

## No more sex for procreation?



Photos: ST, TNF

A BOLD study estimates that the traditional method of making babies will be a dying art, replaced by in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) technology.

According to a new report, advances in IVF technology mean it will be possible to produce embryos with a success rate of virtually 100 per cent and cultivate them in computer-controlled storage facilities, reported Times of London.

The advancement will ease the pressure on couples who have delayed having children until their late 30s or 40s. They may routinely opt for IVF rather than sex to reproduce, giving themselves a greater chance of conceiving through IVF than young adults in peak condition, who have only a one-in-four chance a month of conceiving naturally.

"Natural human reproduction is at best a fairly inefficient process." -Mr John Yovich, co-author of report  
Present fertility techniques meant that the healthiest of couples have a 50 per cent chance of success using IVF, said the report.

However, authors of the study, published in the journal Reproductive BioMedicine Online, said that rapid advances in artificial reproduction for farm animals - which have led to a near-100 per cent success rate in the production of cattle embryos - claim the technology could easily be adapted for humans.

Mr John Yovich, a co-author of the report, told The Times: "We are not quite at that stage yet, but it's where we're heading. Natural human reproduction is at best a fairly inefficient process. Within the next five to 10 years, couples approaching 40 will access the IVF industry first when they want to have a baby."

Gedis Grudzinskas, a Harley Street infertility specialist and editor of Reproductive BioMedicine Online, said: "It wouldn't surprise me if IVF does become significantly more efficient than natural reproduction, but I doubt whether you could ever completely guarantee it would work."

In Singapore, present methods show that the success rate of IVF deteriorates with age.

In a report last month, Dr Wee Horng Yen, consultant and director of the Women's Wellness Centre at KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH), told The Straits Times: "Other things being equal, the chance of having a problem with fertility increases from about 11 per cent in your early 20s to about 33 per cent in your late 30s to almost 40 per cent in your early 40s."

"So if it takes the average younger woman four months to conceive, it may take an older woman twice as long." Earlier reports also show that at least 2,000 women seek IVF treatment each year, and couples are spending at least \$40 million annually on the fertility treatment.