

NFP's reliability and ease get high marks

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Wags back in the 1960s referred to "rhythm" — the only method of birth regulation then permitted by the Catholic Church — as "Vatican roulette."

Today, proponents of Natural Family Planning — which in conformity with Catholic teaching, does not involve the use of any artificial means of contraception — must constantly point out that the NFP method of birth regulation is neither the same as rhythm nor a form of gambling.

thood frequently show a lower success rate for natural methods of birth regulation in comparison with artificial methods. He noted, however, that those figures are based on the combination of various means of natural birth regulation — including rhythm — into one category.

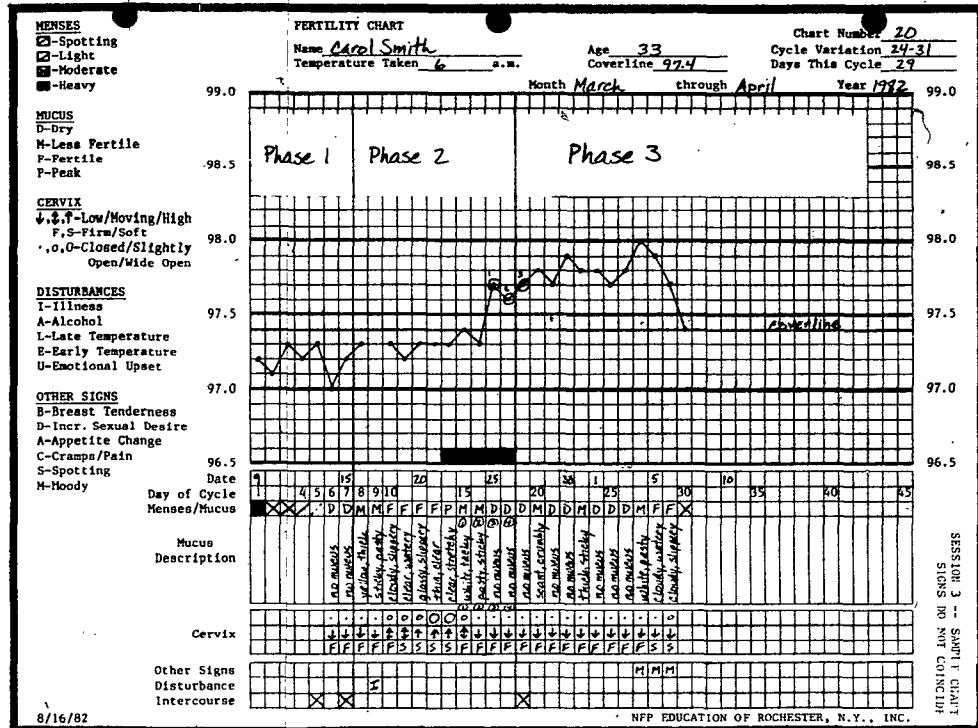
When studies are done solely of the methods taught by such NFP groups as the one run by Tubiolo, the 99-percent rate is the result, Tubiolo said.

The Natural Family Planning procedure taught by the Rochester organization is the most conservative practice — the sympto-



Barbara and Bob Surash planned the births of their two children — Rebecca, 6, and Billy, 4 — through Natural Family Planning. Joining the family for this portrait was Molly the dog, 5.

Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer



A sample Natural Family Planning chart depicts a typical fertility cycle.

"Natural Family Planning is the opposite of rhythm," said Justin Tubiolo, executive director of Natural Family Planning Education of Rochester, N.Y., Inc.

"Rhythm is based on guessing without observation," explained Tubiolo, who said that he and his wife, Nancy, have used NFP since 1978. "Natural Family Planning is based on observation without guessing."

Nevertheless, in the minds of many people, rhythm and NFP are interchangeable, Tubiolo acknowledged. And that false assumption is just one of the myths that supporters of Natural Family Planning must overcome.

Aside from confusing NFP with the rhythm method, one of the other misconceptions people have about NFP is its reliability, Tubiolo said.

"NFP is as reliable as any other method (of birth regulation)," Tubiolo said, citing a success rate of 99 percent. This rate, he said, is comparable to the rate normally given for the birth control pill.

Tubiolo acknowledged that figures cited by such organizations as Planned Paren-

thermal method. By observing changes in the woman's body temperature, her cervical position and the quality of her cervical mucus, the couple can tell when the chances of conception increase and when conception is unlikely or impossible.

Because these factors are all monitored closely, Tubiolo explained, they provide a cross reference for the couple. This method, he noted, also allows for variations in the length of a woman's cycle so that even women with irregular cycles can use it.

NFP, Tubiolo observed, is based on the woman's current cycle. In contrast, he said, the calendar rhythm method was based on the length of the woman's previous cycles, and had a high failure rate because it didn't take into consideration irregular cycles.

One of the attractions of NFP over the pill, Tubiolo said, is that the natural method has no side effects.

The lack of any side effects is one reason why Diane and Wayne Wilczewski decided to use NFP after first learning about it during marriage-preparation sessions three

years ago.

"What appealed to me," Diane said, "is I have never liked pills or any of those artificial contraception methods."

Barbara Surash, who, along with her husband, Bob, has been using NFP for eight years and has been teaching the method for five years, echoed that sentiment.

"I felt strongly about the fact that I

wouldn't be taking any kind of chemicals," Barbara said. "The whole natural part of it appealed to me."

Barbara also pointed out that because of what she learned in the NFP classes and through daily monitoring of her cycle, she came to a greater appreciation of herself and the way that her body works.

Bob pointed out that he was surprised at

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