

1 Year “ 10 Babies Born “ 100 Pregnancies - Apollo Fertility Centre: Where Life Begins.

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The term “Miracles do happen” might appear to be a cliché, but at the Apollo Fertility Centre at The Lanka Hospitals Corporation, it is the essence of what happens everyday. The Apollo Fertility Centre celebrated one year of establishment on September 23, 2009 and has much to be proud of – it has already given hope to many with a milestone achievement of a total of 110 successful IVF pregnancies and 10 precious bundles of joy born within their very first year.

Established in September last year, the Centre has since become the benchmark in the In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF) field through the revolutionary methodologies used. The month of May saw the birth of the Centre’s first IVF baby boy. Simultaneously, the Centre has seen many such breakthroughs in fertility treatment, ranging from successful IVF pregnancies of women who have endometriosis, distorted tubes, fibroids and other such complications – even to those who have had ectopic pregnancies where both fallopian tubes were removed.

Successful treatments have also included cases where the male has an extremely low sperm count. Now as the Centre progresses towards their second year, every month sees two to three babies being born. Following the excitement of the first baby boy, there were twins born in June and the first baby girl as a result of treatment obtained at the Centre was born in September.

The Centre consists of a team of highly skilled and specialised doctors, gynaecologists, embryologists, endocrinologists, urologists and radiologists who conduct comprehensive diagnostics to identify fertility problems and their root causes, with emphasis on non-invasive and minimally invasive procedures. The team, comprises of the two gynaecologists – Dr Nishendra Karunaratne and Dr Sudeera Uduwela, together with in-house medical doctor and embryologist Dr Madara Ralapanawe – a Sri-Lankan doctor with a post graduate masters degree in Clinical Embryology – carry out many different procedures, some more advanced than others but all focused on being the least invasive. Dr Madara and the rest of the team, supported by their highly skilled nursing and technical teams, are driven to maintain the international standard of 35-40% for successful IVF (In-Vitro Fertilization) and ICSI (Intra Cytoplasmic Sperm Injection treatments) which they've achieved thus far, whilst also working towards the goal of increasing their success rate to a magnitude of 50% and perform days (blastocyst) transfers in the near future, which only a few places in the world have yet achieved.

Walking around the Apollo Fertility Centre, it is very easy to see why many opt to undergo the procedure here. Created on the concept 'where life begins' the Fertility Centre exudes a warm, friendly 'home-like' atmosphere. A far cry indeed from the cold, clinical approach generally found. The treatment rooms emulate an environment as homely and as comfortable as possible and the treatments themselves are conducted to suit the natural time cycles of a patient. Even the Centre's colour scheme of green and gold is specially chosen to symbolise fertility and prosperity. Every effort has been made to make the Centre a family-friendly space, where patients are welcome to bring family members or other offspring along. The state-of-the-art facilities offered include an IVF laboratory, freezing/storage facilities for embryos, ultrasound facility, operating suite for egg collection, private sperm collection rooms, private consultation rooms and a counseling room. An investment of Rs 30 million was made for the development of the IVF laboratory. The facility includes all state-of-the-art equipment from Japan, Germany and Australia in order to provide the latest medical interventions and bring the newest and most efficient methods of healthcare to the hospital.

The quality of the service at the Centre coupled with the cost at which it's provided has attracted many international couples from the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States of America, Maldives and the Middle East in the hopes of starting a family - which, including local patients adds up to at least 45 - 50 patients a month, stresses Dr Ralapanawe. Affordability, according to him, has been recognised as a critical factor in the couples' decision. Therefore though the cost of the procedure is comparatively low - as low as 150,000, payments can also be made in installments over the course of the procedure - a strategy which goes in-line with The Lanka Hospitals Corporation's main vision of providing quality healthcare at an affordable price.

The procedures cover Natural cycle IVF, Intermediate IVF cycle and Controlled Ovarian Hyper- stimulation IVF cycle - with prices ranging to suit patients according to their clinical condition and the procedure adopted. He further highlights that they understand that patients travel from out of Colombo to receive treatment at the Centre. Therefore, they initiate the process and then contact the patient's family doctor, providing them with medication and information thus enabling the patient to receive treatment in their hometown. "While the Apollo Fertility Centre is open everyday we intend taking the process to the outskirts so that those in need of such services from the peripheries need not come to the Centre in Colombo, but can stay in surroundings familiar to them and obtain the same services, with no compromise whatsoever on the quality of care that is given to all our patients," Dr Madara added.

Dr Madara further stresses that they do not use the batch method of IVF cycle patients at the same time as done in most hospitals but instead follow the cycle of each individual patient, thus continuing the fertility cycle throughout 365 days of the year and also reducing the risk of any impact on the patient's body. "We do IVF cycles everyday, therefore we do not manipulate the normal or natural cycles. We have even had requests for auspicious timings for embryo transfers" he stated.

The Fertility Centre is just the beginning of the medical journey. Once conception has been achieved at the fertility centre, teams of professional highly skilled gynaecologists are ready to step in to ensure the welfare of both the mother and child at the birthing centre. The well-equipped neonatal intensive care unit and emergency unit available at the hospital ensures nothing but the best for the mother and her new little bundle!

Apollo Fertility Centre is located on the 3rd Floor at Apollo Hospitals Colombo.

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