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18.11.2008 PRESS RELEASE from Dr Phil Boyle of Galway Clinic.

Re: Policy of offering fertility treatment to married couples only at the Galway Clinic.

In response to recent media coverage (<http://www.independent.ie/national-news/fertility-clinic-will-only-treat-married-couples-1541413.html>) regarding the policy of FertilityCare Galway to only treat married couples, I would like to issue the following statement:

"FertilityCare is a natural holistic approach to the problem of infertility. Our treatment seeks what is best for prospective parents and the children they may conceive as a result of participating in our programme. We have been providing care in Galway for over 10 years and have happily helped many couples to achieve successful pregnancies despite recurrent miscarriages, long standing infertility and repeated failed attempts at IVF.

Couples who request FertilityCare treatment must be legally married – civil or religious. Obviously many couples who seek FertilityCare wonder why we ask this question. Marriage is required in order to safeguard the best interests of any child that may be conceived through our programme. Statistics from the United Kingdom show that **children born to an unmarried couple have a 25% chance of seeing their parents separate by the age of 5 compared to just 10% of children who are born to married parents.** (Millenium Cohort Study UK). We accept that a legally binding marriage is not a guarantee that any couple will stay together, but it is the best guarantee we can get to secure this end.

Marriage is a simple way of assessing couple suitability to pursue treatment and embrace the commitment of parenthood if treatment is successful. Couples who seek adoption must go through in depth interviews and rigorous assessment by social workers to determine if they are fit to look after a child. Our requirements are thankfully much less stringent! Nonetheless, we feel obliged to do what we can, so that any child conceived with the help of our clinic is given the best chance to grow up in a stable family unit.

The Irish Medical Council Ethical guidelines in 1985 stated that it is professional misconduct for a doctor to offer fertility treatment to unmarried couples. The current ethical guide makes no reference to a couple's marital status, but certainly does not oblige doctors to treat unmarried couples.

FertilityCare Galway does not seek to "impose" its morality on couples seeking treatment, as stated by health spokesman for Fine Gael Dr. James Reilly. Rather we seek the right to practice fertility treatment in a way that places the welfare of the child at the centre of our decision making. Our policy also safeguards the best interests of women who become more physically, emotionally and financially dependent upon their partner through pregnancy and motherhood. Finally our policy serves the best interests of fathers who have limited parental rights and privileges if they are not in a married relationship." **ENDS..**