

“UN PASSO ALLA VOLTA”: BUILDING A SUPPORTIVE SPACE FOR COUPLES UNDERGOING ART TREATMENT IN TURIN

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Introduction

Infertility can be considered a traumatic life event that can potentially impact the emotional balance, self-esteem and self-image of couples. **Stigma** can be regarded as the **hidden burden of infertility**: the diagnosis and the decision to undergo ART treatment may impact the individual's social sphere, often leading to feelings of shame and isolation.

“Un passo alla volta” - the project

The project takes place at S.Anna Hospital (Turin) and aims to address the needs of couples by **establishing a supportive space before the actual ART treatment begins**. During monthly 90-minutes sessions couples can meet the multidisciplinary team (gynaecologists, biologists, midwives, nurses, and psychologists) and gather information about available services, including individual and couple psychological support; they can also **voice questions** or concerns regarding the different stages of the process. The setting fosters peer exchange, allowing couples to **connect with others who are facing similar challenges**, thereby reducing the sense of social isolation.

“Un passo alla volta” - the book

At the end of each session couples receive for free a book written for this project. The book delves into the **psychological dimensions of ART**, addressing a variety of themes: diagnosis, grief, emotions, couple dynamics and resources, coping with failure, pregnancy after ART, and possible alternative paths (donor conception, adoption, childlessness). It's also a **logbook**: each chapter concludes with blank pages, inviting couples to reflect on their journey and document their experiences.

Objectives

- Human-centered approach to treatment
- Validate the emotions and uncertainties couples may face
- Improve communication with healthcare professionals
- Promote a vision of care that integrates mind and body.

Results

One month after the meeting, couples complete a **brief satisfaction survey to assess the perceived impact**. Reported outcomes include: reduced confusion; reassurance from meeting the clinical team; emotional resonance and validation while reading the book at home.