

**From:**  
**To:** [Community Affairs, Committee \(SEN\)](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Written Question on Notice - AIHW Amendment (Assisted Reproductive Treatment Statistics) Bill 2019 - 21 November Melbourne  
**Date:** Sunday, 1 December 2019 5:18:42 PM

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Please find my response to the Written Question on Notice below. My apologies for the slight delay in responding.

## Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

Written question on notice Dr Richard Henshaw

In your evidence to the committee, you described that:

*The differences in laboratory practices are in my opinion what defines the differences in patient outcomes. The best clinics have a fastidious, close supervision of laboratory personnel. The laboratory techniques differ. The skills of embryologists differ. The culture media, plastic disposables, schedules for action, and equipment all vary from laboratory to laboratory, and it is only through exquisite attention to detail that one is able to produce good embryos and get good pregnancy outcomes.*

In your experience, do the laboratory practices of clinics with better pregnancy outcomes incur greater costs than those of other clinics?

Response:

In my experience, clinics with better pregnancy outcomes will generally incur greater costs, because:

- The embryology staff will tend to have higher qualifications (including PhDs), will have higher seniority and will therefore be paid a higher hourly rate.
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- The ratio of embryology staffing to patient load will tend to be higher, increasing the number of embryology hours per patient treated.
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- There will be a greater focus on clinical research and development programs, publications in peer review journals and attendance at conferences and staff training, all of which require funding from the employing clinics.
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- New developments in embryological science will be fast tracked into clinical practice, usually requiring investment in new equipment and kit.
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- There will be an ongoing focus on prompt equipment replacement and upgrading, requiring ongoing investment.

The focus on better staff, better training and better equipment, along with a culture of continuous improvement, are the key drivers to improved embryological practices and thus better patient outcomes.

Dr Richard Henshaw