

# *In Vitro Fertilization Offered in Effort to Boost Cuba's Birth Rate*

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Cienfuegos, November 2 (RHC/Costa Rica Star)-- Facing a marked aging of its population, Cuba is struggling to boost birth rate, with some territories offering in vitro fertilization free in the context of the island's free medical care system.

Registering virtually zero population growth in recent years, by 2050 Cuba could be the country with the oldest population in Latin America and the ninth-oldest in the world.

In central Cienfuegos, one of the provinces most affected by this demographic trend, and home to one of three reproduction assistance centers in Cuba, free high-technology methods, such as in vitro fertilization are being offered.

With sponsorship by the Pan American Health Organization, the center serves nearly 3,000 couples with fertility problems annually. Center Director Praxedes Rojas said since their operation began they have succeeded in increasing the number of births each year and improving reproductive health in Cuba, where, he said, up to 20 percent of couples are infertile.

The province of Cienfuegos also boasts the widest network of services for the elderly, with 31 daycare facilities and five nursing homes for senior citizens.

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