



94% of Couples Who Experience Problems Having A Baby Do Not Get Treatment

*Global Assisted Conception Taskforce Convened
To Help Couples Navigate the Assisted Conception Pathway*

One in every six couples across the world experience difficulties conceiving and of these, only 6% receive the treatment they need, according to revealing epidemiological data recently announced by the **Assisted Conception Taskforce (ACT)**, a newly formed independent global taskforce of patient leaders and healthcare professionals.ⁱ Further research announced by ACT highlights the startling lack of awareness of the options available for couples experiencing conception difficulties. Nearly half of couples (48%) reporting that the options presented to them by their healthcare professionals are confusing and uninviting.ⁱⁱ

“As this research clearly shows, only 6% of couples experiencing difficulties conceiving actually receive the treatment they need. Either people don’t try to find help, or they find it difficult to access and drop out”, said Sandra Dill, Chair of ACT. “ACT’s goal is to demystify the process, making pregnancy achievable for the tens of millions of couples around the world who may currently be unaware or confused about options available to them”.

Treatment options available to couples are not as daunting as most people think, with many modern treatments being simple, non-invasive and very effective. In light of these innovations, it is astonishing to discover how few people actually get the help they need to resolve their fertility problems. The magnitude of this problem and its potential impact on birth rates all over the world, prompted the formation of ACT, a unique taskforce of patients and healthcare professionals from 17 countries across the globe, to help identify and destroy barriers to medical and emotional help for these couples.

“Labeling a person as ‘infertile’ is unhelpful and discouraging for people who have difficulty conceiving and may contribute to the reluctance attached to seeking help. One of the key activities of ACT is to provide clear advice and guidance for patients, dispelling the myths and misunderstanding associated with conception difficulties and providing a helping hand along the assisted conception pathway”, explained Sandra.

The inaugural meeting of ACT was held in central London on the 24th of February this year, marking the commencement of its campaign to remove barriers associated with assisted conception. Following this meeting and the recent 1st International ACT Conference in Frankfurt, Germany, the group developed a



range of educational materials, aimed at doctors and people who have difficulty conceiving. .

These include the ACT Pathway, which describes the many options available to people trying to have a baby and the ACT Charter, which outlines a global standard of care that people with difficulty conceiving have a right to expect as they navigate the assisted conception pathway. Clinics, support organizations and institutions agreeing to uphold the principles of the Charter will be provided with a commitment and a copy of the Charter to display in their premises so anyone seeking help can feel confident that they will receive the best information, support and advice possible.

For further information regarding the activities of ACT, or issues surrounding assisted conception, please visit www.assistedconception.net or contact:

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About ACT

The Assisted Conception Taskforce (ACT) is an international group of healthcare professionals and patient representatives from 17 countries with a specialist interest/expertise in conception difficulties. ACT aims to provide education, advice and support to couples experiencing conception difficulties by raising awareness of the issue. ACT is supported by an unrestricted educational grant from Serono International.

About the Data

ACT asked Professor John Collins of McMaster University, Ontario, Canada to review current information and provide an initial epidemiological picture of the numbers of people seeking and receiving medical help for conception difficulties.¹ Professor Collins is an epidemiologist and has many papers published specifically on the subject of conception difficulties.

94% is the total figure for couples not seeking or receiving treatment in the developed world **and** couples not receiving or having access to treatment in the developing world. Even if the figures for the developing world are removed from the model it still shows that in the developed world 74% of couples do not seek or receive treatment.

Additional revealing findings within the data include:

- 90 million couples worldwide have some form of conception difficulty.
- 85% (77 million) of these people will never seek any help for their conception difficulties.
- Of the 15% who do seek help, less than half (42%) will actually make it through to the point of receiving treatment.
- Globally, 94% of couples either do not seek or have access to treatment, or seek



- treatment but for one reason or another never receive it.
- In the developed world, 74% of couples either do not seek treatment, or seek treatment but for one reason or another never receive it.

A second study was conducted on behalf of the ACT to gauge barriers faced by patients when trying to access assisted conception:

A total of 103 people from Australia, Great Britain, Germany and France completed an online questionnaire. Respondents were people who were aware that they may have a conception difficulty but had not yet sought medical help. An independent market research company, Lightspeed Research, from London, UK, conducted the research.

Key findings included:

Myths and confusion are two of the most significant barriers to people seeking help:

- There are over two million web sites and 1,000 books about infertility in English alone.
- 48% of couples said that the options were confusingly presented and uninviting.
- Only 15% of couples said they were confident and informed about assisted conception treatment options.

Other key barriers why people do not seek medical treatment are:

- Access/reimbursement
 - Variation in reimbursement policy between countries is vast and 74% of couples around the world agreed that this is a considerable threat to access.
- Stigma
 - In many countries around the world conception difficulties are a taboo subject and treatment for the condition is perceived as embarrassing or even shameful.
- Lack of awareness/education
 - 43% of couples either *never* research the support that exists or do not realize they have a problem after one year.

References:

ⁱ Professor John Collins, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario. Global Epidemiological Conception Difficulties Model.

ⁱⁱ 'Barriers to Assisted Conception Treatment' – Lightspeed Research, June 2004.