

SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION TO SINGLE EMBRYO TRANSFER IN JAPAN

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Purpose: There is no doubt that single embryo transfer (SET) is the ultimate option for reducing multiple pregnancies due to ART. However, at least 20-30% of pregnancies after ART are twins or higher-order multiple gestations despite the recommendations from various academic societies in the world. To evaluate the recent transition to SET in Japan, we examined the recent national registry data in detail.

Materials and methods: We used the data collected by the web-based on-line registry system that was firstly introduced in 2007 by Japan Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology. The registry is cycle-based and is mandatory for all the clinics in Japan.

Results: In 2008, there were 161,480 cycles of ART (IVF+ICSI+FER) initiated in Japan. Forty-eight % of ET (48,698 cycles) used frozen-thawed embryos out of 102,298 ET cycles in total. Of all ET cycles, SET was carried out in 65% and the average number of transferred embryos was 1.38. Overall clinical pregnancy (GS positive) rate per transfer was 23.6%. As the result, the multiple pregnancy rate (GS more than 1) declined to 6.8%, although these figures are provisional at the moment.

Conclusion: Transition to SET seems to be successful without legislation in Japan. The reduction of the number of transferred embryos is apparently connected to rapid diffusion of vitrification technique and blastocyst transfer in the decade. We have to keep watching on the possible deterioration of pregnancy rate and the safety issues of cryopreservation and long culture.