



fertilitynetworkuk

Issue 53, Summer 2017

your fertility journey



OVERSEAS ADOPTION  
INFERTILITY FOSTERING  
OLDER WOMEN DONATION  
SAME SEX COUPLES Q&A ST/ SUPPORT & ADV  
EXPERTS

more at [fertilityshow.co.uk](http://fertilityshow.co.uk)



fertilitynetworkuk

## Affected by fertility issues?

We, the national charity, offer free advice, support, information and understanding

[www.fertilitynetworkuk.org](http://www.fertilitynetworkuk.org)



Visit the team  
on Stand D10 at  
The Fertility Show  
London Olympia  
4 - 5 November

National Fertility Awareness  
Week 2017

Text NFAW17 £5  
to 70070

[www.fertilitynetworkuk.org](http://www.fertilitynetworkuk.org)

# THE FERTILITY SHOW

In association with



fertilitynetworkuk

LONDON OLYMPIA 4 - 5 NOVEMBER 2017

The essential event for your fertility journey



**IVF UK & OVERSEAS**  
**SEMINARS**  
**CLINICS**  
**FERTILITY EXPERTS**

**MALE INFERTILITY**  
**OLDER WOMEN**  
**SAME SEX COUPLES**

**FOSTERING**

**ADOPTION**  
**DONATION**  
**Q&A STAGE**  
**SUPPORT & ADVICE**

Find out more at [fertilityshow.co.uk](http://fertilityshow.co.uk)



# Chief Executive's welcome

Welcome to the first edition of our new-look magazine! We have taken some time to update and refresh our approach to reflect the issues which are important to you, so please do let us know what you think. We really do value your thoughts and will do our best to include any suggestions you have in future editions.

All of us are looking forward to The Fertility Show in November. It's an event not to be missed if you are looking for the best information to help you make the right decisions about next steps in your fertility journey. The addition of a new Fertility Show in Manchester earlier this year allowed so many more people to access information and advice from some of the top clinicians in the field, and the feedback we received was excellent. If you are attending the London event, do come and chat to us. We will be there, as always, to offer our support and advice to everyone who needs us.

This year, we will be using National Fertility Awareness Week to both raise awareness of some key issues, and to raise some much-needed funds for the charity. Could you be one of our #100FertilityFaces – fundraisers helping us to raise funds to extend the free services we offer? We will also be highlighting the lack of funding for NHS fertility treatment in some areas of the UK, and encouraging more men to get involved with the week. After all, men matter too, but are often reluctant to talk about the issue. Find out more about how you can get involved in the week later in the magazine.

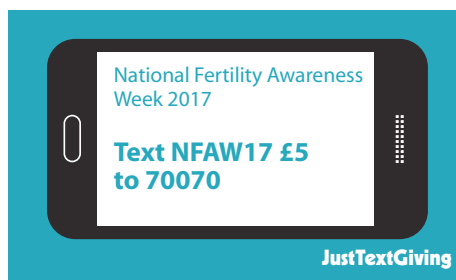


Another focus for the charity over the coming year will be to work more closely with employers and encourage them to better support employees with fertility issues. If you think your employer would benefit from knowing more about how they can better support their staff, please let us know.

Email [CE@fertilitynetworkuk.org](mailto:CE@fertilitynetworkuk.org) or any of the team with your thoughts, comments and suggestions. We really do want to support you in the best way we can.

Very best wishes,

**Susan**



# Surgery made me infertile

It was the news we'd been waiting for. My husband and I were thrilled to find out I was expecting our second child – a brother or sister for our six-year-old son.

My first pregnancy was uncomplicated, so I had no reason to suspect that this one would be any different.

How wrong I was. Not only did we lose this longed-for child, but due to failures in my medical care I was left scarred physically and emotionally, and very unlikely ever to have a baby again.

The first sign that anything was wrong came nine and a half weeks into the pregnancy. Looking for reassurance that all was well, I went to a private clinic for a scan.

Although the scan was officially inconclusive, it was clear that something was wrong – the size of the tiny baby inside me did not tie in with my dates.

At a hospital appointment the next morning, my worst fears were confirmed – there was no heartbeat. The pregnancy had most likely ended at around six weeks – in medical terms, a missed miscarriage.

Following an appointment with my GP, I was referred to the Early Pregnancy Unit at my local hospital to discuss what happened next.

There are three options for what is described as miscarriage management. The first: let nature take its course, as it often does. The second: surgery – an ERPC (Evacuation of Retained Products of Conception).

The third: drugs – Misoprostol, which was not offered. I now know that Misoprostol is an effective alternative to an ERPC which, in up to 70 per cent of cases, avoids the need for surgery.

Without having all the facts available, and left under the clear impression that if the pregnancy didn't pass naturally surgery was my only option, I booked the procedure for a week's time.

Over the next seven days I hoped that nature would take its course. The date arrived, but nothing happened, and I went into surgery. There was no mention of drugs as an alternative.

The surgery was a disaster. My periods did not return for several months,

and later, after more hospital visits, I discovered I had a condition called Asherman's Syndrome.

Asherman's Syndrome is where scar tissue forms in the lining of the womb as a result of surgery, often leading to infertility. In my case I was told that the lining of my womb was now so thin that it was unlikely I

I want any other women who find themselves in this heart-breaking situation to understand that potentially life-changing surgery is not the only option.



could become pregnant without IVF.

Despite the huge costs of IVF treatment, I still yearned for a second child. So far, we have been through four rounds of IVF without success. We haven't given up hope, in spite of the financial burden. My relationships with my husband and with my wider family have suffered under the upheaval of the treatment.

I have suffered in my professional life and have struggled emotionally as a result of all the treatment. I wanted it publicly acknowledged that this suffering could have been avoided had I been given the right information about the alternatives following the miscarriage.

I found a sympathetic ear in Ruth Powell of BL Claims Solicitors, who listened to my story and has taken up a legal claim on my behalf. This is emotional at times - I'm having to defend myself against the accusation that I elected for "quick and convenient surgery" because of my job, which couldn't be further from the truth.

Thanks to Ruth's professionalism and expertise, we are hopeful that the claim will be settled in my favour. Although this will not go any way to easing the suffering I and my family have experienced, it will be of some comfort to know that the mistakes made by those who were supposed to be doing their best to care for me have been acknowledged. Most importantly, I want any other women who find themselves in



this heart-breaking situation to understand that potentially life-changing surgery is not the only option.

**Ruth Powell**, senior associate at BL Claims Solicitors

Anyone affected by this can speak in confidence with Ruth who may offer her services pro bono.

[ruth.powell@blclaims.co.uk](mailto:ruth.powell@blclaims.co.uk)

## CONTACT



For more information on Asherman's, visit [www.ashermans.org](http://www.ashermans.org)

# Fertility Fairness



## Summer update

Fertility Fairness (FF) is in the process of auditing the 2017 Freedom of Information request responses from all 209 clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) across England, following the success of the 2016 audit. It is due to publish its results in Autumn 2017, and will be followed by the publication of an updated league table of CCGs that provides every local commissioner a ranking of their IVF provision. This allows patients to determine exactly what access exists in their area, relative to the rest of the country. FF continues to urge patients living in areas with low ranking IVF access to contact their local CCG and MP, using templates and information on the FF website.

FF recently wrote to Minister Philip Dunne, whose new responsibilities include fertility services, with anticipation to recommence work initiated with previous Minister, Nicola Blackwood. FF also continues to pressure NHS England to address the increasingly inequitable provision of IVF and continues to voice the need to address the vast price disparity in IVF costs across the country. FF supported the proposal and preparation of a parliamentary debate in the House of Commons which occurred in January 2017. Following this, FF continues to encourage parliamentary activity from supporting MPs such as written questions and a ten-minute rule bill.

FF sustains a rapid response mechanism to local consultations about fertility services in addition to the above national activities. An increasing number of CCGs are ignoring the correct definition of a full cycle, and recent information collected by FF shows only 13 per cent of England's CCGs follow national guidance and offer three full IVF cycles. FF engages with such CCGs and fights against cuts. FF continues to target the MPs representing the constituencies of these CCGs to lobby on behalf of patients. In particular we have been campaigning in Swindon, Kingston and Worcestershire. If you live in any of the affected areas, please contact Fertility Fairness to see how you can become involved in local campaigning efforts.

FF would like to encourage anyone who hears of a CCG running a public consultation on fertility services to alert us to this situation, and again to write to their local CCG and MP themselves. You can find more information about this process and template letters on our website.



## MORE INFORMATION



[www.fertilityfairness.co.uk](http://www.fertilityfairness.co.uk)

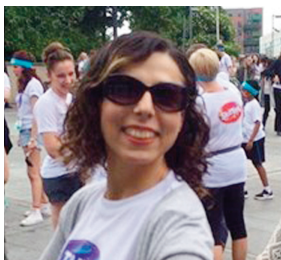
# Summer Fundraisers 2017



## Karen Langford

Karen's daughter and son-in-law lost their daughter and have suffered six years of fertility problems. Having seen them suffering the purest heartbreak anyone could imagine, Karen recognised the work of Fertility Network UK and the help they have provided and has raised funds by running both the 5k and half marathon in Liverpool on 27 and 28 May 2017.

[www.justgiving.com/fundraising/karen-langford1](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/karen-langford1)



## Andreia Trigo

Sixteen years ago, Andreia went through a rollercoaster of emotions, dealing with challenges most teenagers don't have to worry about when she was diagnosed with Mayer Rokitansky Küster Hauser syndrome and infertility at the age of 17. On 11 June, Andreia completed the Colour Run raising awareness of infertility and fundraising for Fertility Network UK.

[www.justgiving.com/fundraising/andreia](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/andreia)



## Clare Barratt

Clare struggled to conceive and said that Fertility Network UK really helped her when she felt that she had no one to talk to. Clare and her husband were eventually blessed with a child, and to raise money for Fertility Network UK she completed the London to Brighton marathon on 27 May 2017.

[www.justgiving.com/fundraising/clare-barratt1](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/clare-barratt1)

## FUNDRAISING



If you are interested in fundraising for Fertility Network UK please get in touch. [sheena@fertilitynetworkuk.org](mailto:sheena@fertilitynetworkuk.org)

All of our fundraisers are truly valued. The money they raise goes a long way to helping us continue to provide the important services we offer to those affected by fertility issues.

A huge thanks to all of our fundraisers past and present. You can read all their stories in full on our website at <http://tiny.cc/FertilityNetworkFundraise>

# A new beginning

We at the HFEA have great news! After some very hard work, we have launched our brand new website and it's got some fantastic new features.

Designed specifically for patients, donors and the donor-conceived, this is all for you. Of course, a lot of the information on the new website will be useful to clinics too, and anyone is welcome to visit, but it's patients we always kept in mind when building it, and we think that shows.

The new site lets you access information tailored precisely to you. By identifying up front your personal situation and letting you choose from a range of options, the site will lead you down an interactive path designed to give you all the information you need in the exact order you need it.

Alternatively, if you're looking for one specific piece of information, for example about a treatment and how it works, you'll be able to get straight to the information you're interested in without any fuss.

Crucially, we know from our research that over half the visitors to our site now do so using their smartphones or tablets, so we've made sure that the site works well with whichever device you want to use.

## Choosing the right clinic for you

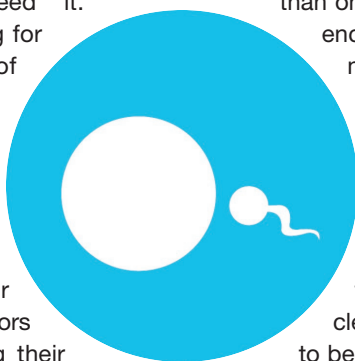
As well as having the most up-to-date information on treatments, clinics and

conditions, and numerous valuable resources such as the Getting Started guide, we've made some innovative additions to put you in the driving seat when deciding which clinic and treatments are right for you.

We have completely redesigned our Choose a Fertility Clinic service, introducing a new ratings system and a function allowing you to compare clinics so that you can truly find the right clinic for you. But remember, it's not just about birth rates. Compassionate staff, involvement in decision-making, and clarity about pricing all affect the patient experience. By rating a clinic on these important things, future patients can choose a clinic based on more

than one criterion. This in turn will encourage clinics to focus as much on patient care as they do on achieving high birth rates.

The patient ratings system lets you rate your clinic during or after treatment, helping those that go after you get a clearer picture of how it feels to be a patient there. You will be asked five questions on a range of topics (friend and family recommendation, privacy and dignity, understanding your treatment, clinic staff empathy, and paying what you expected) with the opportunity to give them a star rating of between one and five. The first four questions (but not the





payment question which won't apply to everyone) go towards giving an overall five-star rating, which is published on the website along with two other metrics – our inspection rating and the clinic's birth rate compared with the national average. Check out the great new animation on the Choose a Fertility Clinic homepage to find out more. [www.hfea.gov.uk/choose-a-clinic/learn-about-choosing-a-clinic](http://www.hfea.gov.uk/choose-a-clinic/learn-about-choosing-a-clinic)

On top of that, you can also write comments about your experiences which will then be passed directly on to the clinic's dedicated HFEA inspector, but won't appear on the website. The hope is that the people who have had treatment most recently will be the ones to give feedback. Not because the views of people who were treated longer ago are less valid, but because they won't give such an up-to-date picture of the clinic.

### **Making sense of add-ons**

Another new addition is treatment add-ons information. You may have heard about these in the press over the last year or so. They're the supplementary treatments, such as time-lapse imagery, reproductive immunology and endometrial scratch, that are often provided on top of IVF to increase the likelihood of success. Of course, innovation should be encouraged, but at the HFEA we want clinics to innovate responsibly and make sure patients are only paying for things that are proven to increase their chances of having a child.

Where the evidence isn't there, we want patients to know that.

We asked our scientific advisory group to investigate the evidence behind the main add-ons currently offered, and they have come back with a traffic light system that lets you see what the experts think in an easily digestible form. Red signifies no evidence, amber means there is some evidence, and green shows there is lots. So if you're offered an expensive add-on you're not sure you need, we can help you make an informed decision.

As part of our work on this, we'd really appreciate your views, so we've recently launched an add-ons survey with Fertility Network UK that gives you the chance to tell us what you think. You can find it at [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/MGNMKGQ](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/MGNMKGQ). It would be great to hear from you.

Overall, the reason we've produced this new website is so that you can be as informed as possible, and make the best choices for you. So we hope you visit us whenever you have questions about your treatment, because it's our job to give you the friendly and independent advice that will make your journey as smooth as it can be.

### **MORE INFORMATION**



Visit the website at  
[www.hfea.gov.uk](http://www.hfea.gov.uk)



# Sperm DNA fragmentation testing

Nearly one in seven couples suffer from infertility and in up to half of these cases, male infertility can play a significant role. Somewhat surprisingly, diagnosing male infertility has changed little over the years and a conventional semen analysis remains the cornerstone of fertility testing in men. However, a semen analysis remains no more than a rough guide to 'probably fertile' or 'probably sub-fertile' and is poor at predicting how successful fertility treatment might be.

Fortunately, a new diagnostic test has begun to enter clinical practice and involves testing sperm for DNA damage. While sperm can often look perfectly normal under a microscope, internally their DNA can be damaged. In fact, many studies have shown that high levels of DNA damage in sperm are associated with reduced reproductive outcomes, including lower rates of conception, reduced success at IVF and early pregnancy loss. While the studies are promising, there has also been an extensive debate on the clinical usefulness of these tests.

When suggested new fertility tests, patients can feel overwhelmed and confused. Recently, Chana – a small, non-profit organisation that offers advice and emotional support to couples dealing with infertility – has been receiving requests for information and guidance on sperm DNA damage testing. To better answer these questions, we undertook an in-depth study of the scientific literature, as well as speaking to experts in the field. In the end, three clinical scenarios convinced us that

testing sperm for DNA damage was a valid diagnostic tool and could prove helpful to patients.

The first was patients who approached us after several failed IVF attempts. Studies have shown that men with high levels of sperm DNA damage are more likely to achieve a pregnancy using ICSI rather than IVF. Therefore, testing sperm early for DNA damage can help change IVF treatment, saving couples from unnecessary distress and disappointment. As a charity concerned with the expense of IVF, we also realised that these tests could save money by avoiding more failed cycles of IVF.

The second was couples complaining of fertility problems combined with recurrent miscarriage. As high levels of sperm DNA damage can increase early pregnancy loss, these tests can be informative to women suffering recurrent miscarriages.

Finally, couples suffering from unexplained infertility. The existence of sperm DNA damage could provide a possible explanation, even if no medical course of action is indicated, as to why they can't have children. The peace of mind an explanation for infertility gives, serves an important emotional purpose and, while hard to value, should not simply be ignored.

## CONTACT



**Avi Lerner** PhD, Research Associate,  
Imperial College London



**Veronique Berman** PhD, Scientific  
Advisor & Community Development  
Manager to Chana

## IVF SPAIN ALICANTE

### PATIENT CARE AT ITS BEST



*"IVF Spain is first class in every way; we knew exactly what to expect at each step of the process. Everything is ready as soon as you get here, there are no hidden surprises and no hidden costs. We have genuinely had a first class experience" - Victoria & Ross.*

**With almost a decade of experience in the field of assisted reproduction, at IVF Spain Alicante we have learnt that individualisation is key to offer our patients the best option to achieve their dream of having a family.**

We focus on the aspects that have the most impact on the fulfilment of that dream, such as the personalisation of the treatments, since each patient is different and unique, as is the story behind them.

On the other hand, we deeply and systematically investigate all the possible factors that may interfere with the correct development of a viable pregnancy that results in the birth of a healthy baby. We give special importance to the oocyte (egg), sperm, endometrial and embryonic factors of each and every patient that comes to our clinic.

Our commitment to our patients makes us constant leaders in innovation and technology by keeping us at the forefront of investigation in the field of assisted reproduction. This is how we have come to specialise in complex cases, namely:

- *Patients with implantation failure*
- *Immune and genetic issues that hinder conception*
- *Repeated miscarriage*

Thanks to the minute attention and care which we approach each case we have achieved high success rates, not only in the most common infertility cases but also in the most complex ones.



*The clinic's beautiful location in Alicante makes us one of the most popular destinations for couples from the UK seeking treatment abroad.*

At IVF Spain we believe that in the world of assisted reproduction no one can guarantee a pregnancy but what we can guarantee is that we will do our best to offer the patient the optimal choice; thanks to the fusion of the best technology with the best professionals in the field of fertility, we feel we offer the highest probability of pregnancy in each treatment.

Book your free initial consultation with one of our experts today at:

[www.ivf-spain.com](http://www.ivf-spain.com)

# Corporates and Clinic Partnerships

The Corporate Partnership scheme brings together Fertility Network UK and business working in the field of fertility and beyond. We develop close, effective relationships and work together in our role in the provision of care, treatment and support of those experiencing fertility problems. Our scheme is stepped: gold, silver, bronze, friend and supporter.

## Gold



CARE has a world reputation in pioneering technologies for fertility

treatment. We tailor appropriate, individual treatment in order to help you have a baby and often succeed with patients who may have tried and failed elsewhere. We'll always do everything we can to support you and help you have a baby.



IVF Spain is a leading fertility clinic in Spain with some of the

highest success rates. Your fertility journey can be a challenging, lonely and sometimes distressing one. Throughout your journey we are committed to reducing unnecessary stress by providing a consistent, high level of care, treatment and support.



Established in 1988, we have maintained our reputation for

success with over 16,000 'Lister' babies. Treating over 2,000 couples per year, our skilled team of doctors, nurses, embryologists and counsellors are committed to providing a holistic and considered approach to investigating and treating a wide spectrum of fertility problems.



Merck is a leading biotechnology company in the field

of infertility. We believe that it is vital that patients are educated about infertility; receive information on new developments, especially in times of changing political focus; and are able to make informed choices about the treatment options available to them.



Ferring Pharmaceuticals is a leading company in the area of infertility treatment. By working in partnership with charities such as Fertility Network UK, we hope to help couples struggling to cope with infertility.

## Silver



Led by professionals with a broad experience in assisted reproduction,

our clinic works with the latest technologies and advances to offer an effective and bespoke service for our patients. We pride ourselves on providing the personal touch - our patient assistant service ensures patients feel well-attended every step of the way.



IVI provides care across 60 plus clinics in 11 countries worldwide.

Founded in Valencia, Spain in 1990,

IVI has delivered more than 126,000 births over the past 26 years. IVI is now available in the UK, with a flagship clinic in the heart of London's medical district on Wimpole Street.



## Bronze



Embryolab is one of the most advanced fertility clinics in Europe. We care for couples and single women who are

experiencing fertility problems, offer diagnosis and immediate treatment. Most of our clinical and lab staff were trained in prestigious UK hospitals and have extensive experience of working with international couples.



Merck Fertility Technologies represents an

evolution of our fertility businesses and services expanding our range of solutions to cover the main aspects of assisted reproductive technologies, contributing to our goal of improving outcomes in fertility for the benefit of patients.



Pharmasure is a pharmaceutical company that

provides products and services to benefit couples seeking to start or add to their family. Our product portfolio includes specialised supplements: Inofolic for PCOS ([www.inofolic.org.uk](http://www.inofolic.org.uk)) and Condensyl which helps prevent sperm DNA fragmentation by enabling the body's own antioxidant processes, thereby avoiding reductive stress.



The UK's No. 1 pregnancy supplement brand, providing

nutritional care from conception, throughout pregnancy and beyond. Pregnacare Conception has been specifically designed to support the nutritional requirements of women trying to conceive. A carefully balanced comprehensive formulation of micronutrients including vitamin B12, vitamin D and 400mcg folic acid to support your body before and during pregnancy.



OvuSense is an ovulation monitor which has been proven in independent clinical trials and over 10,000 cycles, With 99 per cent accuracy, Ovusense detects and confirms ovulation, even with irregular cycles or PCOS. We are passionate about providing accurate cycle data to women who want to take back control of their fertility.

## Friend



Access Fertility works with top UK clinics to provide IVF

payment programmes and treatment plans. Our programmes will help you manage costs, improving your chances of success by committing to more than one cycle of IVF and give you the peace of mind that you have a plan in place.



Casmed International has been producing high quality devices for use in all aspects of infertility and is now considered a world leader in this field. We have worked closely with infertility centres to design and develop a growing range of products that are relevant and of high quality.



Biomaternity, specialises in therapeutic techniques of infertility treatment with

high-tech laboratory equipment. Start your journey with us today by sending us an email quoting 'Fertility Network UK' for a free consultation. Based in Athens, we are an accomplished clinic offering several types of medical treatment designed to result in pregnancy.



Fertility Clinics Abroad can help you find the best IVF clinic abroad

to suit your needs. Our website has lots of facts and figures on clinics in Europe which enables patients to compare features and costs in order to make informed decisions about treatment.

If your company is interested in working with us to help those affected by fertility issues, please contact.  
Andrew Coutts, Business Development Manager e: [andrew@fertilitynetworkuk.org](mailto:andrew@fertilitynetworkuk.org)

### FERTILITYROAD

Launched in 2009, Fertility Road has become the longest

running consumer fertility magazine. We help individuals and couples struggling to conceive naturally, looking for unbiased information on IVF, surrogacy and adoption. Our leading experts in fertility, mind and body, nutrition and male fertility break down the science into easy-to-read features.



As the UK's first online fertility clinic set up by a team of specialists, we offer face-to-face consultation in the comfort of your home via Skype or phone, with a weekly walk-in clinic in Harley Street. Our new service has revolutionised fertility care, with most of it done from where you live.



Established in Beniarbeig in 2005, our highly skilled and experienced medical team are supported by the most

up-to-date technology and scientific advances in assisted reproduction. We offer treatments, from conventional IVF, to fertility preservation, or egg and sperm donation. Our English speaking coordinators are always on hand to assist you.



A premier fertility clinic located in central London, we offer a full range of treatments to suit

every patient's needs. Every couple presents a unique challenge and requires an individualised approach. By integrating highly personalised care with the latest clinical and scientific interventions, we provide exceptionally affordable, high quality fertility treatments.



Our website is here to help you along your way. It is a hub of information about the baby-making process,

from natural conception to fertility treatment. We support anyone going through IVF, meeting all your emotional and nutritional needs, offering you the right guidance and advice, at the right time.



The Stork home conception kit can help you to optimise your chances of conceiving naturally. Based on the cervical cap insemination technique, it is designed to help couples with common fertility difficulties by placing semen closer to the cervix for longer.



The first clinic to be licenced and endorsed by the Greek National Authority of Assisted Reproduction, we provide a

range of fertility investigations and treatments, including a successful egg donation programme. Our British-trained medics and team of English-speaking staff provide treatment packages supported by the latest technology, tailored to your needs.



With over 40 years of expertise, our Madrid clinic is committed to high standards

of clinical excellence and work. With high rates of pregnancies and low incidence of multiple pregnancies, we were the first clinic in the field of assisted reproduction awarded the 9001 ISO standards and were nominated twice for excellence (EFQM).



With excellent facilities on Great Portland Street, we pride ourselves in delivering

clinical excellence, creating bespoke treatment plans and responding to individual patient needs. We have high live birth rates for IVF and egg freezing treatment, a large donor egg bank and our egg recipient program has no waiting list.



Having successfully become pregnant following fertility treatment, Natalie Silverman launched the

podcast in 2014 to give a voice to infertility. With expert interviews and real life stories The Fertility Podcast provides a safe place for all to understand their route to parenthood and realise they aren't alone in their struggles.



The Fertility Show in association with Fertility Network UK has been created

solely for people who need information and advice on fertility. The show is a safe and discreet environment in which to learn and listen to experts; a speaker programme offers unparalleled access to the best minds in fertility.

## More love to give

This is an honest and open account of the problems faced by couples who are going through secondary infertility and all the emotional highs and lows this encompasses. Helen has shared a very frank insight into her and her husband's journey and the book really conveys the rollercoaster of highs and lows that couples can experience whilst going through IVF cycles. It contains great moments of humour along with the heart wrenching times but above all it offers comfort and support to couples who are facing a similar



journey with an overall message of hope. Often couples facing secondary infertility can feel guilt for wanting a second child and this book looks at how isolating that can make someone feel and by reading that others in this position have had similar thoughts and experiences it really does make you feel like you are not alone.

The foreword by our Chief Executive Susan Seenan also gives a good understanding of the sort of issues that secondary infertility couples face.

## We can support your clinic

Fertility Network UK is committed to working closely with all UK clinics. Our national coordinators for England and London are the main contacts for clinics across England. If you already contribute to the clinic outreach scheme and want more information about how we can help you better support your patients, please get in touch.

We can help you, from setting up a fertility group, to visiting your clinic and delivering talks to your team on the work we do, or providing literature.

Working together we show our joint commitment to patients, helping navigate the challenging journey of fertility issues.

Tell us about a free-to-attend event and we will promote it for you.



Sign up today to receive your FREE digital copy of our magazine. Visit [www.fertilitynetworkuk.org](http://www.fertilitynetworkuk.org)

# Men's Fertility Group

## Gareth Down

**'I felt so alone... I didn't have anyone to talk to'**

A BBC special report looking at a couple's fertility journey from a man's perspective was nominated by the Royal Television Society for Best Strand Within a News or Television Programme. Gareth Down, who is a Fertility Network UK media volunteer, set up an online male fertility Facebook group during his eight-year struggle to have a baby with wife Natalie. Gareth spoke to us about setting up his group and his experience of being filmed. You can join the group at [www.facebook.com/groups/mensfertilitysupport](http://www.facebook.com/groups/mensfertilitysupport). The film, made by BBC producer Russell Sheath, and information about it can be viewed at [www.stillriverfilms.com/projects/bbc-special-reports](http://www.stillriverfilms.com/projects/bbc-special-reports).

**What was your hope in setting up the closed fertility Facebook group for men?**

I had one simple goal setting up the group: I wanted to help one other person. I felt so alone going through the preceding years of treatment and I hoped that if I could help someone else it would help me make more sense of the pain we had gone through. I needed it

to be a closed group to give men a secure place to talk openly. I know with my wife present, I don't say anywhere near as much as I should. I am embarrassed or worried that words could hurt her, so the privacy of the group was to allow members to be able to say anything they felt without judgement.

**Was there a particular situation or event that triggered the idea to create a support group?**

I tried looking for support before our final IVF attempt. My wife, who was always keen to get on with the next cycle had had enough. We had four frozen embryos, and my fear was if we didn't have the last round there would always be a big 'what if?'. The group formed, and I could discuss my long-term fears whilst respecting my wife's views.

**What is the Facebook group's status now?**

The group is doing well: 260 members so far are on the page, with new members signing each week as the link to the group gets out on

more forms of media. Hopefully, as people learn it's there as a resource to use, its popularity will continue to grow.

I sat in silence for eight years before having the confidence to seek help, I'm sure we could have avoided many arguments if I had talked about things sooner.





### What message do you have for men facing fertility issues alone, or in silence?

I would encourage any man feeling alone to find some support. It's the hardest thing to do: to reach out and discuss these issues, but getting things off your chest, and hearing tens of other people say "that's what I have" really reduces that isolation feeling. We know we can't fix people or change conditions, but there is such a wide variety of situations I have seen on the group, and someone else always comments and relates to their pain. I sat in silence for eight years before having the confidence to seek help, I'm sure we could have avoided many arguments if I had talked about things sooner.

### What was it like being filmed?

The BBC film was the most challenging to record. Unlike other media interviews I have done as a Fertility Network UK media volunteer, this one was shot at home, my

wife was around, and all the things that bring back the memories of the struggles we faced. I still find it hard to speak about the process, the diagnosis and the miscarriages we faced, so when any media requests come through as a filmed interview, I always have a fear about people seeing my reactions to questions and the events that happened. I guess it's easier to hide behind words on a screen. But, for raising awareness for infertility sufferers and for the support page, it was something I was glad I had the opportunity to participate in.

### CONTACT



If you would like to be a media volunteer for Fertility Network UK, email Catherine Hill at [media@fertilitynetworkuk.org](mailto:media@fertilitynetworkuk.org).

# #IVFis40 National Fertility Awareness Week 2017

National Fertility Awareness Week: providing support, improving awareness, raising funds and changing perceptions.

This year the focus of National Fertility Awareness Week (30 October – 5 November) is fundraising and celebrating #IVFis40 and #TalkFertility – getting people talking about the real facts of fertility.

We are asking for #100FertilityFaces to try to each raise £100 for Fertility Network UK. Hold an event, challenge yourself and get sponsorship, or simply do something silly and raise some money.

## Why fundraise?

We receive no guaranteed funding. Please donate what you can – it will make a difference. Last year our free Support Line dealt with almost 4,100 enquiries and we want to do even more.

Your donations will help us to:

- campaign for better access to NHS fertility treatment;
- support and advise all those affected by fertility issues;
- continue to run and extend our free Support Line service;
- increase our regional network of staff to

provide direct local support;

- extend our online services and peer support groups;
- recruit and train more volunteers to help you;
- increase the support services for those facing the challenges of childlessness; and
- continue to raise awareness of the impact of infertility and the need for fertility education to help protect and maintain future fertility.



One great way to raise money is to hold a

#FertilityCycle.

We already have one #FertilityCycle event organised for Friday 3 November 2017 at

Churchill Square Shopping Centre, Brighton and hopefully

more can be added as we get closer to National Fertility Awareness Week.

If that's not possible why not organise a sponsored cycle ride instead?

## What's NFAW17 all about?

### #IVFis40

Did you know that this year is the 40th anniversary of IVF? On 10 November 1977, IVF worked and nine months later Louise Joy Brown – the world's first IVF baby – was born on 25 July 1978. Since then, more than a quarter of a million UK babies have been born via IVF.

We would like to share IVF stories from the last four decades and from across the UK. We want to hear from patients, successful or not, adults and children conceived as a result of fertility treatment and the many healthcare professionals and others who have helped bring babies into the world: embryologists, midwives, nurses, research scientists, counsellors, doctors, alternative practitioners and more. Send your stories to [media@fertilitynetworkuk.org](mailto:media@fertilitynetworkuk.org)

We aim to showcase stories from across the decades, cultures, professions and countries and highlight both when IVF works and when it doesn't.

### #TalkFertility

Talking about fertility is one of the best ways to raise awareness, break taboos and shatter myths about the impact of not being able to have a baby without medical help. That's why #TalkFertility is at the heart of NFAW17. We want to get people talking about the real facts about fertility.

### #IVFGoldStandard

We want to get the message across that, after 40 years, it's time for #IVFGoldStandard across the UK. That means access to three full NHS IVF cycles for eligible women under 40, including couples where one partner has a child from a previous relationship. In Scotland, all eligible women under 40 can already access this #IVFGoldStandard.

### #FertilityFellas

Men are half of the fertility equation yet far too often their voices are not heard. We are conducting a national online survey with Dr Esmee Hanna at Leeds Beckett University to find out more about men's feelings about fertility issues. The results of this male fertility survey will be shared during NFAW.

This is your week, please join in – fundraise, share your stories, talk to your local newspaper or radio station, post on Facebook and tweet using #NFAWUK #TalkFertility #IVFis40. Together we can make a difference.



# Support Line Q&A

## Would we benefit from using IMSI?

IMSI stands for Intra-cytoplasmic Morphologically Selected Sperm Injection. Using IMSI, the sperm sample is examined under a microscope which is almost 6000 times more powerful than a normal ICSI microscope. This technique enables the embryologist to choose the best quality sperm, without any defects, to inject into the patient's eggs, and hopefully increasing the rate of implantation and pregnancy after fertility treatment. IMSI is usually recommended for couples whose sperm samples are unusually low or highly abnormal, or who have already undergone several IVF treatment cycles without success. In IVF, the eggs that are harvested are left in a dish with partner's sperm. The sperm need to be strong enough to swim to the eggs, penetrate their outer layers and fertilise. IMSI and ICSI give the sperm a helping hand to reach the inner layer of the egg (the cytoplasm).

## Giving Intra-muscular injections

Some people worry about the "drug" injected sometimes leaking out. To prevent this happening, when you give the injection after cleaning the area, make sure you stretch the skin first and hold it taut. Put the needle into the "stretched" skin in a straight line - and give it slowly. When you remove

the needle and let go, you will have left a "zigzag" path, so the fluid stays put. It is meant for intra-muscular injection, so if any gets into the fat above the muscle it will lead to inflammation and will take longer to absorb. Try not to rub the area afterwards, as it will encourage the fluid to move up through into the fat. If you find you are getting sore, try putting an ice cube on the area before injecting and let it melt. Wipe dry, and continue as usual. This usually causes a temporary numbing of the injection site.

Please remember these are my views and you are always best guided by your specialist/doctor.



**SUPPORTLINE**  
**0121 323 5025**

Don't forget you can speak to Diane on the Support Line in confidence and free of charge on Monday, Wednesday and Friday between 10am and 4pm. Discuss all aspects of fertility investigations, treatment or just for support. Please note that as this is a free service, if you leave a message, calls cannot be returned.

## MAKE AN APPOINTMENT



Email [diane@fertilitynetworkuk.org](mailto:diane@fertilitynetworkuk.org) to arrange an appointment.



# Fertility Group

Fertility Network UK launched a new Fertility Group for same-sex couples during last month's Gay Pride. Pride month celebrates sexual diversity and gender variance and was created to reduce the social stigma around being lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT). Pride is celebrated around the world every summer and this year Fertility Network joined in the celebration.



The number of same-sex female couples receiving fertility treatment has significantly increased in recent years (HFEA Fertility Trends Report, 2014). Fertility Network acknowledges this and same-sex couples have always been welcome to join any existing Fertility Network groups but we acknowledge that although there are many shared experiences with heterosexual couples there are some differences too. We would encourage anyone to join the online group but to also go along to their nearest face-to-face fertility group.

The group has been created as a closed Facebook group for anyone in a same-sex relationship and undergoing fertility treatment or considering their fertility options. A closed Facebook group means admins must approve members and only group members can see posted content. However, anyone can find the group and see

who's in it. The group will initially offer peer support online, with face-to-face meetings coordinated by Fertility Network UK later in the year.

Fertility groups are invaluable for getting practical advice about options and emotional support at a difficult time. This group is a confidential space where you can seek advice, support and understanding from others who are experiencing the same issues. You may join to meet others in your area or to find out practical information about your next steps and treatment options.

## MORE INFORMATION



For more information please get in touch or to join the group visit:  
[www.facebook.com/groups/1974276159474395/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1974276159474395/).

# Wales Fertility Options Day

We are looking forward to hosting the second annual Wales Fertility Options Day in Cardiff on Saturday 9 September 2017.

The event is part of the Network's Wales Support Project which has been funded by the Big Lottery Fund. The three-year project is at its midway point and has been a tremendous success.

Support groups have now been established across the country including three well-used online groups. We have distributed information in both Welsh and English.

An important part of the Wales project is the annual Fertility Options Day which provides an excellent opportunity for visitors to meet and speak to fertility professionals from all over the UK and Europe.

The free event is open between 10am and 3pm. Andrew Coutts, the Network's Business Development Manager reveals

the recipe for its success - last year's event was attended by over 100 visitors,

"The event is open to anyone who is concerned or interested in their fertility, education or preservation. We offer an informal opportunity for visitors to spend quality time with professionals and understand the various options open to them."

The event will represent the largest gathering of fertility experts in Wales in 2017. The NHS will be represented alongside private clinics from the UK, Spain, Portugal and Greece, as well as complimentary therapists and exhibitors specialising in emerging technologies.

## BOOKING



Book your free place by contacting [andrew@fertilitynetworkuk.org](mailto:andrew@fertilitynetworkuk.org)



## Fertility Network UK

20 Egerton Drive

London

SE10 8JS

[info@fertilitynetworkuk.org](mailto:info@fertilitynetworkuk.org)

[www.fertilitynetworkuk.org](http://www.fertilitynetworkuk.org)



**INFOLINE**  
01424 732361

### Editor's note

The views expressed in any articles or correspondences included in this magazine are those of the individual writers and not necessarily of Fertility Network UK or the Editor. Their inclusion does not necessarily imply endorsement by Fertility Network UK.

Readers of this magazine are expected to make their own enquiries/ check any service or organisation they intend to use.

Fertility Network UK does not recommend or endorse any one clinic/ company.

Fertility Network UK

is a trading name of

The Infertility Network (UK)

Charity Registered in England

No. 1099960

and in Scotland No. SC039511

Company Registration

No. 4822073

## FERTILITY NETWORK UK TRUSTEES

**Sylvia Shearer**

Chair

**Louise Evans**

Treasurer

**Antonia Rodriguez**

Vice Chair

**Rachel Duffy**

**Melissa Hillier**

## FERTILITY NETWORK UK STAFF

**Susan Seenan**

Chief Executive

**Anya Sizer**

Regional Organiser  
(London)

**Leceia**

**Gordon-Mackenzie**

Deputy Chief Executive

**Diane Arnold**

Support Line

**Sheena Young**

Head of Business  
Development

**Alice Matthews**

Wales Coordinator

**Andrew Coutts**

Business Development  
Manager

**Catherine Dunn**

Wales Coordinator (cover)

**Catherine Hill**

Media Relations Officer

**Sharon Davidson**

Northern Ireland  
Coordinator

**Gillian McLaughlin**

Volunteer Coordinator

**Hilary Knight**

Support Coordinator

**Alison Onash**

Digital Admin

**Gwenda Burns**

Scotland Branch  
Coordinator

**Hannah Tramaseur**

England Coordinator

**Clare Fulton**

Scotland Development  
Officer

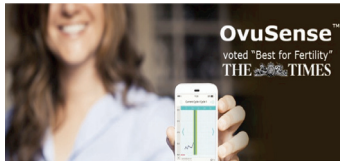
**Kate Brian**

London Representative

**Sharon Martin** Scotland  
Development Officer

# OvuSense is the most clinically accurate ovulation monitor you can buy

OvuSense is a regulated Class II medical device fertility monitor app and sensor that predicts ovulation up to 24 hours in advance, in your first cycle, based on real-time data. No need to wait and learn your cycle as **OvuSense works in your first cycle.**



*"The amount of pregnancies being announced to the credit of using this device is overwhelming. Women who have **PCOS**, and those with long cycles, short cycles, no cycles, and even couples who have been trying for years to grow their family by two-feet with no success were having their magical movie moment of seeing those precious two pink lines!"*

Elisha Kearns, Waiting for Baby Bird

## How does OvuSense work?

The OvuSense Sensor is worn in the vagina overnight and takes your core body temperature every five minutes. In the morning, simply download your data onto your Smartphone via the OvuSense App.

## What's the difference between OvuSense and other methods?

OvuSense mirrors the rise and fall of progesterone in the body. Clinical studies show that progesterone is released as ovulation occurs. All other methods of testing such as skin temperature, pulse rate, oral or urine testing are less accurate and unreliable.

## What if I don't have regular periods, will OvuSense work for me?

Yes! In clinical trials, OvuSense has shown to be as accurate as ultrasound for detecting ovulation and will work for you if you are regular or not.

## I was told that I probably don't ovulate. How can OvuSense help?

Many of our customers have found out that they do in fact ovulate, even though they were told it was unlikely. OvuSense can help pinpoint your exact ovulation date and help you to determine the length of your luteal phase for a successful pregnancy.

## Why is OvuSense different?

OvuSense was developed by doctors, endorsed by doctors and fertility specialists, backed by two independent clinical trials, is CE mark in Europe, approved by the FDA 510(k) in USA, CMDCAS in Canada, the TGA in Australia and been successfully used in over 10,000 cycles by women across the world. **OvuSense is the most clinically accurate ovulation monitor on the market.**

**OFFER CODE: FERTILITY25%**

**For 25% off until 1 January 2018, visit  
[www.OvuSense.com](http://www.OvuSense.com)**