



Supporting a pastoral commitment to a culture of life in the Archdiocese of Omaha

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Thomas W. Hilgers, MD; Bogdan Chazan, MD; & Piotr Klimas, MD in Poland, 2011

**A**dvent Greetings! I would like to share with you in this issue of the *Connect* the excitement of taking **NaProTECHNOLOGY** to Poland, to Costa Rica, and to Colombia. The Pope Paul VI Institute, guided by the teachings of the Catholic Church, developed the **CREIGHTON MODEL FertilityCare™ System** and **NaProTECHNOLOGY** to provide women's health care that respects the dignity of women and of couples.

The impact of the Church's teachings and the work of the Institute becomes clear when one considers that the over 400 *in vitro* clinics (two of which are located in Omaha) successfully serve half of one percent of women suffering from infertility in a given year. Yet, after successfully using the **CREIGHTON MODEL System** and receiving **NaProTECHNOLOGY** treatments, the Institute receives countless letters of gratitude from many of our patient-couples who had suffered infertility and, in some cases, failed previous IVF treatments. The need is ever increasing for promotion of this work. Many women have expressed that "this is the best kept secret". Moreover, the young physicians desire to live the Gospel message that the Church has proclaimed to them, and they desire to heal and to give hope. With **NaProTECHNOLOGY**, they finally find a way to provide high-quality health care in line with their Christian principles. It amazes me to see that this desire is not limited to our own city or even our own country but that it really touches people everywhere. You, priests and deacons, have proclaimed the Gospel of life to us and inspire us to continue building a culture of life in women's health care.

I am looking forward to the honor of presenting **NaProTECHNOLOGY** at the Pontifical Academy for Life meeting in February. This year's annual meeting will address alternatives to reproductive technologies. My presentation will be published in the International Archives of Obstetrics and Gynecology. Also, our second annual physician-couples retreat will be in February. It provides a spiritual "recharge" to physicians and their spouses as they balance the demands of a medical career with family life and it supports physicians converting their practices from BCP use. *Do you know a physician and spouse who you could ask to consider this retreat?* You can find more information on the back page and on our web site, [www.popepaulvi.com](http://www.popepaulvi.com), or on my blog, [www.drhilgers.com](http://www.drhilgers.com).

— Thomas W. Hilgers, MD, Director of the Pope Paul VI Institute, Editor of *Connect*

## *NaProTechnology versus the Culture of Death*

Thomas W. Hilgers, MD, CFCMC

**N**aProTECHNOLOGY is confronting the culture of death. Much of contemporary women's health care is based on such approaches as *in vitro* fertilization, contraception, and abortion. This "alternative" to the contemporary women's health care is not only giving help and healing to women and couples treated with **NaProTECHNOLOGY** but is also giving medical professionals a completely new approach to practicing in their careers without compromising medical service quality or one's moral code.



Thomas W. Hilgers, MD, & Marian Szamatowicz, MD, at NaPro versus IVF debate in Poland, September 23rd

### *The Poznan, Poland Debate*

**NaProTECHNOLOGY** faced off against *in vitro* fertilization in the public sphere for the first time! This first-ever debate occurred in Poznan, Poland in front of approximately 400 medical professionals. The debate and its preceding lecture were streamed live on the Internet as well.

As founder and director of the Pope Paul VI Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction in Omaha, Nebraska and as discoverer of the women's health science of **NaProTECHNOLOGY**, I was invited to give a lecture on Thursday,



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September 22, 2011. This presentation covered the topics of **NaProTECHNOLOGY**, its foundation—the **CREIGHTON MODEL FertilityCare™ System**, and the hope that it provides in treating infertility and miscarriage.

The debate itself was held during the “Hot Topics “in Perinatal Medicine Conference, a conference series coordinated by the Wielkopolska Branch of the Polish Society of Perinatal Medicine and by the University of Medical Sciences in Poznan. I debated Professor Marian Szamatowicz on Friday, September 23rd. Szamatowicz is a famous *in vitro* fertilization doctor in Poland. We each had 45 minutes to present our cases before fielding questions about the effectiveness and the legitimacy of our approaches to perinatal medicine. It was very interesting to note that my opponent in the debate was responsible for bringing IVF to Poland. Prior to his involvement with IVF, he was a communist abortionist. The culture of death is very prominent in women’s health.

At the invitation of Dr. Bogdan Chazan, medical director of the Holy Family Hospital in Warsaw, I met with physicians at the hospital. I performed surgical procedures on two infertility patients, and it was broadcast on closed circuit television to over 100 doctors and medical personnel from Poland. In doing this, the interested medical professionals were able to learn some of the **NaProTECHNOLOGY** surgical techniques used to restore fertility rather than to suppress or destroy it. Dr. Piotr Klimas, our first medical consultant in Poland, assisted in the operating room.

#### *Pro-Life Congress in Costa Rica*

In October, I traveled to Costa Rica. This is the only country in Latin America that has not approved IVF. It also has restrictive abortion laws. At the Fifth International Pro-Life Congress in San José, I presented on **NaProTECHNOLOGY** as a treatment for infertility without the repercussions of frozen embryos, selective reductions, and other moral dilemmas. In addition to the Friday keynote address, I met with other government officials, bishops, clergy, and pro-life leaders while in Costa Rica.



Thomas W. Hilgers, MD, presenting to physicians in Holy Family Hospital

#### *What is All of the Talk About?*

**NaProTECHNOLOGY** is a new women’s health science that specializes in working cooperatively—as opposed to suppressively or destructively—with women’s menstrual and fertility cycles. It integrates, for the first time, family planning with women’s health. It relies upon the observation and recording of biomarkers. These observations are standardized, prospective in how they are collected and interpreted, and reproducible. Through these biomarkers, phases of fertility and infertility can be determined and gynecologic health problems can be diagnosed and effectively treated.

In the United States, there is a mandatory reporting requirement on all of the IVF clinics. The most recent is for the year 2008. The diagnosis of endometriosis is reported in 4.6% of cases and ovarian dysfunction is seen in 6.7% of cases.

However, in using **NaProTECHNOLOGY**, we are actually looking for the underlying cause and a diagnosis. We find endometriosis in 77.4% of infertility cases, target organ dysfunction in 68.2%, ovulation disorders in 56.5%, and luteal phase deficiency in 53.7%. The reason that these percentages are so much higher is because **NaProTECHNOLOGY** looks for the cause.

From the same 2008 national data, one successful IVF pregnancy requires 7.42 embryos (at a minimum). Furthermore, multiple pregnancies with IVF is 31.9%, with **NaProTECHNOLOGY** is



“Words cannot begin to express our gratitude to you—gratitude not only for helping us resolve gynecological problems that a myriad of other doctors were unable to diagnose or treat and for helping to make the conception of our beautiful and long-awaited daughter possible, but also for your courage and ambition in answering the call to practice medicine and surgery in a way that respects both women and marriage, is in line with the teachings of Our Church, and actually helps women and their families...Please know that we pray daily for you and the promotion of NaProTechnology. Thank you for all that you do.”

— Michael & Lucynda (pictured are their children Ava & Anden)

Excerpted from testimonial (enclosed on insert)

3.2%; and the singleton prematurity rate with IVF is 12.4%, with NaPro is 7.0%. With IVF, the prematurity rate for singleton pregnancies after a multi-fetal reduction is 19.1% and for twin or triplet pregnancies is 61-96%.

Moreover, the 2008 statistics show that 9.5 million women suffer fertility-related issues in a given year. Of those, there were 46,326 live births. So, less than 0.5% of women who have infertility had a baby with the help of IVF; in other words, 99.5% of women who have infertility will never have a baby by IVF in any given year.

In **NaProTECHNOLOGY**, diseases are identified and treated, thereby laying the foundation for future success. More total pregnancies are achieved than with artificial methods; multiple pregnancy rates and prematurity rates are much lower; and there are no moral dilemmas such as frozen embryos. While speed to pregnancy

and overall cycle-by-cycle pregnancy rates are greater with IVF, the per-woman pregnancy rate in **NaProTECHNOLOGY** is higher and will only increase with continued growth in **NaProTECHNOLOGY**.

After two failed ISCI/IVF cycles, Stephanie Epolite of Sacramento, California said, “It felt like it wasn’t meant to be. It was like my body failed me...I felt an emptiness inside myself and my heart that could never be filled.” With the help of **NaProTECHNOLOGY**, she and her husband achieved pregnancy and gave birth to a baby girl!

With this research data, your pastoral support of women and couples to pursue **NaProTECHNOLOGY** over IVF can be done with great confidence. Whereas IVF undermines Church teachings and creates morally problematic circumstances, **NaProTECHNOLOGY** gives couples a way to approach love and life as part of their faith journey. ☺

## Dr. Keefe takes “NaPro” to New Places



Catherine E. Keefe, MD, presents at the Pontifical University Bolivarian in Colombia. Behind her is the flag of the university (red/black).

This past October, Catherine E. Keefe, MD, presented the new women’s health science of **NaProTECHNOLOGY** in Medellín, Colombia. There, the Fourth Panamerican Seminar for Natural Family Planning conference featured speakers who presented on a variety of natural methods of fertility regulation, including Billings and Sympto-thermal methods.

“There were about 250 people,” said Keefe, “From places such as Mexico, Argentina, Costa Rica, and the United States. The Archbishop of Medellín” said a special Mass...[and] also attending the conference were Auxiliary Bishop Hugo Torres and Fr. Rodrigo Hurtado, LC.”

Keefe, who was invited in Dr. Thomas W. Hilgers’ place, is the first graduating fellow of the Pope John Paul II Postgraduate Fellowship in **NaProTECHNOLOGY**. The fellowship program is offered by the Pope Paul VI Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction in conjunction with Creighton University Medical School. She is a board-certified obstetrician-gynecologist who performs reproductive surgery and provides patient care at the Pope Paul VI Institute.

During the conference, Keefe gave two separate talks. The first, *Introduction to the Creighton Model*, included “a history of the development and overview of the **CREIGHTON MODEL System**, information about its professional infrastructure, and details on the worldwide growth of **FertilityCare™**

**Centers.”** In the second, *NaProTechnology: The New Women’s Health Science*, Keefe said, “I presented the applications and the success rates of **NaProTECHNOLOGY** as well as details on Dr. Hilgers’ recently published data regarding near-adhesion-free reconstructive pelvic surgery.”

The **CREIGHTON MODEL System (CrMS)**, unlike other methods of natural fertility regulation, is based on solid scientific and educational research. This research and standardization of the **CrMS** ensures its medical safety and reliability. The **CrMS** is the foundation of **NaProTECHNOLOGY**, which is highly effective in diagnosing and treating women’s health problems.

“My trip to Medellín was sponsored by the Institute for Marriage and the Family,” said Keefe noting that the IMF is located at the Pontifical Bolivarian University (or Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana). She said, “The university has a medical school there as well. The Institute for Marriage and Family and the dean of the medical school arranged for Keefe to speak to a group of physicians and medical professionals.”

That presentation drew interest from the physicians, two of whom were OB-GYNs who wanted to learn more about the **CrMS** and **NaProTECHNOLOGY**. “It was also really exciting to present to the medical students at the University. There were about 70 at the presentation.”

Currently, there are three trained **FertilityCare™** professionals in South America—a **CrMS** medical consultant in Peru and in Chile and a **FertilityCare™** Practitioner in Chile. ☺



Maria Garcia, NFP coordinator of Archdiocese of Chicago; Catherine E. Keefe, MD; Maria Piedad de Klunkert, PhD, and Fr. Gilberto Gomez, both at Institute for Marriage and Family



# You and I = We

Culture of Life Physician/Couple Retreat

*A retreat especially for physicians & their spouses or fiancé(e)s to strengthen physician couples in promoting a culture of life through the practice of NaPro Technology*

*A weekend retreat—February 9th-11th, 2012— led by the Reverend Jarosław Szymczak, PhD, focusing on marriage, family, and the practice of women's medicine in a Culture of Life.*

*Daily Mass; silent reflection/prayer before the Blessed Sacrament; retreat sessions (lectures, workshops, & couple dialogue); and two continuing medical education lectures by Thomas W. Hilgers, MD include Building a Culture of Life in Women's Health Care and Are Science and Faith Compatible? Sponsored by Pope Paul VI Institute & Creighton University School of Medicine.*

[www.popepaulvi.com/PhysicianRetreat.htm](http://www.popepaulvi.com/PhysicianRetreat.htm)

# Connect



HELPING PRIESTS RESPOND TO MEDICAL AND MORAL CHALLENGES



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### *Helping Priests Respond to Medical and Moral Challenges*

*NaPro Technology versus the Culture of Death by Thomas W. Hilgers, MD | Dr. Keefe takes "NaPro" to New Places  
If You Gift Us Another Child... A Testimonial*

# Connect

## If You Gift Us Another Child... A Testimonial by Lucynda and Michael

Fall/Winter 2011 • Volume 6, Number 3/4 Insert • Excerpted from an appeal letter written by Lucynda and Michael, November 2011

I OWE MY CHILDREN AND MY MOTHERHOOD to Dr. Hilgers and to God. We are so deeply grateful for our children. ...Rarely does much time go by when I am not reminded that I might not have had them. I treasure every moment with them. ...We have gone down a long and painful road to arrive here, but this is a magnificent place. ...I am closer to God now than ever. It seems it may be necessary to endure hardships to really live how we should. God led me to the Pope Paul VI Institute and brought me through what I could have let bring me down instead into the most wonderful and joy-filled outcome possible.

I had severe endometriosis and was told I would never get pregnant. I was devastated and lost. But, I was told about the Pope Paul VI Institute. Meeting Dr. Hilgers gave me new hope. ...Dr. Hilgers was very open and honest with us but also very hopeful. He wasn't going to give up on me, so I wasn't either. He told us honestly how bad it was. Then, he also told us what he could do. He had solutions with which I felt more comfortable than any I had been told previously by any other doctor or specialist. They felt like real answers—and, moreover, I didn't have to worry morally about my conscience with his recommendations either. ...

I had three surgeries in total. ...Post-surgery, it took quite a regimen working with Dr. Hilgers, and a lot of diligence and prayers to get my body to function properly to become pregnant. But, on October 14, 2008, we became pregnant with our daughter! We cannot possibly put into words our elation! My husband and I spent the entire evening that we confirmed our pregnancy in each other's arms in tears of joy. I said *Thank you, God* a million times over. ... God had not abandoned me. We are finally a family. ...



Ava Lily Maryn was born June 30, 2009.



*Ava Lily Maryn and Anden Markus*

Dr Hilgers told me to just have my children. Don't wait, delay or space....that if I wanted them that I should have them while I could. Typically, he is able to repair with a very low rate of return but, due to the severity of my endometriosis, I had a likelihood of return. I was worried the road to getting pregnant a second time may be a long one again like it was with Ava. I made a promise with God...*if you gift us another child I'll pray for this one to become someone to help Dr Hilgers in his practice.* So without delay, as soon as it seemed my cycle was normal again, we were ready to try for baby 2! We got pregnant the first try! God gave us another baby! We were shocked! I think it took me months just to believe we were pregnant again! I was so thrilled.

Our son was born to us December 9, 2011—Anden Markus. We were given the most wonderful Christmas gift possible. *Thank you Lord and thank you Dr Hilgers. I owe my family to you. We are so blessed by you.* Our precious little ones mean everything to me. And, I am keeping my word and praying to God for our son to one day help Dr. Hilgers.

Dr. Hilgers amazes me with his trust in our Lord. He has allowed God to turn him into an instrument and a guiding force. We will always be ever grateful to Dr. Hilgers for his dedication to this work, and we will continue to use his tools for our family and for my health. He is truly concerned for women's health and values our reproductive system as a necessary and vital system that helps make up our body. This is so contrary to popular mainstream medicine. God gave us built in information that we can *continued on back*

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## If You Gift Us Another Child... A Testimonial by *Lucynda and Michael*

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*continued from front*

use if we choose. Dr. Hilgers is the instrument who is teaching us how. His charting method alone is an invaluable resource for any woman no matter what her life entails. My daughter has a high likelihood of experiencing endometriosis as well, as it runs on both sides of her family. This tool will be invaluable for her.

We hope we can give back as much as Dr. Hilgers has given us.

My experience with the Pope Paul VI Institute in particular has brought me closer to God and created a unity in my own family that I know would not be there without having endured this experience. I have more knowledge, more understanding. I am more open to God. I am closer to my husband after the pain and this long road together. It hasn't been easy, but we are united in a special way. And most of all, I have a family. If I had not trusted God's direction, I would be missing the most important thing to me.

After my big laparotomy surgery in Omaha in December 2007, my husband and I spent a very intimate and humbling Christmas by ourselves in a hotel recovering before I could travel again. I was worn of all we had been through thus far but filled with new hope. It is no small task that Dr Hilgers has, but he gives patients the gift of new hope. With our newest gift of our son, almost three years to the day of my first surgery my husband and I were made a family of four. Our hope has been fulfilled. The Pope Paul VI Institute will always hold a special place in my heart, especially at Christmas time. ❧



*Lucynda and Anden Markus*



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