

A MESSAGE OF HOPE

OMAR RAJANI '95

BY LAUREN MANDARINO

When Omar and Natasha Rajani got married in 2010, they had no idea that their journey to have kids would be such a bumpy road. The couple tried to get pregnant for over four years, trying nearly every available measure in an attempt to conceive. From simple cycle monitoring, fertility drugs and intra-uterine insemination to a terminated ectopic pregnancy and failed IVF, it was a never-ending up and down of stress, nerves and tears.

“When you have so many struggles, it’s a roller coaster ride, but Natasha was in the driver’s seat,” said Omar, who works in small business marketing at Canada Post. “She was the one who had to go through the cycle monitoring, she was the one who had the ectopic pregnancy and the injections. She was so strong – it was incredible. You just never imagine you’ll end up in this position.”

But then something incredible happened.

Natasha’s age, the failed IVF and other challenges they were having made them eligible for a trial treatment, only available at one clinic in North America that happened to be in Toronto. Called Augment IVF, the treatment re-energizes a woman’s eggs using mitochondria from her own egg precursor cells. In the trial treatment, which has not been approved by the FDA in the United States, mitochondria – seen as the “batteries” that energize the cells – are injected into an egg, along with sperm, during IVF.

The couple froze four embryos and implanted two. Nine months later, on April 13, 2015, Zain Rajani entered the world. He made international headlines, becoming the first baby in the world to be born via Augment IVF.

“I always knew I wanted to have kids, I just didn’t think it would be this hard for us,” said Omar, who described Augment IVF as “IVF on steroids.” “We were elated when Zain was born. I still tear up when I think about it and I’m getting choked up now just talking about it.”

After all the stress of getting pregnant the first time, the Rajanis were hopeful to add another child to their family, with Omar actively encouraging Natasha to have a second baby. Natasha, however, was a little more hesitant.



“Going through all of these failed processes, I needed to be emotionally prepared that Zain was going to be an only child in the event that our last two embryos didn’t work,” said Natasha. “That would have been the last thing we tried, so I really needed to be emotionally prepared to not have a second. I think it was harder to prepare myself for not having any more children because I knew what it was like to have one. Before, it was easier to make the decision because I didn’t know what I was missing.”

The embryos are graded and the best two were transferred with Zain. So neither Natasha nor Omar thought it was going to work with the remaining two.

“It was stressful,” said Omar. “We’re grateful to be parents and we wanted more children, but if it didn’t work, we would have coped. It would have been different having no children and it not working. We would have come to terms if we had only had Zain.”

On January 19, 2018, Malai Rajani was born, making her the second Augment IVF miracle baby for the family.

And no one is happier for Omar and Natasha than Omar’s close friend, Aaron Thompson ’95, who supported his friend through their fertility issues for years.

“It was difficult seeing them struggle because we all knew how much Omar and Natasha wanted children and how dedicated and amazing they would be as parents,” said Aaron, who met Omar at RSGC in Grade 5 and is Zain’s godfather. “It was a feeling of pure joy when they announced they were pregnant. And that was not just for me and my wife Tara, but also for our two daughters, who were so excited to have a ‘little brother’ and, now, a new ‘baby sister!’”

Now, the Rajanis are adjusting to a new set of challenges.

“When you have one child, you have two parents on one,” said Natasha. “When you have two, you have to divide and conquer.”

Meanwhile, Omar is trying to get used to a fuller house, more responsibilities and not having much time to relax anymore, while Zain has to adapt to not being an only child.

“Zain is adjusting to not having all the attention on him,” said Omar. “There are all these toddler struggles – it’s hard to get out the door at a reasonable time and drop him off at school. I’m always late for work. When I get home, I want to spend time with family, but then there’s dinner, bath time, struggles with getting Zain to bed and wash the dishes. Meanwhile Natasha is just trying to keep her head above water.”

Still, the couple wouldn’t have it any other way.

Throughout their whole ordeal, they both remained positive, hopeful and supportive of each other.

“As a husband, when you get married, you promise to be supportive. You make a commitment, so that’s kind of your job,” said Omar. “You have to have a positive outlook and all you can do is hope for the best. Rather than be negative, stay positive and hopeful, and with any luck, your dreams will come true. They did for us.”

That was the message Omar and Natasha wanted to bring when they agreed to all of the media coverage when Zain was born.

“Natasha’s message was really one of hope. There are tons of people out there with fertility issues, yet it’s a taboo subject that people don’t talk about. We wanted to bring it to the forefront,” said Omar. “Zain is our message of hope that great things can happen. You just need to stay positive and hopefully things will work out for everyone.”

After years of fertility struggles, Omar and Natasha now have the “million dollar family”.



Zain’s godfather, Aaron Thompson ’95 and his family are thrilled that the Rajanis have welcomed another little one into the family.

