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Fertility Network UK responds to IVF industry investigation

Commenting on the Daily Mail investigation into the IVF industry and fertility clinics, Susan Seenan, chief executive of national patient organisation Fertility Network UK said: 'Anyone considering egg sharing or egg donation should have all the facts explained to them at the outset. There is a real risk when egg sharing that the recipient could have a successful outcome, while the donor may remain unsuccessful. That is why counselling is vital, and we would be extremely concerned if clinics were encouraging patients to donate without addressing the possibility that they may in future regret doing so. Donating or sharing to fund your own fertility treatment is very different to altruistic egg donation.'

Egg freezing may be a good option for some women who are not yet in the position of starting their family and who can afford the costs. However, egg freezing is still in its infancy and although success rates are increasing, the data is still very limited. Anyone considering this should be given accurate information on the potential success rate for their own individual circumstances. They also need to understand that this is not a guarantee of future success and that their future partner may have his own fertility problems. Clinics should be very clear on all these points when offering this option so that individuals can make an informed choice as to whether egg freezing is worth the cost.

Fertility treatment is expensive, and it is particularly concerning to Fertility Network UK that many people are being denied access to NHS treatment because their clinical commissioning group or health board refuses to follow national recommendations. People go to extreme lengths to fund their treatment, and we would be concerned if clinics were offering high cost loans to anyone seeking treatment without explaining that there may well be other, cheaper, loans available.

'Fertility Network UK's 2016 survey showed the average amount people pay for their treatment is £11,378, with many couples paying far more than that for multiple

rounds of treatment. That is why it is of great concern to hear some private clinics are imposing an exorbitant mark-up on the cost price of necessary fertility drugs. It is important that patients are aware that it can be to their financial benefit to shop around to find the best possible price for their IVF medication.'

Clinics and clinicians have a duty of care to patients. That should include ensuring that they are given all the information they need to make the best decision for them, supporting them through the decision-making process and providing them with appropriate counselling, particularly if they are considering egg sharing/donation. If any patients are concerned about any of these issues, we would urge them to contact the charity for support and advice.'

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Notes to editors:

1. Fertility Network UK provides practical and emotional support, authoritative information and advice for anyone experiencing fertility issues. The charity works to raise the profile and understanding of fertility issues and to push for timely and equitable provision of fertility treatment throughout the UK.
2. Fertility Network UK provides a free and impartial Support Line 0121 323 5025
3. Fertility Network UK supports people. We rely on voluntary donations to continue our vital work. You can donate now by visiting www.justgiving.com/infertilitynetwork