

Over 5,000 births of healthy children thanks to Crete Fertility Centre

Dr Mattheos Fraidakis and his team of medical experts bring people closer to the blessing called parenthood



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When it comes to assisted reproduction technologies (ART), Crete Fertility Centre in Heraklion, Greece has been leading the way since 1993, offering quality services at the highest standards.

Clinical and scientific director of the IVF Unit, Dr Mattheos Fraidakis, along with a team of highly-qualified professionals, are known to never lose focus of the specific needs of couples who have sought care at Crete Fertility Centre.

His clinical activities range from 5,000 births of healthy children following successful IVF programs, to successful reproductive surgery operations, hysteroscopic and laparoscopic operations and impregnation of people with special needs. The unit has one of the highest success rates in Europe, in women

who have carried out IVF fertility treatments in egg donation programs.

"During 2015 we performed 257 embryo transfers and our success rate was 62.3 per cent, which translates into 160 successful pregnancies.

"Twenty-five years of experience in the field of IVF and egg donation is the basis of the high standards of care and attention to all the details made available to the patient, as they take this important step in their life to start a family," Dr Mattheos Fraidakis explains.

Crete Fertility's lab and medical equipment are the newest available in global Assisted Reproductive Technology and are on par with European and American standards for hygiene. Meanwhile, Crete Fertility Centre offers a wide variety of egg donors from all walks of life, and since there are plenty of women who wish to donate their eggs anon-

ymously there are no long waiting lists for treatment. Besides Crete Fertility's medical expertise being of the highest calibre, treatments are more affordable than most European IVF clinics, making it an attraction for patients from all over the world.

"The cost of treatment is much lower than the costs in Australia and USA, which, when considered in the context of choice of donor characteristics and no waiting, is much appreciated," Dr Fraidakis tells *Neos Kosmos*.

Familiarity, cultural, ethical and societal factors are also of predominant importance when having any medical treatment, especially fertility treatment. The hospital setting at Crete Fertility Centre provides not only a classical Greek welcome, but also one which has an international flavour for patients who travel from Italy, France and Hungary as well as other continental European and Scandinavian countries.

"Our 25 years of experience has shown that a lot of couples, motivated by their strong wish to have a baby, while hindered by restrictive legislation in their own country, seek Third World countries, exposing themselves to avoidable risks due to inconsistency and clarity in standards of health care and hygiene as well as failure to conceive. Lack of a robust and transparent ART legal framework has been known to complicate the experience many couples have had abroad in unfamiliar cultures and societies," he explains.

Meanwhile, the Greek legal framework for assisted reproduction services is one of the most progressive worldwide, establishing Greece (and Crete Fertility Centre) as an ideal destination for couples from abroad seeking treatment not available in their own country. The country's legislation assists couples to realise their dream of having a baby, using egg or sperm donation, until the age of 50 for women and without age limit for men, in

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contrast to other European countries such as France. In addition, there is favourable legislation for couples considering host surrogacy as a treatment option.

"Greek patients from all over the world often look to their homeland for their medical care, and this is especially the case when starting a family," Dr Fraidakis says.

"So it is not surprising to learn that more than 200 healthy babies have been born in Australia after egg donation treatment of Greek women who live in Australia, where there is a large expatriate Greek community in most cities, especially in Melbourne and Sydney. They travel these great distances because of confidentiality, great attention to the important details of the characteristics of the anonymous egg donor and excellent standards of patient focused care."

Browsing through the testimonials on the website, one comes to realise that it is this aura of the patient-centred approach which has attracted women and couples to seek advice and treatment in Heraklion rather than the mega-centres, where waiting rooms can so often seem to be full of stressed couples.

"Women prefer the more personalised approach of a 'boutique style' ART centre such as Crete Fertility Centre, which provides international-level, innovative fertility treatment





Dr Mattheos Fraidakis

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while staying true to its unique ethos, which is so important," he emphasises.

"It is for these and other reasons that women travel from as far afield as Australia and the USA to benefit from the very special and sensitive atmosphere which exists at Crete Fertility Centre while receiving care to start their family."

On the other hand, each advance in reproductive technology which has been added to the treatments provided at Crete Fertility Centre is well understood by all members of the multi-disciplinary team, doctors, nurse practitioners, embryologists and counsellors, led by Dr Fraidakis whose insightful personality and manner has inspired his team to put the couple and their needs at the forefront of priorities.

"Treatment is provided with the knowledge that the Crete Fertility Centre team has worked together for the last 20 years," the director of the clinic adds, ensuring that there are no misunderstandings about which treatment the patient wishes to have and what will be provided to the highest standards.

These technologies include egg and embryo donation, IVF, IUI, ICSI, PGD blastocyst culture and cryopreservation, to name a few, which in themselves sound daunting, but are conducted in a friendly, relaxed atmosphere

which is unhurried, personalised and efficient, without the couple feeling as if they are part of a protocol-driven or mechanical process going through different steps without explanation. This is especially so in relation to blastocyst development, embryo biopsy and genetic diagnosis (PGD), when couples can anxiously await news of daily embryonic growth or PGD results.

"PGD and CGH Array are some of the latest technologies which are available to ensure that greatest care is taken to identify the embryos which are most likely to be normal and so lead to the birth of a healthy baby," he explains.

"At least 100 PGD procedures per year are performed by the Crete Fertility Centre medical, scientific and paramedical team."

Patient support at Crete Fertility Centre is multi-disciplinary not only in offering the best in medical technology strategies for the couple during their treatment, but in providing counselling and psychology expertise supplementing the highly complex clinical experience before, during and after procedures, whether successful or not. Counselling is not mandatory and is provided at no extra cost from the Crete Fertility Centre.

"Infertility is undoubtedly a stressful state from the diagnosis level, not to mention when the couple decides to deal with it therapeutically. Negative emotions such as anger, sorrow, guilt and disappointment often overwhelm the couple," Dr Fraidakis says.

"Stress, insecurity and physical fatigue during the assisted reproduction process can all become obstacles in the therapeutic process and directly effect the results of the effort. We firmly believe that providing a multidimensional synthesis of services, covering all aspects of the fertility process and minimising physical and emotional cost guarantees the best possible results in our

common effort with the couple."

In addition, acknowledgement of the benefits of complementary care such as meditation, acupuncture and other traditional remedies such as aromatherapy provides added value to medical care, the technological nature of which can be softened by incorporating mindfulness and other strategies to enhance not only the patient experience but also pregnancy and live birth rates.

"Our job, however, does not end with a successful childbirth," he emphasises.

"In co-operation with various organisations, such as the Logopedists Society of Athens, we will provide continuous feedback and support on various issues, not only to couples that face infertility, but to young parents as well, to sustain and develop in an excellent manner the gift of life they took home with them from Crete Fertility Centre."

Dr Mattheos Fraidakis was born in Rethymon, Crete, and studied at the medical faculty of Rome University (Italy). He undertook part of his speciality training at Royal London Hospital under Professor J.G. Grudzinskas, and continued at the Obstetrics-Gynecology Clinic of Athens University (Areteion Hospital, Athens) under the supervision of P.A. Zourlas, where he was awarded a PhD with honours. He continued training in the subspecialty of ART at the academic unit of obstetrics and gynaecology at Royal London Hospital and at London Bridge Fertility Centre for over three years, supervised by the head of unit and director of the ART clinic Professor J.G. Grudzinskas in the principles of assisted reproduction, diagnosis and treatment, endoscopic surgery, laparoscopy, hysteroscopy, etc.

To find out more about the treatments offered at Crete Fertility Centre, go to www.fertility-crete.gr

