

Has the IVF Industry Been Lying to Millennials?

Recently the Sydney Morning Herald [reported](#) that a technique known as “endometrial scratching”, used in fertility clinics, has been found to be useless. A three-year study carried out in Britain, Australia and New Zealand, showed that the IVF add-on, costing up to \$700 in Australia, did nothing to boost the chances of falling pregnant through in vitro fertilisation.

Too bad, isn't it, about all the women who have paid for an often painful procedure (which involves superficially wounding the lining of the womb to trigger an inflammatory or immune repair response to improve the receptivity of the uterus to an embryo) that raised their hopes in vain.

But raising hopes on the basis of little or no evidence is looking more and more like the core business of the infertility industry.

“Egg freezing”, a method of storing a woman's unfertilised eggs, has also come under scrutiny recently. A younger millennial market is being targeted here. Women in their mid-20s or early-30s, who may not even have any reproductive health issues, are now being encouraged by fertility clinics to act now by saving their eggs to ensure that they'll “definitely” have that healthy baby they want in the future.

Senior research fellow, Dr Karin Hammarberg, at Monash University's School of Public Health says the notion that freezing your eggs will safeguard your chances of having a baby in the future is misleading. “There is increasing discourse that [freezing your eggs] gives women choice... It's often launched as an insurance policy, but in reality it's nothing like insurance, because it might not pay out,” Dr

Hammarberg told the Sydney Morning Herald.

So, thanks to effective marketing and “expert” advice, thousands of women throughout the world are being encouraged by IVF specialists to pay and pay for fertility treatments that are only pain (to the hip pocket and their own bodies) and no gain.

With questions already raised about egg freezing and the ineffectiveness of endometrial scratching, would it be a surprise if other IVF services are discovered to be just as useless in the years to come? A British evaluation of [38 IVF add-ons](#) that found a lack of evidence for all but one treatment.

Last year a study confirmed that [acupuncture](#), which was offered at IVF clinics at a higher-than-average rate of \$100-\$300 for an initial session in Australia, did not increase a woman’s chances of having a baby either!

Yet in spite of such discoveries and health experts criticising IVF clinics for empty promises, the pain and desperation of tens of thousands of people wanting to have a child hasn’t deterred them from running to the IVF industry in their time of need. Just take a look at the market projections.

A snapshot of the baby-making market

According to a 2018 report, [IVF Services Market, by Cycle Type, and End User: Global Opportunity Analysis and Industry Forecast, 2018-2025](#), the worldwide IVF industry generated US\$10,587 million in 2017 and is projected to reach US\$22,467 million by 2025.

The reality is that there is big money to be made from promoting IVF than from the [alternatives](#). With the commercialisation of the fertility industry, people are primarily viewed as potential customers. As the examples of

endometrial scratching and acupuncture show, ad-hoc techniques for boosting success rates and profits count more than what is best for the patient.

The IVF industry knows how to play on the broad spectrum of emotions – fear, hope, struggle, desire, love – experienced by their target market, and they promise to deliver solutions to help you have the baby you ultimately want even if that involves groundless promises.

It's worth noting that IVF clinics were put on notice by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) back in 2016 for confusing and misleading information about their success rates on their websites.

But the concerns people have about IVF services go further. Recent cases of misconduct and cover-ups by clinicians have also recently come to light.

Cover-ups and growing concern

In the 2018 [Review of Assisted Reproductive Treatment](#) published by the Victorian Government, a whistleblower referred to as “Charlie” recounts three separate incidents in which a number of patients were outright lied to about the health of their embryos and their chances of achieving a successful pregnancy.

According to an article published in The Age Online, this interim report sparked the Victorian Government's pledge to open public IVF clinics this year in an effort to stymie malpractices and the lack of transparency occurring in the commercialised fertility industry.

It cannot be denied that the creation and commercialisation of a baby-making industry has opened the doors to very real abuses against vulnerable people. No one likes to be lied to and it's clear people are being fed lies about IVF.

It's not long since that the typical mainstream media story about IVF featured beaming parents with "miracle" babies. The beginning of 2019 has seen a more critical stance and one hopes that with more research and more media attention, those suffering infertility will given a more realistic picture of what IVF can do.

The problem of infertility today is many-sided, and so the other task awaiting journalists is research on the causes and [alternative therapies](#) that are already on offer but almost totally ignored in the mainstream press.

Causes include delayed marriage and family formation, pathologies resulting from lifestyle factors, natural deficiencies of the reproductive system and – most important of all – almost total lack of fertility awareness among young women, who are taught only how to suppress and harm their reproductive system right up to the time they want to have a baby.

We await other studies about the effectiveness and value of IVF, but also wider dissemination of information that could prevent and more successfully heal the infertility that is causing so much suffering today.

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