

First live births with a novel simplified IVF procedure

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A recent prospective study published in *Reproductive BioMedicine Online* comparing conventional IVF with a novel simplified laboratory method of culturing embryos suggested that fertilization and implantation rates were similar for the simplified system when compared with those reported by conventional IVF programs. Sixteen healthy babies have already been born with this new method. According to the results of this study, IVF may be offered at a more reasonable price and made available to a larger part of the world population. Other quality studies are needed to determine the reduction in cost and the prospect of different patient groups using this simplified approach.

More than 5 million IVF babies have now been born worldwide, but because of high costs IVF is largely the preserve of [developed countries](#) and is only available or affordable for less than 10% of the [world population](#). The success and sustainability of assisted reproductive technologies will depend to a large extent on the ability to optimise these techniques in terms of availability, affordability and effectiveness.

In developing countries the consequences of involuntary childlessness can create wide-ranging societal problems, especially for women. Because many families in developing countries depend entirely on children for economic survival, childlessness can often be viewed as a social and public-health issue and not only as a medical problem.

Published in *Reproductive BioMedicine Online*, American and Belgian researchers outline the first results of a prospective study performed in Genk, Belgium. They report the results of a study in which a simple, reduced cost IVF culture system was used to replace more expensive incubator systems. The new method does not alter the need for surgical egg retrieval and embryo transfer, laboratory staffing and egg or embryo freezing.

In a short prospective clinical trial, successful outcomes were obtained with the simplified method at levels that compare favourably with those reported by typical IVF programs in developed countries.

Sixteen healthy babies have now been born using the new method. It is expected that laboratory costs may be reduced, however the extend of this remains to be determined..

The simplified IVF method has the potential to open up a new era in the history of IVF and may not only change the accessibility of IVF in resource-poor countries, but also have implications for accessibility in developed countries too, where IVF is increasingly becoming available only to affluent couples. The trend in IVF has been to introduce new and complex instruments and tests. It is hoped that the new embryo culture method may change this philosophy.

More information: The research papers presenting the results of this prospective study on the novel simplified method of embryo culture process are:

Van Blerkom, J., Ombelet, W., Klerkx, E., Janssen, M., Dhont, N., Nargund, G., Campo, R. First births with a simplified culture system for clinical IVF and embryo transfer. ([DOI: 10.1016/j.rbmo.2013.11.012](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rbmo.2013.11.012)). The article appears in *Reproductive BioMedicine Online*, in Press.

Ombelet, W. 2013. Is global access to infertility care realistic? The Walking Egg Project. ([DOI: 10.1016/j.rbmo.2013.11.013](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rbmo.2013.11.013)). The article appears in *Reproductive BioMedicine Online*, in Press.

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