

## Pearlstone moves infertility practice to Missouri Baptist

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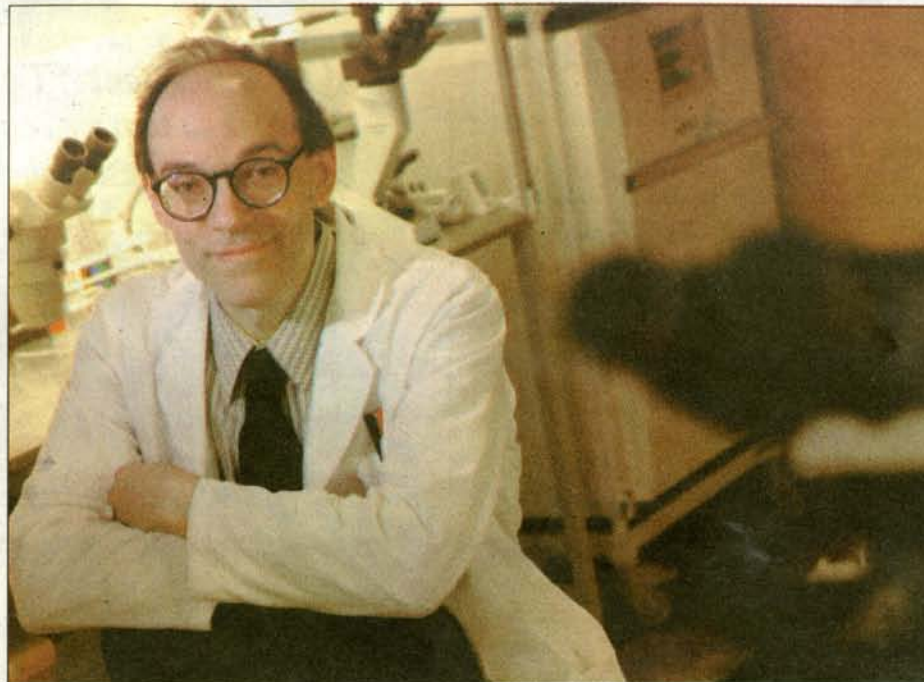
Dr. Anthony Pearlstone's infertility practice has a new home and a new name, The Fertility Center.

The practice, formerly the Infertility Institute, relocated April 1 from St. Luke's Hospital in Chesterfield, where it had been for 14 years, to Missouri Baptist Medical Center, part of BJC HealthCare.

The practice consists of Pearlstone, embryology lab supervisor Marla Wohldmann and several nurses, technicians and administrative staff. Pearlstone said he hired two more nurses who will start April 16. When they join, the staff will number 12. He said the practice handles about 250 patient visits in an average week, and he expects that to grow with the addition of new physicians, which he said he is considering.

Pearlstone said he made the move because Missouri Baptist President Joan Magruder and Chief Medical Officer Dr. John Krettek were "as committed to expanding accessibility to fertility services" as he was. "I feel these services haven't been as available to the community as they should be," he said. Magruder said that after talking with Pearlstone, she invited him to bring his practice to Missouri Baptist.

She said the hospital is committing



BRIAN CASSIDY

**Dr. Anthony Pearlstone says he expects The Fertility Center will add new physicians to its staff.**

\$200,000 toward recruiting at least one new fertility physician to the practice and expanding its in vitro fertilization lab.

Missouri Baptist already had one reproductive health practice on its campus, the Infertility and IVF Center, headed by Dr. Ronald Wilbois.

Pearlstone said he is able to offer many services in-house that patients otherwise

would have to go to a separate location for, including diagnostics and in vitro fertilization. The practice also offers services such as artificial insemination, surgery and preimplantation genetic diagnosis.

Beth Fagan, a spokeswoman for Missouri Baptist, said buildout at Pearlstone's new offices was completed by Chesterfield-based Hedicorp Contracting.

Missouri Baptist Medical Center has 489 beds and \$360 million in annual revenue. St. Luke's has 493 beds and \$340 million in annual revenue.

When asked if St. Luke's would bring in any new fertility physicians to replace the relocated practice, Don Miller, administrator for St. Luke's, said it would continue to rely on its existing team, which includes Dr. Sherman Silber, an internationally recognized fertility specialist.

Silber said Pearlstone's practice at St. Luke's was separate from his, a three-doctor, 50-employee group known as the Infertility Center of St. Louis at St. Luke's Hospital. Silber said he doesn't think the departure of Pearlstone's practice will have a long-lasting impact on St. Luke's. "We're growing by leaps and bounds," he said. "We are seeing at least 50 percent growth per year in patient numbers. As people are having children later, infertility has become a gigantic public health problem." Silber said his practice performs more than 600 treatment cycles a year.

"I think (infertility services) are really good business for hospitals," he said. "But there are very few hospital-based IVF and infertility programs. Doctors tend to take these services into their own private offices. It's more profitable for them to do it that way. But we have a particularly friendly relationship with St. Luke's, and that's why we've stayed here."