

# The Division of Fertility Preservation

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Recognizing the unmet fertility management needs of women facing fertility threats, the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology took an unprecedented step and created a new clinical division, the Division of Fertility Preservation in the fall of 2006. The mission of the division is to increase the pace and quality of basic ovarian research and to provide fertility sparing options to young adults with a cancer diagnosis as well as other fertility threatening diseases or disease treatments. Members of the division explore the molecular mechanisms that underlie normal follicle development, develop methods that support human follicle development and provide information, support and guidance to reproductive-age cancer survivors and other young adults to accelerate research in fertility preservation. In achieving our mission, the Division of Fertility Preservation is meeting the needs of women within our local community and providing a template for work around the nation.

Dr. Teresa K. Woodruff, a leader in the field of reproductive research, heads the division. Dr. Woodruff is a professor of obstetrics and gynecology and of endocrinology at the Feinberg School of Medicine and professor of biochemistry, molecular biology and cell biology in the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences, She was appointed the Thomas J. Watkins Memorial Professor in Obstetrics and Gynecology in 2006 and is the immediate past director for the basic science programs of the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center of Northwestern University. Woodruff's career focuses on ovarian biology and interdisciplinary approaches to solving problems in reproductive sciences. Her team has led the way in the new discipline of oncofertility, encountering patients at the time of a cancer diagnosis, and navigating the patient through the decision making process about fertility and, in some specialized cases, providing the fertility preservation interventions.

The programs within the Division of Fertility Preservation encompass cutting edge research and advanced clinical care. The Division serves as the coordinating unit between the specialties that comprise the new discipline, created by Dr. Woodruff and coined "oncofertility". The participating disciplines include oncology, gynecological oncology, urology, reproductive endocrinology, pathology, biomedical engineering, molecular biology and the behavioral and social sciences including bioethics, health law, policy studies, economics and communication science. The Division also serves as a centralized resource for information about fertility management for clinicians and cancer survivors while working closely with the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center (recently designated a Center of Excellence by Fertile Hope, the nation's leading advocacy organization dedicated to fertility preservation for cancer survivors).

The Division's goals include:

- Encouraging research that can protect or preserve fertility for reproductive-aged cancer survivors
- Expediting the transition from research findings to clinical practice
- Understanding the decision-making process that cancer patient face when dealing with the potential loss of fertility
- Serving both the professional and general communities as a resource for fertility preservation
- Navigating reproductive age cancer survivors through the clinical options for fertility preservation