



## It makes you think...



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In a recent issue of *New Scientist* (1st July 2003), there was a report of a human reproduction conference held in Spain. Apart from the usual assisted fertilisation technology (e.g. IVF), there were discussions about womb transplantation and the harvesting of eggs from aborted foetuses.

Where is medicine heading?

Modern (Western) medicine has come a long way in the past 50 years. But has it gone too far?

There is a belief amongst a large group of medical doctors that 'big medicine' is the pinnacle to be climbed to reach ultimate success. But is it?

In the area of human reproductive health we may soon be careering down the road of technology at breakneck speed. Will there be people in 50 years time who remember what natural reproduction is? Or will we be relying on IVF (maybe using eggs harvested from aborted foetuses)? Will womb transplantation become a normal procedure for a growing number of women? Where this may lead is chillingly portrayed in Frank Herbert's excellent book: Hellström's Hive.

There is definitely a place for technology in medicine; but it is not the main answer. If it becomes the main answer, then we are asking the wrong question. One of the questions which needs to be always asked is: "What is the simplest approach?"

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In the area of human reproduction, the answer to this last question includes "look at the nutritional status of the couple wishing to get pregnant". It is unbelievable, with all that is known today, that people working in IVF clinics do not see nutrition as having any bearing on the matter. This is inconceivable. Many ACNEM-trained doctors report high success rates with couples who have 'failed' through several cycles of IVF treatment, simply

by having both the woman and the man changing their diets (and maybe their lifestyles), and prescribing nutritional supplements if indicated.

While it is understandable that people will often opt to have a loved family member kept alive as long as humanly possible, this usually requires high technology. Is this humane? Are we losing touch with what it is to be human? Are we no longer willing to face our lives without resorting to all possible technical interventions?

Modern medicine has given us many benefits - excellent intervention in accidental and other trauma, good acute and critical care, etc. We have a clearer understanding of the underlying biochemistry involved in disease states. But is the increasing reliance on high tech, in fact making us ill?

From the cradle to the grave, we are giving up more and more into the hands of others and, consequently, letting go of our choices, our responsibilities and our power.

