

Patient Support Policy

1.0 Introduction / Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline how the Regional Fertility Centre (RFC) ensures that our patients, donors and their partners (where applicable) receive appropriate psychosocial support from all staff they encounter before, during and after treatment.

1.1 Background

The Human Fertilisation & Embryology Authority (HFEA) introduced changes to the 9th Code of Practice in October 2018. One of the main changes was for clinics to develop and improve the emotional support provided to its patients.

2.0 Scope

It is important to the RFC that all patients; their partners and donors are provided with good emotional support throughout their fertility journey. Patients, their partners and donors will be treated in accordance with the Belfast Health and Social Care values: working together, excellence, openness and honesty and compassion.

3.0 Roles & Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of all staff members in the RFC to ensure that patients, their partners and donors receive psychosocial support whenever this is required, in particular, if they are suffering distress at any time. Everyone should show how important they are by interacting in a friendly, positive and attentive manner.

3.1 Patient-centred Care

This includes listening to, informing and involving patients in their care. This will mean providing care that is respectful of, and responsive to, individual patient preferences, needs and values, and ensuring that patient values guide all clinical decisions. This will be achieved through good communication between staff and patients with an ongoing commitment to patients being at the heart of their treatment and care.

The RFC together with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust will deliver patient-centred care through the following values:

- Working together
- Excellence
- Openness and Honesty
- Compassion

Working together

We work together for the best outcome for people we care for and support. We work across Health and Social Care and with other external organisations and agencies, recognising that leadership is the responsibility of all.

Excellence

We commit to being the best we can be in our work, aiming to improve and develop services to achieve positive changes. We deliver safe, high quality, compassionate care and support.

Openness and Honesty

We are open and honest with each other and act with integrity and candour.

Compassion

We are sensitive, caring, respectful and understanding towards those we care for and support our colleagues. We listen carefully to others to better understand and take action to help them and ourselves.

3.3 Support

The RFC has formed a Patients Support Subgroup with members from the RFC including the Person Responsible, Principal Embryologist, Quality Manager, Sister, Andrologist, and Embryologist alongside Counsellors from the Fertility Counselling Service NI (FCSNI) and the Northern Ireland Coordinators from Fertility Network UK.

3.3.1

Counselling – Fertility Counselling Service Northern Ireland (FCSNI)

The Regional Fertility Centre provides a professional counselling service free of charge to all its patients. You can see the counsellors as often as you need, as a couple or as an individual in a relaxed environment specifically designed to aide relaxation and calmness. This can be arranged at a time to suit you.

The RFC works closely with FCSNI to develop the service offered by the RFC. FCSNI design and deliver training to RFC staff in 'patient emotional support'.

To make further enquiries about the Fertility Counselling Service or to make an appointment, simply telephone **028 9073 6081**.

Most appointments take place at their premises:

Ground Floor
2 Pilot's View
Heron Road
Belfast
BT3 9LE

3.3.2 Fertility Network UK

The RFC works closely with the local Northern Ireland team of Fertility Network UK to provide patients with information on their patient support subgroup, events, open evenings / days / information sessions.

Fertility Network UK Contact Details:

fertilitynetworkuk.org / Tel: 01424 732 361

3.4 Communication

Excellent communication is key to all our activities. The RFC expects all staff to communicate with patients / partners / donors in a clear and concise way, aiming to use language which can easily be understood. All staff should introduce themselves when speaking directly or over the phone with patients, in a polite and friendly manner. Staff should be clear when explaining information to patients and direct patients to online resources where appropriate.

3.4.1

Written & Online Information

The RFC has a comprehensive website containing information on all treatments available through the RFC with links to patient information given to patients within the clinic. The website is reviewed and updated on a frequent basis or whenever information changes.

4.0 Implementation of Policy

This policy is available to all staff via Q-Pulse and to all patients via our website - will be, not on yet.

4.1 Dissemination

This policy is relevant to all staff within the following teams: Administration, Nursing, Embryology, Andrology and Consultants.

4.2 Resources / Training

Training will be provided to all staff, firstly at induction and then on an ongoing basis. Training will be provided by Heads of Discipline or designated staff within the RFC and by the Fertility Counselling Service NI.

5.0 Monitoring

The success of this policy will be monitored through evaluation and monitoring of patient satisfaction with the provision patient support and care. This will focus on the different elements of patient support across different groups of patients. Monitoring will include how supported patients felt before, during and after their treatment or donation.

6.0 Complaints & Feedback

The RFC are committed to listening to complaints and feedback whether positive or negative. A root cause analysis is carried out for all complaints to establish the cause, corrective and preventive actions.

7.0 Covid-19 Response

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the RFC has ensured that additional patient support is available for patients at this uncertain time.

1. Staff are still available within the RFC to speak to and advise patients regarding their concerns or requests. These may include Oncology patients wishing to transfer gametes to another clinic or to facilitate storage requests for Oncology patients about to undergo cancer treatment. Requests for patient records/results.

2. Additional Counselling support is available to all patients, offering an alternative form of counselling which does not require patients to leave home.

Counsellors can arrange to speak to patients by telephone or through Zoom “one to one” video web-based calls.

To arrange counselling support patients can email: info@fertilitycounsellingserviceni.co.uk or

Telephone 07587137538

3. Fertility Network UK are providing additional online support for patients through:

3a) The Fertility Network Northern Ireland FB page

3b) Support from Fertility Nurse Diane Monday, Weds and Friday 10-4pm 0121 323 5025 or by email at support@fertilitynetworkuk.org

3c) Fertility Network Health Unlocked forum

3d) Trying to Conceive Webinars - Trying to Conceive Webinars

3e) One-to-one or group Zoom calls

3f) Register on their website to receive free digital copies of the FNUK magazine Affinity

SIGNATORIES

(Policy – Guidance should be signed off by the author of the policy and the Person Responsible).



Date: 16/08/2021

Author



Date: 16/08/2021

Person Responsible