

主旨:

Fw: views

Dear Sir,

I try to submit on line but fail, hope this e mail will help me to submit my view.

Louis

Dear Ms Carrie Lam,

I am a Specialist Gynaecologist and see a lot of subfertile couples. A number of them ended up need help by Assisted Reproductive Treatment (ART) procedures. I must spell out clearly that ART procedures were not and should never use to solve a societal problem.

The ensuing paragraphs explain the rationale.

ART is not a magic bullet

Despite the in vitro fertilization (IVF, the most powerful ART procedures) has been invented for 36 years, the success rate remains low. According to the Hong Kong Council on Human Reproductive Technology (CHRT) statistics, the success rate per cycle is only 32% and 23% for women age 31-35 and 36-40 respectively. For women age 41 or over, the success rate drops substantially to 0.8 to 9%. This is a very disappointing success rate. Furthermore, a lot of women will suffer from miscarriage even if they become pregnant immediately after treatment. The miscarriage rate is 15% for women age 31-35 and raise to 51% for women age 40-45.

A lot of couple seeks ART procedures because of advance age on the female side. It is well known in the medical field that fertility drops substantially after mid 30's, and this is why IVF success rate drops from to after the age of 40. You can immediately see the 'take home' baby rate is indeed very low.

Therefore, it is difficult to justify for Government to invest healthcare resources into such an expensive medical treatment with these low success rate. The prioritization of healthcare resources should rest on Food and Health Bureau policy direction according to citizens need and not change because of population policy. I don't think citizens will appreciate increase resources for fertility treatment and not in other life threatening diseases such as cancer and heart attack.

Psychological pressure

Couple (especially women) receiving ART are under substantial psychological pressure. There are numerous medical studies to show the level of stress is very significant. As a doctor, I see more subfertile patients break into tears in front of me, even more than cancer patients. Therefore, instead of encouraging these couple to undergo ART, we should encourage them give birth at a younger age when they have no fertility problems and able to give birth to a healthier baby.

False sense of security

Another disadvantage of subsidizing ART is that it will create a false sense of security. Despite I presented a lot of unfavourable statistics about ART, the public generally has a false impression that ART can definitely get them a child even if they are 'old'. I conduct a study (together to my Master of Public Health student) last year. The result shows many couple has misconception about the success rate and many other aspects of ART. (The result will be presented in the Asian Pacific Initiative on Reproduction Conference in April this year at Brisbane). Many participants of this survey overestimate the success rate of IVF. If Government subsidizes ART especially for older women, it will give them a false sense of security and they may even delay their child bearing plan later.

How to encourage childbirth at young age?

Earlier I state that many women seek ART at an advance age. Why? I conducted a survey among 98 of my patients. 71 of the female are above age of 35. Most (68) have been in a stable relationship for more than 2 years. They were being asked why they did not embark of having a child earlier. The 2 most commonly give reasons are lack of financial resources and lack of home space (these 2 reasons account for 80.9% of responses). In regard to the later reason, a lot of them were staying with parents in a small residential space which does not allow them to have space for a baby. Most couple objects the idea of subsidizing ART to encourage childbirth. Indeed most people think the Government should provide incentive through financial or housing to encourage childbirth. Earlier when the Chief Executive also said 成家不立室 is not acceptable. We should target the root of the problem that is financial and housing issues.

Conclusion

All the above data and statistics substantiate that if we wish to increase our workforce and population size by encoring childbirth, we should do it through creating a conducive environment that encourage young couples to give birth early. This would be much easier and cost effective. We should not use a medical technology to solve a societal problem. In Chinese, 我們不應用醫療技術來解決社會問題.

Lastly, I know the chance of you reading this response personally is zero, but I still want deliver my compliment to you. I attended the Yau Tong consultation session in Jan 2014. There was a group of aggressive opponents in the session. I do not want to comment what they trying to say is right or wrong, but I do not appreciate the way they deliver their messages. Despite their aggressive behavior, you have shown to other attending citizens what a leader should show.

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Dr Louis Chan

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