



A SPECIAL INTEREST SECTION BY MEDIAPLANET

# NAVIGATING Parenthood



## DR. MARJORIE DIXON FROM ANOVA FERTILITY on Why Inclusive Fertility Matters

Dr. Marjorie Dixon shares her insights on inclusivity in fertility and helping diverse individuals navigate their pathway to parenthood.

Tania Amardeil

**D**r. Marjorie Dixon, Founder, CEO, and Medical Director of Anova Fertility and Reproductive Health, is a passionate advocate for inclusive fertility care. Tania from Medioplanet spoke with her about the evolution of reproductive care, common misconceptions, and how Anova is making parenthood more accessible.

**Tania: Fertility is often perceived as a journey for heterosexual couples. Can you elaborate on the concept of inclusive fertility and how fertility care is evolving to be more inclusive of 2SLGBTQI+ couples and single prospective parents?**

**Dr. Dixon:** The idea of “what is a family” and how families are created has evolved. Although the individual needs of each patient varies, we see and treat all patients, regardless of their marital status, sexual identity, preference or race.

Family-building for the 2SLGBTQI+ community often involves additional steps, including legal considerations, finding inclusive health care providers, and navigating options like sperm or egg donation, surrogacy and adoption. These technologies give those in historically marginalized communities the chance to become parents.

**Tania: What are some common misconceptions about fertility treatments?**

**Dr. Dixon:** Fertility health is multifaceted and doesn’t discriminate. One in six Canadian couples experiences infertility, including individuals from all ethnicities, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic statuses. It’s not solely determined by age or lifestyle factors — genetics, medical history, and environmental factors also play a role. Contrary to common misconceptions, fertility awareness isn’t solely for women. Men play an equally essential role in the conception process. Understanding factors like sperm quality, quantity, and lifestyle choices is key.

**Tania: What options are available for those exploring their fertility journey?**

**Dr. Dixon:** At Anova, we provide

customized fertility care options to support all patients. We offer a range of services like egg freezing, in vitro fertilization (IVF), third-party reproduction, genetic testing, and embryo selection for couples with specific genetic conditions. Egg donation and gestational surrogacy are available, as well as reciprocal IVF for lesbian couples and gestational surrogacy with various egg donor options for male couples. For transgender patients, we offer gamete extraction and gestational surrogacy with egg donation.

**Tania: When should someone consider seeking fertility care?**

**Dr. Dixon:** The earlier, the better! Early fertility assessments provide insight into ovarian reserve, sperm quality, hormone levels, and overall reproductive health, enabling proactive planning for patients. By understanding your fertility health as early as possible, you can make informed decisions about your future family planning.

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**Fertility health is multifaceted and doesn’t discriminate.**



## Meet Your Trusted Partner, Anova Fertility, on Your Pathway to Parenthood

More than just a fertility clinic, Anova Fertility and Reproductive Health is a trusted friend in your journey to parenthood.



**A**nova Fertility’s value of delivering exceptional individualized, inclusive and innovative care is precisely what fertility patients need to feel supported and empowered in their journey. With offices across Ontario, including North York, Toronto, Guelph, and Waterloo, Anova offers curated fertility journeys tailored to each patient.

“Anova Fertility was founded on the premise that all patients have a fundamental right to access fertility care and to become parent(s),” says Kim Kopyl, Chief Growth Officer at Anova Fertility. “As your friends in fertility, we hold your hand, every step of the way throughout your family building journey,” says Kopyl.

### A patient-centric philosophy

“Our award-winning team sees more than the patients behind the charts” says Kopyl, “We see their future family. We appreciate their unique pathways to parenthood, and we’ve dedicated our practice to providing a compassionate, inclusive, and respectful environment for all patients.”

“Our five core pillars — empathy, innovation, friendliness, inclusion, and privacy — shape every aspect of care at Anova,” says Kopyl.

“Empathy means we recognize the deeply personal nature of fertility care and ensure every patient feels heard and supported. Innovation keeps us at the forefront of reproductive medicine, making advanced treatments accessible while ensuring patients fully understand their options. Friendliness and inclusion create a welcoming space where patients feel comfortable, not just like a number,” says Kopyl.

### Supporting all patients

Anova Fertility offers fertility assessments, egg freezing, IVF, IUI, ovulation induction, oncofertility, 2SLGBTQIA+ family building, and wellness therapy.

“Our team of expert doctors use key results, along with other factors such as medical history, age, lifestyle, and genetics to create unique treatment plans to improve chances of conception. We try to look at everything, from genetic testing to addressing nutrient and vitamin deficiencies with IV vitamin infusion therapy,” says Kopyl.

Anova’s state-of-the-art on-site embryology lab is recognized as the top embryology lab in Canada, and its team is second to none. “We continually place extraordinary effort and make ongoing financial investments towards advancing our laboratory technology. We think about every aspect of the lab, from airtight, double air-locked windows to ensure air quality is never compromised, to time-lapse incubators that allow us to capture every moment of embryo development. All these different technologies ensure that we maintain the quality of the genetic material, optimizing our patients’ outcomes even in the face of any challenges,” says Kopyl.

Beyond medical treatments, Anova offers a full spectrum of support and wellness, including fertility counselling, peer support groups, integrative wellness options like nutrition, IV vitamin therapy, and acupuncture, to optimize the highest success rates and to ensure that patients feel cared for at every level.

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Book your appointment now, with Your Friends in Fertility at [anovafertility.com](https://anovafertility.com) for your free consultation.

This article was sponsored by **Anova Fertility.**

**Anova**  
FERTILITY



## THE MODERN MAN'S GUIDE TO FERTILITY: Learn How to Improve Sperm Health

For couples trying to conceive, men can take proactive steps to optimize fertility through lifestyle changes, supplements, and early testing.

Michelle Sponagle



**Dr. Keith Jarvi**  
Director of the Murray Koffler Urologic Wellness Centre & Head of Urology, Mount Sinai Hospital

**M**ale fertility is on the decline globally. According to the World Health Organization, one in six couples experience infertility, with male factors contributing to nearly 50 per cent of cases. While conversations around fertility have traditionally focused on women, research shows that men's reproductive health plays an equally crucial role in conception success.

"Men often don't receive the same attention as women when it comes to reproductive health," says Dr. Keith Jarvi, Director of the Murray Koffler Urologic Wellness Centre and Head of Urology at Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto. "It's time to look at what men can do to optimize fertility."

### Supporting sperm health

A growing body of evidence suggests that lifestyle choices significantly impact sperm health. Factors like poor diet, smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, and high stress levels can negatively affect sperm count, motility (movement), and morphology (shape).

"These are changes men can start making right away," says Dr. Jarvi. "Maintaining a healthy weight, exer-

cising, and adopting a nutrient-rich diet can all contribute to better sperm health. Reducing stress and avoiding environmental toxins can also make a difference."

Scientific research has identified key nutrients that support sperm health, including antioxidants like CoQ10 and vitamin E, which help protect sperm from oxidative stress. L-carnitine, an amino acid, plays a role in energy production and sperm motility, while zinc and folic acid are essential for sperm production and DNA integrity.

To help men optimize their fertility, FlowLabs developed FloVita, a daily male fertility supplement formulated with clinically validated ingredients to enhance sperm quality. "It's difficult to get all the necessary nutrients through diet alone," says Dr. Jarvi. "FloVita was designed to bridge that gap and provide men with the best chance of conception."

### Early testing for better outcomes

Understanding fertility potential early can save couples time and stress. Traditionally, semen analysis required a visit to a clinic, which could be inconvenient or uncomfortable for many men. Flow-



Labs is changing the game with its soon-to-be-released mail-in semen analysis service, the first of its kind in Canada. This at-home option offers lab-quality results without the need for a lab visit, allowing men to assess their fertility status discreetly and conveniently.

For men looking for expert guidance, FlowLabs is also launching a free-to-the-patient male fertility telehealth service. This new offering will provide direct access to fertility specialists, giving men personalized advice on improving their reproductive health, requisitions for tests and/or prescriptions.

Optimizing male fertility is about more than just diet and lifestyle — it's about taking proactive steps to understand and improve reproductive health. With supplements like FloVita, easy-to-access semen testing, and expert fertility support, FlowLabs is empowering men to take charge of their fertility journey.



To learn more, visit [flowlabs.ca](https://www.flowlabs.ca). Use code **FLTS15** for 15% off.



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## The Benefits of Including a Midwife in Your Pregnancy Care

When having a baby, there are numerous pregnancy care choices available. Many women choose to make midwives their pregnancy care partners.

Anne Papmehl

**H**aving a baby is exciting. Whether welcoming your first child or a new sibling into the family, you want to have your pregnancy your way. Many women turn to midwives for their prenatal, labour and delivery, and postnatal care.

Midwives are professional, autonomous primary care providers who are skilled in all facets of childbirth. They work in partnership with other health care professionals such as obstetricians, family doctors, and nurses. Depending on your preference, midwives can attend births in hospitals, in birthing centres, or at home.

### Accessible and fully funded care

Working with a midwife has many benefits, and you don't need a referral from a doctor to seek out midwifery care. Throughout pregnancy, midwives provide essential services, such as prenatal visits, routine blood work, and diagnostic tests. Their care doesn't end after the birth. Midwives continue to see you for at least six weeks postpartum to ensure that your physical, emotional, and psychological needs are met. Most importantly, midwives can give you plenty of time and space to allow for meaningful discussions, answering your questions, and helping you make the best decisions about the health and care of your baby — all at no cost to you. Midwife care is fully covered under provincial and territorial health care plans.

Working in tandem with the National Council of Indigenous Midwives (NCIM), the Canadian Association of Midwives (CAM) is dedicated to promoting the vital role of midwives in sexual, reproductive, and newborn health. Since 2001, CAM has been working across all levels of health care and government to drive legislation and funding and support for midwives directly with tools and learning opportunities.

CAM also provides comprehensive resources to families about pregnancy, childbirth, and choosing the best care. For people interested in working with a midwife, CAM provides information on how to find one in their province or territory.



To learn more about working with a midwife, visit [havingababy.co](https://www.havingababy.co).

This article was sponsored by the **Canadian Association of Midwives**.

**HAVING A  
baby**







Teams from Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia pose for a selfie. Photo: Alex Wilson/Oxfam Canada ▲

# Oxfam Project and Partners Empower Adolescent Girls and Young Women to Claim Their Rights

Through health services, education, and advocacy, an Oxfam project is strengthening young women's sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Abigail Cukier

**M**ihret was just 17 years old when she married Berhane. Following community norms in Ethiopia, Berhane pressured Mihret to have a child at the age of 19.

His opinion began to change when he saw how much pain Mihret experienced during childbirth and when he and Mihret struggled to feed their child on his low income. But he felt the pressure from those around him for his wife to have more children and began pushing Mihret to have another child.

When Berhane heard about a self-help group organized by a partner of the Her Future, Her Choice (HFHC) project, he encouraged Mihret to join. Mihret learned about contraception and received a loan to open a vegetable business. Berhane attended the group's family dialogue sessions, where he learned about the importance of contraception and women's financial independence and decision-making.

Berhane is no longer pushing Mihret to have more children. "Now, we're focused on growing my wife's business and providing better living conditions for our child," he says.

### Inspiring change for girls and young women

Berhane and Mihret's story is just one example of how Oxfam and partners have made real change for adolescent girls and young women in regions of Southern and Eastern Africa, where they face harmful cultural practices, taboos surrounding sexuality, and lack of access to sexual and reproductive health information and services. Adolescent girls in these regions have limited decision-making and control over their bodies, lives, and health. They experience child, early, and forced marriage; gender-based violence; teenage pregnancy; unsafe abortion; and early parenthood. As a result of teenage pregnancy and a lack of support, they are forced to drop out of school.

HFHC has improved sexual and reproductive health and rights for

young women in targeted districts of Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia. Through this project, Oxfam and partners have worked with young women and men, parents, teachers, and other community members to change discriminatory norms and attitudes and strengthen the autonomy of teenage girls and young women. It also trains health service providers, supports health facilities to provide high-quality sexual and reproductive health services, and promotes change in sexual and reproductive rights and health-related laws and policies.

Over the last five years, HFHC initiatives have helped reduce teen pregnancies, led to a positive shift in attitudes regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights, and increased access to contraception, safe abortion care, and youth-friendly health care.

### What worked? Bringing traditional, community, and religious leaders on board

Anabela Ant6nio is a revered matron and religious leader in the Marcuza community of Mocuba District, Mozambique. Young women in her community experience sexual violence and child marriage. Due to poverty and lack of education, families often feel the need to marry off their daughters at a young age.

Anabela used to conduct initiation practices to signify a girl's passage into adulthood. The girls would spend weeks in the forest going through cultural training, before returning for early marriages and pregnancies. Pregnancy typically meant the end of formal education.

Anabela's transformation began when she got involved in the "Girl Go Back to School" campaign. She learned about premature marriage, gender-based violence, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. This helped her see the role initiation practices played in fostering early marriages. She began advocating for legal age limits for marriage and encouraging the education of girls until 18. Her efforts have helped get girls back into school and inspired

them to continue their education.

For Anabela, abandoning initiation practices meant losing her primary source of income, as families paid for their daughters to undergo the rituals. Since then, she has turned to farming to support her livelihood.

### Training health service providers

Before 2020, Namwala District in Zambia saw a high rate of teenage pregnancies. One major gap was the lack of trained health care providers to offer comprehensive contraception services, including long-acting reversible contraception (LARC). LARC includes the intrauterine device (IUD) and the contraceptive implant, which are effective forms of contraception that reduce the need for repeat clinic visits. Through HFHC, Masauso Banda, a registered nurse and midwife, was trained to offer a range of contraception services. Campaigns and peer education also addressed the stigma of contraception.

Traditional leaders, including the local chief, played a critical role in increasing community acceptance of these initiatives. Masauso also mentored his colleagues so that more health service providers could offer LARC services. The community began to understand the benefits of contraception, particularly in preventing teenage pregnancies.

### Advocating for change with the government

HFHC has also contributed to changes at the national and local policy levels. In Malawi, Oxfam and partners worked with other organizations to push for increased funding in the national budget. This led to a 13 per cent increase in funding for sexual and reproductive health in the 2023-24 budget, followed by an increase in the national health budget from 8.5 per cent to 12.2 per cent for 2024-2025.

Together with local organizations, through projects such as Her Future, Her Choice, Oxfam is advancing women's and girls' rights and putting sexual and reproductive health decision-making in their hands — where it should be.

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▲ Primary care health facility outside Mugeba, Mozambique.

To learn about more such impacts visit [oxfam.ca](https://www.oxfam.ca) or sign up for the Oxfam Canada Newsletter:



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