

Find a...

Irish Examiner

Sharp rise in women over 45 trying to have a baby

Monday, May 06, 2013

A leading fertility clinic has said there has been a sharp increase in the number of Irish women over 45 trying for a baby.



By Martin Callaghan

Almost 70 babies have been born to Irish women over the age of 45 over the last seven years after successful fertility treatment in the Institut Marques clinic in Spain.

There has been a 50% rise in the number of Irish women in their late 40s seeking fertility treatment at the clinic which specialises in the diagnosis and treatment of long-standing unexplained infertility. In 2012, almost all the 143 Irish patients at the clinic used donor eggs or embryos in their last ditch attempt to have a child – which cuts out many of the risks associated with late maternal age.

Dr Hans Arce, Assisted Reproduction consultant of Institut Marques in Dublin, said more and more Irish women are following the worldwide trend of waiting until they are into their late 40s to have a child.

"We see Irish women who have worked, they have wanted to travel, maybe they are divorced and now they want to have children and it is harder and harder for them. They have tried a couple of fertility treatments beforehand but egg donation in Ireland is not a reality. That's why we see a lot for women here.

"I think this is going to happen more and more in Ireland and gynaecologists and obstetricians are going to have a lot more experience in women in this range of age and this will become part of our normality very, very soon."

Last year 21% of their patients were Irish women over the age of 45 compared to 14% in 2009 while in 2012, 40% of their Irish patients were women aged between 40 and 45.

Dr Arce said babies born to older mothers are more likely to have chromosomal changes that can lead to serious birth defects but egg donation avoids chromosome or genetic problems.

He said: "Down syndrome is associated with maternal age; miscarriage is associated with maternal age. All those issues will disappear with egg donation."

The oldest Irish woman to have a baby after treatment at the clinic was 49 but they don't treat women over the age of 50.

He said egg donation coupled with the health of women in their forties in the 21st century makes pregnancies in the late forties very viable.

"With egg donation programmes, if everything is working properly we are looking at a 70% success rate. It is pretty high."

But he said the chances of a woman becoming pregnant with their own eggs in their forties drops dramatically.

He said the pregnancies of women in their late 40s carry more risks but there is still a very low percentage of serious conditions like pre-eclampsia, diabetes, hypertension. "You're talking of a disease with a 1% or 2% prevalence so doubling it means 2% or 3% which is not that much."

With people now living to the age of 90, he said studies have shown that babies born to older parents tend to thrive better at school and on a social level.

MORE FROM THE IRISH EXAMINER