Dear ASPIRE members and colleagues,

It was 1 year ago since COVID-19 pandemic disrupted every aspect of our life, including the essential fertility services. Several concerns were raised regarding the possibility of COVID-19 infection to our gametes and reproductive organs, however all the evidence are still very limited and debatable.

ASPIRE released its position paper toward fertility patient’s management during the pandemic situation. We have also conducted several ASPIRE webinars successfully which have received very good responses. These ASPIRE webinars were organised to ensure that we are all kept updated with the current knowledge and technology in assisted reproduction.

We greatly appreciate all support from ASPIRE board members, speakers and also sponsors in keeping us consistent for bridging the gap of assisted reproduction in Asia Pacific.

On behalf of ASPIRE, it is my great pleasure to invite all of you to join our 10th Congress of Asia Pacific Initiative on Reproduction Virtual Congress (ASPIRE 2021) which will be held from 30 April – 2 May & 8 – 9 May 2021.

Stay healthy and see you soon virtually.

Warmest regards,

Professor Budi Wiweko
President of ASPIRE
The 10th Congress of Asia Pacific Initiative on Reproduction Virtual Congress (ASPIRE 2021) will be held from 30 April – 2 May & 8 – 9 May 2021. This is ASPIRE’s first Virtual Congress and we hope that you will be able to enjoy the programme from the safety of your homes.

The theme of ASPIRE 2021 is “Bridging the Gap: Fertility and Reproduction”. The theme was adapted from ASPIRE 2020, which could not take place due to COVID-19 pandemic. Look forward to an exciting programme line up which caters to both clinicians and embryologists by high calibre speakers.

COVID-19 pandemic has changed the scenario of fertility treatment for the last couple of months. Similar to many other countries, ART services were suspended in Bangladesh too. First dose of vaccination is almost completed in our country. Fertility specialists have started ART services and have started infertility management while maintaining proper health etiquette. Dissemination of academic activities are conducted via webinars, and soon, hybrid meetings will start. Impact of COVID-19 on infertility is a hot topic and research activities are going on.

Fertility and Sterility Society of Bangladesh has launched its first official journal “Bangladesh Journal of Fertility and Sterility” on 23 February 2021. Journal will be available online on www.bjfsbd.net. Prof. T.A. Chowdhury is the President of Fertility and Sterility Society of Bangladesh, and Editor-in-Chief is Prof. Maruf Siddiqui (Country Representative ASPIRE, Bangladesh). Other associate editors are Prof. Rashida Begum (Board Member of ASPIRE) and A/Prof. Nusrat Mahmud (Country Representative ASPIRE, Bangladesh). The Board of International Reviewers consists of Prof. Budi Wiweko (ASPIRE President), Prof. Jaideep Malhotra (ASPIRE Board Member), Prof. Eileen Manalo (Philippines), Dr. Ramani Devi Thirunavukkarasu (India), Dr. Sevellaraja Supermaniam (Malaysia) and Dr. Anu Chawla (UK). Bangladesh Journal of Fertility and Sterility is indexed in Directory of Research Journal Indexing (DRJI) & IJI Factor indexing.
Ferring is committed to building healthy families worldwide.

Ferring Pharmaceuticals Pte Ltd
168 Robinson Road #13-01 Capital Tower Singapore 068912

OG/044/0321/SG

Products are registered in Singapore. For other countries, please check the registration approval status in your country and consult the local Full Product Information before prescribing, which can be made available upon request.

Dinoprostone is marketed under the trade names of either Propess or Cervidil in different countries.

Carbetocin is marketed under the trade names of either Pabal or Duratocin in different countries.

At Ferring, we remain committed to serving families worldwide and supporting healthcare professionals and patients during these challenging times.

As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve rapidly, stay up-to-date with the latest info and resources at our Coronavirus COVID-19 Online Resource Center: http://re.ferring.com/Covid19

Learn more at www.ferring.com or connect with us on LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.
Throughout the second semester of 2020 and 2021, Indonesian Association for In Vitro Fertilization (IAIVF/PERFITRI) is still trying to carry out scientific activities online due to COVID-19 pandemic condition. Recent activity included a webinar meeting with theme 'Prevention Strategies for COVID-19 in patients undergoing IVF programs'. The speakers were Prof. Budi Wiweko, Dr. Ivan Sini, Prof. Hendy Hendarto, Dr. Binarwan Halim and Prof. Tono Djuwantono as moderator. The most recent activity was IAIVF journal club with the topic "Dydrogesterone as an oral alternative to vaginal progesterone for IVF luteal phase support: A systematic review and individual participants data meta-analysis" with speakers Prof. Budi Wiweko, Prof. Hendy Hendarto, Prof. Tono Djuwantono and Dr. Binarwan Halim as reviewers of the recently published journal article. Both activities were attended by hundreds of participants from across Indonesia.

Indonesia started a mass COVID-19 vaccination program since January 2021 with Indonesian President Joko Widodo as the first person to be vaccinated. Indonesian Association of Obstetrics and Gynecology (IAOG/POGI) have issued recommendations on the infertility treatment during vaccination. It is advisable to postpone the infertility treatment for at least one month after the second vaccination to allow time for observing the side effects after vaccination and also the formation of antibodies that protects against COVID-19 infection.
Greetings from Singapore. We’ve all had a stressful year surviving COVID-19 while practicing our profession and enabling women get pregnant. Many of our practices have evolved with these times - and we have perfected virtual consultations, surviving whole day N95’s, socializing less and celebrating family more.

In Singapore we reduced our IVF cycles from April 2020 till July aiming to serve only the poor responders and older women during the crisis. Thereafter we opened up and are almost back to normal by now. Currently our women make space for vaccinations between IVF cycles while adhering to still rigorous screening measures in place.

On a professional front the two-yearly SOAR (Starting out on Assisted Reproduction) course aiming to guide fledgling IVF specialists was cancelled in 2020 and we fronted a much abridged two day ZOOM version in March 2021. The virtual congress highlighted different challenges- collating speakers in different countries into an alien time zone, brooding over internet connectivity during live lectures and allocating unhackable codes to genuine participants and gathering a wide audience while protecting intellectual property. Internet conferences have limited attention spans and we circumvented this by dividing the content into modules of 3 hours each to appeal to different interest groups. The pandemic has highlighted what we have hitherto taken for granted- the ample pleasure of travelling, conducive environments (Not your study desk!) and human interaction that a conference bestows on group learning.

Looking forward to better days ahead. Take care and Keep safe everyone.
The Philippine Society for Reproductive Medicine had a busy first quarter launching numerous activities for its members as well as for fellow obstetrician gynaecologists in the country.

Pioneering is the weekly webinar initiative entitled "Online Thursdays," where experts discuss various and relevant topics on reproductive medicine.

The following were the webinars that were held for the past 3 months: (1) Ovarian endometrioma: current issues and management; (2) Cost-effective fertility management; (3) The ABC’s of A.R.T.; (4) Mastering COCs: current concepts, concerns and controversies (1st of year-long series); (5) Erectile dysfunction: its ups and downs; (6) The role of GnRH agonists in common gynaecologic conditions; (7) Mastering COCs: current concepts, concerns and controversies (2nd of year-long series); (8) To vaccinate or not to vaccinate?; (9) Inflammation in RPL: updates in management; and (10) The role of progestins in the management of endometriosis.

For our members, we have started the quarterly wellness activities, which aim not only to promote well-being of the body and mind but also to foster camaraderie among us.

Midyear and annual conventions, IVF series, along with the other exciting projects and campaigns through social media have been set throughout 2021 to highlight the society's advocacies.
#Throwback to the story of a breakthrough in biotechnology

**#GameChanger**

*2005 The journey continued with the filled-by-batch formulation, improving the precision of FSH content in each batch,*
*thus offering better control* and confidence to MRCs.*

**2000 GONAL-f®** was the very first fertility treatment available in pen increasing convenience* for patients.¹

**Did you know:**

GONAL-f® ensures a more consistent and predictable ovarian response, significantly reducing the patient burden* and increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the stimulation cycle.*² ¹²

**1993**

Preliminary development was completed.*³

**#BornOriginal**

*In 1999, GONAL-f® was the first recombinant, pure FSH that helped improve safety* and efficacy for infertility patients.*³ ¹²

**#FirstMiracleBabies**

*On October 1, 1993, Karine and Cecile were born after their mother had undergone* infertility treatment with GONAL-f®.*²

**Did you know:**

The breakthrough was a result of 12 years of development.*²

**2013**

As a result of a patient-centric approach, GONAL-f® succeeded in developing an innovative device with unique design and high patient friendliness.*² ³

**Did you know:**

The new pen allowed titration in 12.5 IU increments, further aiding treatment individualisation.*²

**#Winner 2015**

The new, redesigned Pen received Product Design of the year award.*³

**#Approved!**

*In October 1995, the EMA approval opened the door for a new treatment option for patients in Europe.*³

**Today, we celebrate.**

Today, GONAL-f® is the most prescribed r-hFSH, available to patients in more than 120 countries worldwide.*³

**#3.6MillionBabies**

*Since its marketing authorization until 2019, GONAL-f® had helped bring more than 3 million babies to life.*²

**Did you know:**

To further improve treatment, studies were performed prior to and after redesign to confirm ease of use, dosing accuracy and patients’ preference.*² ³

---

¹ vs. GONAL-f® filled-by-batch study
² vs. Veloféart®
³ vs. Pergonal® and other gonadotropins used until then

---

5. Schetz et al. 11:
6. Chitwood et al. 2011;
7. Abbott et al. 2011;
15. Data on file. JMB/Merck Data Analysis; Dec 2019;
ART in Japan – 65th JSRM Meeting and 38th JSFI Meeting

Assisted reproductive medicine (ART) professionals in Japan are organized into two main levels, the Japan Society for Reproductive Medicine (JSRM) and the Japan Society of Fertilization and Implantation (JSFI). Due to COVID-19, both JSRM and JSFI held online meetings.

The 38th JSFI meeting was held from 1 October to 23 October 2020. The president was Dr Yumi Nagata, the director of IVF Nagata Clinic. The JSFI meeting was attended by 1653 participants and received 241 abstracts.

The 65th JSRM meeting was held from 3 December to 23 December 2020. The president was Prof. Toshiyuki Takeshita from Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Nippon Medical. The JSRM meeting was attended by 2767 participants and received 477 abstracts.

Total number of participants increased by about 20% but number of abstracts decreased by about 30%.

The reason for the increase in number of participation for both meetings may be due to the fact that participants are able to acquire points (through attending the meeting) necessary to become qualified specialists in ART or renew their qualifications.
XXX International Conference of RAHR “Reproductive technologies today and tomorrow” was held on 8 – 12 September 2020 online. The total number of participants was approximately 1,200, there were 27 sessions, 143 speakers from 12 countries, 154 oral presentations and 11 posters.

The conference was attended by representatives of the following organizations:

- International Federation of Fertility Societies (IFFS),
- International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO),
- European Societies of Human Reproduction and Embryology (ESHRE),
- Preimplantation Genetics Diagnosis International Society (PGDIS),
- American Society of Reproductive Medicine (ASRM),
- Center of Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC, USA),
- Israel Fertility Association (IFA),
- Fertility Society of Australia (FSA),
- Kazakhstan Association of Reproductive Medicine (KAPM).

On 8 – 9 September we had 10 pre-congress courses:

- Management and quality control in ART lab (O. Shurygina, A. Dotsenko, Russia, N. Basile, Spain);
• Unexplained infertility: how to explain? (A. Ellenbogen, Israel, A. Raziel, Israel, K. Boyarsky, Russia);
• Basic skills for embryologist (O. Shurygina, M. Veyukova, Russia, V. Bolton, UK);
• How to manage difficult ART patients: case reports (M. Anshina, M. Kiseleva, A. Smirnova, Russia, L. Gavrilova-Jordan, USA)
• PGT: potential and progress (J.L. Simpson, USA, A. Saifitdinova, E. Pomerantseva, Russia);
• Reproductive surgery in ART era (K. Krasnopolskaya, A. Popov, A. Fedorov, A. Koval, Russia, D. Tsepow, UK);
• Vascular abnormalities and infertility (O. Zhukov, S. Bogolyubov, I. Korneev, Russia);
• Epigenetics and fertility (in cooperation with FIGO) (I. Diaz, Columbia, N. Mishieva, Russia, D. Feldberg, Israel, E. Mocanu, Ireland);
• Interaction between doctor and patient during first visit (G. Filippova, E. Pechnikova, M. Chizhova, Russia);
• Male infertility and ART (S. Bogolubov, V. Bozhedomov, I. Korneev, Russia, A. Raziel, Israel).

Unfortunately, according to the COVID-19 pandemic this year we do not have an opportunity to meet each other in person but we are very happy that so many international speakers joined us in a new online format. We did our best to run the conference on the highest level and made all sessions and discussions interesting for the audience.

On 1 January 2021, the new Order of the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation No. 803n "On the procedure for using assisted reproductive technologies: contraindications and restrictions to their use" came into force. The most important changes were related to surrogacy. According to the new order, it is forbidden to transfer donor embryo to surrogate mother.
IVF services were able to continue in Australia despite lock downs in Melbourne and other states. The low prevalence of covid meant that, after an initial disruption, ART was relatively unaffected and indeed a 20% increase was seen in IVF cycle across the country as families were restricted from travel, reduced their commute, and saved money by not being able to eat out or travel. Another change was the recognition in the community that the fertility window was time limited, and some couples would lose their window of fertility if they had to wait for services for a long time. Egg freezing cycle also increased as young women had to be more planned about preserving fertility.

We had to convert our examination process to a virtual format (see our zoom examiners below). The written and oral CREI exam were both held in a way that obviated the need for interstate travel. The dedicated examiners spend long hours on zoom both working up the exams in a fair and transparent way but also conducting particularly the oral exam over 2 days of zoom!
Several initiatives were launched online including the my IVF success website. Using centrally reported data on live birth rates, those wanting to go to an IVF service were able to look up services and pregnancy rates on this website and use a basic calculator to estimate their fertility. This does provide transparency although IVF units had the option to opt out and many did.

The Australian Covid-19 vaccination program has started, and many enquires as to the safety about having the vaccination during fertility therapy were fielded. The ANZSREI society of fertility subspecialists provided a statement recommending having this vaccine while trying to conceive [https://anzsrei.com/covid-vaccine-and-fertility/](https://anzsrei.com/covid-vaccine-and-fertility/). This is in line with the recommendations from the British Fertility Society.

The Fertility Society of Australia is planning an in person/virtual meeting in Sydney on the 11 to 15 September 2021 having had to cancel the 2020 meeting. An international group of virtual speakers will support this meeting which promises to be a great event and an opportunity to catch up in person when we have not been able to for a long time. We welcome members of ASPIRE to this meeting and hope you can join us.

Fortunately, we will be able to meet with old friends at the virtual ASPIRE conference and we are all looking forward to this. It will be great to enjoy our camaraderie across the Asia-Pacific again and hear about the work and changes that have occurred in our ART world over the last year. Greetings in advance of meeting at our virtual ASPIRE conference which promises to be a great event.
The ASPIRE Special Interest Group (SIG) on Reproductive Endocrinology (includes PCOS), chaired by Dr Clare Boothroyd and myself, is happy to announce some academic activities between ASPIRE and the PCOS Society of India. We have plans for several webinars that will be taking place during the second half of 2021. The details of the webinars will be shared with all of you closer to the date.

The PCOS Society of India has been extremely active on the academic front. As the Founder President of the Society, and as Chair of the SIG on Reproductive Endocrinology, I am happy to share the links of the academic programs carried out by us.

Links:
- W3 Webinar series: [https://pcosindia.org/webinars.php](https://pcosindia.org/webinars.php)
- Masterclass on "Elective Freeze-All" [https://pcosindia.org/masterclass.php](https://pcosindia.org/masterclass.php)

Looking forward to seeing you online!
Corona virus was first reported in Pakistan on 26th February 2020 and reached its peak with 6,825 new cases recorded in a day on 13th June 2020. Pakistan has the 5th highest number of confirmed cases in Asia. There was a decline in reported cases after August 2020, however, we are now struggling with the third wave which hit Pakistan in the last 2 weeks which is believed to be the deadlier UK strain (B.1.1.7). As a result of this schools have been closed and “smart lockdown” in areas with higher numbers is underway. The last statistics on 22nd March reported 3667 cases per day with positivity ratio of 8.74%. In these unprecedented times, our lives changed drastically. We were not prepared initially for this new menace and were completely taken off guard. However, in this third wave, we have learned to modify our practice and ways. Initially, we closed down the IVF centre from 24th March to 6th April 2020 followed by partially opening after 6th April 2020. However, now fully operational since June 1st, with COVID -19 test mandatory for all couples prior to ART. The impact of COVID was huge but luckily short-lived! We have realized that any couple faced with subfertility is under so much social and emotional pressure that they don’t want to wait for COVID to subside and want to go ahead with the treatment despite the country’s situation.

Vaccination drive started in Pakistan in February 2021. Vaccination is initially offered only to health care workers followed by elderly population who are 60 years. Many myths started circulating like effect of vaccines on fertility including rumors about vaccine leading to infertility which scared many making them reluctant to take the vaccine. As fertility specialist we need to address such concerns of our patients. We hope and pray to see better times with a less number of cases!
Dear All,

I am delighted to highlight the fact that Fertility & Reproduction is about to launch into its 3rd year of publication with Volume 3 Issue 1.

A concept that was conceived in April 2018 at ASPIRE meeting in Taipei (ASPIRE 2018), that was to publish our own Journal which had a gestation period of 21 months. During that time, the Board invited me to be the Foundation Editor-in-Chief, which I was delighted and honoured to accept. We then commenced discussions with various publishers, and decided on an on-line journal, free to all members to be published by World Scientific in Singapore.

Fertility & Reproduction
Vol 3 Issue 2

Fertility & Reproduction is very excited to be on our 3rd volume of publication. Do support F&R by submitting your manuscript to us for hopeful publication!

Deadline for manuscript submission:
11 June 2021

For more information or to submit a paper, please visit http://aspire-reproduction.org/fertility-reproduction-fr/
Updates on recent ASPIRE webinars

In 2020, ASPIRE launched our webinar series, which were very well supported by our ASPIRE members.

This year, ASPIRE begun the year with a webinar titled “The role of office hysteroscopy in infertility management”. The webinar was held on 21 February, and it was organized by the ASPIRE Reproductive Surgery Special Interest Group, in collaboration with the Indonesian Gynecological Endoscopy Society and Philippine Society of Reproductive Medicine.

The webinar featured speakers from United Kingdom, Italy, and several countries from the Asia Pacific. There were over 300 attendees for this webinar.

ASPIRE and Ferring Pharmaceuticals also collaborated on a webinar titled “Influence of hCG during Ovarian Stimulation: An Overview”. The webinar was held on 31 March, and had over 900 attendees.

The speakers of the webinar were Professor Johan Smitz and Dr Peter Platteau, and the session was moderated by Dr Vuong Thi Ngoc Lan and Professor Tin Chiu Li.

If you have missed any of the webinars above or past ASPIRE webinars, do visit our website to watch the recordings!

Watch ASPIRE Webinars here: http://aspire-reproduction.org/webinars/
The Asia Pacific Initiative on Reproduction (ASPIRE) was founded in 2001 to improve knowledge and awareness of ART and infertility-related services, with an ultimate aim of improving the quality of patient care. The society has been active in providing a platform for professionals in this field to share experiences and information in the development and advancement of fertility services in the Asia-Pacific region.

We are currently having a membership drive where our membership rates are heavily reduced. Do take this opportunity to join our growing community!

*MEMBERSHIP DRIVE RATES*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Usual Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Year Membership</td>
<td>SGD 20</td>
<td>SGD 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Years Membership</td>
<td>SGD 40</td>
<td>SGD 180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Years Membership</td>
<td>SGD 60</td>
<td>SGD 270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Years Membership</td>
<td>SGD 80</td>
<td>SGD 360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Years Membership</td>
<td>SGD 100</td>
<td>SGD 450</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MEMBER BENEFITS**
- Access to the ASPIRE Education Portal
- Reduced registration fee to ASPIRE Congress and ASPIRE Masterclasses
- The opportunity to participate in the “Call for Bids” to host ASPIRE congresses
- Newsletters and regular updates on ASPIRE’s activities
- The chance to participate in ASPIRE’s projects and host regional events
- The right to attend and vote and General meetings of the Society
- Be part of an ASPIRE Special Interest Group (SIGs) & forum

ASPIRE has formed 6 Special Interest Groups (SIGs) to provide platforms for professionals to discuss and exchange perspectives and experiences to address common challenges in the focus areas:

- Embryology
- Endometriosis
- Endometrium & Implantation
- Male Infertility
- Reproductive Endocrinology
- Reproductive Surgery

These SIGs are only open to ASPIRE members, so while we are having our membership drive, do take this opportunity to sign up and register as a SIG member!

Join us at the SIG forum where we post regular updates on the upcoming ASPIRE activities. Feel free to share interesting thoughts and findings about a particular topic and do watch the space for messages by our SIG leaders on upcoming activities!

To Join our SIG/ SIG Forum, simply fill up the SIG form [http://www.aspire-reproduction.org/forums/](http://www.aspire-reproduction.org/forums/)