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Sister Steps In To Help Sibling Have Baby

Woman Struggling With Fertility In Face Of Cancer Treatment

UPDATED: 4:17 PM EDT July 19, 2004

CHICAGO -- Many women know what it's like to try for years to get pregnant and then face the frustration of never having it happen.

Television station WMAQ told the story of Beth Turner, who not only struggled with that, but also with two life-threatening diagnoses of cancer.

"I just stopped trying [to get pregnant], and it just never worked," Turner said.

After chemotherapy and radiation, doctors told Turner she was still fertile. So this past spring, she tried to get pregnant again -- until doctors told her she had cancer in her right breast.

To save her life, doctors said Turner needed chemotherapy and radiation as soon as possible. That would most likely destroy any chance for her to conceive or carry a baby.

"I was willing to risk my life," Turner said. "I want a part of me to live on, even if I had the baby and I didn't live that long afterwards."

Desperate, Turner turned to fertility specialist Dr. Randy Morris. Almost immediately, he scheduled a procedure to retrieve her eggs -- with no time for pretesting. Turner's oncologist gave Morris two weeks before her cancer treatment had to begin.

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"So this is a very tense moment for us," Morris said. "Will we be able to get anything, or had the chemotherapy destroyed her ovaries so much this was for naught?"

One by one the eggs were counted, the station said, and Morris found there were only four. That was fewer than normal, but still worth fertilizing. Each egg was impregnated with Turner's husband's sperm. After that, they were frozen until they could be inserted in the womb. But whose womb would that be?

Fortunately, Turner's younger sister stepped in to do what Beth can't do herself, the station reported.

Jill Arellano has four kids of her own -- she hopes the fifth will be her sister's. Arellano said she'll stay positive. So while Turner is being treated for breast cancer, her sister said she hopes she'll be going to the doctor as well -- to get pregnancy checkups on Turner's baby.

"I like to have something to live on with us," Arellano said. "Hopefully, of course, she will live a long life, but, you know, I want a part of her around for a long time also."

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