Every year tens of thousands of couples and individuals around the world become parents through egg donation. In one form or another egg donation IVF has been going on for more than 30 years. Many intended parents are able to access egg donation and undergo their treatment in their home country. For many thousands of others, they must travel abroad to access the treatment they require.

Common reasons motivating intended parents to travel abroad for egg donation tend to fall into one of four categories: either egg donation is prohibited entirely in their home country; the availability of donors is limited so there are long waiting times to be matched with a donor; the rules governing egg donation in their home country limit their ability to make decisions concerning anonymity and the choice of egg donor; or they are seeking different treatment options or higher success rates than are available in their home countries.

Where is Egg Donation Allowed?

According to the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology (ESHRE) most European countries permit egg donation in one form or another, with notable exceptions being Germany, Switzerland and Norway.

Four countries – Spain, Czech Republic, Russia, and the UK – represent about 80% of all egg donation procedures performed in Europe based on the most recently available data compiled.
In most countries, national regulations determine whether egg donation is fully anonymous or non-anonymous, typically meaning that a child has the right to information about their donor. National regulations generally also determine the levels of compensation or reimbursement for related expenses, if any, that may be paid to an egg donor.

They may also set age limits for egg donors and/or recipients, maximum limits on the number of times a woman is allowed to donate and/or the number of donor children she may assist; and other eligibility requirements, including in some countries that a donor already has at least one child of her own. In some countries, they determine whether there is a national register of women that have been egg donors for future identification and ensuring there is a national register of women that have been egg donors for future identification and ensuring future eligibility requirements, including in some countries that a donor already has at least one child of her own.

In the USA, this matter is not regulated and the full range of options from fully-anonymous to fully-known with exchange of contact details is possible. This is a matter of choice for the intended parents, with the consent of the egg donor, to make and is documented in the legal agreements concerning each donation. Some egg donation programs in the USA only contain anonymous donors, whereas others contain a mix of anonymous donors and women open to being known. Programs in the USA provide donor profiles to intended parents.

In the USA, there is also an independent organisation called the Donor Sibling Registry (DSR) that facilitates indirect semi-anonymous communication (i.e. without exchanging contact details) between donors, intended parents and donor-conceived children. The DSR is voluntary and requires donors and intended parents to each pay their own registration fees. This is something typically agreed to prior to the donation.

In most countries, the availability of egg donation to those considering egg donation treatment is not binding. So, there is a greater range of options in the USA compared to other countries where egg donation is regulated, for example regarding anonymity, the information available to intended parents about a donor, and compensation levels.

In other countries intended parents are able to receive donor profiles with varying degrees of information about a potential donor. Depending on the country and program, these profiles may contain some or all of the following: childhood, and in many US programs adult, photos; physical descriptions; educational and/or occupational background; personal medical and reproductive history; family medical history; relationship and family status; answers to personal questions including reasons for donating; genetic disorder screening and genetic family history; and prior donation history and outcomes.

The USA, in addition to anonymity, has mechanisms to protect donors. The Donor Sibling Registry (DSR) provides a framework for assessing their options, can empower intended parents to choose the egg donation.

### What Should Intended Parents Consider?

Knowing where they can pursue treatment is just the first step for intended parents. Intended parents have many factors to evaluate when choosing their specific egg donation treatment plan.

**Fresh Donation or Frozen Egg:** Intended parents need to decide whether they wish to have a fresh donation of eggs or use frozen eggs from an egg bank. In a fresh donation, the egg donor is stimulated specifically to donate eggs for the intended parents to create embryos. The intended parents generally receive all the eggs retrieved, unless they are specifically undertaking a split donation process where they share the total number of eggs retrieved.

A fresh egg donation takes place at the clinic where the embryology is performed, which is generally where the recipient will receive the transferred embryo. A fresh egg donation can be combined with a fresh embryo transfer or a frozen embryo transfer.

In many countries, because of the anonymity regulations, intended parents do not receive anything other than the most basic information about their donor, typically, in these cases it is the clinic and physician that matches donors with intended parents. This is the situation that applies in Spain and in many European countries.