



TIME TO INTRODUCE INNOVATIVE ASSISTED REPRODUCTION METHODS TO IMPLEMENT AFFORDABLE AND SUCCESSFUL INFERTILITY SERVICES IN RESOURCE- POOR COUNTRIES

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According to the World Health Organization (WHO), one in six people worldwide is affected by infertility. There are disparities between high-income countries and low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) due to differences in the availability of infertility care, reimbursement policies, and sociocultural attitudes towards procreation.

In LMICs, specialised infertility centres are scarce, mostly private and accessible only to the fortunate few who can afford them. The success and sustainability of assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs) will depend on our ability to optimise these techniques in terms of availability, affordability, and effectiveness.

A low-cost, simplified IVF system has been developed which is safe, cost-effective and applicable to low-resource settings. When combined with inexpensive mild ovarian stimulation protocols, this could become an effective and affordable means of treating infertility and performing assisted reproduction, but only if such programmes are desired and supported by all relevant stakeholders.

We have recently proven that it is possible to perform simplified IVF and embryo transfer in a mobile laboratory with very promising results. This supports the idea of using mobile laboratories in areas where access to ART is limited and costly due to the small number of IVF centres, which are mainly located in large cosmopolitan cities.

Take Home Messages

- ☞ Access to assisted reproductive technologies (ART) remains limited, especially in low- and middle-income countries, due to the high cost of treatment and the limited availability of affordable IVF centres.
- ☞ Despite the severe societal and personal consequences of childlessness in most LMICs, barriers to infertility care persist, meaning it remains a low priority for local politicians, community leaders and healthcare providers.
- ☞ To achieve universal access to ART, it is crucial to develop low-cost ART models with simplified diagnosis and treatment protocols while maintaining the quality of care.
- ☞ In a pilot study, we demonstrated that simplified IVF and embryo transfer can be performed in a mobile unit with a high success rate.
- ☞ Effective and accessible low-cost ART can only be successfully introduced if there is political will and economic and community support.