

SPAIN BECOMING A LEADING DESTINATION IN FERTILITY TOURISM



40% of European travelers searching for fertility treatments opt for Spanish medical facilities, encouraged by the law that allows treatments of single women and anonymity for donors. Fertility tourism is thus becoming a significant sector for Spanish economy.

Only a few days ago, the Spanish Ministry of Health released data of the National Registry of Activity of the Spanish Fertility Society (SEF, in Spanish). The figures speak for themselves: **in 2016, 138,553 IVF cycles, and 36,463 artificial inseminations were carried out in some of the 307 public and private clinics of the country where these procedures are available.** A significant part of them (12,939) regarded foreign patients (39% were French, and 19% were Italian travelers) who visited the country mainly because of more favorable laws and top quality treatments.

After performing over 80% of the cycles in their private facilities, the IDIS Foundation (Institute for Development and Integration of Healthcare), which shares the opinion of the private health sector, backs up the figures released by the Spanish body: “Spain is the leading European nation for Assisted Human Reproduction in number of clinics and cycles, according to data released by the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology (ESHRE). Each year, about 40,000 babies are born in our country through these procedures, and every year, between 10,000 and 15,000 couples travel to our country looking for assisted reproductive treatments. Fertility tourism is growing in popularity.”

In fact, according to the National Association for Fertility Problems (ASPROIN, in Spanish), “Spain is the preferred destination by foreigners to undergo reproductive procedures, representing almost 40% of European fertility tourism, a figure that continues to rise.”

At the IDIS Foundation, experts believe that “the reasons why people travel abroad to look for fertility treatments can be classified into categories: cost, quality, and availability of treatment. Often, travelers are motivated by a combination of these.

A European study suggests that one reason for traveling abroad with the purpose of receiving fertility treatment is the legal restrictions of the country of origin, and their limitations of the number of embryos transferred.”

It's not surprising to see how the Spanish law is considered the main factor that has allowed the country to be established as a leading destination for fertility tourism: “The majority of foreigners turn to Spain because in their countries, the legislation doesn't allow in-vitro fertilization in some cases, such as single women, or same-sex couples [not only is it not supported, but some explicitly forbid it]. There's also the

case where donors of sperm and eggs [some other countries, including those with laws for assisted treatments that are similar to Spain's, such as the United Kingdom] are not anonymous. This lack of anonymity causes potential donors to lose interest, which, as a result, causes waiting lists to be very long, and may even take several years.”

Some countries, such as Germany, Italy, Norway, Austria or Switzerland, have an egg donation prohibition. **At the same time, the IDIS Foundation mentions treatments are more economical and that “luckily, we have a desirable service for medical care after the treatment.”**

Despite becoming one of the favorite destinations for fertility tourism, when it comes to surrogacy, Spanish citizens are precisely the ones who turn to other countries.

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