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Putting humanity back into the focus of ‘technonatalism’ in assisted reproduction

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Since the world’s first IVF baby was born almost 50 years ago, assisted reproductive technologies have advanced spectacularly to help millions of infertile couples to achieve their dreams of parenthood.

Yet, despite the power of so-called technonatalism human reproduction is in a negative slide due to a combination of factors including lifestyle and career choices, socio-economic uncertainty and environmental impacts.

A global conference on fertility health in Beijing has heard policies implemented by governments around the world to encourage family building had failed to deliver expected results largely due to generational change in attitudes towards parenthood.

“The fact is many couples are simply saying they have other properties beyond children, and delaying the choice to be parents invariably puts them into an age of sub-fertility,” renowned fertility specialist Professor Luca Gianaroli told the 2026 Congress of the Asia Pacific Initiative on Reproduction (ASPIRE).

“To address the crisis of population decline, the focus must turn to those who are entering their reproductive years through education about fertility health, particularly age-related decline in fertility.

“They are the future and our hope of arresting the collapse in total fertility rates around the world. They are the people who need to make informed choices about their reproductive potential.”

Professor Gianaroli was the founder of the first Italian day surgery clinic dedicated to assisted reproduction. He served as Chairman of the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology (ESHRE) and is currently Director of Global Educational Programs of the International Federation of Fertility Societies (IFFS).

While assisted reproductive technology has progressed spectacularly, Professor Gianaroli told the ASPIRE Congress that it should not lose its roots as an “art form” centred on human skills and personalised care.

“Assisted reproductive technology will play an increasingly important role driving progress through ongoing research and innovation, contributing to more effective, accessible and affordable care,” he said.

“At the same time, this progress raises relevant questions including the balance between precision and personalisation, and the shift from a counselling-based approach to a more marketing driven sector.

“Reflection on these aspects is important to understand whether assisted reproductive technology has become a merely technical process.

“In order to face challenges risen by technonatalism, it will need to go back to its roots as a true art guided not only by technology, but also by skills, experience and individualised care.”

Professor Gianaroli said many people undertaking treatments for infertility, such as IVF, withdrew after one or two cycles abandoning their hopes of parenthood.

“Patients need to be encouraged to make more informed choices,” he said. “I draw an analogy with a general practitioner prescribing antibiotics to a patient presenting with an infection.

“If the doctor says to take the full course of antibiotics that may take a week or two, invariably the patients will do so to get better.

“Similarly, fertility specialists need to personalise their treatments to individual hopes and expectations of patients and encourage them to keep trying beyond one or two cycles of IVF to achieve success.

“This is not a matter of commercialism. It is going back to our roots in precision and personalisation when people need to undertake a medically assisted journey to parenthood.”

The ASPIRE Congress is being held at the China National Convention Centre in Beijing. More than 3,000 scientists, clinicians, nurses and counsellors in assisted reproduction from around the world are attending the Congress.

For further information, go to <https://www.aspire2026.com>

Interview

Professor Luca Gianaroli is available for interview. To arrange, please contact Trevor Gill, ASPIRE Congress Media Relations.

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