

EMBRYO ADOPTION UNIT

In November 2003 the Law of Assisted Reproduction was approved, concerning the disposal of frozen embryos. Until that time there were only two legal options:

- 1- Implantation in the woman who owns the embryos
- 2- Donating the embryos to other women.

The options have been widened with the new law to include:

- 3- Destroying the embryos
- 4- Donating the embryos for research

Over the last 20 years Spanish Assisted Reproduction Centres have accumulated thousands of embryos, belonging to couples who now do not want to have more children themselves but who do not want to donate their embryos to other people either.

After 5 years the ownership of these embryos passes legally to the centre that carried out the in vitro fertilisation and it is then the Reproduction Unit that has to decide their future.

In January 2004 Institut Marquès sent a new document to the patients whose frozen embryos were in the situation described above, offering them the new legal options. 61.7% of the patients did not reply in writing and are now untraceable.

It is worth noting:

that in spite of offering all the options possible, many couples were not able to make a decision. We received an exceptionally large number of telephone calls in which they expressed their indecision and asked that we choose the best option for them. In many cases the document had raised difficult issues and triggered emotional conflict.

It was because of this that the majority of these couples “transferred” the decision to the medical team in which they had put their trust.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

We find ourselves now with hundreds of frozen embryos whose future must be decided by those in charge of the Reproductive Centre.

The decision made by the Institut Marquès is to offer all the embryos that have been left with us from healthy parents in an “Embryo Adoption Programme”

Our wish is to offer all these embryos the chance of life and we want to help them to find a mother.

Which embryos are they?

They are embryos from healthy parents who have undergone an in vitro fertilisation treatment and who have now completed their families.

Who can adopt these embryos?

Any adult woman, in good psycho-physical health and of reproductive age.

- Couples or women on waiting lists for adoption
- Couples with children
- Women without a male partner who want to have a child
- And of course couples with sterility problems

What does the treatment consist of?

It is very easy and pain free.

The uterus (womb) is made ready to receive the embryos by wearing skin patches and by using vaginal pessaries.

In a few days the uterus will be ready and the embryos can be unfrozen and transferred without the patient needing to be admitted to hospital. The patient will only need to rest at home for a few hours after the procedure.

After 14 days a pregnancy test can be carried out.

If it is positive everything will proceed as in a normal pregnancy except that the initial treatment will need to be continued for two more months.

Care during pregnancy will be carried out by the patient's usual gynaecologist.

What is involved in the process?

On the first visit the woman's health is examined to ensure she is fit for pregnancy, gynaecological examinations are carried out (the results of these could be brought from her gynaecologist) and embryos are assigned.

An ultrasound examination is carried out together with a test using the catheter that will be used to transfer the embryos through the neck of the womb. This is pain free.

The treatment to be followed will be outlined and together the date is chosen for the embryos to be unfrozen and transferred.

What is the probability that the patient will become pregnant?

Our clinic has a success rate of 32% for each cycle of transfer of frozen embryos.

What are the risks that siblings from embryo donation meet each other?

The system has been designed so that embryos are exchanged between Autonomous Communities or countries.

What are the costs involved?

The fees for the first visit are 100 euros.

The fees for the complete cycle of embryo transfer are 2,500 euros.

Is it necessary to go through the official adoption process?

No, it is only necessary to complete the assisted reproduction informed consent form.