

IVF IN UKRAINE, AN AFFORDABLE SOLUTION TO INFERTILITY

Ukraine has a long history in successful reproductive medicine. Now, childless couples denied IVF by the NHS may receive treatment in Ukraine at a fraction of the UK cost

For many childless couples in the UK, In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) may often provide a solution.

But the criteria for IVF on the NHS are becoming ever more stringent. Each health authority may operate to a different set of criteria - general guidelines given back in 2004 stated 3 cycles of IVF for childless couples where the woman is between 23 and 29 years of age may be given, diminishing to just one IVF cycle for a woman between 29 and 40. It has been reported that, even as long ago as 1999, 80% of couples approaching the NHS were rejected. For those able to afford it, IVF in the private sector is a safe option, but in the UK it's extremely expensive. Generally speaking, the cost of one cycle in a private clinic in the UK is going to cost upwards of £3000.

It's for this reason that an increasing number of couples from the UK seek IVF abroad. Medical tourism is increasing in popularity around the world, with people requiring various procedures travelling to a number of countries where medical and ethical standards are known to be high, but the cost of procedures is low.

In recent years the city of Kiev, capital of Ukraine, has welcomed a steadily increasing number of people from the UK, Western Europe, USA, Russia and the Arabian Gulf for a variety of treatments. The first of these is IVF. Kiev welcomes more than 350 couples from the UK who are seeking IVF every year, and this figure is set to increase as the treatment becomes harder to obtain in the UK under the NHS, and increasingly expensive in private clinics.

In 2009 (most recent figures) over 30,000 people visited Ukraine for medical treatment, the most popular being IVF, followed by surrogacy, dental implants and other dental work.

Ukraine has a well established track record in reproductive medicine and the country's clinics are modern and very well equipped. The health care teams operating within them are trained to the highest international standards and are in constant contact with peer groups all over the world to share advances in this exciting medical field. IVF success rates in Ukraine are impressive – as high as 65% in certain patient profiles.

Medicare Europe specialises in arranging procedures for people who either cannot access or afford treatments in their own country. It is British-based and it recognises that travelling away from home for any health procedure can be traumatic, which is why all patients are met at the airport on an individual basis, accompanied to their accommodation and then to the clinic where they will have their procedure. Staff at the clinics selected by Medicare Europe are used to dealing with an international clientele on a daily basis and speak good English. They will do all they can to reassure and make patients as comfortable and relaxed as possible.

It is estimated that most procedures in Ukraine cost up to 85% less than the same treatment in Western Europe or the USA. In Ukraine, a single cycle of IVF may cost as little as £1080. With return flights from London to Kiev starting at less than £150 return, and accommodation at around 60€ per night, travelling to Kiev for IVF treatment is a highly attractive option both in terms of cost, and in the high IVF success rates claimed in that country.

The CEO of Medicare Europe, Ivetta Sharashenidze, explains why Ukraine is an increasingly popular choice for couples seeking IVF “We recognise that infertility is a terrible diagnosis for couples who want to create a family. In Ukraine we have a proud track record of helping infertile couples achieve their dream of children. Our IVF success rates are very high, and our costs very low. Yet to quality of treatment is not compromised in any way.

“We are only too aware that for some couples, and for a host of reasons, IVF cannot be a solution for childlessness. In Ukraine we are able to offer surrogacy to these couples. It is completely legal in our country. People who think surrogacy may be the answer for them are often put off by what seems to be a sea of red tape – they worry that there will be legal difficulties in getting the child’s birth registered in the country of its parents’ domicile.

“But in Ukraine these difficulties do not exist – the child is considered to be legally belonging to the prospective parents from the moment of conception. Even if a donation programme took place and there is no biological relation between the child and its intended parents, their names will be on the birth certificate. For extra reassurance, we have our own British legal advisor to guide couples through the necessary paperwork so they can take the baby back to their own country without any difficulty. Surrogacy programmes are not confined to heterosexual couples, single woman may also participate. There is no concept of same sex marriage in Ukraine but such patients can be treated as single men or women.”

There is no stigma attached to travelling abroad for procedures and treatments that are either hard to come by or extremely expensive at home. With specific reference to IVF, a paper produced in 2008 by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority included results of a survey undertaken amongst people who had travelled overseas for health care.

Of those polled, 76% said they would consider travelling abroad for health care, for the following reasons in order of importance

- Short waiting times
- Cost of treatment
- Success rates
- Availability of donor eggs / sperm
- Positive reports from other patients
- Availability of donor eggs and sperm, recommendation from UK clinics and the opportunity to have embryos replaced

Of the 339 respondents, only 26 said that they would not consider going abroad as they were happy with the fertility treatment they receive in the UK.

Medicare Europe is very experienced in arranging IVF treatment as well as other treatments and procedures, for people from all over the world.

Quick facts about Ukraine



Kiev is an old and beautiful city with some awesome architecture. It is a safe place for locals and tourists alike both by day and night. The country is highly respectful of women who led the country to autonomy following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Health living is a priority in Ukraine with fresh food in abundance. The country has a well deserved reputation for its spas and wellbeing centres, patronised by visitors from all over the world. The country is strongly family-orientated and its people are good looking.

Contrary to what you might expect, the climate is not harsh in comparison with the UK. Winter (November to March) temperatures average around freezing with a fair amount of snow, but the spring, summer and early autumn are long and mild.

Kiev is just under three and a half hours away from London by air and is served by a number of airlines including British Airways, Ukraine, Aerosvit, Wizz Air with a wide variety of fare options.