Clinical experience reported as a retrospective study

James M. Goldfarb, M.D., and Nina Desai, Ph.D.
Department of Reproductive Biology, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio

We are very much aware of the problems with a retrospective analysis. However, we believe that our clinical experience with the two preparations in a highly successful IVF program is of value to readers. The January 1998 to April 1999 time frame was chosen because during that period, we were giving no recommendations to patients regarding selection of gonadotropins. In April 1999, we looked back at our findings and began to share these retrospective results with our patients.

We agree that well-controlled, multicenter prospective studies are needed to definitively compare specific stimulation protocols. We hope these will be done. However, by the time a study is completed, new protocols may have been introduced. Thus, we may still be left with the question as to what is the best protocol. We suggest that studies be done in programs that are attaining high success rates. We are particularly skeptical when no difference is found between protocols but overall success rates are low. Such matters as quality problems in the laboratory, managing of stimulations, embryo transfers, may hide a real difference in the stimulation protocols themselves.