

## Media

- ▶ Contact the Press Office
- ▶ Science blog
- ▶ News releases for journalists
- ▶ Find an expert
- ▶ Filming in Oxford
- ▶ For University members

21  
JAN

# New centre of excellence for fertility and reproduction research



21 Jan 10

[Health](#)

The Institute for Reproductive Sciences – a new centre for cutting-edge research into causes of infertility and assisted reproduction techniques such as IVF – has opened on the Oxford Business Park in Cowley.

The £3 million development brings together under one roof the University of

Oxford's world-class research in reproductive medicine and the Oxford Fertility Unit, a research-led IVF clinic known for pioneering new treatments. There are also new University teaching laboratories for a Master's degree course to train the next generation of scientists and clinicians in this area of medicine.

'The new Institute for Reproductive Sciences concentrates the best research and clinical provision of fertility treatments in one place, with state-of-the-art facilities that have been designed for this purpose,' says Dr Enda McVeigh, co-director of the new Institute and a Senior Fellow in Reproductive Medicine in the University's Nuffield Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

'Couples will be able to access the latest treatments, such as new embryo screening techniques that have been developed here, and we expect this concentration of research excellence



Dr Tim Child in 2007 with first IVF babies to be born in the UK. Credit: Oxford Medical Illustrations.

## Further informaion

- ▶ Nuffield Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology
- ▶ Oxford Fertility Unit
- ▶ Oxford Biomedical Research Centre



will lead to further advances that will benefit even more couples in the future,' he adds.

Infertility is estimated to affect around one in seven UK couples – approximately 3.5 million people – at some point. Although many of these will become pregnant naturally given time, a significant minority will not.

The Oxford Fertility Unit, which is an independent organisation, maintains strong research partnerships with the University and the senior members of its team all have positions at the University. This research focus has given the Unit its reputation for advancing new treatments.

The move from premises at the Women's Centre of the John Radcliffe Hospital, which were getting increasingly cramped, means Oxford Fertility Unit now has significantly more space. Importantly, couples no longer have to walk through the maternity unit of the hospital to reach the Unit.

**“ We expect this concentration of research excellence will lead to further advances that will benefit even more couples in the future. ”**

Dr Enda McVeigh

' We find that couples want to come to a cutting-edge unit with research affiliations,' says Dr Tim Child, a Senior Fellow in Reproductive Medicine at the University and co-director of the Institute for Reproductive Sciences along with Dr McVeigh. 'All IVF couples are offered the opportunity to become involved in research studies going on at the University, and people do get involved and interested in the science that could benefit others as well.'

In 2007, Dr Child delivered the first IVM babies in the UK, and the Oxford Fertility Unit is still the only UK centre to offer this treatment. In-vitro maturation (IVM) is an increasingly effective alternative to IVF, particularly for women with polycystic ovaries.

Ten researchers from the Nuffield Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University of Oxford will be based at the Institute, and another 20-30 associate researchers in the department will also use the laboratory facilities as part of their work. Their research ranges from understanding fundamental causes of infertility, identifying factors that control how embryos implant in the womb, and research with new stem cell lines, to developing new screening methods to find viable embryos for implantation in the womb during IVF.

A new method for pre-implantation genetic screening of embryos has been pioneered by Dr Dagan Wells, whose research team is based in the new Institute. Comparative genomic hybridisation (CGH) is able to test for significant rearrangements or abnormalities in chromosomes of developing embryos before they are implanted. This should reduce the chances of miscarriage and can check for conditions like Down's syndrome. The technique is now available as an option at the Oxford

Fertility Unit.

' The concentration of expertise in patient care and cutting edge research in the same purpose-built facility provides a unique opportunity to develop improved techniques for treating patients suffering from infertility,' said Dr Wells, a Senior Fellow at the Nuffield Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, who is funded by the Oxford Biomedical Research Centre.

The Institute for Reproductive Sciences also includes new teaching and laboratory space for the University of Oxford's MSc in Clinical Embryology. This one-year course is in its second year and has already attracted students and clinicians from every continent. The course aims to prepare graduate students, scientists and clinicians for employment within the clinical embryology or assisted reproduction sector or for a research career in reproductive science.

---

 [Back to top](#)  [Recommend this page](#)