

PRESS RELEASE

“Multiple-birth rates drop with IVF improvements”

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At the Australian Multiple Birth Association (AMBA) National Convention in Canberra last weekend, the audience heard about the release of the Australian Bureau of Statistics data that showed fewer twins, triplets and quadruplets were born in Australia despite the rising number of total births.

AMBA Communications Director and mum of triplets Ali Mountifield said, “I feel the reduction in multiple birth rates may be linked to improvements in artificial reproductive technologies (ART) such as in-vitro fertilisation (IVF).” Ms Mountifield spoke at the Association's national convention in Canberra on Saturday. “Australia and New Zealand are leading the way with their IVF or ART and the number of embryos implanted,” Ms Mountifield said. “As a result they actually have fewer multiple births ... so I think that there might be a correlation”, she said.

The ABS data notes that the number of confinements resulting in a multiple birth has increased consistently since the 1970s. In 2012, there were 4,480 confinements resulting in a multiple birth; of these, 59 were triplets or higher order. This number of confinements was 34% higher than the number recorded in 1991 (3,355 confinements), and 1.8% lower than the number recorded in 2011 (4,560 confinements).

AMBA's Patron, Associate Professor Mark Umstad, spoke at the convention and said that the drop in multiple birth rates was directly linked to revised ART guidelines and policies of self-regulation regarding the number of embryos transferred.

In an article that Prof Umstad wrote with Lyndon Hale, Yueping A. Wang and Elizabeth A Sullivan: “Multiple deliveries: The reduced impact of in vitro fertilisation in Australia”, it was noted that the number of twins born in Australia steadily increased from 2,420 sets in 1983 to 4,458 sets in 2010. At one stage, almost 25% of all twin deliveries in Australia were a consequence of assisted reproductive technologies, but that proportion had dropped to just 16%, which is directly related to a significant increase in single rather than multiple embryo transfers.

Prof Umstad said, “Multiple pregnancies and births are associated with significantly higher risks of maternal, neonatal and childhood complications than those seen in singleton pregnancies and births. Multiple births as a result of assisted fertility peaked in 2002 and have been dropping since then. It is very pleasing to see that self-regulation by our infertility specialists has produced a continuing decline in the number of multiple births related to infertility treatments.”

ABOUT OUR ORGANISATION

The Australian Multiple Birth Association (AMBA) is a not-for-profit organisation comprising of multiple birth families. The organisation provides support, resources and education to multiple birth families from “those who know”.

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