

DR. JOANNA ELLINGTON, SPERM PHYSIOLOGIST, INFERTILITY

Dr. Joanna Ellington helps grow families. Many couples who are trying to conceive a child (6 to 9 million couples in the U.S. at any given time) have stress around intimacy. However, personal lubricants kill sperm. In 2002 Ellington developed Pre-Seed, a patented “fertility-friendly” lubricant to meet this unmet market demand.

Pre-Seed has grown into an international consumer and medical product. It was the first lubricant ever cleared by FDA for specific use during fertility interventions and as “safe for use while trying to conceive.” She says she originally learned about the dangers of lubricants to sperm during equine reproduction lectures by Dr. John Hinton of UT’s College of Veterinary Medicine (’84), and carried this knowledge with her as she received her Ph.D. from Cornell (’90) and completed numerous National Institutes of Health-funded studies in human reproduction.

When we caught up with Ellington, she was writing a research paper for a human reproduction journal and came across the original study showing that lubricants killed stallion sperm that Dr. Hinton referenced to his students when it was published in 1983. “Because of his state-of-the-art knowledge, he made me aware of a problem that many physicians still don’t know about. My training at the College of Veterinary Medicine allowed me to go forward and succeed in a novel area that has benefited many couples in their journey to conceive.”

Pre-Seed was developed under Dr. Ellington's portfolio of eight patents, using the bioactive plant sugar arabinogalactan (from the tamarack tree). “Arabinogalactan is a naturally occurring antioxidant. It protects sperm from oxidative stress in the vagina and cervix, which can harm them and interfere with fertility. This is especially true for infertile men who are known to have lower levels of antioxidants in their semen, making their sperm more susceptible to damage on its way to the egg,” says Ellington. You can learn more about Pre-Seed at www.preseed.com.



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