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Fertility tourism sparks Spanish takeover of clinic

Anonymous egg donation among treatments



Joanna Kiernan
EMAIL

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Irish base: Dr Hans Arce of Institut Marques

As more and more women wait later in life to become pregnant, Spain has become a major international destination for fertility treatments because of new treatments and techniques as well as soft-touch legislation in relation to anonymous egg donation.

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Now it has been confirmed that Clane Fertility Clinic in Kildare has been acquired by one of Spain's leading assisted reproduction centres, Institut Marques.

Spain has become a popular destination for Irish people seeking fertility treatment, thanks to its amenable attitudes to assisted reproduction, which have been enshrined in law since 1988.

And now Institut Marques plans to make the same treatments available to Irish couples at its clinic in Clane as it provides in its Barcelona base, including anonymous egg donation.

"We want to do all of the types of treatment that you can't do, or have been really hard to do in Ireland, and we want to do them here," Dr Hans Arce of Institut Marques told the Sunday Independent. "For example with egg donation; you cannot do egg donation because there are barely any egg donors here. Why? Because donors in Ireland cannot be anonymous and that scares a lot of these donors away, so now the idea is that if you have donors giving the eggs in Spain and we form the embryos in Spain, then Irish couples can just ask for their embryos to be brought into Ireland. So we will bring the embryos that were formed in Spain, under Spanish laws, and the patients can have them transferred here."

Embryo adoption is also available to Irish patients at the new clinic, provided that the official adoption of these embryos - the remaining embryos, which may be left over from another couple's successful in vitro fertilisation at the clinic - is completed in Spain beforehand.

"We have had an office here for five years now, so we wanted to base ourselves in Ireland," Dr Hans Arce said. "We hope to really change fertility treatment in Ireland because it is something that is really needed. Ireland has had many difficulties for many years in this area and this will definitely open up doors here."

The company is awaiting approval from Ireland's Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) to also provide the option of Pre-implantation Genetic Diagnosis (PGD) whereby embryos are genetically analysed to make sure that only the healthiest are transferred to the womb, a procedure which can significantly reduce spontaneous miscarriage.

"There is a lot of fear about the genetic testing area, but I think it is something very necessary, especially here in a country where termination of pregnancy is not legal, so avoiding unhealthy pregnancies would be a huge thing to do," Dr Hans Arce said.

Clane Fertility Clinic will now be called Institut Marques and a specialised medical team from Barcelona will also be based here, joining the team of 23 professionals that were part of the existing clinic.

Sunday Independent

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