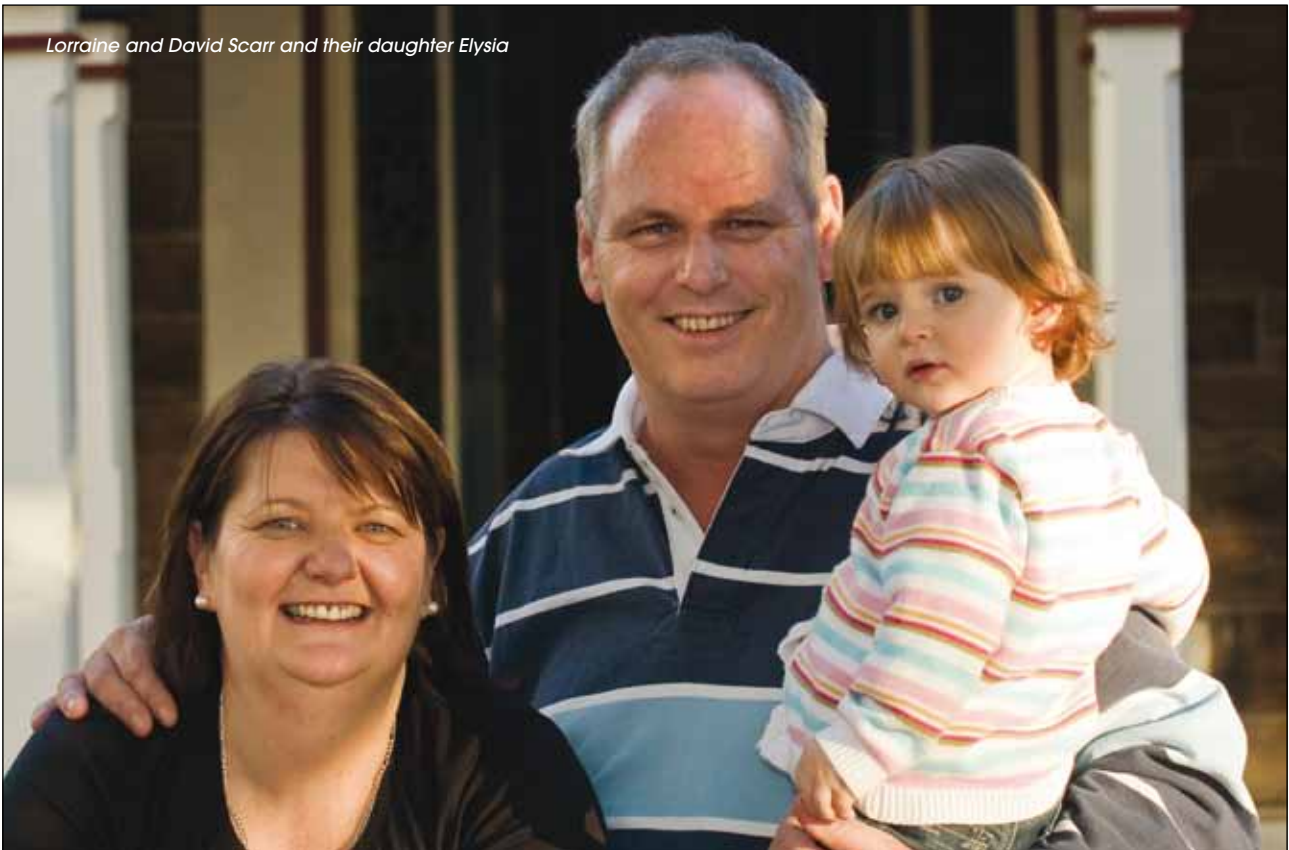




repro^{med} Newsletter

SPRING 2009

Lorraine and David Scarr and their daughter Elysia



An IVF 'marathon' you can win

Okay, I know what you are thinking. You've looked at my photograph and thought: "She can't be a marathon runner." You are absolutely right!

The only running I've done lately is to join the buffet club on holidays or get a Tim Tam from the fridge during the ad break. Both I claim as purposeful exercise. So, what has marathon running to do with IVF?"

Well, I think IVF is like running a marathon, and that makes me an unlikely athlete as I have been running this race for what seems like an eternity. So, I thought I would impart to you some of

the tools my husband (St David) and I have used to survive our IVF marathon. Hopefully, these tools will not only make your run a little easier, but hopefully you may even have some fun along the way.

My husband and I began IVF over four years ago. Like so many of you, we thought our family would come along at a sensible time after our wedding and after a not so sensible night of indulgences (including, of course, the requisite intake of alcohol and chocolate).

This, unfortunately, was not the case and, after many years of trying to conceive, we realised that external help was going to be needed.

After talking with a specialist, we were referred to Repromed for the battery of unflattering tests (especially for David), and were informed that our only probable chance of having a baby would be IVF in the form of ICSI.

It was a shock! We felt a bit ripped off that nature hadn't stepped up to the plate and done its bit, but at the same time we felt that we were at the right place.

The doctors had been upfront and professional, and the nursing staff were wonderful.

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From previous page

In fact, we felt like everyone we came in contact with wanted to see our dream come true. And so our marathon had begun.

We underwent our first IVF cycle completely unaware of what to expect, and yet fully expecting to be pregnant at the end of it.

Of course, like many other couples we weren't. But we had a frozen embryo that we transferred and - surprise, surprise - we fell pregnant. It was an amazing sensation that lasted only a short time as we lost this pregnancy at 10 weeks.

So cycle number two began, and with it a growing sense of urgency. Unfortunately, this cycle was unsuccessful and no embryos were frozen, so cycle number three began.

Amazingly, we were again blessed with a pregnancy, but we suffered the heartache of losing our beautiful baby girl at 19 weeks.

As you can imagine, the marathon we were on was now in the darkest forest with no sign of light anywhere. We were feeling like children were not a possibility for us, but the amazing support of my husband, our friends and from staff at Repromed gave us the strength to do cycle number four.

Amazingly, we fell pregnant again. This was not a pregnancy without stress, but we finally had the sun shine on us and our gorgeous daughter was born on the 31st of January last year.

We had finally become the family we had always dreamed of being. So as you can see, I've run a fairly long marathon with many twists in the road - where the sun and sea have been beside me only to find that the bend in the road has taken me into the depth of

• There will always be hope if you hang on for the duration •

• Finally we had the sun shine on us and our gorgeous daughter was born •

the forest where the air was cool and little light pervaded, and then without any warning I was back in the sunshine enjoying the beautiful view again.

Our marathon goes on still. This year we started again to try to give our daughter a brother or sister. So far, after three cycles, we've had no luck, but my feet are still pounding that road.

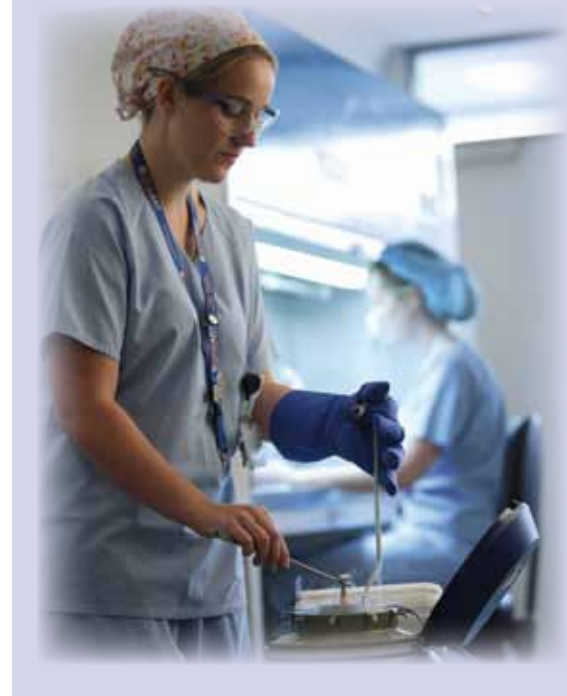
So what can I hope to pass on to you to help you stay on the course? Well, I want you to think of yourself as an elite athlete too. Like any athlete undertaking a challenge, preparation is the key.

Firstly, you need to surround yourself with a great support team. This is where the partners truly come to the fore. It's their job to keep the Tim Tam supply stocked, the credit card ready for any unexpected need for retail therapy (my personal preference is shoes), the liniment on hand to rub away the aches and pains of the journey, and a strong shoulder to hang onto when the run seems too long and tiring to carry on.

They are your encouragement and remind you that your dream may be just around the next bend. Rely on your partners and family. It's amazing how much, if given the chance, your family and friends will be willing to do for you. So fire up that support team and use them where and whenever you can.

So now it is about you. IVF is not only physically challenging, but also mentally taxing. So my advice is to do whatever it takes to keep a smile on your face. Remember to do the things you enjoy. It can be as simple as taking the dog for a walk, going to the movies, having a pedicure with your friends, or making a date with your partner.

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Try to keep your relationships with those you care about as normal as possible. I know that can be hard. Hormones can be cruel and unkind, and your moods can swing faster than the pendulum on an angry grandfather clock. But when they aren't raging, remember to find the time to have a laugh.

I know a guru or swami I'm not, but I hope that something I have written helps to keep you on the run to reach your dreams. Everybody's run will be different. Some of you will have a quick sprint to the finish line, and some will have a winding road that seems to take you across Australia. But there is always hope if you hang on for the duration.

So now go out and put on your Charlie's Angels hot pink, satin-trimmed velvet shorts with matching hoodie (the Farah Fawcett kind) and lace up your Dunlop Volleys. Do your stretches, stock the fridge with the essentials, hug your support team and run, run, run!

If you see me along the way, make sure you give me a wave to help keep me on my IVF marathon because I can always do with support. See you on the track.

Lorraine

Outstanding infertility research base

Repromed's success in assisted conception is supported by an outstanding scientific base and through research affiliations around the world.

Scientists within Repromed's dedicated research arm have made major contributions to global knowledge about the causes of and treatments for infertility.

The benefit of this research is that new and proven developments are quickly embraced into Repromed's laboratory protocols and clinical programs to ensure couples receive state-of-the-art assessment and treatment for infertility problems.

Two of Repromed's current research projects, both of which are in preliminary stages, involve:

- fertility preservation, including egg and embryo freezing; and
- the effects of ageing and lifestyle on eggs.

Fertility preservation of eggs is important for a variety of reasons. The following are examples:

- preserving reproductive potential of young, single women about to undergo fertility threatening cancer treatment;
- facilitating the provision of donated oocytes; and
- allowing the deferral of decisions when male gametes are unavailable.

Repromed's research focus is on improving outcomes for the rapid freezing and thawing of eggs in a process known as vitrification.

The contribution of cryopreservation to clinical assisted reproduction is likely to increase in the future. However, it is essential that carefully designed research underpins this contribution so that the most appropriate options are available to patients.

Meanwhile, Repromed is working to recruit around 200 patients to participate in a trial investigating the effects of ageing on eggs.

The next edition of the Repromed newsletter will report on further developments with these research projects.

Consistently high pregnancy rates

Repromed continues to achieve clinical pregnancy rates above the national average for couples using IVF.

Latest cumulative pregnancy rates from IVF among women aged 38 or less are 53 per cent on the first cycle, 78 per cent on the second cycle and 90 per cent on the third cycle.

For women aged 38 to 40, the comparison figures are 32 per cent, 54 per cent and 70 per cent.

The cumulative pregnancy rates are based on viable foetal heart beat at eight week scan for

fresh and frozen embryo transfers combined.

The latest data has been gathered from more than 2,000 IVF patients.

Repromed's cumulative clinical pregnancy rates are higher than the latest national figures produced in the Assisted Reproductive Technology in Australia and New Zealand Report.

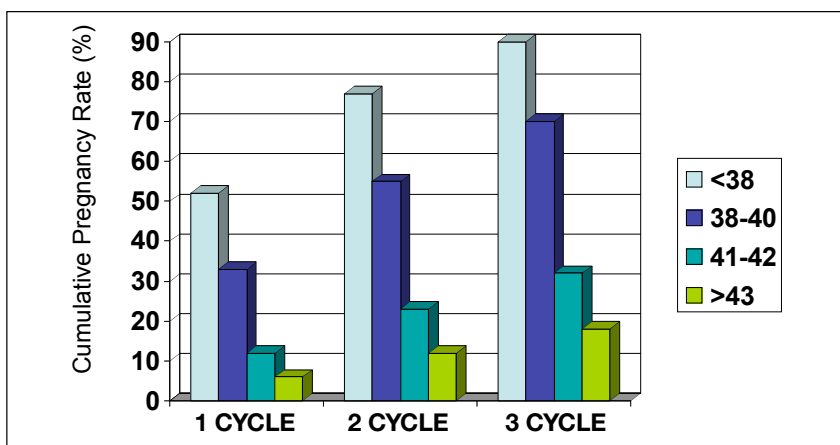
Dr Michelle Lane, Repromed's Scientific Director, said the latest data was very encouraging for couples undergoing IVF.

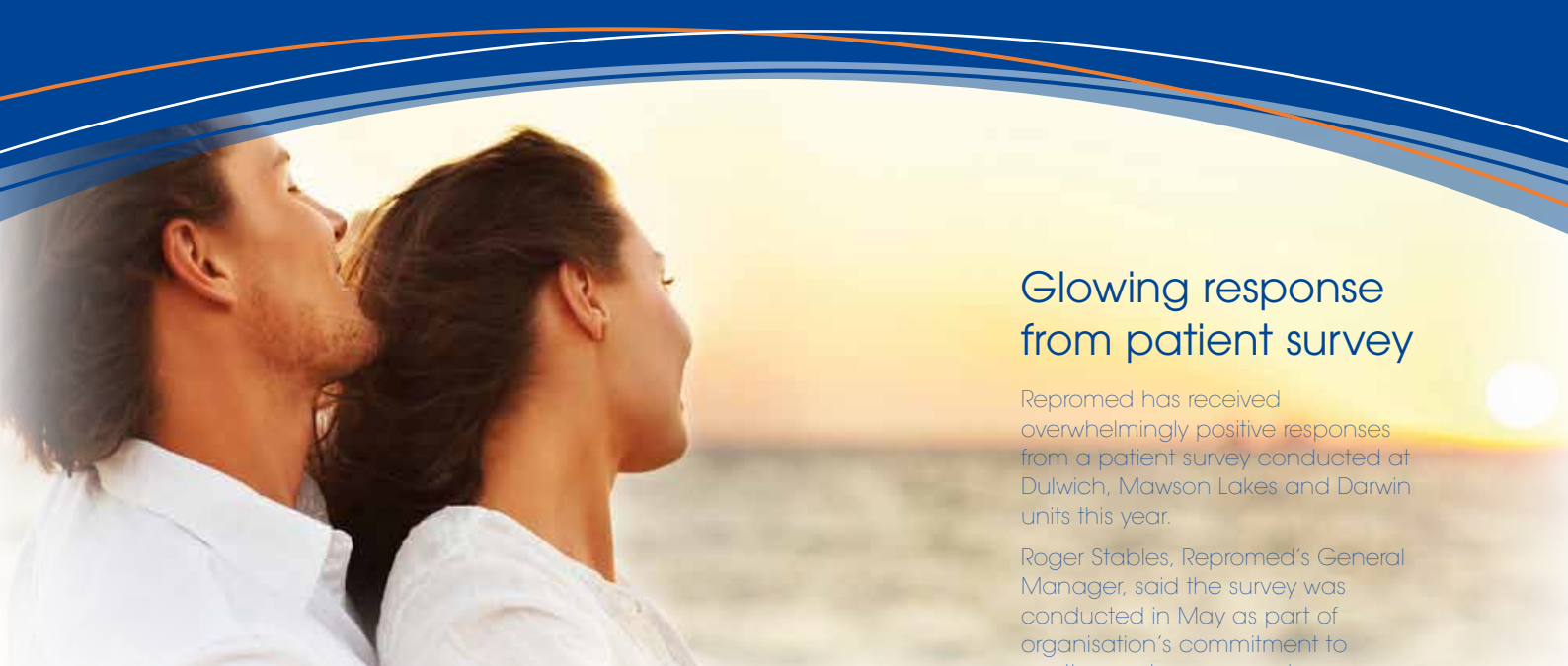
"We are consistently achieving

very good pregnancy rates," Dr Lane explained. "The fact that we are achieving a viable pregnancy in nine out of ten cases among women aged less than 38 shows that infertility treatment has never been so successful."



Michelle Lane





Helping you to manage your 'great expectations'

Caring for your emotional and physical well-being can contribute to the success of infertility treatment.

Sharing your thoughts, hopes and fears, and helping others to understand your feelings, can make the journey easier.

The experience of infertility treatment can be quite different for the male and female partner, each of whom faces different challenges and can experience the journey quite differently. The key to surviving this journey is to be able to accept these differences.

"The duration and success of treatment can also vary considerably between couples," said Katrina Burgess, Repromed's Coordinator of Counselling Services.

"It is important to prepare well for treatment and have support strategies in place that rely largely on good communication with your partner, friends and family.

"Nurturing this contact can help people cope with the physical and emotional stress of treatment.

"Even those closest to you will not always understand your feelings or concerns. That's why it is helpful to

express your emotions and to build your support network."

Repromed has introduced a series of free seminars to help couples entering infertility treatment to understand the journey ahead and to manage their expectations.

The Great Expectations seminars are presented at Repromed, 180 Fullarton Road, Dulwich. To register, please call (08) 8333 8111 or go online to www.repromed.com.au

The Great Expectations program for the remainder of the year is as follows:

- Thursday 24 September, 7.00pm to 8.00pm - I'm pregnant: What to expect now
- Tuesday 6 October, 7.00pm to 8.00pm - Life with a baby: Realising your dream
- Tuesday 27 October, 7.00pm to 8.00pm - Understanding the costs associated with ART treatment
- Tuesday 10 November, 7.00pm to 8.00pm - IVF: Debunking the mystery
- Tuesday 1 December, 7.00pm to 8.00pm - How friends and family can offer support through infertility
- Tuesday 15 December, 7.00pm to 8.00pm - Fertility drugs: What you need to know

Glowing response from patient survey

Repromed has received overwhelmingly positive responses from a patient survey conducted at Dulwich, Mawson Lakes and Darwin units this year.

Roger Stables, Repromed's General Manager, said the survey was conducted in May as part of organisation's commitment to continuous improvement.

As promised, we undertook to promote feedback to patients who kindly participated in the survey.

Asked to describe their experience at Repromed and the quality of service provided, 96 per cent of responses included comments such as friendly, pleasant, professional, helpful, knowledgeable, efficient and caring.

Eighty one per cent of survey respondents described the friendliness of Repromed staff as excellent and 19 per cent as good.

Asked about quality of care, 71 per cent said it was excellent and 23 per cent good.

Mr Stables said the outcomes of the survey were very pleasing with some general constructive comments that would contribute to Repromed's on-going quality of service delivery.



Roger Stables

repromed Your dream is our goal

www.repromed.com.au

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