

11-22-2019

## Vocation, Salvation, and In Vitro Fertilization

Emily DeGenova

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dsc.duq.edu/duquark>

---

### Recommended Citation

DeGenova, E. (2019). Vocation, Salvation, and In Vitro Fertilization. *D.U.Quark*, 4 (1). Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/duquark/vol4/iss1/4>

This Staff Piece is brought to you for free and open access by Duquesne Scholarship Collection. It has been accepted for inclusion in D.U.Quark by an authorized editor of Duquesne Scholarship Collection.

# Vocation, Salvation, and In Vitro Fertilization

By Emily DeGenova

*D.U. Quark* 2019. Volume 4(Issue 1) pgs. 9-12

Published November 22, 2019

Staff Article

Katrina McNally is a graduate student in the Occupational Therapy program at Duquesne University. Katrina is outgoing, loves to travel, and is a strong believer in Christ. What most people don't know, however, is that Katrina is a triplet with two brothers, and they were brought into this world by in vitro fertilization (IVF). After an interview with Katrina and her mother, they explained what effects IVF had on Katrina's parents, what it was like growing up for Katrina and her brothers, and how this has tested the family's faith throughout their lives.

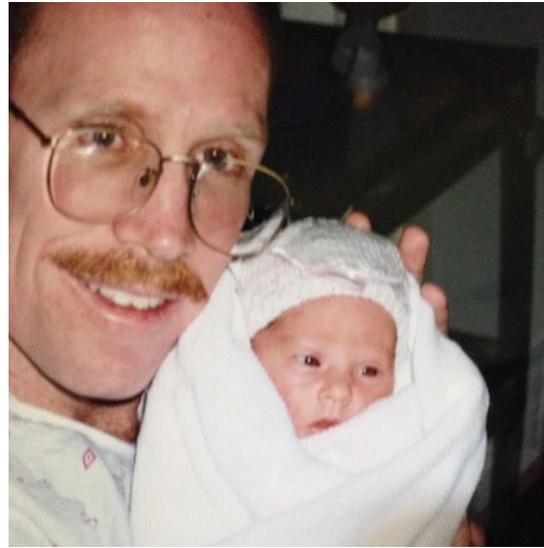


## What is IVF?

In vitro fertilization (IVF) is a complex series of procedures used to increase fertility and assist in the conception of a child. During IVF, the eggs are retrieved from the ovaries and fertilized by sperm in a lab. Then they are transferred to the uterus. IVF is the most effective form of assisted reproductive technology. The chances of giving birth to a healthy baby after using IVF depend on various factors, including maternal age, embryo developmental status prior to transfer, reproductive history, cause of infertility, and lifestyle factors. Risks of IVF include ovarian hyper-stimulation syndrome, miscarriage, egg-retrieval procedure complications, ectopic pregnancy, birth defects, cancer, and stress (1). However, if more than one embryo is transferred to the uterus, a common risk of IVF is a multiple pregnancy. Multiple births tend to be at a disadvantage from the start. Early problems are often related to prematurity (average gestation for twins is 37 weeks and 33.5 for triplets) and low birthweight (average for twins is 5.5 lb. and 3.9 lb. for triplets). Children may suffer long-term consequences from multiple birth complications, including many forms of disability, especially intrauterine growth retardation and cerebral palsy (2).

### **What effects did this have on Katrina's parents?**

During an interview with Katrina's mother, she explained, "as a woman, not being able to get pregnant makes you feel useless or defective. My mother always struggled with having children; therefore, we expected some complications but nothing like this. We later found out that my mother had endometriosis, which she passed down to me and I fear I may have passed down to Katrina." Endometriosis, the growth of endometrial tissue outside the uterine cavity, causes intractable pelvic pain, dysmenorrhea, dyspareunia, and infertility. It is estimated that up to 40% of infertile women have endometriosis (3).



Knowing the risks associated with IVF, Mr. and Mrs. McNally tried everything before attempting IVF, such as intrauterine insemination and fertility drugs to increase production of eggs. However, with not much luck and little hope left, they decided to try IVF. Although Mr. and Mrs. McNally feared the risk factors involved with IVF, they said it was the best decision they have ever made.

In fact, just 2 years after the triplets were born, they conceived a son naturally – which they now consider a miracle. According to Mayo Clinic, women who've given birth previously are more likely to be able to get pregnant than are women who've never given birth (1).

### **What was it like growing up for Katrina and her brothers?**

Growing up, Katrina's life was spent playing in dirt and making mud pies - the usual kinds of things little girls end up doing in a house full of brothers. Despite their normal upbringing, however, their beginning was not as conventional. Katrina's brother, Seamus, has a disability called arthrogryposis multiplex congenita (AMC) due to inadequate room in utero and low amniotic fluid. AMC is a variety of conditions involving multiple joint contractures, where the range of motion of a joint is limited or stiff (4). Due to Seamus's condition, the McNally family quickly became familiar with hospital rooms and school bullies. Despite these hardships, the family has persevered. In fact, Seamus recently graduated from Edinboro University with a degree in Sports & Recreation Management, while playing D3 wheelchair basketball on a scholarship for all four years. Seamus hopes to continue a career path helping young adults with conditions like his. Similarly, Katrina wants to open an OT clinic with a focus in

sensory integration to help children with conditions like her brother's. Her passion was inspired by years of watching her brother in therapy and how it has improved the quality of his life immensely.

### **How has this tested the family's faith throughout their lives?**

When Mr. and Mrs. McNally first learned of Seamus's condition during one of the ultrasounds, the physician offered to abort the child with a disability. This was not a consideration due to the McNally's' faith and their love for their unborn child. The McNally's believe everyone is made the way they are, disability or not, for a reason. Everyone is given different strengths and weaknesses to share with the world. The McNally's always say Seamus has the best personality of the family, and his joy is his gift from God to give to the world.



Additionally, the question of what to do with the extra frozen embryos not used in the first round of IVF was another faith-testing moment for the McNally's. Often, extra embryos are fertilized and frozen in case the first round of IVF does not work or if the parents want to revisit IVF in the future. Once the triplets were born, the McNally's decided that they did not want to go through IVF again, because they had their hands-full already. This leads to the moral question of what to do with the leftover eggs? In this situation parents have four options: (1) Dispose of the embryos. (2) Place the eggs inside the uterus and "see what happens"; meaning, the mother will not be given any medications to increase her chances of getting pregnant. (3) Donate the embryos to other couples having difficulty getting pregnant. (4) Donate the embryos to science. The McNally's decided on the 4th option, because they felt comfort in knowing their experience could enhance other people's experiences in the future. They voted against the other three options for various reasons: (1) They felt it was wrong to simply dispose of their child, giving no purpose to its life. (2) They didn't want more children, and the chances of a mother getting pregnant through IVF without the support of medication is quite small. Therefore, they felt like it was like disposing of their child. (3) They felt uncomfortable knowing they would have other children in the world that they would never meet or have the right to meet; They wouldn't be able to live with the fact that their children could be out there somewhere without any way of knowing if they were being cared for.

Katrina and her family have always been very active in the church; so, when Katrina came to Duquesne University, she joined a Christian fellowship group. During the spring break of her freshman year, she went on a mission trip to a deaf village in Jamaica to help serve and spread the word of God. Throughout the trip she had many eye-opening experiences, but one remains vivid. One evening, Katrina and other Duquesne students ventured out at dusk to watch the stars. During that time, they had long discussions as they were getting to know one another and sharing their beliefs. One student began talking about their newly wedded sister and her struggle to get pregnant. Katrina chimed in, asking if they had considered IVF as a solution. The student then began to explain how appalled they were with emerging technology interfering with God's will. They expressed their belief that IVF is wrong, because if God's will does not allow two people to have children naturally, then they obviously aren't part of his

plan. At the time, the student was unaware of how Katrina had come into the world; after that realization, they had a long conversation followed by an apology.

**Works Cited:**

1. "In Vitro Fertilization (IVF)." *Mayo Clinic*, Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 22 June 2019, [www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/in-vitro-fertilization/about/pac-20384716](http://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/in-vitro-fertilization/about/pac-20384716).
2. The ESHRE Capri Workshop Group, Multiple gestation pregnancy, *Human Reproduction*, Volume 15, Issue 8, August 2000, Pages 1856–1864, <https://doi.org/10.1093/humrep/15.8.1856>
3. Patients' report on how endometriosis affects health, work, and daily life Fourquet J., Gao X., Zavala D., Orengo J.C., Abac S., Ruiz A., Laboy J., Flores I. (2010) *Fertility and Sterility*, 93 (7) , pp. 2424-2428.
4. "Arthrogyrosis." *Johns Hopkins Medicine*, [www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/arthrogyrosis](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/arthrogyrosis).

DeGenova, E. 2019. Vocation, Salvation, and In Vitro Fertilization. *D.U. Quark*, Volume 4(Issue 1). Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/duquark/vol4/iss1/article2>