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Dr Duru Shah becomes the new president of ISAR

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As the new president of Indian Society of Assisted Reproduction, Dr Shah sets her sights on making reproductive healthcare and infertility treatment available to all women, in rural and urban India



Well known gynaecologist and infertility expert Dr Duru Shah recently took charge as the president of the prestigious Indian Society of Assisted Reproduction (ISAR). As the Scientific Director of Gynaecworld and the Gynaecworld Assisted Fertility Center, Mumbai as well as a consultant to Breach Candy and Jaslok Hospital in Mumbai, Dr Shah leads a highly qualified team of consultants offering a wide range of specialised fertility treatments such as IUI and IVF to freezing of embryos, eggs, sperm, to surrogacy.

She took over as the president of ISAR from Dr Narendra Malhotra, and assured her esteemed colleagues of her commitment to the worthy cause of women's reproductive rights in India in her Presidential address, by dedicating 2017 as ISAR's Year of Empowerment: through Education, Ethics and Empathy.

Over her several decades of experience in the field, Dr Shah has had to opportunity to work with and help women from all walks of life, and from all parts of the country, and has developed a deep empathy for the plight of lakhs of women in India who do not have access to reproductive healthcare.

"India has a strange problem. On the one hand, it has the burden of high fertility which the government is addressing through family planning programs, and on the other hand, there is the problem of childlessness, with over 7 % of currently married women being childless," she explained. And as an infertility expert, Dr Shah stressed the point that infertility treatment is a very necessary component of women's mental and physical health, especially considering the social pressure that women who are unable to conceive or have children face both in rural and urban India.

Apart from this, they battle many other demons, such as the high cost of the treatment, the lack of access to quality infertility treatments in rural areas, the lack of insurance coverage for infertility treatments etc. Adding to this stress is the fact that the woman, who ultimately has to get pregnant, has to go through repeated examinations, procedures and maybe surgeries, entailing a lot of physical discomfort and health issues.

An issue that Dr Shah wants to address during her term as President of ISAR is the need to offer good, dependable and genuine clinical services related to infertility treatment through public private partnerships with infertility clinics, which are accredited by a professional organisation such ISAR. And for this, she has a solution: "We could utilise a program with GOI and ISAR to get private IVF centers accredited so as to help women to become mothers without being at the mercy of quacks." As the former President of the prestigious Federation of Obstreticians and Gynaecologists Society of India (FOGSI), Dr Shah had proposed a Public Private Partnership of GOI with FOGSI. Convinced of the need for such a partnership, the WHO had even offered a grant of Rs. 40 lakh to create guidelines on accreditation of private nursing homes that would then be a part of the PPP model. Ten years later, this agenda has been officially taken up in order to reduce maternal mortality. Many experts agree that the PPP model is the way to go, as far as healthcare in the country is concerned. "Even other countries in the world such as UK, Singapore, UAE, Israel, Canada, Switzerland, Germany and Australia have begun offering support for infertility treatments both through government or insurance channels." And that is what is needed in India, she added.