



Your copy to take home

# THE Dandelion

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

NOVEMBER 2016



## IS FERTILITY on your mind?

World-leading research on brain control of fertility is being conducted right here in New Zealand

Woody Allen once famously stated that his brain was his second favourite sex organ. Of course he was wrong; your brain is your most important organ when it comes to fertility and sex. Your brain is the only organ that can examine the world around you and sense your own state of health and then determine whether it is appropriate or not to be fertile.

Picture an animal in the wild. Becoming pregnant is a very risky thing

for a female to do – it requires everything to be just right; the animal needs to be fit, free of any major ill-health, have enough food, appropriate shelter, and no predators around. The only organ that can detect and sum up all these pros and cons for fertility is the brain.

Although humans have moved on from living in the wild, we have retained many of these ancient characteristics

Continued on page 3 ▶

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- A word from the President
- About Fertility NZ
- Preparing for Christmas
- *Inconceivable's* Hansi has a passion for helping others
- Join our community
- New app for Menopur users
- My solo flight into parenthood
- Noticeboard: events around the country

**PAGE 6**  
Choosing to go it alone



**PAGE 4**  
Whatever it takes: realising a dream



fertility  
NEW ZEALAND



## Welcome Notes

Welcome to *The Dandelion* newsletter.

Are you familiar with Fertility NZ's Vision? I reviewed it recently, to ensure that we still reflect our core vision in the service that we provide our Members and wider community.

This was prompted by an increase in our activity – more people calling our 0800 line and contacting our Support email address, more Members, more Facebook followers and an increased number of regional support groups with more people attending them.

It is alarming that the number of New Zealanders affected by infertility is on the rise, but we are pleased that there is awareness of the information, support and advocacy that we provide.

I hope that your interaction with us reflects our key Visions, which are listed in the 'About Fertility NZ' column below.

This edition of *The Dandelion* includes

two personal stories. Rochelle shares her journey as a single mother (by choice); and Hansi (who you may recognise from TVNZ's *Inconceivable* series) gives an update on her journey including her experience of donor conception.

Both Rochelle and Hansi are amongst our new support group facilitators. We now have the largest network of volunteers offering support around the country than we have had for years, with support available in 15 centres around the country.

These volunteers – who are the backbone of our organisation – have had their own fertility journeys and want to support others with theirs. We hold training days (run by clinic counsellors) for our support facilitators twice per year.

Turn to the back page for details of your nearest support group.

Christmas and the holiday season can be a difficult time for people dealing with infertility. In late November, our Auckland Committee will be holding an event titled 'Preparing for Christmas', to give practical advice on handling family expectations, event and lifestyle challenges.

We also have a downloadable resource entitled 'Coping with Christmas' which can be found on the homepage of our website.

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*

## 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](http://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.

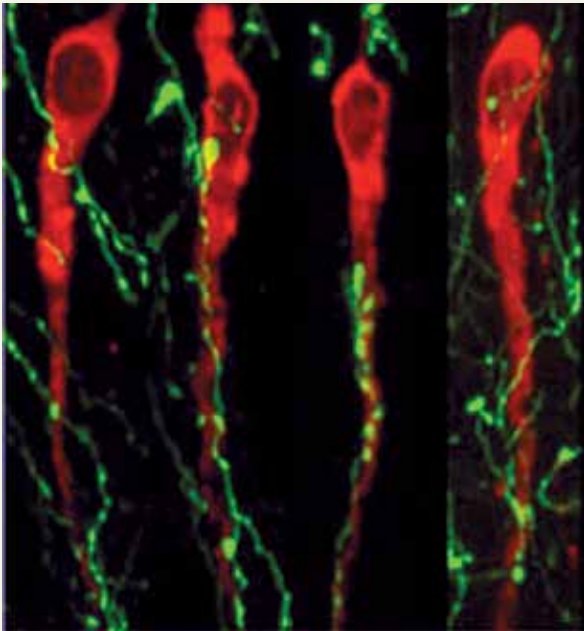
• **Advocacy** Representing the voice of people affected by infertility on medical, ethical and policy issues.

### 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.

## IS FERTILITY on your mind?



The labs are working to explain the mysteries of how the brain controls fertility, the processes of pregnancy and motherhood itself.

Left: GnRH neurons in action

◀ From page 1

and the brain still plays a big role in controlling when we can be fertile. For example, a woman ovulates only because a group of cells in the brain – called gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) neurons – have decided it should be so and triggered a cascade of events that ends up releasing the egg from the ovary.

This ability of neurons in the brain to control hormone levels in the blood is the field of Neuroendocrinology and scientists all over the world are trying to work out very precisely how this happens.

### World-leading research

We actually have the world-leading research center in Reproductive Neuroendocrinology right here in New Zealand based at the University of Otago. Ten research laboratories working together to try and explain the mysteries of how the brain controls fertility, the processes of pregnancy like giving birth and breastfeeding and, indeed, motherhood itself.

The work is fundamental in

nature; that means that we do not work with people or in the clinics but use experimental models to explore how the brain controls all these facets of reproduction.

Luckily, it seems that many of the basic processes controlling fertility have been highly conserved during evolution so that things we find in animals are applicable to humans.

Some of our recent highlights have been working out how important molecules like the wonderfully named “kisspeptin” controls those GnRH neurons, what might be going on in the brain to cause and worsen PCOS, and ways in which imbalances in nutrition and stress can impact upon the brain cells controlling fertility.

Come have a look at our website and see what we are up to – and don't be afraid to get in touch.

Prof. Allan Herbison  
Director, Centre for  
Neuroendocrinology

[www.neuroendocrinology.otago.ac.nz](http://www.neuroendocrinology.otago.ac.nz)



## Join our community

Are you a Member of Fertility NZ? If not, join today (free of charge) at [www.fertilitynz.org.nz/register](http://www.fertilitynz.org.nz/register). Benefits of becoming a Member include:

- Option to receiving news (Members receive *The Dandelion* via email)
- Option to receiving notifications about support groups in your area
- Participate in the forums on our website
- 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 relevant issues including legislation 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, or perhaps one-off support helping with your local Fertility Week event, please contact Fleur on [support@fertilitynz.org.nz](mailto:support@fertilitynz.org.nz) or 0800 333 306 to discuss.



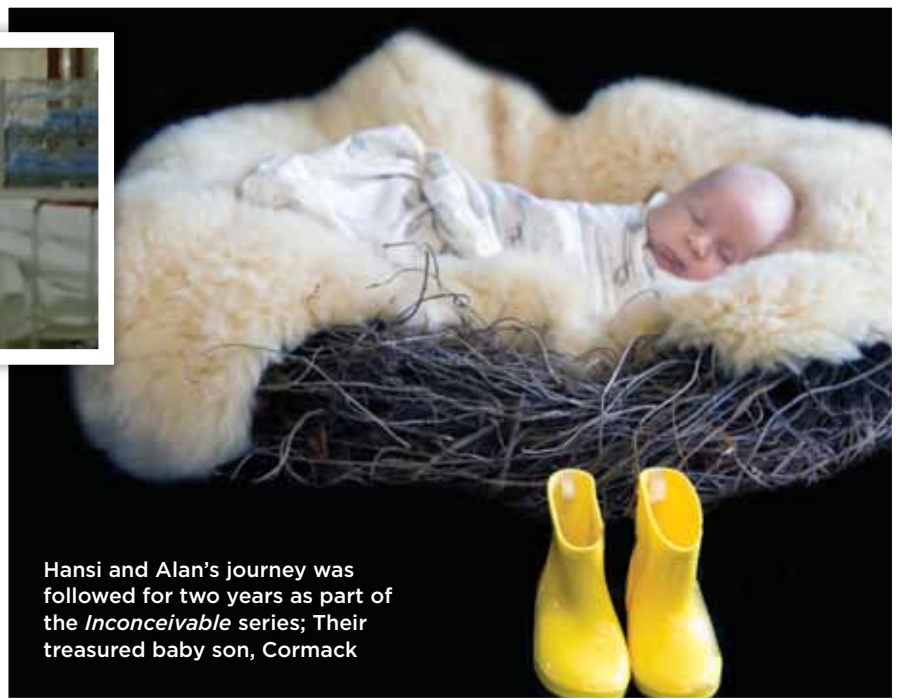
Alan and Hansi while pregnant with Cormack in early 2016

# My journey through infertility, *Inconceivable*, donorship and supporting others

Hansi Bennett tells of her and husband Alan's seven year fertility journey and her commitment to helping others

Hi my name is Hansi and my husband Alan and I have been described as veterans of IVF. This was a description of us from the documentary *Inconceivable* that aired on TV1 in July this year. We were the couple who went through the process of using an egg donor.

Our journey through IVF is 7 years long. After two full rounds of IVF with no success and lots of heartache it was discovered that I had a genetic condition that was preventing my eggs from developing into a successful pregnancy.



Hansi and Alan's journey was followed for two years as part of the *Inconceivable* series; Their treasured baby son, Cormack

"I keep in regular contact with our donor and I will forever be grateful to her for giving us the chance to have a baby."

While we were going through the process of seeking an egg donor we saw an ad on Fertility NZ's website seeking couples who were going through an egg donor cycle for a documentary. We decided that it was really important for New Zealand to see the reality of IVF and so for two years we shared our journey with a camera crew, who came to every appointment.

At first it was a bit strange having a crew come to all our appointments but after a while you get to know the crew and they become your friends who are just coming along to your appointments to support you.

#### Egg donor process

If I was told at the start of my journey that I would need an egg donor I don't think I would have been open to the idea but, after so much failure, the dream of wanting a baby was still strong – it was like, "whatever it takes". We had to fill out a profile, which honestly felt like a dating profile (we like long walks on the beach, etc!).

The process to match us took about a year. An amazing woman chose us from the profile and we met

her with the counsellor from Fertility Associates. I was so nervous but she was awesome – and so the process began.

During the two years we had a miscarriage with the first embryo that implanted, our second embryo did not take and the last embryo (which was not considered to be a great embryo) did take. WOW! I keep in regular contact with our donor and I will forever be grateful to her for giving us the chance to have a baby. I message our donor and I'm hoping in the next few weeks to introduce our little man to her family.

#### Encouraging others

As I take care of my little (well not so little, he is a big baby) 4 month old Cormack I still can't believe that after all this time I am finally a mum. Through all of this process, doing the documentary and the years that we went through without success, I have become more and more passionate about helping and supporting others through their fertility journey.

This is why I have chosen to run a support group through Fertility NZ in Hamilton. I want to encourage

others to hold on to hope and that if you get to realise your dream and hold your baby, the whole journey is worth it no matter what you face. But it is also about finding peace as you come to terms with infertility.

Lots of love, Hansi xx

#### Presidents note:

Although *Inconceivable* was too raw for some of our Members to watch, we were pleased with the final documentary when it aired in July. Seeing real life experiences of infertility on prime time television is really positive for raising awareness.

On behalf of our community, I'd like to thank Hansi and Alan and the other participants who so generously shared their journeys.

#### Hamilton support group

Hansi and Jenny are beginning a new support group in Hamilton. They are planning casual monthly 'coffee and chat' sessions with occasional guest speakers. They will be free-of-charge and open to any woman experiencing fertility. Please contact them via [hamiltonsupport@fertilitynz.org.nz](mailto:hamiltonsupport@fertilitynz.org.nz) to register your interest, or meet for coffee.

## New MENOPUR® App - A helpful user's guide

If you are on Menopur, a new App has been designed to help you prepare and inject. The App can be downloaded from your Android or Apple Store.

Menopur® is a prescription medicine for the treatment of female infertility in two situations where clomiphene has not helped and in assisted reproductions programmes (ART).

Menopur® has risks and benefits. Further information is available in the Consumer Medicine Information for the medicine, which is included in the pack or at [www.medsafe.govt.nz](http://www.medsafe.govt.nz). Use only as directed by your doctor.

*Contains Menotrophin HP 75 IU*

Pharmaco (NZ) Ltd, Auckland, New Zealand  
(NZ Agent for Ferring Pharmaceuticals).

TAPS NA8609 0916FER600

# My solo flight into parenthood



Tuesday 29 November 2016, 7.30–9.30pm  
ASB Building, 12 Jellicoe Street  
Wynyard Quarter

## PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS

Eat, drink and be merry... maybe?



**The Christmas and holiday season can be a minefield to manoeuvre through, and often a great cause of sadness, anxiety or discouragement for those dealing with infertility.**

This session will empower couples and singles to plan ahead for a more enjoyable season, with practical strategies and coping mechanisms for the coming months. Topics covered include:

- how to deal with Christmas parties and events whilst trying to conceive
- managing family expectations and celebrations
  - looking after your relationship

A presentation will be given by experienced fertility counsellors **Joi Ellis** and **Fiona McDonald** and preconception health expert **Loula George**, followed by Q&A and coffee and chat.

Attendance is free-of-charge, but numbers are limited.

RSVP to [aucklandsupport@fertilitynz.org.nz](mailto:aucklandsupport@fertilitynz.org.nz)  
or call 0800 333 306

Rochelle Trail discovers that while life doesn't always turn out the way you thought it would, that doesn't mean it won't turn out just great anyway.

Like many of the women that I have spoken with I had always imagined myself with a family – presumably coming about in a somewhat conventional manner. However, when I found myself single and with my fortieth birthday approaching, I knew I needed to act promptly and act alone. The imminent ticking of my biological clock forced me to have to rethink the “fairy tale” ending.

### Doing it alone

Whilst I felt some grief at doing it alone, I also felt empowered at taking my fertility into my own hands and commencing the process to have a child via a clinic-sourced sperm donor. Thus one week prior to my 41st birthday I discovered I was pregnant with a much-longed for baby. Whilst I was thrilled, I also experienced an array of other emotions I wasn't



“When I found myself single with my fortieth birthday approaching, the imminent ticking of my biological clock forced me to rethink the ‘fairy tale’ ending.”

Rochelle and her son Taine, aged three

expecting such as apprehension, self-doubt and fear.

I can now say that it was the best decision that I made and I’m incredibly grateful to have my son, Taine, in my life. I’m only three and a half years down the track of parenthood, but I can’t imagine a life without him in it.

This experience has also taught me that while things don’t always turn out the way you thought they would, it doesn’t mean they won’t turn out just great anyway.

As I was living in Sydney at the time, I was fortunate that New South Wales has the same legislation as New Zealand regarding open-identity

sperm donors. So if Taine chooses to do so, he may contact his donor at 18. At this stage, with the help of a book entitled *Our Story*, Taine has an understanding of the fact that he has a donor and where his almond-shaped eyes and dark hair come from.

#### **Family support**

I’ve been lucky enough to have wonderful family support which has enabled me to return to my studies. This has also meant that Taine has a wonderful relationship with his grandparents.

I am currently completing my dissertation on the experience of being a single mother by choice in

New Zealand and interviewed seven fabulous women to gain more insight into this growing area.

I am currently very immersed in the world of fertility and am thrilled to be involved in the great work that Fertility NZ does. Due to the increase in demand, I am currently organising a support/coffee group in Auckland for single women who are contemplating conception or trying to conceive. If this is relevant to you personally and you’d like support, I’d love you to come and join me for a coffee at our next meet up on the 27th of November.

Rochelle can be contacted on [singlewomensupport@fertilitynz.org.nz](mailto:singlewomensupport@fertilitynz.org.nz)

# noticeboard

Support  
Group  
Dates

## AUCKLAND SINGLE WOMEN

Sundays: 27th November  
29th January 2017  
26th February 2017

## AUCKLAND CASUAL COFFEE GROUP

Tuesdays: 18th October  
15th November  
17th January 2017  
21st February 2017

## AUCKLAND SECONDARY INFERTILITY

Saturdays: 26th November  
17th December  
28th January 2017  
25th February 2017

## HAWKE'S BAY

Sundays: 20th November  
19th February 2017

## TARANAKI

Wednesdays: 9th November  
22nd January 2017  
8th February 2017

## WELLINGTON

Wednesdays: 9th November  
22nd February 2017

## NELSON

Tuesdays: 8th November  
13th December  
17th January 2017  
21st February 2017

## CHRISTCHURCH

Tuesdays: 22nd November  
24th January 2017  
28th February 2017

## DUNEDIN

Tuesdays: 1st November; 6th December;  
3rd January 2017; 7th February 2017

## Local information

How can we help you  
in your area?

## Fertility NZ Local Contacts

### Whangarei

whangareisupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

### Auckland

aucklandsupport@fertilitynz.org.nz  
secondariesupport@fertilitynz.org.nz  
(secondary infertility)  
singlewomensupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

### Casual Coffee Group (Auckland)

casualcoffeegroup@gmail.com

### Hamilton

hamiltonsupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

### Tauranga

taurangasupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

### Rotorua

rotoruasupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

### Gisborne

gisbornesupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

### Taranaki

taranakisupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

### Hawke's Bay

hawkesbaysupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

### Wellington

wellingtonsupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

### Nelson

nelsonsupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

### West Coast

westcoastsupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

### Christchurch

christchurchsupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

### Central Otago

centralotagosupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

### Dunedin

dunedinsupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

### Invercargill

invercargillsupport@fertilitynz.org.nz

This material is supported by way of an educational grant from Bayer New Zealand Limited. The information submitted is intended to assist health care professionals and patients in forming their own conclusions and making decisions, but may not represent a comprehensive listing of all available information on the subject. The views and opinions expressed by the individual presenters do not necessarily represent the opinion of Bayer New Zealand Limited.

Fertility New Zealand accepts no responsibility for any information contained in this publication, and the views are not necessarily those of Fertility New Zealand. © Permission to reprint any articles from this magazine must be sought from Fertility New Zealand prior to publication.

## CONTACT US

• phone: 0800 333 306 • email: support@fertilitynz.org.nz • web: www.fertilitynz.org.nz  
• post: Fertility New Zealand, PO Box 28262, Remuera, Auckland 1541 • Visit us on Facebook!