

Study examines ethical dilemmas of medical tourism

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Medical tourism in Latin America needs to be regulated to protect consumers, according to Université de Montréal researchers. A new study published in the journal *Developing World Bioethics* argues that Argentinean fertility clinics are increasingly marketing themselves to international health care consumers: these clinics offer all-inclusive packages with fixed prices that feature airfare, accommodations, transfers, language interpreters and, of course, fertility treatments.

"The appeal of such packages is obvious: healthcare consumers need not worry about any of the practical details of their trip - budgeting, travel arrangements or language barriers - and can instead focus on obtaining quality medical services combined with a vacation. Non-accredited clinics in Argentina offer much more competitive prices for services in comparison with clinics in North America or Europe. For example, in vitro fertilization in the United States runs upwards of \$10,000 U.S. per cycle of treatment," says Bryn Williams-Jones, a bioethics professor in the Université de Montréal's Department of Social and Preventive Medicine, who coauthored the paper with graduate students Elise Smith, Carolina Martin and Jason Behrmann.

An increasing number of private fertility clinics have opened in developing countries such as Argentina over the last decade and are attracting consumers through lower pricing. There are two subcategories of medical tourism clinics: accredited centres that are part of the broader healthcare industry and non-accredited clinics focused on medical tourism. "While the 'big players' in medical tourism, such as India and

Poland, are actively involved in the fertility sector, so too now are Latin American countries such as Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Argentina," says Dr. Williams-Jones.

Reproductive tourism clinics are targeting wealthy North American or European couples through the Internet. "The main interest for these individuals to become medical tourists is the high cost, long waiting lists, or even the absence of access assisted reproductive technologies services at home," says Dr. Williams-Jones.

Developed and developing nations have encouraged the practice of medical tourism, the authors argue, because of the economic spinoffs. Legislation and professional guidelines - both local and international - are needed to regulate the conduct of private fertility clinics in order to ensure that services are safe and effective. "It is in the best interests of consumers, health professionals and policy makers that the reproductive tourism industry adopts safe and responsible medical practices," says Dr. Williams-Jones.

More information: The paper, "Reproductive Tourism in Argentina: Accreditation and its Implications for Consumers and Policy Makers," published in *Developing World Bioethics*, was authored by Elise Smith, Carolina Martin, Jason Behrmann and Bryn Williams-Jones of the Université de Montréal. [www3.interscience.wiley.com/jo ... /122443658/abstract](http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/jo.../122443658/abstract)

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