



Fertility hope for chemotherapy drug

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Health Reporter

Monthly injections of a drug that induces temporary menopause can preserve the fertility of women undergoing chemotherapy, a new study has shown.

A study of more than 200 women with breast cancer found that 8 per cent of those receiving the drug were in menopause two years later, compared with 22 per cent who did not have the drug.

The drug, goserelin, disrupts hormonal communication and puts the ovaries into hibernation, causing temporary menopause.

Study co-chair and Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre oncologist Kelly-Anne Phillips said the findings confirmed that goserelin could preserve fertility during chemotherapy and help women avoid permanent, early menopause.

The current standard treatment for women wanting to preserve fertility before chemotherapy is to have a cycle of IVF to store eggs or embryos ahead of the treatment.

But Professor Phillips said this could be unreliable, with some women unable to produce many eggs in a single cycle before having cancer treatment.

Researchers studied women with hormone-receptor-negative breast cancers but Professor Phillips said the

findings were also relevant to younger women receiving chemotherapy for other cancers.

She said preventing early menopause was important even if women did not want children, because it carried increased risks of long-term health problems including osteoporosis.

Professor Phillips said the findings, to be presented at the American Society of Clinical Oncology's annual meeting in Chicago on Saturday, set a new standard of care for young women during chemotherapy.

"For women concerned about fertility preservation, it will still be important to see a fertility expert promptly before chemotherapy to store eggs, but in addition you would have the goserelin in the hope you maintain your pre-menopausal status," she said.

One of the patients who took part in the trial, Nicole Glazner, said she was not thinking about children when she was diagnosed with breast cancer at age 26. She chose not to have IVF treatment ahead of chemotherapy but, following successful treatment, conceived her daughter Ruby, now 4, a couple of years after her cancer treatment.

She said she hoped her story brought hope to other young women diagnosed with cancer. "We are so lucky to have Ruby. I hope it does show other people that there is a light at the end of the tunnel," she said.

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Nicole Glazner



**Nicole Glazner
and her
daughter Ruby.**
Photo: Eddie Jim