

A *Miracle* Starts WITH A BEAT OF A HEART

by resident writer Lori Stewart

The Wellington's Baby Story

"I was 36 years old and so surprised when my OB-GYN suggested I have blood work done to check the quality of my eggs. I was getting married shortly and knew I wanted to have a family."

Affinity and her then fiancé, Jeffrey Wellington, met in 2010. She had moved to Portland from San Francisco in 2009, and he relocated from Minneapolis—Saint Paul in 2005. From the beginning they had things in common: Both had brothers who attended Whitman College in Walla Walla, Wa., at the same time, and they had unknowingly crossed paths at their graduation in 2005.

Affinity and Jeffrey knew they wanted to be parents; on the advice of Affinity's doctor, they made an appointment to have blood work done. This sent them on a five-year journey that isn't over yet. The results of the blood work were not only surprising, but upsetting: Affinity learned that she would likely have trouble conceiving because of the quantity and quality of her eggs. It was mid-2012 and she was getting married at the end of the year—and this news was not in the family plan. What she did not know then is how common infertility is, affecting approximately one in eight couples.

Affinity was referred to a doctor at a local medical group who started her on three rounds of Clomid—a fertility drug used to induce ovulation. Her doctor also recommended IUI (Intrauterine insemination), a fertility treatment that involves placing sperm inside a woman's uterus to facilitate fertilization. Together, these treatments are considered to be the first step in fertility treatment; they are less expensive and less invasive than IVF (in vitro fertilization). Affinity and Jeffrey completed three rounds, unsuccessfully.



It was at this point in Affinity and Jeffrey's journey, that they connected with Oregon Reproductive Medicine (ORM) and Dr. Brandon J. Bankowski. A friend recommended that Affinity and Jeffrey check out ORM because of the clinic's high success rates with IVF. After consulting with Dr. Bankowski and a fertility counselor, they weighed their options and next steps. A donor egg

was always an option, but they decided to try for a biological child first.

Between October 2013 and October 2015, Affinity underwent five egg retrievals. According to Affinity, this process was not only physically grueling, but emotional as well—especially since there were other health factors to consider.

"Twice the process had to be stopped because I suffer from an autoimmune disease called ulcerative colitis," explained Affinity. "So while we started the process five times, we completed only three full attempts."

Each "attempt," or egg retrieval, is to retrieve eggs and make sure they are healthy, viable, and hopefully able to sustain themselves once they are fertilized and transferred back into the uterus.

Prepping for egg retrieval involves injections on a daily basis, usually eight to 14 days in advance, to stimulate the ovaries and produce eggs. The more eggs retrieved, the higher the likelihood that some of the eggs will be viable to use in the IVF process. After two years and five attempts, the Wellingtons learned that they had two viable embryos.

Both embryos were transferred into Affinity's uterus in March 2016. While there was a 40 percent likelihood that twins could result from transferring more than one egg, it was not meant to be. Affinity learned that she was pregnant with a single baby, and their daughter, Jacqueline, was born in November 2016.

Affinity and Jeffrey are delighted to be parents and feel extremely thankful to the team at ORM for guiding them on their journey to parenthood. In fact, they have decided that they are not done yet and are determined to continue to grow their family. They are currently undergoing fertility treatments again—under the guidance of Dr. Bankowski and the dedicated team of professionals at ORM, they are waiting for the results of an egg retrieval that was completed in early October of this year.

For more information on fertility treatments, IVF or ORM, please visit their website at www.oregonreproductivemedicine.com.

