

# Reproductive medicine in South Africa and IFFS 2007 – Durban



The standard of reproductive medicine in South Africa compares very favorably with that in the rest of the world. In keeping with other countries, reproductive medicine is now recognised as a sub-specialty by the Colleges of Medicine of South Africa and the fellowship curriculum comprises two years' full-time training.

In contrast to the First World it is of concern that in this country reproductive technologies are mainly concentrated in the private sector, but we have a number of centres that have made substantial scientific contributions. In addition the private sector has gradually started to play an important role, participating in the training of specialists with an interest in this discipline.

The South African Tissue Act, concerning gametes/embryos, is extremely lenient, which has brought about some interesting challenges. We have seen a surge of infertility clinics in the USA exploiting young South African students for their genetic material. Furthermore, we have no legal limits regarding the number of embryos that can be transferred, in contradistinction to Europe where such constraints have had a marked impact on pregnancy rates.

In South Africa there have been numerous attempts to accredit both centres and clinicians, and regularisation is certainly needed. Some guidelines have been circulated by the Southern African Society of Reproductive Science and Surgery, with varying degrees of compliance. We have moved forward with the accreditation of clinicians by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) under a 'grandfather' clause, and the acceptance of the Reproductive Fellowship. The HPCSA is in the process of creating a system of accreditation for centres of assisted reproductive technology (ART).

A challenging project for our society would be putting together a national registry for ART, and to follow this through by collaboration with an organisation like ICMART – an international registry. We hope that ICMART's presence at the Durban conference will stimulate such an initiative.

South Africa is confronted by a high prevalence of HIV-positive patients presenting with infertility. We recognise this, and have responded by making the only keynote address of the meeting on this topic.

## The Durban Conference

The International Federation of Fertility Societies (IFFS) 19th World Congress on Fertility and Sterility takes place at the International Convention Centre in Durban from



*Paul Dalmeyer*

29 April to 3 May. A packed scientific programme will comprise plenary addresses, workshops, short courses and 19 'trilogies', each of which will incorporate three successive presentations on a particular topic.

The trilogies are key to the structure of the programme. Some will run concurrently so that delegates have the option of selecting sessions of most interest to them. The topic-specific sessions each involve lectures by internationally recognised experts in the field, reviewing what is known and offering practice updates.

The IFFS, which has 64 national societies as members, hosts a congress every three years. The Durban congress organisers are thrilled that for the first time a Federation congress will be hosted in South Africa. (South Africa put in a bid six years ago to host this congress, winning from Turkey and the UK in the final round.) An IFFS congress is always a major event, attracting over 200 delegates. We trust this one will be no exception.

Invited speakers are all leaders in their specialised fields, which means that the trilogy lectures and plenary addresses will offer the most up-to-date information currently available.

For the first time at an IFFS congress there will be a keynote address. This will be delivered by Pieter-Dirk Uys, but delegates must not expect only entertainment. Uys is one of our foremost AIDS activists, and he will be

addressing the topic of HIV in fertility and reproduction, which is an important concern and will be a recurrent theme of the meeting.

At the time of the bid, South Africa also undertook to bring 50 less privileged trainees from elsewhere in Africa to the congress. Their attendance is fully funded and we extend a warm welcome to them.

The workshops are another first for an IFFS congress. The themes have been carefully chosen to spotlight topical issues such as ethics, menopause and

endoscopy. Of course there will also be a wide-reaching social programme, including an innovative 'wildlife workshop' that will allow delegates to get a real taste of Africa.

South Africa welcomes you.

**Paul Dalmeyer**

*Chairman, Southern African Society of Reproductive Science and Surgery*



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