The IVF process is emotionally intense, physically draining and astonishingly expensive. But advanced medical knowledge and pioneering lab techniques are making the ‘take-home baby rate’ for women and couples better than ever, writes Danielle Barron.

A

round 250 babies are born every minute around the world, and a growing proportion of these will have started life in a petri dish. Almost nine million babies worldwide have now been born thanks to in-vitro fertilisation, or IVF, and advances in medical knowledge as well as increasingly sophisticated laboratory techniques mean the assisted reproduction baby boom is set to continue.

The fertility industry has been the answer to millions of couples’ prayers but, not surprisingly, it has its detractors. IVF is big business, and fears persist that the market model of assisted human reproduction can muddy the waters when it comes to treatment options and decisions.

Criticisms levelled at fertility clinics include a tendency to encourage couples to jump straight into IVF, or the offering of additional investigations and procedures that aren’t medically necessary and may not improve your chances of success.

Professor Mary Wingfield is a consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist at the National Maternity Hospital at Holles Street in Dublin, and clinical director of the not-for-profit Merrion Fertility Clinic, the stresses that, first and foremost, the goal should be to continue a couple’s objective of conceiving naturally. "Undoubtedly, IVF is the best fertility treatment we have, but nature is better than IVF if someone can get pregnant naturally then that is much better," she says.

"We don't advocate rushing straight into IVF but sometimes, particularly if the woman is older, that is the only logical way to go, as they might miss the boat. That can be a difficult balance with patients' feelings, as sometimes someone will walk into the clinic, and perhaps the man has a very..."
When a couple who are trying to have a baby are given the news that they are infertile, a range of feelings can be a shock. The long-held dreams of parenthood are cut short, and the emotional impact can be profound. Couples may go through a period of denial, anger, and grief. They might feel a sense of loss, a failure, or even a sense of guilt. It can be particularly challenging for those who have been trying to conceive for a long time, as the pressure to succeed can become overwhelming.

Infertility is a complex issue that can affect people from all walks of life. It is estimated that 1 in 7 couples in the United States experiences infertility, and the numbers are similar in other parts of the world. The causes of infertility are varied, ranging from genetic factors to environmental exposures. It can be frustrating for couples to know that there might be something they can do to improve their chances of conceiving, but it can also be encouraging to know that there are many resources available to support them.

The National Infertility Support and Information Group (NISIG) is a charity that provides support and information to people who are trying to conceive. They offer a range of services, including peer-to-peer support, information sessions, and a 24-hour phoneline. The group has been running for over 30 years, and they have helped thousands of couples navigate the challenges of infertility.

One of the most important things that NISIG provides is a sense of community. Couples who are going through the same experiences can feel isolated and alone, but peer-to-peer support can be a lifeline. It can be comforting to know that others are going through the same thing, and it can be empowering to learn from their experiences.

It is important to remember that fertility is a complex issue, and there are many factors that can affect it. Couples who are trying to conceive should be encouraged to seek support and information from trusted sources. They should also be encouraged to take care of their physical and emotional well-being, as this can have a positive impact on their fertility.

There are many ways that couples can support each other during their fertility journey. They can talk about their feelings and concerns, and they can offer each other emotional support. They can also find ways to manage stress and anxiety, as these can have a negative impact on fertility.

It is important to remember that infertility is a complex issue, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to treatment. Couples should be encouraged to explore their options and to seek support and information from trusted sources. They should also be encouraged to take care of their physical and emotional well-being, as this can have a positive impact on their fertility.