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## **94% of Couples Who Experience Problems Having A Baby Do Not Get Treatment**

*Global Assisted Conception Taskforce Convened  
To Help Couples Navigate the Assisted Conception Pathway*

Only 6% of the 90 million couples across the world experiencing conception difficulties (representing an average of approximately 1 in every 6 couples) receive the treatment they need,<sup>i</sup> according to revealing epidemiological data, announced today, by the newly formed Assisted Conception Taskforce (ACT), an independent global taskforce of patients and healthcare professionals.

Additional research, also announced today by ACT, reveals appalling awareness of the options available for couples experiencing conception difficulties, with nearly half (48%) of couples reporting that the options presented to them by their healthcare professionals are confusing and uninviting.<sup>ii</sup> However, despite these views, treatment options available to couples are not as daunting as most people think, with many modern treatments being simple, non-invasive and very effective.

“As this research clearly shows, only 6% of couples experiencing conception difficulties actually receive the treatment they need. Either people don't try to find help, or they find it difficult to access and drop out”, said Sandra Dill, Chair of the ACT group. “ACT's goal is to demystify the process, making pregnancy achievable for the ten's of millions of couples around the world who may currently be confused about options available to them”.

The extent of these problems, on both a national and international scale, has prompted the formation of the ACT group, a unique taskforce of patients and healthcare professionals from 17 countries across the globe whose aims are to:

- Address the social and emotional issues surrounding conception difficulties and assisted conception
- Provide clear advice and information about assisted conception
- Dispel myths and misconceptions about the treatment processes involved

- Increase awareness of the range of therapeutic approaches and support available for patients.

“The concept of a patient being “infertile” is an unhelpful and inappropriate description for people who have conception difficulties and may contribute to the reluctance attached to seeking medical help. One of the key activities of the ACT group is to provide clear advice and guidance for patients, dispelling the myths and misunderstanding associated with conception difficulties and providing a helping hand along the assisted conception pathway”, explained Sandra.

The ACT group are meeting today to hold their inaugural meeting in central London, marking the commencement of their campaign to remove barriers for patients associated with assisted conception. Following this meeting, the group will develop a range of educational materials, aimed at doctors and patients, providing help and assistance along the assisted conception pathway. These will be launched later this year.

For further information regarding the activities of the ACT group, or issues surrounding assisted conception, please do not hesitate to contact:

Jim Baxter / Amy Band (ACT Secretariat)

**Tel:** +44 (0) 20 7331 5371 / 5386

**Fax:** +44 (0) 20 7331 9084

**Email:** [secretariat@assistedconception.net](mailto:secretariat@assistedconception.net)

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## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

### ***About the ACT Group***

The Assisted Conception Taskforce (ACT) is an international group of healthcare professionals and patient representatives from 17 countries with a specialist interest / expertise in conception difficulties. ACT aim to provide education, advice and support to couples experiencing conception difficulties by raising awareness of the issue. ACT is supported by an unrestricted educational grant by Serono International.

### ***About the Data***

The ACT group asked Professor John Collins of McMaster University, Ontario, Canada to review the currently available information and provide an initial epidemiological picture of the numbers of people seeking and receiving medical help for conception difficulties<sup>1</sup>. Professor Collins is an epidemiologist and has many papers published specifically on the subject of conception difficulties.

94% is the total figure for couples not seeking or receiving treatment in the developed world **and** couples not receiving or having access to treatment in the developing world. Even if the figures for the developing world are removed from the model it still shows that in the developed world 74% of couples do not seek or receive treatment.

Additional revealing findings within the data include:

- 90 million couples worldwide have some form of conception difficulty
- 85% (77 million) of these people will never seek any help for their conception difficulties
- Of the 15% who do seek help, less than half (42%) will actually make it through to the point of receiving treatment
- Globally, 94% of couples either do not seek treatment or have access to treatment or seek treatment but for one reason or another, never receive it
- In the developed world, 74% of couples either do not seek treatment or seek treatment but for one reason or another, never receive it

A second study was also conducted on behalf of the ACT group to gauge barriers faced by patients when trying to access assisted conception:

A total of 103 people from Australia, Great Britain, Germany and France completed an online questionnaire. Respondents were people who were aware that they may have a conception difficulty but had not yet sought medical help. The research was conducted by an independent market research company, Lightspeed Research, from London, UK.

Key findings included:

Myths and confusion are two of the most significant barriers to people seeking help:

- There are over 2 million web sites about infertility and 1,000 books in English alone
- 48% of couples said that the options were confusingly presented and uninviting
- Only 15% of couples said they were confident and informed about assisted conception treatment options

Other key barriers why people do not seek medical treatment are:

- Access / reimbursement
  - Variations in reimbursement policy between countries is vast and 74% of couples around the world agreed that this is a considerable threat to access
- Stigma
  - In many countries around the world conception difficulties are a taboo subject and treatment for the condition is perceived as embarrassing or even shameful
- Lack of awareness / education
  - 43% of couples either *never* research the support that exists or do not realise they have a problem after one year

**References:**

- i. Professor John A. Collins, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario. Global Epidemiological Conception Difficulties Model
- ii. 'Barriers to Assisted Conception Treatment' – LightSpeed Research, June 2004