



## Patient Support

### Patient Information

“ As well as counselling, I have undertaken professional training in hypnosis, mindfulness and positive psychology in order to help BCRM’s patients maximise their wellbeing whilst going through treatment. ”

Wendy, Counsellor at BCRM

## Patient Support

### Emotional and psychological care for BCRM patients

The Bristol Centre for Reproductive Medicine offers independent patient support and employs trained, qualified and experienced specialist fertility therapists. Counselling is an important requirement of legislation controlling all assisted conception treatments. It is recognised and understood by the HFEA, doctors, nurses and clinicians alike that fertility investigations and treatments can, at times, be highly emotionally challenging and that support for you throughout this process is essential.

### What is Patient Support?

The BCRM Patient Support Service provides a range of ways to help you manage any stresses and strains you may encounter while you are a patient in our care. Patient Support sessions are offered by our in house Specialist Fertility Therapists, Wendy Martin and Francine Blanchet, who deliver a range of practical tools, techniques and opportunities to help you improve the quality of your lives and manage the stresses and strains associated with the fertility difficulties you may be encountering. During these sessions you can have any of the following:

- Counselling - giving you the chance to talk through what is happening to you and any difficulties you and your partner may be experiencing in your lives that are impacting on your ability to cope.



- Relaxation techniques and hypnotherapy to help relieve any anxiety and fears you may have about certain aspects of the treatment.
- A chance to explore differences and find out why you may be coping differently from your partner.
- Mindfulness for a calmness which can enhance wellbeing and help make your fertility path a little less stressful.
- Positive psychology to harness your inner strength as you go through your fertility treatment.
- Communications tools and strategies to help you better communicate your experience with others e.g. your partner, family, friends and colleagues etc.
- Self-hypnosis and guided visualisation to increase self-confidence, help with sleep and enhance well-being.



### **How might Patient Support help me?**

Undergoing fertility investigations and treatments can sometimes engender a range of unexpected and difficult emotions and experiences while you try to achieve the family you desire. These can include:

- Tearfulness, being unable to control emotions
- Overwhelming feelings of sadness and loss
- Distress and jealousy when friends, relatives and colleagues become pregnant
- Feeling left out, left behind, isolated, not part of the mainstream of life
- Anger, bitterness and frustration at a situation you cannot control
- Confusion and disbelief as to why this is happening to you
- Sex is no longer fun – it's a baby making process
- Loss of identity, purpose and meaning
- Stress and strain within the relationship and communication difficulties



- A sense of being punished, singled out
- Not able to decide when to stop
- Feeling in limbo – life on hold
- Earlier feelings of disappointment or loss resurfacing
- Bafflement at your partner's reactions
- A sense of failure and inadequacy and loss of confidence.

### **Am I more likely to get pregnant if I access Patient Support?**

Although there is no scientific evidence that stress can in any way affect the outcome of assisted conception treatments such as IVF or ICSI\* at BCRM we are nonetheless still very interested in your emotional and psychological wellbeing while you are a patient at our clinic.

It is important to us that your time spent in our care is as good as it can be. So from the time you come to us for investigations and tests, and then throughout any treatment you have with us, we provide a range of services that are designed to help you maintain the optimum quality of life.

\*'Emotional distress in infertile women and failure of assisted reproductive technologies: meta-analysis of prospective psychosocial studies' J Boivin, E Griffiths, C A Venetis 2011 British Medical Journal (BMJ) 342.

### **If I make use of this service will it affect how I'm perceived by the doctors?**

Patient Support is viewed very positively by all the doctors and nurses at BCRM as they recognise the psychological challenges fertility treatment can bring. The service, which is independent of the medical side of your fertility journey, is not an assessment of your suitability for treatment. You will not be judged as being unable to cope or unfit for treatment if you access the Patient Support Service, rather it is there to help you optimise your emotional ability to continue on with the treatment you need in order to try for the family you so desire.

### **Confidentiality**

What you discuss with the therapist will not be shared with the medical team. Confidentiality may only be breached if you disclose something that gives cause for serious concern (e.g. that you are considered to be a danger to yourself or others, or you are at risk of serious harm, or that a child may be at risk of harm). In such rare cases this would be discussed with you first before taking it to the senior team.

### **Do I pay extra for it?**

The Patient Support Service is an integral part of your treatment pathway and is offered at no extra charge for both NHS funded patients and private patients. This support continues for six months after you have finished your treatment with us – no matter what the outcome.

### **How many Patient Support Sessions am I allowed?**

You can have one free Treatment Support Session while you are undergoing treatment if you are NHS funded and three free appointments for each cycle of IUI, IVF or ICSI if you are self funded. Further support is available should you want it but a charge will be made for any additional sessions.

### **Are there sessions out of working hours?**

Yes. Some Treatment Support sessions have been made available in the evening and on Saturdays. Please ask about this when you make your appointment.

NB. The BCRM Treatment Support Service also offers Patient Support Evenings on 'Mindfulness for Fertility Stress'. See posters, leaflets and the BCRM website for more details.





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