

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Family through surrogacy: An increasing alternative to infertility**

Englewood, New Jersey – With the recent announcement that Sarah Jessica Parker and her husband Matthew Broderick have recently delivered twins through surrogate pregnancy, third-party reproduction is making headlines again but in a more positive light than the landmark legal cases and news stories of the 1980s.

For many outside the medical and reproductive fields, surrogate pregnancy can often be a mystery. And those who are unknowing often question the reasons why someone might need a surrogate or – more specifically – why a woman might offer herself to fill the reproductive void for another.

Dr. Allison Rosen, a clinical psychologist at The Rocking Chair, has been in private practice for over 30 years specializing in general infertility counseling, third-party reproduction, pregnancy loss, and adoption, is considered a gestational carrier expert who performs independent surrogacy evaluations.

According to Dr. Rosen, many couples turn to gestational surrogacy because it is relatively less difficult than adoption and offers the intended parents relatively more command of the process. She said, “You have control over who’s going to be your surrogate as well as the genetic aspect without the wait or bureaucracy of international adoption.”

Dr. Rosen performed two studies on international adoption which found that if a woman had ever had a cancer history – or yet a medical condition that would even be considered minor in the United States – she could not adopt internationally from some countries. In other countries, women are mandated to wait five years after recovering from illness only to mature out of the adoption age limit.

With a long history of helping breast cancer patients preserve their fertility, Dr. Rosen highlights the emotional aspects of having gone through cancer: these women often have survived identity issues and feelings of shame, and eventually find someone to marry with the hope that they can have a child. “When they look into the world of adoption and how hard it’s going to be,” she said, “and then through gestational carrier arrangements learning they can indeed have a child...the birth of that child really transforms someone’s life.”

For the gestational carrier or surrogate mother, studies have shown that they are primarily motivated by the desire to do something meaningful and important in their lives, said Dr. Rosen.

During the evaluation process, Dr. Rosen performs the standard American Society of Reproductive Medicine guideline screening of both the intended parent and potential surrogate and meets with the husband or partner of the prospective carrier. She is then referred for a physical exam and routine blood work.

A potential gestational carrier has to have had children of her own otherwise they can not provide an informed consent if they have never had a child. “They really have to know what they’re getting into,” said Dr. Rosen.

If the psychological and medical evaluations go well, the psychologist continues to act as a mediator between both parties helping to make all involved more comfortable by having access to a highly qualified and trained third-party.

What are some important things to think about?

What are the similarities in lifestyle choices such as eating habits between the surrogate and the couple? Who will be present at the hospital for the birth and is the gestational carrier’s husband comfortable with the birth being witnessed by the intended father? And how are the families going to maintain postpartum contact or how much contact do they want – a photograph on the child’s birthday or visitation arrangements?

“These are things that need to be contracted ahead of time and before entering into an agreement,” said Dr. Rosen. Throughout the pregnancy she further mediates if there is conflict and said, “That’s the role of a mental health professional.”

Selecting empathic people on both sides is important for the positive outcome of a third-party pregnancy, explained Dr. Rosen, and that both parties need to be empathic to each others problems and needs. “Sometimes it’s psycho educational where the gestational carrier is more laissez-faire about the pregnancy because she has already had children and the intended parent has suffered loss and pain,” she said.

Addressing the surprise benefits to surrogacies that are often overlooked by outsiders, Dr. Rosen said the positive outcome is, typically, a win-win for everyone involved. “In my experience, and in research,” she said, “the thing that most people don’t realize is how wonderful it will be for the intended parents to suddenly have a child or for the surrogate to have a warm and loving reaction from the intended parents having watched the beauty of helping them create their family. It’s absolutely wonderful.”

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