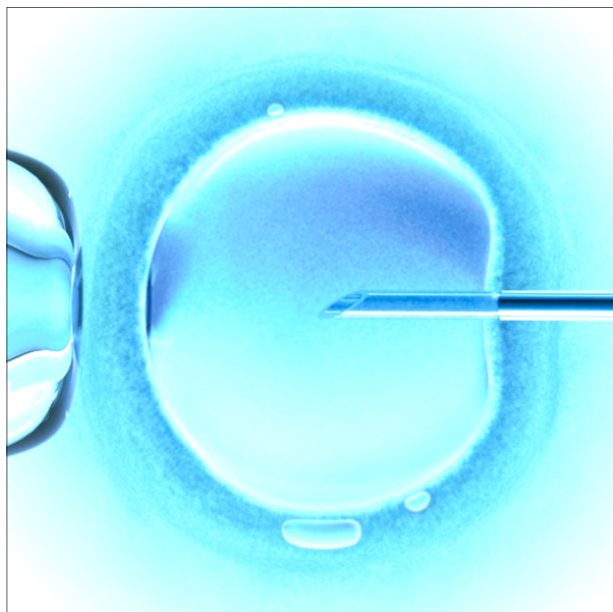


# IN VITRO FERTILIZATION

INFORMATION SERVICES TEAM

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## IVF CAUSES BIRTH DEFECTS AKIN TO INBREEDING



IVF presents a host of problems. First, it has no guaranteed success. The success rate of IVF is generally 50% for women under thirty but falls to just 20% for women under 40.

Second, IVF costs a lot of money. Each treatment cycle can cost a couple around \$3000 (after government assistance) whether there is success or not.

Third, IVF has health risks. About 30% of IVF patients experience at least a mild case of ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome (OHSS) which causes swollen, painful ovaries. While mild cases can be treated with over-the-counter pain medication a small percentage develop severe OHSS which may require hospitalization.

Fourth, IVF creates a life by destroying others. A usual cycle of IVF produces multiple embryos to assist with the success rate and also

to store if a couple wishes to try for more children further down the track. However the truth is these embryos are mostly unused. There are 120,000 embryos sitting in frozen storage in Australia, the majority of which will be eventually destroyed with about 90% of IVF couples choosing to discard them.

It is worth remembering that an embryo is no longer just an egg or a sperm, it is a new human life. A couple must ask themselves if the birth of one of their children justifies the deliberate creation and destruction of a few of their other children.

Fifth, research has shown that IVF markedly increases the incidence of underweight babies and structural defects, thus is akin to men having a baby with a close relative like an aunt or adult niece. Thus using IVF if you can conceive naturally means unnecessarily endangering a baby.

Another concern with IVF is the physical and emotional cost. While the physical process of IVF is difficult enough perhaps even more serious is the emotional toll that must be borne.

A book well worth reading is 'The Hollow Heart' by Irish journalist Martina Devlin. In three attempts at IVF Martina lost nine embryos but in the process she also lost her marriage and was driven to the depths of despair. While Martina and her husband began with the very natural desire for children this eventually became all encompassing for Martina so that everything else in her life (including her husband) became inconsequential.

IVF was originally intended to help a small minority of people with fertility issues, but has become increasingly popular with fertile single adults and same-sex couples who often use commercially harvested eggs and hire surrogates, which raises a number of ethical issues. Notably that such people often deprive the baby of a mother or father despite the development and emotional harm this naturally causes; while paying poor women to undergo an invasive medical procedure to harvest their eggs or act as a human incubator when these acts entail substantial risks is exploitative, thus unethical; all the more so when the biological mother and the surrogate who bore the baby for nine months will not have an ongoing relationship with the baby and their parent/s.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

IVF damages eggs/sperm which markedly increases the incidence of birth defects, but the ART industry downplays the dangers as do ideologically driven public institutions committed to reproductive freedom.

### RECOMMENDATION

Ensure that service providers inform clients about the ethical issues surrounding IVF; notably the increased incidence of underweight babies and structural defects.

### FURTHER READING

*2010 Assisted Reproductive Technology National Summary Report*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012.

*Are we overusing IVF?*, Esme Kamphuis et al, *BMJ* 2014;348:g252 doi: 10.1136/bmj.g252.

*Assisted reproductive technology and major structural birth defects in the United States*, J. Reefhuis et al, *Human Reproduction*, Vol. 24, No.2, pp. 360-366, 2009.

*Why is the Catholic Church against IVF?*, Bernard Toutounji, *foolishwisdom.com*, 5 May 2013.

