

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1. What is the SEF?

The Spanish Fertility Society (SEF) is an independent scientific association that has been active since its foundation in 1953. Its membership consists of specialists from different fields: obstetricians, gynaecologists, andrologists, embryologists, technicians in assisted reproduction laboratories, qualified nurses, and psychologists involved in the study and treatment of human infertility. The SEF has been a member of the International Federation of Fertility Societies since its creation, and since 2005 it has been a member of the Fertility Working Group of the Spanish Society of Obstetrics and Gynaecology and a member of the National Federation of Assisted Reproduction Societies. The SEF currently has over 900 members, working in all the Autonomous Communities (regions) of Spain. In order to be more operational, and to better adapt to the social and healthcare reality of our country, in 2005 regional SEF delegates were nominated and elected, with one such delegate being present in each Autonomous Community.

### 2. What is the SEF Register?

One of the stated goals of the SEF is to favour the reproductive health of all Spanish citizens, by disseminating current scientific knowledge in the field of human reproduction and informing about available medical treatments and techniques in this area, together with their medical, bioethical, psychological and legal implications. A further objective is to collaborate with national, regional and municipal institutions, and with other public and private organizations, with respect to human fertility and with particular reference to monitoring the use in Spain of assisted reproduction techniques (ART). It also advises on scientific and legal issues in the preparation of rules and regulations in this field.

In order to fulfil these objectives, the SEF ART register was established in 1993. The purpose of this Register is to compile and make available nationwide information on ART, concerning the number of treatments performed, and their demographic and medical characteristics. The Register provides an up-to-date record of diagnostic and treatment protocols, and enables users to obtain reliable, current information on the clinical activities of all the centres included.

From 1993 to 1998, register data were published in the SEF Bulletin, and since then, in the Iberoamerican Journal of Fertility (the annual reports may be consulted at [http://nuevo.sefertilidad.com/charts/centros\\_old.php](http://nuevo.sefertilidad.com/charts/centros_old.php)).

### 3. Is the SEF Register the official register?

The SEF Register is not the official Spanish register described in the Assisted Reproduction Law (Law No. 14/2006) currently in force. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Health and Social Policy has described the SEF Register as being “of utility” until a royal decree is promulgated setting up an official register. As a result of collaboration between the SEF and the Ministry of Health and Social Policy, the Ministry will facilitate patients’ access to the 2008 annual SEF Register.

### 4. Which clinics participate in the SEF Register?

Participation in the SEF Register is voluntary. Approximately 60-70% of accredited centres in Spain currently participate. Nevertheless, the activity thus recorded is estimated to represent 80-85% of all ART activity in Spain, as the most important centres in the country are included in the SEF Register.

### **5. Why do some clinics report lower pregnancy rates than others?**

The different pregnancy rates reported by assisted reproduction clinics are mainly due to the following factors:

- The severity of the infertility: the more patients with poor prognosis treated, the lower the pregnancy rates achieved. Due to the structure of the SEF Register, it cannot represent these data.
- The number of embryos transferred. In Spain, no more than three embryos may legally be transferred. Only rarely is any benefit to be gained from transferring three embryos rather than two. Twin and triplet pregnancies present high complication rates. The SEF has published recommendations on the optimum number of embryos to be transferred. This information can be consulted at: (<http://nuevo.sefertilidad.com/quienessomos/saludembrionaria/Folletoinformativo.pdf>).
- The centre's resources and the way in which it is organized.

### **6. What factors lead some women to become pregnant following IVF while others, treated at the same clinic, do not?**

Some women have a worse reproductive prognosis than others, and then the treatment received will be less effective. Relevant factors include the following:

- Female fertility diminishes with age. The older the woman, the lower the probability of achieving pregnancy with her own eggs.
- Some patients respond poorly to ovarian stimulation, perhaps because their ovaries have aged prematurely.
- Poor sperm quality can also have a negative influence on the pregnancy rates. The higher the number of men with severe male factor, the lower the pregnancy rate.
- Other factors that can affect the probability of pregnancy include:
  - Obesity
  - Tobacco
  - Previous years of infertility
  - Diseases such as diabetes
  - The number of treatments previously received

### **7. Why are the 2008 results being published in 2010?**

This delay is due to the complexity involved in compiling data on this type of activity, as well as the quality control and other types of inspections performed. Furthermore, to obtain data on births resulting from pregnancies achieved in December 2008, it was necessary to wait until September 2009. This time lag is very similar to that produced in registers of similar characteristics in other countries.

### **8. Why doesn't the SEF publish a ranking of centres, from the best to the worst results?**

The quality of an assisted reproduction centre is not reflected exclusively in the percentage of pregnancies achieved; also relevant are a number of different parameters. These include: the use of an appropriate ovulation stimulation policy; a high percentage of single or double embryos transferred; a low percentage of twin and triplet pregnancies; and a high percentage of embryo survival following freezing. A crucial element in evaluating the quality of a clinic is the availability of systems for quality management and the transparent presentation of the results achieved, accessible to patients, via participation in the SEF Register. Finally, it should be taken into account that the percentage of pregnancies achieved is influenced by many different factors, and that no valid comparison of clinics may be made if these factors are not considered.

### **9. Are all the cycles performed at a clinic recorded on the register?**

All cycles performed must be recorded. This is one of the key questions considered when the SEF monitors the results reported by an ART clinic.

### **10. What are my chances of becoming pregnant after IVF?**

Don't worry about clinics' published pregnancy rates; what you need to know is your "personal pregnancy rate", your own chances of having a child. This will depend on the factors that may have resulted in infertility (previous surgery, endometriosis, endocrine disorders, etc.) and associated factors (years of infertility, previous treatment failures, smoking, obesity, diabetes, etc.). Your specialist in reproductive medicine will evaluate these factors and will be able to advise you as to the options available.

### **11. Why are results presented for each technique?**

The results achieved may vary widely depending on the technique used, and so these are presented separately.

### **12. Why are the results presented as percentages?**

A percentage is a way of presenting results so that they can be compared, and this is an approach we all use, even if only intuitively. Percentages can be used to evaluate the overall functioning of clinics, because, independently of your own personal circumstances, this is the 'normal' result to be expected from the clinic in question. When your particular case is considered, this percentage will vary, and your doctor will advise you on this, taking into account your personal characteristics.

### **13. What does it mean when one clinic is said to have a percentage of pregnancies per cycle with a range of 20-30%, while another has a range of 26-41%? Can I tell whether I would become pregnant at one clinic sooner than at another?**

This means that the percentage of pregnancies per cycle to be expected, on average, at the first centre would be between 20 and 30%, i.e. for every 100 cycles of treatment begun at this clinic, between 20 and 30 would finalise in a pregnancy. This is an average value, without taking into account the particular circumstances of the individual patient.

In theory, the second range is broader than the first; thus, at first sight this second clinic would appear to obtain more pregnancies than the first. However, this impression is false. In fact, between the first interval (20-30%) and the second one (26-41%) there is a common, overlapping zone, of 26-30%. Therefore, these possible pregnancy rates per cycle could correspond to either of the stated intervals. From this, we conclude that one clinic cannot be said to achieve more pregnancies than the other. On the other hand, if the second clinic had a range of 31-41%, then the intervals for the two clinics would not overlap, and we could then say that the two centres differed, with the second one achieving a higher pregnancy rate.

Furthermore, if one clinic presents a higher range of pregnancy rate per cycle than another, this does not necessarily mean you would have a greater chance of becoming pregnant at the former, because this outcome depends on many factors other than those recorded in the SEF Register (your infertility background, the type of treatment being received, the quality of the embryos, etc.).

#### **14. Where can I get additional information about clinics?**

The following web page of the Spanish Fertility Society provides data on the clinics that participate in the SEF Register (<http://nuevo.sefertilidad.com/>).

#### **15. Where can I get additional information about assisted reproduction techniques?**

The Spanish Fertility Society provides information on the different aspects of assisted reproduction. See: <http://nuevo.sefertilidad.com/pacientes.php>

#### **16.- Where can I get additional information about the SEF Register?**

The SEF Register has a web page (<http://www.registrosef.com/>) and a blog (<http://registrosef.wordpress.com>) where you can obtain further information and leave comments.