

What are the various Motives for Patients to Travel?

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Reproductive Tourism

Assisted reproductive technology (ART) lures people across borders. The willingness to travel for ART and the practice that facilitates fertility travel is known as “reproductive tourism.” In the past few years, reproductive tourism has expanded rapidly, and has acquired a public profile in the process.

(Reproductive Tourism: Equality Concerns in the Global Market for Fertility Services : Lisa C. Ikemoto)



Background

- * **One in six couples worldwide experience some form of Infertility Problem at least once during their Reproductive lifetime. The current prevalence of infertility lasting for at least 12 months is estimated to be around 9% worldwide for women aged 20-44.**
- * **20-30% of infertility cases are explained by physiological causes in men, 20-35% by physiological causes in women, and 25-40% of cases are because of a problem in both partners. In 10-20% no cause is found.**
- * **Infertility is also associated with lifestyle factors such as smoking, body-weight and stress. Increasing age in the female partner is one of the most common explanations today.**
- * **It is now estimated that around 5 million babies have been born worldwide since the first IVF baby was born in 1978.**
- * **Its estimated that about 50,000 patients travel abroad each year for fertility treatments**
- * **Most ART treatments take place in women aged between 30 and 39.**



Major Destinations offering Reproductive Tourism

- * **USA**
- * **India**
- * **Israel**
- * **Thailand**
- * **South Africa**
- * **Greece**
- * **Ukraine**
- * **Romania**
- * **UK**
- * **Georgia**
- * **Russia**
- * **Spain**

- * **USA** is chosen by many Europeans because of the higher success rates and lenient regulations.
- * **India** is the main destination for U.S. women, single parents and same-sex couples for their fertility care. Its the destination for 40% of U.S. women seeking IVF and 52% seeking IVF with donor eggs.
- * Many travel from countries like Germany and Italy, which are very restrictive of the number of eggs that may be fertilized and how many embryos can be used for implantation or cryopreservation.



Major Points of Departure for Patients of Reproductive Tourism

- * **USA**
- * **Latin-American Countries**
- * **Canada**
- * **Israel**
- * **Spain**
- * **South Africa**
- * **Japan**
- * **Sweden**
- * **Singapore**
- * **Australia**
- * **Hong Kong**
- * **African Countries**



Factors contributing to Reproductive Tourism

The factors involved that contribute in prospective Intended Parents to search for other avenues abroad can broadly be classified into two:

- * Demand**
- * Supply**



Factors contributing to Reproductive Tourism: Demand Side Requirements

- * **Country Specific Policies and Laws**
- * **Regulations with respect to ART Techniques**
- * **Time Frame of the Process**
- * **Racial Diversity**
- * **Local Dearth of Technology**
- * **Cost of ART**
- * **Third party Reproduction- Eggs, Sperm, or Wombs.**
- * **Social Stigma & Secrecy**
- * **Gender Selection (banned in India)**



Country Specific Policies and Laws

- * **Non Commercial Surrogacy (Altruistic Surrogacy):** Countries like Australia, Canada, Greece, Israel, South Africa, and the United Kingdom.
- * Countries like Israel, U.K., U.S.A. & Canada advocate rights for Surrogate/ Donors wherein they can keep the baby if he/she wishes to.
- * **Eg: Baby M case in USA, 1986:** the Surrogate mother was deemed the legal parent, but the custody was given to the genetic parents.
- * In South Africa, an Intended Parent can only enter into a Surrogacy Arrangement after Court's Approval, which may take a long time to be processed.
- * New Zealand law recognizes Birth Mother as the only Mother and despite the Surrogacy Arrangement an Intended Parent needs to enter into an Altruistic Surrogacy Arrangement only and adopt a child through Court.



Regulations with respect to ART Techniques

- * Countries in Europe, Middle East Asia have imposed regulations on various techniques of ART like number of Embryo's to be transferred, scheduling of Embryo Transfers etc., which may have a negative impact on outcome of the case.
- * Swedes, Norwegians, and the Dutch travel to Denmark for sperm. These countries permit only known donors and prohibit anonymous donation. As a result women seeking semen donors from these countries travel to Denmark which permits anonymous donation.
- * Similarly there are countries where there are restrictions imposed for Same Sex Couples and Single Parents and such these people travel to other countries for undergoing this process.



Time Frame of the Process

- * Many big facilities in various countries have a waiting period due to various factors. In this scenario, the Intended Parents would not want to wait. Especially those whose biological clock would be ticking. Hence this factor is a major contributor to Reproductive Tourism.**
- * In fact, Sweden has almost a 2 year waiting list for sperm donation.**



Racial Diversity

- * Intended Parents opting for ART Techniques with either Sperm/ Egg Donation often like to look out for a Donors with different ethnicities and this leads to patients travelling.**
- * Britain prohibits payment to Donors, hence patients from Britain go to Spain and Romania for Donors.**
- * Clinics in countries like India, Romania & Spain cater to such patients seeking oocyte donors**



Local Dearth of Technology

In certain African, Middle-Eastern, Asian and a few Latin American countries, the ART Treatments are not as advanced as in other parts of the globe, this contributes for residents of such countries to look out for more advanced avenues.



Cost of the process

Costs for ART Treatments in various developed countries like USA, UK, Canada are higher by at least three times from the costs in countries like India, Thailand and hence not all people have access to these treatments.

Most of the Government sponsored Health Insurance Schemes do not offer coverage to ART Treatments.



Third Party Reproduction: oocytes, Sperm, or Wombs

Various reasons such as Government Regulations and Differences in Cost-of-Living have lead to compensation disparities among developed and developing countries in payment of Donors and Gestational Carriers, hence contributing to exodus of patients seeking such treatments to cheaper countries.



Social Stigma & Secrecy

- * Patients move to other horizons to maintain Secrecy. Certain societies, especially in Asia and the middle east, Infertility is considered as a Social Stigma and hence patients go to other countries for such processes.**



Gender Selection

laws in countries like India prohibit Gender Selection which is considered a criminal offence. Hence some patients travel to U.S.A., Thailand where Gender Selection is possible.



Factors contributing to Reproductive Tourism: Supply Side Services.

With a growing Market for Reproductive Tourism Hospitals are coming up with innovative ideas to attract patients from across the globe:

- * Cheaper Costs**
- * Integrated Services**
- * Tourism**
- * New modes of Communication via emails, Skype etc.**
- * Diagnostic Testing and Medical Protocols**
- * Integrated Legal services**



Costs

- * Due to less costs of Medical Treatments and less cost of living, countries like Thailand, India, Cyprus, Romania are providing ART Treatments with costs at times which is equivalent to 1/5th of costs in developed countries.
- * Main selling point of medical tourism is the attraction of 'First World' medical treatment at 'Third World' prices.



Integrated Services

- * **Countries targeting patients for reproductive tourism are now coming up with innovative and comprehensive services.**
- * **They are providing Non- Medical Services like Food, Accommodation, Travel, Tourism, Legal, etc.**
- * **Patients do not need to look out for Donors or Gestational Carriers as Medical Facilities are tying up with different agencies which provide services of oocyte and semen Donors.**



Tourism

- * As we know that almost all ART Treatments are minimally invasive and do not require admission for more than a day and do not require extended medical monitoring hence they include Tourism Options in the package to their patients**
- * The clinics have also tied up with Tourism Service Providers and also try to include holidays in their Medical Protocols.**



New modes of Communication

Internet has brought about a vast change in the mode of communication in Medicine too. Unlike as in the past, patients now using ART Treatments like Surrogacy do not need to spend extended periods of time in other countries, especially when opting for Oocyte donors. Now a days, all medical reports are sent to patients over email in real time.



Legal

In most countries offering surrogacy and other ART treatments, the laws are straight forward and clear-cut.

Some medical providers offer free Legal services before beginning the process, so that the patients can make an informed choice. Thereby providing a sense of security.



Conclusion

Reproductive Tourism is a developing phenomenon and is here to stay. Facilities providing ART Treatments have to gain and garner the trust of international patients by continuously addressing their Medical, Legal & Logistical concerns, whilst simultaneously improving with the introduction of latest technology and complying with good clinical practices.



About KIC: some statistics

- * The clinic has successfully treated more than 30000 couples since its inception with an average success rate of 35 to 40%.
- * Till date, 1609 Patients from 24 different Nationalities(excluding India) have visited KIC for various Infertility Treatments.
- * 836 International Intended Parents have enrolled with the Facility for Surrogacy, with 228 Births and 106 on going Pregnancies beyond 12 Weeks with 32% self cycles and 67% using Donor Eggs, 1% using Donor Sperm.
- * Overall 407 Births for International Patients by treatments including Surrogacy and IVF.



Thank You!