

# MEDICAL TOURISM: TREATING INFERTILE COUPLES



An increasing number of infertile UK couples go abroad for fertility treatment, mainly due to the introduction of new British legislation that withdraws anonymity from egg and sperm donors. The result is that women who are seeking egg donors now travel abroad.

Another reason is the price. As with all sectors of medical tourism, the price is much cheaper in destinations outwith the United Kingdom or the US. In the UK fertility treatment can cost about L4,000. Iceland, on the other hand, offers a cycle of IVF (in vitro fertilization) for L1,600. Another popular destination is Malaysia where you pay some L2,000, which includes testing, consultation, flights and hotel at the purpose-built TMC Fertility Centre. This centre, which boasts labs on site, a sperm bank and PGD (pre-implantation genetic diagnosis) equipment, claims a pregnancy rate per embryo of 53%, whereas in the UK it is only 28.4%. It provides services not available in the UK such as sex selection and surrogacy in which the woman who bears the child signs away all legal rights to it.

The most popular IVF destination for UK couples is Spain, where clinics are recruiting English-speaking staff to deal with the influx of Britons, and the local press carries ads calling for: "tall, fair-skinned or fair-haired European donors".

In France, there has been a change in legislation that prohibits egg donors being paid for their donation, and this caused a "severe shortage" of egg donors. According to the French government's Biomedicine Academy, only 144 women donated eggs in 2004. Therefore many French couples look for donors abroad. Women from the US on the other hand travel abroad to receive a much cheaper treatment.

Spain and Malaysia however, are not the only destinations providing IVF. Other destinations are, for example, Italy, Ukraine, Turkey, Russia, Czech Republic, Greece and Poland.

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