

# Introduction to Restorative Reproductive Medicine

Natalie Dodson

For a married couple, the desire for biological children is natural. Yet, with birth rates declining and infertility rates rising in the United States, more couples are experiencing the devastation of infertility.<sup>1</sup> In conventional reproductive healthcare, the solution to this crisis is fertility clinics and assisted reproductive technology (ART). Nevertheless, ART should not be the first solution offered to couples who suffer from infertility; restorative reproductive medicine (RRM) should be.

One of the major differences between ART and RRM is that the former seeks to circumvent the infertility, and the latter seeks to treat the underlying causes of infertility.

## Conventional Reproductive Healthcare's Response to Infertility

Infertility is not a disease or condition. Instead, it is a symptom of underlying reproductive dysfunction and can often present with other symptoms. In Abigail Anthony's case (see "How Doctors Ignored My Stage Four Endometriosis"), for example, while not experiencing infertility—she was not trying to conceive—her other symptoms, such as intense pain, revealed her reproductive health condition: endometriosis. Her pain was not the

disease; endometriosis was. In the same way, infertility is not a disease, but conventional reproductive healthcare treats it like one.

For many symptoms of reproductive health conditions or diseases, the medical professions' instinctive response is pharmaceutical Band-Aids to mask and ignore the symptoms for as long as possible. Likewise, for infertility, the common response is in vitro fertilization (IVF), which circumvents the infertility by producing the child outside of the body without attempting to treat the underlying cause of the infertility. Both approaches fail to restore health and may instead contribute to worsening health for all patients involved. As some of this section's authors describe, circumventive technology often sells couples a pervasive yet ineffective promise. While ART can produce an embryo outside of the uterus, it cannot guarantee successful implantation or live birth of that child. The reproductive dysfunction persists with ART, often leading to unsuccessful IVF cycles and repeated heartbreak for couples.

## Restorative Reproductive Medicine

RRM is a comprehensive approach to addressing the symptoms and causes of reproductive dysfunction. Rather than treating reproductive or bodily dysfunction in a piecemeal manner, RRM examines the whole body and the multitude of conditions or comorbidities that may contribute to the symptoms patients experience. Once the underlying causes of the symptoms are identified, often through fertility awareness-based methods (FABMs), RRM protocols treat them

<sup>1</sup> Joyce Martin, Brady Hamilton, and Michelle Osterman, "Births in the United States, 2023," NCHS Data Brief, July 20, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.15620/cdc/158789>; Colleen N. Nugent Ph.D. et al., "Infertility and Impaired Fecundity in Women and Men in the United States, 2015–2019," National Health Statistics Reports, March 24, 2024, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr202.pdf>.

through hormone-balancing, dietary and nutritional adjustments, environmental changes, and, in some cases, surgery.

Rather than suppressing or circumventing distressing symptoms of reproductive health conditions with pharmaceutical Band-Aids or ART, RRM treats the conditions and seeks to return the individual to peak health. While conventional reproductive medicine offers inadequate options to women suffering from symptoms of reproductive health conditions or couples struggling with infertility, RRM does not sell women or couples quick fixes. Instead, RRM requires the difficult yet necessary work of treating the underlying diseases, conditions, and dysfunction.

Unfortunately, funding for reproductive health condition research is sorely lacking.<sup>2</sup> In response to this gap, independent health organizations and RRM specialists have created their own databases and research projects.<sup>3</sup> These medical professionals, like Dr. Marguerite Duane (“An Overview of Restorative Reproductive Medicine”) and Dr. Patrick Yeung (“Restorative Reproductive Medicine:

A Surgical Approach to Treating Endometriosis”), have also undertaken the burden of training the next generation of medical professionals in RRM.<sup>4</sup> Up to this point, policy has failed to address reproductive dysfunction comprehensively and instead has narrowly promoted pharmaceutical Band-Aids. With ongoing discussions about the infertility crisis in the United States, legislators and the administration have an opportunity to support treatment for the root causes of infertility and restorative reproductive medicine.

The articles in this section will provide an introduction to RRM. The authors describe the present flaws in conventional reproductive medicine and how RRM produces much-needed solutions to these failings. As medical professionals, bioethicists, and patients, these authors draw from personal experience and evidence-based data to support RRM and its medical protocols.

The authors discuss why restorative reproductive medicine should be an alternative to, or at least a prerequisite to, assisted reproductive technology. One article (“Putting All Our Eggs In One Basket”) will examine the cost and success rates of assisted reproductive technology and restorative reproductive medicine, finding that “success rates for [restorative reproductive medicine] are similar to or better than IVF for many couples.” Our hope is that this section provides an introduction to restorative reproductive medicine, a new and burgeoning area of medicine.

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2 Kerri Smith, “Women’s Health Research Lacks Funding — These Charts Show How,” *Nature* 617, no. 7959 (May 3, 2023): 28–29, <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-023-01475-2>.

3 Patrick Yeung Jr., “Characteristics of Patient Population with Endometriosis,” *ClinicalTrials.gov*, updated September 19, 2019, <https://clinicaltrials.gov/study/NCT03002870?cond=endometriosis%20database&rank=1>; FACTS - Fertility Appreciation Collaborative to Teach the Science, “Research - FACTS About Fertility,” *FACTS About Fertility*, May 13, 2024, <https://www.factsaboutfertility.org/learn-more/research-nli/>; FEMM Health, “Research - FEMM Health,” March 3, 2024, <https://femmhealth.org/professional-education/research/>.

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4 FACTS - Fertility Appreciation Collaborative to Teach the Science, “Enroll in Our Elective - FACTS About Fertility,” *FACTS About Fertility*, January 22, 2025, <https://www.factsaboutfertility.org/learn-more/enroll-in-our-elective/>.

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**Natalie Dodson** is a Policy Analyst at the Ethics and Public Policy Center