

Infertility sucks

We started actively trying to get pregnant in 2006. We knew we were going to get married, had (still have!) every intention of staying together, and it seemed like a good time. I went off the Pill and we expected to be within average – a year or so, and we'd be pregnant. We had friends who were getting pregnant by accident. How hard could it be?

For twelve months we did what all of the “Want to get pregnant?” books suggested. No pressure, no big deal, just pattering along. I've been teased about having baby making hips all my life. We both have big families – four kids in my family, five in his – so there was no reason to think anything was wrong.

After a year or so, I went to see my OBGYN. She did a few blood tests, said I might possibly have PCOS, said to give it a few more months, and let it be. A few months later we went back, and more tests were ordered. Something came up which indicated fertility treatments might be necessary. The doctor who did that test said he really thought we would make amazing parents. At the time, it made me cry. In retrospect, he probably says that a lot. I mean, is he going to say “Well, good thing your genes won't be passed on!”?

I was starting to have a hard time when, every month, I got very clear confirmation that we were, yet again, not pregnant. This was supposed to be easy.

We discussed our options. Insurance didn't cover anything having to do with fertility. Neither one of us wanted to go through in vitro fertilization (IVF). Cost benefit analysis, for us – well, \$15,000 for a 60% chance at having a baby was not reasonable to me or to Xander. We didn't have that much money to play with, and even if we did it would be a lot of heartache for a chance that wasn't good enough. We knew we had

to make that decision before it became a question, because when emotions run high, no one is good at being sensible. We went into this knowing that intra-uterine insemination (IUI, which is much cheaper) was the only procedure we were willing to do, and if that didn't work, that was it.

We were referred to a fertility specialist in town. I will not name names, but he's an ass. He talked down to us every time we were there and tried to make us feel like idiots. We said, at our first meeting with him, in the interests of laying all of the cards on the table and being very clear, that we were only going to do IUI and that, if it came to IVF, we were done. He sat and nodded his head, and we thought he understood. He explained the IUI process in very small words (usually the sperm has to get from here to China, but with IUI we give it a head start and it only has to travel from Hawaii!-really? That's the best example you could come up with?). I would have much preferred that he treated us like we had brains, but that was not his style. He was very...paternal. I don't appreciate feeling like a doctor would, if he thought he could get away with it, pat me on the head and say, "There, there. You aren't a doctor, so you couldn't possibly understand. Let me make all of those difficult decisions for you so you don't have to worry your pretty little head about it."

Ick.

Did I mention that he irritated me?

So. Fertility doctor, not the best rapport, whatever. Mostly we interacted with his staff, anyway. His staff who did not once call me by name. Instead I was sweetheart, darling, dear, or whatever else they could come up with.

I overlooked it, although it felt much too sweet. We weren't there for the social interaction. We were there to try to have a baby. I can put up with a lot if there is a goal that's

important to me.

Ultrasound. No problem. HSG was not comfortable, but not too bad. First results were fine, then they said they might have seen a mass on my uterus, so they had to do a water ultrasound. "Mass" is one of those words that scares me when it comes to medical tests, so I worried for a week. The water ultrasound showed that it was just a slightly misshapen uterus, not a mass. The uterus shape was not odd enough to cause issues with implantation.

So, we were good to go.

Clomid sucks. I mean, the whole process sucks, but apparently I react rather strongly to hormones. (One more reason I miss being on the pill – twice a month I get hormone swings. Argh!) Have you ever seen Cool Hand Luke? Not generally a deeply moving movie, right? I mean, yes, the ending is sad, but not *that* sad. At the end of the movie, the first evening of Clomid, I was weeping copiously. It was so sad! I couldn't get over it! I figured I was just tired and ignored it. The next day, at belly dancing, I was having a great time and ended up in tears. Clomid takes my good mood and slams it, hard, between about 7 and 8:30 PM. Before and after those times, I was fine. In that stretch of time, I would weep about anything. TV commercials, someone smiling, a moth landing on the window – anything. It was ridiculous. I knew it was ridiculous and it didn't help or change anything.

5 days of being hormone slammed later, we were finally through that.

Clomid makes me ovulate. 2 follicles, one on each side, good sizes. I got a trigger shot to make sure I was really ready, and we did the IUI.

Two weeks later (we'll just ignore all of the in-between pain-in-the-ass-ness that is the two week wait) I wasn't pregnant.

A week after that, we were asked to come in for a consultation with the fertility specialist. Xander had a meeting he really needed to go to. No big deal, I figured. It would just be a "Yes, that was sad, let's try it a few more times and we'll see where we are" kind of meeting.

I walked into the doctor's office and sat down.

He walked into his office and sat across from me.

"You will never have children without IVF. I am ethically unable to do another IUI cycle for the two of you."

"What?" Just like that, I was crying.

"In this office, we never want people to go without having a child due to financial constraints. Here is some information about IVF. We have several very good programs to spread out the cost, low interest loans, and possibly a grant to help with some of the costs. You see, IVF is like taking that sperm, which had to swim to China, and putting it on a helicopter and getting it right to the egg."

I was very upset, furious, and a little part of my brain was thinking, "There aren't any helicopters that can make the flight without refueling, asshole."

"You wouldn't be here if you didn't want a child. You wouldn't have come this far if you weren't serious. IVF is not that expensive. I don't want you to get 30 years down the road and think, 'If only we'd done IVF, I might have grandchildren by now!' I know you want a baby to hold. There's really nothing like the experience of having a child, knowing that you and your husband have added to your wonderful families."

"We aren't going to do IVF. It's much too expensive. I know it sounds cold, but we basically did a cost benefit analysis, and we can't do that. We told you that the first day we were here."

"We have programs to help, though. You really can't put a price on a baby! It really rounds out your family, and you and your husband clearly want one. Let me call my finance person and she can talk to you about the options."

(I remember thinking, "You can't put a price on a baby? You just did!") "But we don't..."

"Hello, I'm sending Wendryn in to you to talk about financing options for IVF." He hung up the phone, walked out the door, and asked a passing nurse to take me to the financial person's office.

I was crying. You can't tell from this, but I don't cry much. This was too much to handle, though, and I felt like I was getting steamrolled by the equivalent of a used car salesman. I sat in the financial person's office and numbly answered questions, was handed a wad of papers regarding the procedure we didn't want, then left as fast as I could.

I was angry. I felt cheated. I felt like the doctor was looking for money, not working with our best interests. I felt kind of...well, slimed. I was very unhappy with how the whole incident had been handled, and I wanted to curl up in a hole and pull it in behind me.

After over three years of trying, all of the tests we had done, everyone saying how good we'd be as parents, to be told, flat out, that we couldn't have kids...it was immensely painful.

There is more to this, but nothing I can write about yet. Infertility sucks.