be 40 weeks in humans.

GESTATIONAL CARRIER: The woman who gestates an embryo, fetus, or child for another couple.

GONADOTROPIN: A hormone capable of stimulating the testicles or the ovaries to produce sperm or an egg, respectively.

HORMONE: A chemical, produced by an endocrine gland, which circulates in the blood and has widespread action throughout the body.

HOSTILITY FACTOR: The inability of sperm to survive in the vaginal or cervical area long enough to swim upward toward the ovum. May be due to an overly acidic secretion or to an immunologic reaction that kills the sperm.
HUMAN CHORONIC GONADOTROPIN (HCG): A hormone secreted by the placenta during pregnancy that prolongs the life of the corpus luteum, progesterone production and thus preserves the pregnancy. This hormone accounts for pregnancy tests being positive. It may also be administered therapeutically in some infertility problems or in males for the treatment of cryptorchidism.

HYDROSALPINX: A large fluid-filled, club-shaped fallopian tube closed at the fimbriated end (the end nearest to the ovary). It is a cause of infertility.

HYPERSTIMULATION SYNDROME: A syndrome which may include ovarian enlargement, gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea), abdominal distension and weight gain. Severe cases may be further complicated with cardiovascular, pulmonary and electrolyte disturbances requiring hospitalization.

HYSTEROCECTOMY: The removal of the uterus which can be total (including removal of the ovaries and tubes) or partial (just the uterus and sometimes including the cervix).

HYSTEROSALPINGOGRAM: An x-ray study in which a contrast dye is infected into the uterus to show the delineation of the body of the uterus and the patency of the fallopian tubes. Also called a tubogram or uterotubogram.

IDIOPATHIC (UNEXPLAINED) INFERTILITY: The term used to describe when no reason can be found to explain the cause of a couple's infertility.

IMMUNOLOGIC RESPONSE: The presence of sperm antibodies in the woman or man that tend to destroy sperm action by immobilizing the sperm or making them clump together.

IMPLANTATION: The embedding of the fertilized egg in the endometrium of the uterus.

IMPOTENCE: The inability of the male to achieve or maintain an erection for intercourse due to physical or emotional problems or to combined factors.

INCOMPLETE CERVIX: A weakened cervix that is incapable of holding the fetus within the uterus for the full nine months. Sometimes a cause of late miscarriage or stillbirth.

INFERTILITY: The inability of a couple to achieve a pregnancy after one year of regular unprotected sexual relations, or the inability of the woman to carry a pregnancy to live birth.

INTRACYTOPLASMIC SPERM INJECTION (ICSI): A micromanipulation technique where a single sperm is infected into an egg cell.

IN VITRO FERTILIZATION (IVF): A procedure in which an egg is removed from a ripe follicle and fertilized by a sperm cell outside the human body. The fertilized egg is allowed to divide in a protected environment for about two days and then is inserted back into the uterus of the woman who produced the egg.

LAPAROSCOPY: The direct visualization of the ovaries and the exterior of the fallopian tubes and uterus by means of inserting a surgical instrument through a small incision below the navel.

LAPAROTOMY: Abdominal Surgery.

LUTEAL PHASE: The days of the menstrual cycle following ovulation and ending with menses during which progesterone is produced.

LUTEINIZING HORMONE (LH): A hormone secreted by the anterior lobe of the pituitary throughout the menstrual cycle. Secretion of LH increases in the middle of the cycle to induce release of the egg.

MENOPAUSE: The cessation of menstruation due to aging or failure of the ovaries. Most commonly occurs between the ages of 40 and 50. Surgical menopause is the abrupt cessation of menstruation caused by the removal of the ovaries (hysterectomy).

MENSTRUATION: The shedding of the uterine lining by cyclic bleeding that normally occurs about once a month in the mature female, in the absence of pregnancy, until menopause.

MICROMANIPULATION/MICROINSEMINATION: The use of sophisticated tools and techniques to facilitate fertilization.

MISCARRIAGE: A spontaneous abortion of a fetus up to the age of viability.
MORPHOLOGY OF SPERM: The study of the shape of sperm cells. This evaluation is part of a semen analysis.

MOTILITY OF SPERM: The ability of the sperm to move about.

MYOMECTOMY: A surgical removal of a tumor (myoma) in the uterine muscular wall.

NATURAL IVF CYCLE: An IVF cycle in which there is no inducement of superovulation by the use of medication.

OLIGO-OVULATION: Infrequent ovulation, usually less than six ovulatory cycles per year.

OUGOSPERMLA: An abnormally low number of sperm in the ejaculate of the male.

OOCYTE: The egg.

OOCYTE RETRIEVAL: A surgical procedure, usually under general anesthesia, to collect the eggs contained within the ovarian follicles.

OVARIAN FAILURE: The inability of the ovary to respond to any gonadotropic hormone stimulation, usually due to the absence of follicular tissue on a genetic basis or the postmenopausal condition (absence of oocytes).

OVARIES: The sexual gland of the female which produces the hormones estrogen and progesterone, and in which the ova are developed. There are two ovaries, one on each side of the pelvis, and they are connected to the uterus by the fallopian tubes.

OVULATION: The discharge of a ripened egg, usually at about the midpoint of the menstrual cycle.

OVULATION INDUCTION: The use of female hormone therapy (clomiphene citrate, hMG, hCG) to stimulate oocyte development and release.

OVULATORY DYSFUNCTION: A dysfunction of the releasing process of an ovum from the ovarian follicle or of the process of egg development.

OVUM: The egg (reproductive) cell produced in the ovaries each month. (The plural of ovum is ova).

PELVIC INFLAMMATORY DISEASE (PID): Inflammatory disease of the pelvis often caused by infection.

PITUITARY: A gland located at the base of the human brain that secretes a number of important hormones related to normal growth and development and fertility.

POLYCYSTIC OVARIAN SYNDROME (PCO): Development of multiple cysts in the ovaries due to arrested follicular growth. There is an imbalance in the amount of LH and FSH released during the ovulatory cycle. Infertility associated with PCO is often responsive to drug therapy.

POLYP: A nodule or small growth found frequently on mucous membranes such as in the cervix or the uterus.

POSTCOITAL TEST: A diagnostic test for infertility in which vaginal and cervical secretions are obtained by vaginal examination following intercourse and then analyzed under a microscope. Normal test results show large number of motile sperm.

PREMATURE EJACULATION: Discharge of sperm from the penis prior to or immediately after entering the vagina.

PREMATURE OVARIAN FAILURE: The premature cessation of ovarian function usually before the age of thirty five.

PROGESTERONE: A hormone secreted by the corpus luteum of the ovary after ovulation has occurred. Also produced by the placenta during pregnancy.

RESOLVE Inc.: A nationwide organization, founded in 1973, that provides referrals, support and medical information to infertile individuals.

SALPINGITIS: Inflammation of the fallopian tubes.

SECONDARY INFERTILITY: The inability to conceive or carry a pregnancy after having successfully conceived and carried one or more pregnancies.
**SEMEN**: The sperm and seminal secretions ejaculated during orgasm.

**SEMEN ANALYSIS**: The study of fresh ejaculate under the microscope to count the number of million sperm milliliter or cubic centimeter, to check the shape and size of the sperm, and to note their ability to move (motility)

**SPERM (SPERMATOZOA)**: The male reproductive cell that has measurable characteristics such as:

- **Motility** - Refers to percent of sperm demonstrating any type of movement.
- **Count (or Density)** - Refers to the number of sperm present.
- **Morphology** - Refers to form or shape of the sperm.
- **Viability** - Refers to whether or not the sperm are alive.

**SPERM WASHING**: A technique that separates the sperm from the seminal fluid.

**SURROGATE MOTHER**: A woman who becomes pregnant through insemination with the sperm of the husband of an infertile woman, and then, following birth, turns the child over for adoption by the couple.

**TESTICULAR BIOPSY**: Small surgical excision of testicular tissue to determine the ability of the cells to produce normal sperm or to diagnose possible neoplasms.

**TESTICULAR FAILURE**: Occurs when the testes fail to produce sperm.

**TESTOSTERONE**: The most potent male sex hormone, produced in the testicles.

"**TIPPED**" **UTERUS**: A uterus tilted backwards toward the woman's back rather than the more common state of tilting toward the front of the abdomen. By itself this should not be a cause of infertility.

**TUBOPLASTY**: Surgical repair of fallopian tubes.

**ULTRASOUND**: A technique for visualizing the fetus in the uterus which allows for estimating the size of the fetus and for detecting fetal abnormalities. Also used to follow the growth of ovarian follicles during infertility therapy (can be done both abdominally or vaginally).

**UTERUS**: The hollow, muscular organ in the woman that holds and nourishes the fetus until the time of birth.

**VAGINISMUS**: A spasm of the muscles around the opening of the vagina making penetration during sexual intercourse either impossible or very painful. Can be organic or psychogenic in nature.

**VARICOCELE**: A varicose vein of the testicles, sometimes a cause of male infertility.

**VASECTOMY**: Surgery to excise part of vas deferens to sterilize a man.

**WEDGE RESECTION**: A surgical procedure in which a small section is excised from an ovary to improve ovarian function.

**ZYGOTE**: An embryo in early development stage.

**ZYGOTEINTRA-FALLOPIAN TRANSFER (ZIFT)**: Transfer of a zygote into a fallopian tube.