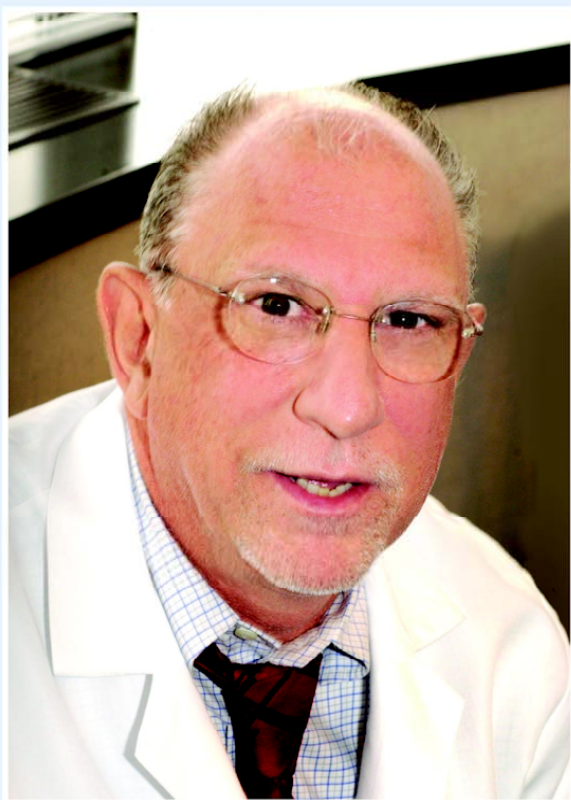


Advancements in Health Care

DR. SERGIO OEHNINGER



KATHY KEENEY

Dr. Sergio Oehninger, medical director at the Jones Institute for Reproductive Medicine and vice chair of the department of obstetrics and gynecology at Eastern Virginia Medical School, is an infertility expert.

Helping couples deal with infertility and try to get pregnant through various avenues, such as in vitro fertilization, can take a doctor through the highest of emotional highs and lowest of lows, Oehninger said.

“The emotional aspect is always high, because these couples are seeking help and have gone through a lot, often three or four years of trying things and stressful procedures,” he said. “When things do happen, it is wonderful to see their response. At the same time it’s important to say, among the different things we do, including IVF, a third don’t get pregnant. Emotions are up and down.”

The emotions are high in dealing with infertility, but it was the science behind the issue that attracted the Uruguay native to reproductive medicine, he said.

“It was the very early days of the IVF boom and I was very much attracted by the endocrinology behind it and the new technology helping couples

achieve pregnancy,” Oehninger said. “When I started in 1986, the success rates were 15 to 20 percent, a big thing then. Today’s rates can be as high as 50 percent.”

His mentors, Drs. Howard and Georgeanna Jones, founders of the Jones Institute, also inspired Oehninger.

“It was very intimidating in the beginning, because they were well-known throughout the world,” he said. “Upon arrival, it was clear they were magnificent to work with. But they were knowledgeable and strict in terms of procedures – they kept you on the right path.”

Many things have changed since Oehninger entered reproductive medicine, including new developments in diagnosing male infertility,

a specialty of Oehninger’s.

“The male component was kind of ignored, because of our ignorance of how to diagnose and analyze,” he said. “We went straight to blaming the woman, but today 40 percent of the cases are male problems. That’s a long way from where we were 20 years ago.”

Reproductive
medicine

– Mary Worrell