

*Maternal Life International*  
326A S. Jackson St.  
Butte, Montana, USA 59701



*www.maternallifeintl.com*  
Phone/Fax: (406)-782-1719  
usacares@in-tch.com

## **News From Maternal Life International**

MLI News Contact:  
Cort Freeman, Executive Director

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### Bead System for Fertility Awareness receives patent

BUTTE – Maternal Life International (MLI) of Butte said the U.S. Patent Office in Washington, D.C., today issued a patent to MLI for its “Apparatus and Method of Fertility Awareness.”

The apparatus consists of a set of beads of various colors and sizes that represent the different stages and physical characteristics of a woman’s monthly menstrual cycle. The woman, usually in collaboration with her husband, selects a bead each day and places it on a string, tracking her fertility. At the end of the cycle the beads are removed in order to start the process again.

Dr. George Mulcaire-Jones, MLI’s president and medical director, developed the Bead System to help literate and illiterate couples, especially in developing countries, to better understand their fertility in order to avoid AIDS, to strengthen marriages, and to improve communication and gender equity between husbands and wives. The fertility awareness system has been used in the United States and in several African countries, as well as Haiti and Mexico.

“Many women and couples the world over are looking for natural, non-hormonal ways of fertility care because of concerns about possible short and long term adverse side effects of chemicals and contraception,” Mulcaire-Jones said. “Just as people take care to maximize the health of their bodies through exercise and proper nutrition, they also want to maximize the care of their fertility through natural means,” he added.

MLI developed the Bead System in response to these concerns. The system and related method teaches women and couples to understand and monitor the natural rhythms of their fertility during all stages of a woman’s reproductive life, including breast feeding. With this understanding a couple can decide whether to achieve or avoid pregnancy during a given menstrual cycle.

According to Mulcaire-Jones, the Bead System is easy to learn. It is taught in a “story form” using simple comparisons and illustrations.

“The information that women and couples learn is an essential part of health literacy, educating them about their bodies and the gift of their fertility and sexuality,” he said. “Just as reading and writing are essential skills in today’s society, people are coming to realize that understanding fertility awareness also is important.”

Mulcaire-Jones said there is only a six-day window in which a woman can become pregnant each cycle. “Studies reveal that 95 percent of women can learn to correctly categorize the fertile and infertile phases of their menstrual cycle to approximate this fertile window,” he said.

Maternal Life is a non-profit organization that provides AIDS avoidance and care programs and maternal health services, especially ways to ensure safe births and healthy babies, to developing countries. Patent Attorney Robert Berube of Marsh Fischmann & Breyfogle LLP of Denver, Colorado, represented MLI before the U.S. Patent Office. The issued patent is U.S. Patent No. 7,588,544 and can be read in its entirety at [www.USPTO.gov](http://www.USPTO.gov).