



**PHILIPPINE OBSTETRICAL AND GYNECOLOGICAL
SOCIETY (Foundation), INC.
PHILIPPINE SOCIETY FOR REPRODUCTIVE MEDICINE, INC.**



**PSRM Statement regarding
Reproductive Medicine management during the COVID-19 pandemic**

March 28, 2020

In light of the global public health crisis brought about by the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19), this advisory is released by the Philippine Society for Reproductive Medicine (PSRM) to guide practitioners, other health care workers, and their patients involved in reproductive medicine management during this period of the pandemic.

Currently, there is a lack of evidence for the vertical transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus among pregnant women with COVID-19.^{1,2} Although there is no clear evidence that COVID-19 infection in the third trimester results in poorer obstetric and perinatal outcome, there is also no robust evidence regarding their possible effect during early pregnancy.³ Finally, although there is no clear documentation as of the moment, there are theoretical risks of increased viral transmission during laparoscopic surgery.

As a precautionary measure, the PSRM advises the following to reproductive medicine practitioners and their clinical/laboratory staff:

1. All patients planning infertility treatment should avoid getting pregnant during this time of pandemic.
2. All IVF and fertility centers should suspend all procedures, including ovulation induction/ovarian stimulation, oocyte retrievals, fresh and frozen embryo transfers, surgical sperm retrievals, and artificial insemination cycles. No new treatment cycles must be started. Patients wherein treatment may have been started are advised to consider oocyte or embryo cryopreservation with a plan for frozen embryo transfer at a much later time.
3. Fertility preservation options in young patients with cancer are ordinarily considered an emergency form of treatment due to the potential loss of future fertility when performed prior to gonadotoxic cancer therapy. However, the risk of viral transmission while doing these procedures seems to outweigh the patient's unsure benefit in a background of a global pandemic. For these reasons, the PSRM advises against performing emergency fertility preservation procedures at this time.
4. All Reproductive Medicine practitioners should refrain from conducting outpatient clinics, and instead, conduct video or telephone consultations, whenever possible. If there is a compelling need for a face-to-face consultation with a patient, social distancing rules must be followed.
5. All diagnostic services related to infertility work-up should be suspended.
6. All elective, non-essential reproductive surgery should be postponed.

7. In case of an emergency, a laparoscopic approach should be deferred, and exploratory laparotomy, mini-laparotomy or a vaginal approach under regional anesthesia should be done instead. Avoiding laparoscopy is carried out to decrease the risk of viral transmission during endotracheal intubation, electrosurgery, and carbon dioxide insufflation plus release⁴, which are procedures that cause aerosol-generation. Standard measures to avoid viral transmission during emergency operative procedures such as the use of recommended PPE during pandemics must be strictly followed.

The PSRM shall continue to monitor the current situation as well as scientific literature (including various recommendations from international reproductive medicine societies) regarding the care of our patients needing fertility treatment, during this time of public health crisis. We will resume all procedures once the Department of Health and the World Health Organization declare this COVID-19 pandemic controlled, and it is safe for our patients.

References:

¹ Chen H, Guo J, Wang C, Luo F, Yu X, Zhang W, Li J, Zhao D, Xu D, Gong Q, Liao J, Yang H, Hou W, Zhang Y. Clinical characteristics and intrauterine vertical transmission potential of COVID-19 infection in nine pregnant women: a retrospective review of medical records. *Lancet*. 2020 Mar 7;395(10226):809-815. doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30360-3. Epub 2020 Feb 12.

² Yang H, Wang C, Poon LC. Novel coronavirus infection and pregnancy. *Ultrasound in Obstetrics and Gynecology*. 05 March 2020.

³ Coronavirus Covid-19: ESHRE statement on pregnancy and conception. <https://www.eshre.eu/Press-Room/ESHRE-News/>

⁴ Joint Society Statement on Minimally Invasive Gynecologic Surgery during the COVID-19 Pandemic. <https://www.aagl.org/news/covid-19-joint-statement-on-minimally-invasive-gynecologic-surgery/>