



THE Dandelion

THE NEWSLETTER OF FERTILITY NEW ZEALAND, A REGISTERED CHARITY SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH FERTILITY ISSUES

JULY 2016

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

Fertility Week, our annual public awareness campaign, is about providing information and advice to New Zealanders about their fertility – for any stage or situation.

Did you know that:

- One in four New Zealanders will experience infertility
- Sperm are best used fresh – periods of abstinence longer than three days can be detrimental because of the accumulation of aged sperm
- Did you know that excessive exercise is detrimental to fertility in both women and men? Moderate exercise is important though, so find the balance! Did we see you during Fertility Week?

We held events around the country, such as 'May for Men' in Taranaki, and an evening with legend cricketer Chris Harris and his wife Linda in Christchurch.

Each weeknight had a different information webinar, with a live presentation by a fertility specialist, followed by an opportunity for Q&A.

Miss the webinars? The recordings are available on www.fertilityweek.org.nz

Fertility Week also sought to break
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Running for fertility!



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Welcome Notes

Welcome to *The Dandelion* newsletter.

Alarming statistics about the prevalence of infertility in New Zealand have been emerging over the past year. In a nutshell, infertility will affect one in four New Zealanders during their lifetime. Until quite recently, we quoted 'one in six' as the prevalence of infertility, and so the shift to one quarter of our population is very dramatic.

'One in four New Zealanders' underpinned this year's Fertility Week campaign. Fertility Week 'what you need to know, now' looked to raise awareness of the impact of age on fertility, the fact that infertility affects men and women equally, the importance of timing of sex for natural conception and the impact of lifestyle factors on fertility. It also sought to address the commonly-held misconception that IVF is a 'silver bullet'.

One of the events held around the country during Fertility Week was an evening in Christchurch with former

BlackCap Chris Harris and his wife Linda, who gave a personal account of their fertility journey. We are grateful to the Harris' and to all our Members who share their stories in order to support others during what can be a stressful and isolating time. One of our Christchurch support group facilitators, Juanita, shares her own story on page 4.

If you are not yet a Member of Fertility NZ, join today (free of charge) at www.fertilitynz.org.nz/register. Benefits of becoming a Member include receiving news (Members receive *The Dandelion* via email), and/or receiving notifications about support groups in your area. Members can also participate in the forums on our website. Importantly, Fertility NZ Membership supports all New Zealanders experiencing infertility – the more Members we have, the stronger our voice. This is particularly important when lobbying

the Government. We also survey our Members on issues including relevant legislation changes and their experience of New Zealand fertility clinics.

In addition to becoming Members, we always welcome new people into our wonderful community of volunteers around the country. If you would like to help in your area, such as through organising or facilitating support groups, email support@fertilitynz.org.nz for more information.

Fertility NZ exists to support you, and any feedback you have on the information, support and advocacy we provide is always welcome.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to read *The Dandelion* and look forward to continuing to provide support over the coming months.

Cheers

Nigel McKerras – President

Fertility Week: What did **you** learn?

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down myths surrounding infertility. For example, recent research shows that NZers (especially young New Zealanders) believe that fertility treatment is much more successful than it is in reality and Fertility Week seeks to address this. One of our key visions is for a fertility-friendly and fertility-aware New Zealand, and Fertility Week is an important vehicle for this vision.

See you next year!

If you missed the Fertility Week Webinars, you can watch the recorded videos any time! See them at www.fertilityweek.org.nz

Wanted: People to provide support in Tauranga, Gisborne and Whangarei

We are currently looking for Regional Support Representatives in Tauranga, Gisborne and Whangarei. Our wonderful Regional Support Reps are volunteers who hold coffee/support groups (usually monthly) in their area. They have their own fertility stories and realise the value of support.

Our Regional Support Reps also look after an FNZ email address for their region. This is completely volunteer but all costs of running the group are covered by Fertility NZ, and we provide all the support we can!

If you live in Tauranga, Gisborne and Whangarei and are interested in helping others on their fertility journey then please contact: support@fertilitynz.org.nz to discuss



About Fertility New Zealand

Fertility New Zealand is committed to supporting, advocating for and educating all people who face infertility challenges at all stages of their journey and beyond.

Fertility NZ was founded in 1990 and is a registered charity. It operates on a national level and much of its work is undertaken by dedicated volunteers. Fertility NZ provides assistance for people with fertility issues through the following channels:

- **Support** A network of regular support gatherings, workshops and contact groups throughout the country; an 0800 line and email address for enquiries, and infertility forums on our website where Members can provide support to one another.
- **Information** Fertility NZ's website www.fertilitynz.org.nz is the focal point of information; informative fact sheet brochures are available for Members and through Clinics; regular publication of *The Dandelion*

newsletter and email updates to Members; conferences and information events.

- **Advocacy** Representing the voice of people affected by infertility on medical, ethical and policy issues.

Our vision

FertilityNZ has a vision of a 'fertility friendly' and fertility-aware New Zealand where:

- Infertility is recognised, understood and supported;
- All men and women faced with the medical condition of infertility have access to appropriate, timely and fully-funded medical treatment;
- Men and women have all the information necessary to enable them to make informed decisions regarding their fertility;
- Young New Zealanders learn about fertility preservation;
- Fertility and all alternative forms of whanau and family-building are respected and valued.



James' big run – for us!

Congratulations to James (above) who ran the Christchurch half marathon to raise money for his chosen charity, Fertility New Zealand. James raised over \$900 through what he reported as one of his toughest challenges.

James' wife has PCOS and a very low chance of ovulating. After trying other methods without success, they embarked on IVF. Thankfully they were one of the lucky couples who had success first time.

Their beautiful daughter Olivia just celebrated her first birthday. James advised "we whole- heartedly support Fertility NZ and encourage people not to give up on their dream of becoming parents".

Thanks so much James, from all at Fertility NZ!

- If you are interested in following in James' footsteps and using your event to fundraise for Fertility NZ, we can happily provide you a branded sports t-shirt. We have a Give a Little page for your fundraising – and proceeds of this go towards running our Regional Support groups. Contact Fleur on support@fertilitynz.org.nz or 0800 333 306 to discuss.

Introducing...

Fertility NZ is made up of an Executive Committee (12 Members plus the President), a network of regional support volunteers, and two employees. Our employees are:

Fleur Wallace, Support Coordinator
support@fertilitynz.org.nz

Fleur (top left) joined Fertility NZ in March this year. She provides assistance to our regional support volunteers. Fleur also looks after the 0800 line and Support email address, so if you contact us, you'll be speaking to Fleur!

Nicola Bitossi, Business Manager
nicola@fertilitynz.org.nz

Nicola (left) has been with Fertility NZ since 2012. Nicola is responsible for major projects such as Fertility Week, *The Dandelion* newsletter, key relationships and funding.



Juanita Copeland and husband Terry share their story

Even the BAD DAYS are GOOD

For as long as I can remember, I have pictured myself as a mother. Before I even imagined my life as a career woman, a wife or a friend; I was a mum. In my imaginary world I had a little girl (perhaps two) with dark brown eyes and chestnut hair that bounced about in loose ringlets.

As I grew older I worked hard, loved my work and was proud of my career and looked around for Mr Right. In my late 20s I found him and we were married. Terry had been married before and had three school age children. Part of what I adored about him was the way he managed his divorce and parented his children; he was a great Dad.

Thinking that phase of his life was over, he had had a vasectomy. When our relationship was becoming really serious I told him that having children was something I didn't think I could forego. He didn't flinch and agreed that having a family together would be wonderful. He also assured me that the vasectomy



Terry and Juanita with daughter Hazel, aged three.

could be reversed and he was willing to undergo that surgery in order to conceive.

Surgery

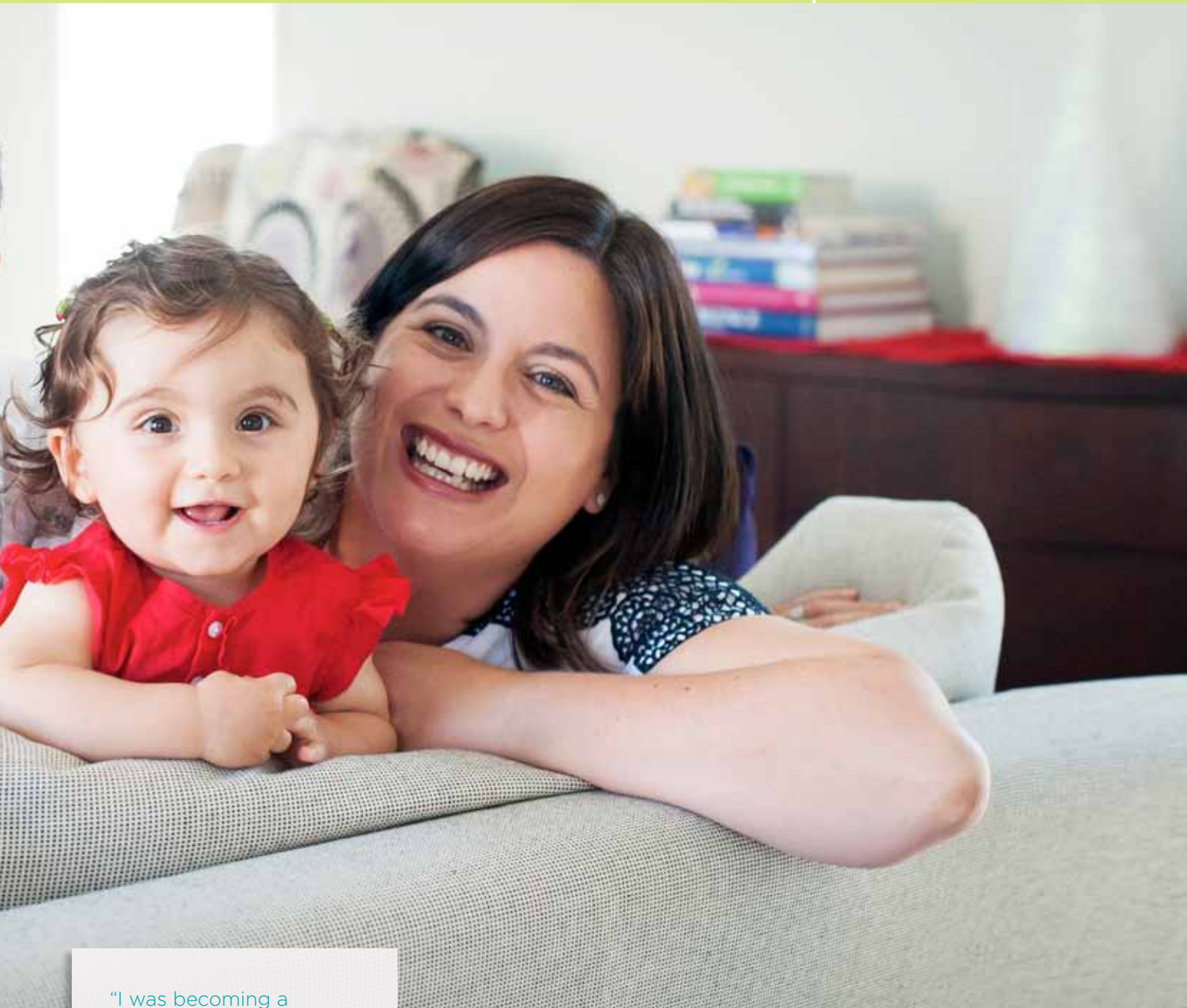
After we had been married a couple of years, I was nearing 30. We decided to seek advice on how best to get pregnant. All my tests came back good as gold and it was decided that if the vasectomy could be successfully reversed we could conceive naturally.

We were thrilled and had the surgery done. It was only moderately successful, but good enough that

we were sent away to try natural conception. After almost 12 months of no luck, Terry's semen was retested and it was found the reversal actually hadn't worked and there wasn't a single sperm in the semen. We were so frustrated that we had wasted so much time and money, without success. At least we still have IVF as a back-up we thought.

Public funding wait

We were told that Public funding would take up to 3 years to come through for us so we decided to scrape the money together to pay privately – filled with



“I was becoming a changed person. My friends were too scared to tell me they were pregnant. Some had three babies in the time we were trying to get pregnant.”

hope that as I had no issues we'd only need to do it once! We were wrong. The first cycle was cancelled the day before egg collection. As it was a clinical error we were refunded our money and embarked on our second cycle.

The wait for that result was excruciating. Every twinge, ache,

mood swing or trip to the toilet filled me with anxiety. Would there be bleeding? Am I feeling this because I'm pregnant or because of the drugs? I would get anxious about how worried I was and how I couldn't relax.

The result was negative and we were crushed. I cried and cried and cried – mainly nuzzled into Terry's chest, in bed, in the dark. It's so unfair. We are good people, we would love a child, we would be great parents – and the big one – there's nothing wrong with me, so why won't this work?

Three more IVF cycles

We went through IVF another three times with two Frozen Embryo Transfers interspersed. We had one positive result but the HCG level was low and even though we had been warned the pregnancy was precarious, we held out a smidgen of hope that it would take hold. But two days later the blood test showed it was no longer there. It was devastating. We had both allowed ourselves to imagine, just for a few minutes, that we were going to have a baby and now we weren't. More tears.



“In 2012 I gave birth to our daughter. Hazel was healthy and the most wonderful baby. The moment she was put on my chest the previous five years’ heartache disappeared.”

The whole process was exhausting. The logistics alone were a nightmare. Getting into the clinic for scans, getting home in time to inject, working Terry’s massive travel schedule to accommodate last minute treatment and trying to keep it reasonably private.

Morbid fear

I was becoming a changed person. My friends were too scared to tell me they were pregnant. Some had three babies in the time we were trying to get pregnant. I was starting to mistake Terry’s stoic support as a lack of caring – if he wasn’t crying floods of tears I started to question how invested he was. After all, he had three children – he got cards on Fathers Day!! I love having his children as part of our family, but they have a wonderful mother and I never attempted to carry that mantle. I had a morbid fear of facing life as someone who wasn’t a parent,

growing old without children of my own around me. He never had to face that. Mother’s Day was torture. Baby showers were no go zones and I hated myself for that.

I love my friends and work hard at being a good friend to them, but I just couldn’t muster the courage or energy to sit through them. My close friends were amazing and so supportive. As therapy I baked. I loved doing something I finally had control over ... but whatever I baked I ate. My weight increased, my self esteem went in the opposite direction. I carried this sadness in my gut, like a heavy rock I couldn’t shift.

“The pain and sadness of infertility has never completely left me. But it has made me so grateful for my marriage, my friends, family and my darling girl.”

We had a wonderful life, ate out, travelled and cherished our marriage. But I remember sitting on a beach in Bali with a cocktail in hand, watching the sun set and all I could think was that I would swap it all to be in my living room in track pants with my own baby spewing down my front!!

By this point we were exhausted, financially stretched and almost at the point of contemplating giving up. There is a kind of grief that comes with coming face to face with the very real possibility that I would never grow a baby inside me and it's awful.

All too much

Just as we were questioning how much more we could handle, the February Earthquakes hit Christchurch. It completely destroyed our house. In an instant we had nowhere to call home. It was the house we'd bought to fill with children and live in forever. I was done. That was the last thing I could juggle. We moved in with my parents and began the process of rebuilding our lives. Further IVF was put on the backburner until we could pull ourselves together. We found a house to rent and began our battle with the insurance company.

It was all too much though. After 3 years of constant IVF and now this, I simply couldn't juggle it all. I decided to resign from work. It was a huge decision but we decided that I would take 6 months to regroup, work on the

House claim and then we would make some big decisions. It was bliss. I cleared my head, lost weight, got fit and refocused. I changed my mind set and decided that things would happen for us. The specialist had said to me he still felt pregnancy for me was not a matter of “if”, but “when” and we just had to tough it out. So that was my mantra – it's WHEN not IF!

Positivity

Then, a small glimmer of positivity. Our public funding came through and we were told we could start another round of IVF straight away. We were almost settled with the insurance company so decided to go ahead.

It worked. The initial blood test showed strong HCG levels and they continued to rise. Then in November 2012 I gave birth to our daughter. Hazel was healthy and the most wonderful baby. The moment she was put on my chest the previous 5 years heartache disappeared. The second I saw her lock eyes with her Daddy and the expression on his face, any doubts I had about his wanting another child melted away.

She is now three years old. She has deep brown eyes and beautiful chestnut hair that falls into perfect ringlets. She is amazing. She will be an only child. We can't face any more treatment but we are so content.

So grateful

The pain and sadness of infertility has never completely left me. The struggle to conceive combined with our insurance claim took all the fight out of me. But it has made me so, so grateful for my marriage, my friends, family and my darling girl. It has put things into much sharper perspective – as a parent I still consciously appreciate every single moment, even the bad days – because I'm all too aware they may never have come to be.

Fertility Funding Charitable Trust is launched

The Fertility Funding Charitable Trust has been established by Fertility Associates to provide financial support for people who cannot afford the fertility treatment they need. This includes people who do not meet the public funding criteria, or have exhausted their funding allocation.



The chances of success

The public funding model provides two cycles per patient when the woman is less than 40 years. However, the average age women seek fertility advice in New Zealand is 37.5 years and their chance of having a successful IVF cycle at this age is 35%. Therefore, more than 1 cycle could be required to achieve a family's dream of a baby.

Recipients of the Trust may include:

- Women aged 40 – 42 years
- Women who have had a child previously
- Women with unexplained infertility, as they currently need to wait 5 years to access funding for treatment – which means a woman aged 38 years will need to wait till she is 43, by which time she will have passed the age limit for publically funded treatment.

A seed fund of \$20,000 has been donated by Fertility Associates, and the Trust is now seeking further donations in order to begin its work. People who have undergone fertility treatment themselves may wish to donate in order to help others. This can be done through the 'Donate' button at www.fertilityfund.co.nz. No donation is too small!

noticeboard

Support
Group
Dates

AUCKLAND CONTACT SUPPORT GROUP

Tuesday 4th, 11th and
18th October

AUCKLAND CASUAL COFFEE GROUP

Tuesday 19th July
Tuesday 16th August
Tuesday 20th September
Tuesday 18th October

HAWKE'S BAY

Sunday 21st August
Sunday 16th October

TARANAKI

Wednesday 13th July
Wednesday 10th August
Wednesday 14th September
Wednesday 12th October

WELLINGTON

Wednesday 6th July
Wednesday 17th August
Wednesday 28th September

NELSON

Tuesday 12th July
Tuesday 9th August
Tuesday 13th September
Tuesday 11th October

CHRISTCHURCH

Tuesday 26th July
Tuesday 23rd Aug
Tuesday 27th September
Tuesday 25th October

DUNEDIN

Tuesday 5th July
Tuesday 2nd Aug
Tuesday 6th September
Tuesday 4th October

Local information

How can we help you
in your area?

Fertility NZ Local Contacts

Auckland

aucklandsupport@fertilitynz.org.nz
secondarysupport@fertilitynz.org.nz
(secondary infertility)

Casual Coffee Group (Auckland)
casualcoffeegroup@gmail.com

Hamilton

hamiltonsupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

Hawke's Bay

hawkesbaysupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

Taranaki

taranakisupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

Wellington

wellingtonsupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

Nelson

nelsonsupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

West Coast

westcoastsupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

Christchurch

christchurchsupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

Timaru

timarusupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

Central Otago

centralotagosupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

Dunedin

dunedin-support@fertilitynz.org.nz

Donor Conception

donorconception@fertilitynz.org.nz

Christchurch August Support Group Meeting

Learn how to manage stress by creating your own stress toolkit – learn to recognise when you are feeling stressed and identify some simple ways to cope. Dealing with infertility can be incredibly stressful and anxiety can strike at any time. Well-being facilitator and reflexologist Shell Withers will explain how to create your own set of stress busting devices as well as the ways in which complementary therapies can be applied to suit individual needs.

Tuesday 23 August, 6-8pm (free of charge) – CHCH Viewing Studio, 147 Papanui Road. Register (spaces are limited): christchurchsupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

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