

Women seek fertility treatment in Spain

by **Lynne Kelleher**

MORE than 250 Irish women over the age of 40 have jetted out to a leading Spanish fertility clinic over the past five years to attempt to have a baby with the donated eggs of young European females.

Since 2005, 379 Irish women between the ages of 30 and 49 have travelled to the Institut Marques in Barcelona in an attempt to become mothers, with seven out of 10 (265) over the age of 40.

The success rate for Irish mothers is more than 60%, with 219 babies born to single mothers and couples who received treatment in the last five years, including 18 sets of twins.

But a study carried out by the clinic, which will be presented at the Fertility 2011 Congress in Dublin this week, reveals how a new technique for examining embryos before they are implanted in the womb more than doubles the chance of women of advanced maternal age becoming pregnant.

The number of Irish patients at the clinic, which specialises in the diagnosis and treatment of couples with long-standing unexplained infertility, has almost doubled every year since 2005 when 12 patients received fertility treatment.

Last year 123 Irish patients underwent fertility techniques.

The clinic revealed that two-thirds of the Irish couples undergo in vitro fertilisation (IVF) treatment due to infertility problems with the male partner.

The study reveals that 73% of the Irish women were implanted with donor eggs while 9% used both donated eggs and donated sperm, and just over 1% using just donated sperm.

The clinic is supplied with fresh eggs every week from between 15 and 20 healthy European women between the age of 18 to 35, with the donors screened for any genetic illnesses.

Some 31 Irish couples opted to adopt an embryo at the clinic in their attempt to have a baby and the remaining 26 couples underwent IVF with their own sperm and eggs.

A specialised Fish technique, pioneered at the Institut Marquès, is now being applied to analyse all embryo chromosomes in a single cell to identify which embryos derived from IVF are healthy enough for transfer to the uterus of the woman.

More than 400 experts in fertility are expected to attend Fertility 2011 from today to Friday at the Dublin Convention Centre.