

## THE EGG SHARING PROGRAMME

### What is Egg Sharing?

Egg sharing is a process whereby patients with a normal egg reserve can undergo IVF and share their eggs with a woman who cannot produce their own eggs. Usually the person sharing (donating) their eggs does so to reduce the cost burden of standard IVF, as the person receiving the eggs ('recipient') undertakes to pay most of the expenses involved.

### Who can be an egg-sharer - donor?

Egg sharers (donors) must be less than 36 years of age (by regulation of HFEA), and have an ovarian reserve assessment that indicates a likelihood of a normal yield of eggs. She must also qualify through tests for infectious diseases and genetic analyses.

### Who can be an egg-sharer - recipient?

Recipients are normally women whose ovarian reserve has declined to minimum, so that they fail to produce any (or sufficient) mature eggs for fertility treatment. There are also individuals with specific genetic conditions which they wish to avoid transmitting to the next generation.

### What is generally involved?

The processes involved are slightly more complicated than standard IVF. The egg-sharer – donor is donating her eggs for the use of others, and therefore has to undergo more screening tests than normal. Furthermore, she has the implications of the donation procedure to consider, and counselling is strongly recommended before final decisions are made.

After preparation, a normal IVF cycle is undertaken, and, assuming a normal yield of eggs, they are shared with a recipient whose normal ovarian (menstrual) cycle has been modified to be coordinated with the donor.

Normally, the donor undertakes to donate approximately half her eggs to the recipient.

### The sequence of events for egg sharer donors

At the initial consultation at GCRM, the principle steps will be explained to you. Essentially, they will follow the path of taking your relevant medical details, followed by an assessment of your ovarian reserve. If this is satisfactory, then we strongly recommend a session with the counsellor, who will provide implications support for the steps you are considering undertaking. At this stage you will be expected to take time to consider your undertakings before progressing to the screening tests required for anyone donating their eggs.

### Assessments and tests for donors

The standard assessments and tests for IVF will be carried out (see information on IVF), but in addition, tests required prior to donation of gametes (eggs and sperm) are required. These include tests for the infectious diseases HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C, and Syphilis. A test for CMV antibodies is also carried out to determine status, but a positive test result would not necessarily exclude any one from treatment.

Genetic screening is also required to determine whether the donor is a carrier for cystic fibrosis (CF) and also, if indicated, a full karyotype screen is carried out.

### **Commitments**

The egg-sharer-donor will formally make a commitment to donate half of her eggs to a recipient. This will include a formal document, as well as appropriate consent forms.

**NB.** It is important that both the donor and recipient are fully aware that the donor is free to withdraw consent to donate her eggs or to transfer embryos derived from her eggs at any time until they are transferred to the recipient.

### **Financial obligations**

The egg-recipient will be charged such as to fund most of the costs of the IVF cycle of the egg-sharer-donor, including the costs of the drugs.

In the event of there being no eggs available to share, most of these costs will be refunded to the recipient.

### **Distribution of eggs to be shared**

It is the policy of GCRM to try to ensure that the potential fertility of the donor is compromised to a minimum. Correspondingly, if 5 or less eggs are retrieved from the donor, she will have the choice to **either** keep all her eggs for her own use **or** donate all eggs for use by another.

If the donor chooses to keep all of her eggs she will be liable for the full balance of her treatment costs and her drugs. If she chooses to donate all her eggs, she will be offered a repeat cycle free of charge (except for the cost of drugs), with all eggs for her own use.

### **Information regarding outcome**

Donors can inquire whether their donation has resulted in a live birth, by contacting GCRM after sufficient time has elapsed. GCRM can inform them of the gender of any live birth, but no identifying information can be released.