

Barcelona hosts the International Congress of Andrology, March 7th – 10th

- ∞ **One in 3 long-term infertile couples shows abnormalities in the sperm.**
- ∞ **Couples from 30 countries come to Spain after multiple failed attempts due to unknown male issues.**
- ∞ **Meiosis study is the most conclusive study to ascertain the chromosomal load of sperm. Many men refuse to have the required procedure as it involves an injection/incision into the testicles.**

Barcelona, March 7th 2009.- Abnormalities in the chromosomes of the sperm is one of the most common causes of miscarriages and failed attempts of IVF cycles.

According to a study performed at The Institut Marquès, which will be presented at the International Congress of Andrology, this problem affects one in 3 long-term infertile couples; Many patients are coming to Spain after many years of infertility and failed IVF attempts from countries such as Great Britain, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Austria, USA, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Nigeria and Australia.

In the last few years many patients have travelled to Barcelona from abroad for fertility treatment, mainly due to legal hurdles that forbade some techniques in their own country. However most recently, almost half of the number of foreign couples who ask for help after failed IVF attempts, are searching for the most advanced technology, which will provide them with the best chances of success.

According to Dra. López-Teijón, Director of the Assisted Reproduction Service at Institut Marquès, *“in the last 2 years we have treated 270 couples coming from almost 30 different countries that have been trying to become parents between 8 and 20 years, 62% of them have achieved a viable pregnancy in the first embryo transfer. The personal and human histories behind them are really emotional and stand as examples of how to fight and cope with failures, keeping faith that they will become parents one day”*

Why all those attempts in other countries?

Andrology is a new science that studies the male fertility potential. Until now, the specific studies about this matter were just a branch inside of Urology. However, the fast evolution of knowledge and specific techniques requires more and more doctors to specialise in Andrology. However, there still remains a few

Urologists dedicated to this science and in many countries there still are still few medical specialists.

Consequently, in a lot of countries the most recent tests are performed on women and not on men. Most male patients have just a semen analysis performed. The problem is that a semen analysis studies the outward features of the sperm but it does not provide any information about the chromosomal load or about the integrity of DNA chains either.

For these reasons, and especially after multiple failed IVF attempts, couples attend reference centres for infertility. A lot of women ask for egg donation treatment due to their low ovarian reserve (very common in women older than 40). *“They are surprised when we tell them that their infertility issues are due to a male factor that was not diagnosed, and that egg donation is not the solution, since the reason of failure lies in the man. This is a situation we have to deal with every day”*, says Dr. Marisa López-Teijón.

Newest techniques for the genetic study of male infertility

In many couples that have long term fertility problems the study of the genetic code of the sperm through a technique called **FISH** (Fluorescent in situ hybridization), allows us to detect chromosomal abnormalities that may prevent a pregnancy. As reported in the study at Institut Marquès, that is going to be presented at the International Congress of Andrology, This test also helps us to decide whether it is necessary to perform more genetic tests on the embryos (PGD), to prevent the transfer of abnormal embryos.

Nevertheless, the FISH technique is not always conclusive and in these cases there are other techniques where a diagnosis is more precise, such as a **meiosis study**, performed by taking a biopsy of testicular tissue.

However, many men are unwilling to have the required incision into the testicles which is required for this procedure. According to Dr. Marisa López-Teijón, *“Even though men's approach to infertility treatments has changed a lot in recent years, it still surprises us how women accept to go through techniques that can be painful, and on the other hand men prefer to use sperm bank over a meiosis study”*.

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