

Vital input of Asia Pacific region in dealing with complex challenges of human infertility

The 10th Congress of the Asia Pacific Initiative on Reproduction (ASPIRE) this month addressed latest advances in human fertility treatment in the region with outcomes that will help shape the future of assisted conception throughout the world.

A total of 7,769 fertility specialists from 116 countries participated in the congress that was presented in virtual format because of ongoing concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic.

The on-line format - <https://aspire2021.cme-congresses.com> – was an outstanding success with expert speakers discussing and dissecting new developments in scientific research and clinical practice in response to growing demand for fertility treatment around the world.

Globally, one in six couples experience infertility, which is defined as the inability to conceive after a year of unprotected intercourse or the failure to carry pregnancy to a live birth. The causes of infertility are equally shared among male and female partners.

Fertility care involves the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of individuals living with problems of the reproductive system.

Since the first IVF birth in 1978, more than eight million people have been born as a result of this procedure.

ASPIRE 2021 Scientific Chairman, Professor Tzeng Chii-Ruey, said the Congress allowed fertility scientists, clinicians, nurses and counsellors to engage on a wide range of issues as nations confront falling fertility rates that will have serious social and economic consequences.

“Apart from the active participation of thousands of expert registrants, the ASPIRE 2021 Congress featured an important exchange program with other world bodies including the American Society for Reproductive Medicine,” Professor Tzeng said.

“Participants in the Congress were also prominent members of organisations such as the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology, the Fertility Society of Australia and New Zealand, the British Fertility Society and assisted reproductive technology peak bodies in countries including the Philippines, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, China, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Japan, Taiwan and Singapore.”

...2/

Topics on the Congress program, which concluded on 10 May, included:

- the impact of COVID 19 on the reproductive system, particularly among males;
- access to and affordability of assisted reproduction, especially in low to middle income countries;
- the need for ongoing research on the health of offspring from assisted reproductive technologies;
- social and medical aspects of fertility preservation;
- new developments in reproductive genetics and associated ethical, legal and societal ramifications;
- advances in the treatment of polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) and endometriosis;
- adjuvant, or add-on therapies in IVF; and
- the role of artificial intelligence in assisted reproductive technology.

Professor Tzeng said leading scientists and clinicians from the Asia Pacific region made a vital contribution in advancing knowledge on these issues and they engaged in compelling question and answer sessions with expert speakers from other parts of the world.

A powerful focus of the Congress was on ethical challenges including growing application of intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) compared with conventional IVF when male factor infertility is not present, and comparing pregnancy outcomes.

“The Congress also addressed the need for a cautious approach to new developments in reproductive gene editing, which ultimately could allow for the programming of embryos for physical attributes and IQ in offspring, and strict guidelines governing this technology,” he said.

“It also became clear that access to surrogacy needs to be re-evaluated for specified patients in the Asia Pacific region particularly for women with congenital absence of the uterus and others with hysterectomy.”

Outgoing ASPIRE President, Professor Budi Wiweko, said the depth and diversity of issues addressed at the Congress would translate into clinical practice around the world to help improve outcomes for couples striving to achieve their dream of parenthood.

Full recordings from the scientific program can be accessed on the Congress website until April next year. The 11th Congress of the Asia Pacific Initiative on Reproduction in 2022 will also be held in virtual format.

INTERVIEW

To arrange an interview with Professor Tzeng Chii-Ruey, please contact Trevor Gill, ASPIRE Congress Media Relations on (Australia) 0418 821948 or by e-mail at lighthousepr@adelaide.on.net