

## REFERRING ONCOLOGY PATIENTS FOR PRE-TREATMENT GAMETE OR EMBRYO STORAGE

### Introduction

Some of the treatments involving chemotherapy or radiotherapy can affect a patient's future ability to have children. RCP/RCR/RCOG joint guidelines<sup>1</sup> recommend that the possible future effects of chemotherapy or radiotherapy on fertility should be discussed with all patients with reproductive potential.

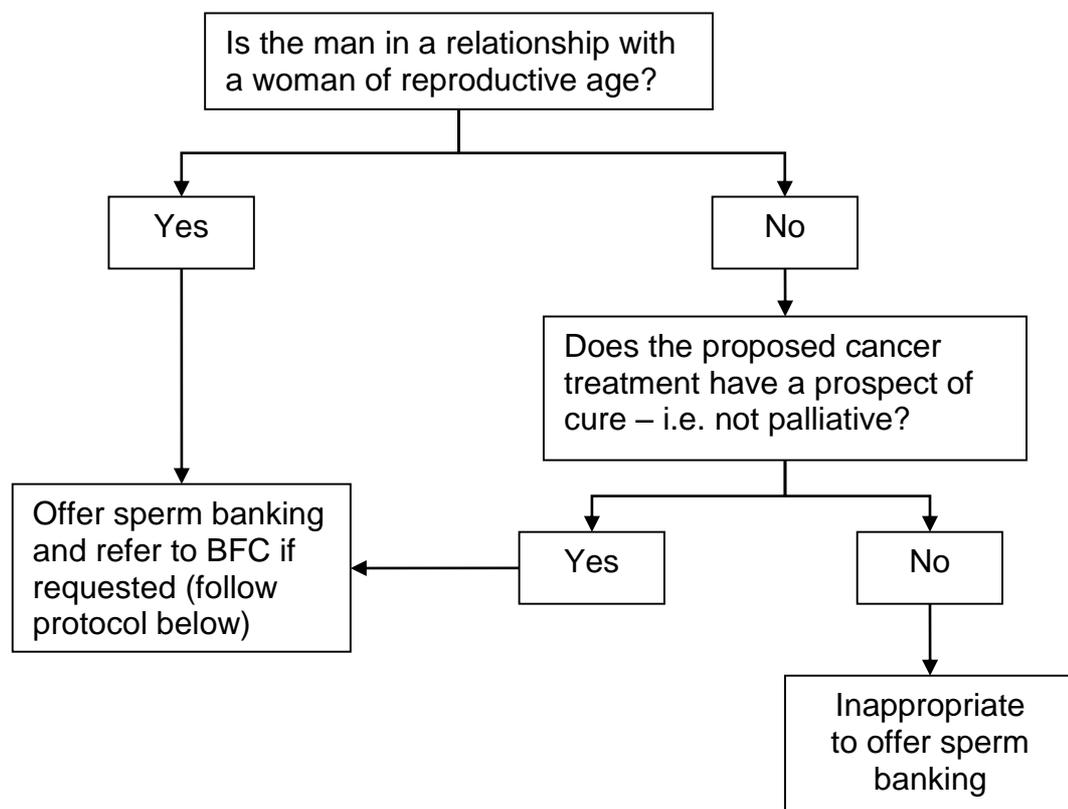
Where relevant, patients who are about to undergo chemotherapy or radiotherapy may wish to consider storing samples of their sperm, eggs or embryos, which could be used at a later date if needed.

The storage of gametes and embryos is an activity licensed by the Human Fertilisation & Embryology Authority (HFEA) under the terms of the HF&E Act of Parliament (1990) as amended (2008).

This document describes the steps to be undertaken when referring patients for gamete or embryo storage prior to oncology treatment.

### MALE PATIENTS

All post pubertal males who may develop gonadal dysfunction should, whenever relevant, be offered sperm banking. Please see flow diagram below to assess whether offering sperm storage is relevant.



If a man decides he would like to take up the offer of sperm storage, take the following action:

Download the following from the Bath Fertility Centre website:

- Patient information for sperm storage
- Pre-screening questionnaire
- Sperm storage referral form
- For Wiltshire patients, NHS Wiltshire Prior Approval Request Form

Give the patient the information leaflet and arrange viral screening, funding and referral (see below).

### **Viral Screening**

Ask the man to complete the pre-screening questionnaire, available on the BFC website. The purpose of this is to determine whether he is at high risk of HIV or Hepatitis B or C infection.

If any of the questionnaire answers are 'yes' the man should be offered counselling before screening – contact GUM clinic at the RUH. For these patients storage cannot be offered until screening test results are available and negative.

If the answers to the questionnaire are 'no', the man is in a low risk group and will not need counselling prior to HIV and hepatitis screening. Take blood and send to virology for HIV, hepatitis B (antibody and core antigen) & hepatitis C, and syphilis screening (yellow vacutainer tube). **NB:** BFC will not store samples until screening bloods have been taken, although results can be outstanding for low risk patients (sperm can be stored in a quarantine tank until results available).

If a man is known to be HIV or hepatitis B or C positive, BFC does not have facilities to store such samples and the man will have to be referred to a London clinic (contact BFC for details).

### **Funding**

For sperm freezing prior to cancer treatments the patient's CCG must be notified of the referral by faxing a copy of the referral form to the relevant CCG. Funding approval does not need to be applied for from BANES, Somerset, or Swindon CCGs. Wiltshire CCG require a Prior Approval Request Form to be emailed to them (using nhs.net), although there is no need to wait for a response before arranging an appointment.

If the patient has a different CCG from those listed above, funding approval must be sought before referral.

## Referral

Complete ALL sections of the referral form. It is important that the form is signed by a registered medical practitioner as this allows BFC to store samples for up to 55 years, otherwise the maximum storage period is limited to 10 years. NHS funding covers 10 years of storage and after that the patient pays an annual storage fee.

Contact the BFC lab team on 01761 434464 to request an appointment for the patient.

Fax the completed referral form and pre-screening questionnaire to BFC on 01761 438580.

## FEMALE PATIENTS

Do not refer patients unless they meet referral criteria listed below.

Download the referral form for egg or embryo storage from the BFC website and complete all sections.

The cost of treatment and storage can be up to £6000, which will have to be met by the patient unless CCG funding has been agreed. If this is required the referring clinician or nurse must contact the relevant CCG to request funding approval in advance and complete a funding request form. Send the funding request form to the relevant CCG.

**NB** If the woman already has a child or children of her own, NHS funding would usually be declined.

### Criteria for referral:

- Proposed cancer treatment has a prospect of cure – i.e. not palliative
- Proposed treatment has significant risk of causing sterility
- If single, must be under 36 years of age; if in a stable relationship, must be under 40 years of age
- Sufficient time exists for cycle of ovarian stimulation without detriment to treatment of malignant condition. Absolute minimum time required is two weeks and it may be up to six weeks depending on the woman's menstrual cycle.
- No previous indication of ovarian failure, or previous cancer treatment which may have caused ovarian failure.

If the woman meets the relevant criteria, telephone Bath Fertility Centre on 01761 434464 for an urgent appointment to see Nick Sharp or David Walker (specify appointment is to discuss egg or embryo storage prior to cancer treatment).

Download the egg/embryo storage referral form available on the intranet Bath Fertility Centre Website. Patient information can also be downloaded.

Fax through the referral form and any other relevant information to BFC on 01761 438580.

## References

<sup>1</sup>Royal College of Physicians/Royal College of Radiologists/Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists joint report: The effects of cancer treatment on reproductive functions: Guidance on management.