

## **Threatened fertility: are fertility clinic success rates accurate?**

By  
Global News

TORONTO – Many couples struggling with infertility look to fertility-assisted reproductive technologies to conceive a child. When evaluating fertility clinics, many would-be parents look for success rates or pregnancy rates. However, those statistics may not be what people think they are.

Amber Willdig has tried IVF to conceive a child. She hasn't had any luck so far, even though based on her age, she is supposed to have a 70 per cent chance of success.

While age is a major factor in determining success, it's not everything, says Dr. Christopher Newton, a psychologist at the London Health Sciences Centre. In fact, the chances of success are very individual to each patient. Newton says many couples over-estimate their chances of pregnancy, particularly older couples.

“So you will have some patients say ‘Well yes, I’m 40 but I’m a young 40, I’m healthy,’” says Newton.

Dr. Art Leader, fertility specialist at the Ottawa Fertility Centre, says when it comes to success rates “you don't know if they are reporting all the cases, you don't know how accurately they're reporting the cases. So you have to take [them] with a grain of salt and a buyer should beware.”

Why the confusion?

The only organization in Canada keeping track of fertility stats is the Canadian Fertility and Andrology Society. But the organization is run by the fertility clinics themselves. Clinics submit their numbers on a voluntary basis. There is no outside system to audit those stats.

This is why eight clinics are currently claiming to be number one in Canada, according to Dr. Thomas Hannam, fertility specialist at the Hannam Fertility Centre.

“I don't know what the success rate of the clinic down the street is. I only know my own,” said Hannam. “When I choose to post my own data, I'm posting the data I wish to post.”

Other countries including the United Kingdom and the United States do have regulations and their systems have built-in auditing. But in Canada, it's easy for clinics to increase their pregnancy rates, says Newton. All they have to do is transfer more embryos or pick favourable candidates.

It's another argument, some say, for regulating the number of embryos which can be transferred rather than worry about auditing success rates. Single-embryo transfer would help reduce the number of multiple births which are risky for both mother and children.

Quebec is the only province to mandate single-embryo transfer in most cases. The province offers three funded cycles of IVF.

In the year since the program was implemented, multiple births have dropped from 28 per cent to five per cent.

In a special 16x9 investigation, Beatrice Politi speaks to men dealing with infertility – the struggles, the science and the risks to both father and child. The full hour-long 16x9 investigation will air on Global this Saturday, Feb. 11 at 7pm on 16x9. Join our live-blog discussion on GlobalNews.ca on Monday, Feb. 13 at 7pm.

- *With files from Beatrice Politi*

**▲** Report an error

## More Stories

Canada

### **Iqaluit women warned dump fire smoke poses risk to unborn children**

- **Wednesday June 4th on The Morning News**

- **Stroke patients are getting younger in Canada, new report warns**



- **Brain protein may be cause of high rates of depression in menopause**

- **Saskatchewan Prevention Institute launches app to fight STI**

- **How Canadian doctors are leading by example in organ donor registration**

- **Health advocates promote safe Stampede sex with catchy campaign**
- **Five sunscreen tips to avoid getting sunburned this summer**
- **Customer compensated after being denied access to cruise line while pregnant**
- **Childbirth main reason for hospital stays in Canada, report suggests**