



repromed

Newsletter

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Simplifying the IVF pathway

IVF has become far more patient friendly with the application of short (antagonist) cycles to reduce the duration of treatment and potential side effects.

Repromed has been offering short cycles to clients for the past 18 months as a preference to the long (agonist) cycle to control ovulation.

Kelton Tremellen, Repromed's Deputy Medical Director, said pregnancy rates after three short cycles were comparable with those of the long protocol.

"Importantly, the induced menopause state of the long cycle, and potential side effects, such as headaches, hot flushes and mood disturbances, are not associated with the short cycle.

"The duration of treatment is also significantly less with the short cycle."

Dr Tremellen said infertility had emotional impacts that, combined with treatment, could result in high levels of stress and anxiety.

"Typical triggers for stress include multiple visits to the clinic for tests



Kelton Tremellen ... 'infertility can result in high levels of stress and anxiety'

and procedures," he explained.

"There are clear benefits from simplifying the IVF pathway by reducing the time of treatment and side effects, including emotional impacts.

"Research has shown that the incidence of depression in the week after a failed IVF cycle is halved in a

short cycle compared with the long cycle.

"Short cycles are also ideal for older women who have a limited reproductive window of opportunity as they allow for a more rapid turnover of IVF cycles, and potentially an improved cumulative chance of pregnancy."

Major investment in Repromed growth

Ironbridge, a leading private equity manager, and Horizon Health have acquired a major stake in Repromed, which provides infertility treatment services in Australia and New Zealand.

The investment will assist Repromed in achieving its growth strategies to help more people experiencing infertility realise their dreams of parenthood.

It will also result in Repromed having a significant role in a new specialist diagnostic and day surgery business planned for Australia and Asia.

Repromed, which has been responsible for more than 13,000 assisted births in Australia and New Zealand, is one of the world's outstanding infertility centres offering a comprehensive range of treatments.

Repromed Medical Director, Dr Richard Henshaw, said while the investment provided exciting business growth opportunities, the organisation would continue to offer affordable, convenient and accessible infertility care.

He said IVF had never been so successful with 45 per cent of women under 38 years of age presenting to Repromed for treatment becoming pregnant on their first cycle.

A small word about IVF

It ought to be as spectacular and difficult to spell as Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious – so great is its power.

Yet it's a four-letter word. Small enough to hold in one hand; humble as a prayer; quiet as breath. And it's integral to IVF. Because none of us would walk through the sliding doors at Repromed without it. Without hope.

When we began our IVF journey, my hope was like a cool grey coal from last night's fire. It took care and kindling to bring it to life. Since then, it's fluctuated like a living flame.

At times it has blazed, bright and bold – unguarded and uncaring of the consequences. At other times it has hidden, small and blue, in a dim room behind many closed doors and cold corridors.

And that's the hardest part of the IVF experience. Not the medication, the discomfort, the operations, the mood swings... Not the struggle to find ways to manage at work, to balance the urge to tell friends and family and workmates with the need for privacy... Not the financial stretch or the strain on your relationship as a couple.

No, all of that is challenging, but it's not the hardest part. The hardest part is hope. Finding hope, keeping hope, containing and controlling hope. And, when your hope has all but fled, coaxing it out of that very dark place and trying again: hoping against hope.

Sharing your stories

By sharing experiences of your IVF journey, you can help remind others in the same situation that they are not alone. These experiences can be reassuring and comforting. They can also help people to make informed decisions, and have realistic expectations.

Your stories may, with your permission, be featured on the Repromed website or in our newsletter. You can remain anonymous. If you are interested in sharing your stories, please contact Adrienne Pope at Repromed on 8333 8111 or e-mail APope@repromed.com.au



Trisha and baby Riley

Yes, in IVF, hope really can be a four-letter word - and it's only one of the four-letter words I've used during my treatment. One of the worst is 'wait'. Some of the best are 'luck', 'team' and 'love'.

If you're undertaking IVF, chances are you're already familiar with these. You've found love – with a partner who shares your dream of building a family, or within yourself – love enough to nurture another. You have a supportive team: your friends and family, and your medical team. And, to some degree (even if it feels otherwise) you have luck.

You live in a time and place where IVF is possible and accessible. You can choose to try – to hope.

These things won't guarantee you your own baby. But if, like me, you recognise all that you already have, your team, your love and your hope will sustain you through whatever your IVF journey brings.

Our journey has brought me

'If you recognise all that you already have, your team, your love and your hope will sustain you through whatever your IVF journey brings!'

so much. It's brought me answers, questions, uncertainty, acceptance, empathy... It's brought me closer to my partner, to my 'team', to my self. It's brought me to tears. It's brought us Riley, a beautiful baby boy.

It has not, yet, brought us the brother or sister I so desperately want for him. For me. For us all. But I hope.

- Trisha Helbers (c) 2008

Donors can bring great joy

Over the past two decades, there have been quantum leaps in our knowledge of human reproduction and assisted conception.

However, there are still some hidden frontiers in the biology of human egg fertilisation and embryo implantation. There is also the reality that age and lifestyle choices impact on fertility.

That's why some couples must ultimately resolve that their dreams of biological parenthood will not be fulfilled. Often, these couples consider other measures, including donated embryos or gametes (sperm or egg) from a third person or couple. Donors may be known as family members or friends, or clinic recruited - for example, from people in the community who feel they would like to help.

In donor programs, there are many factors that need to be considered, including potential long term psychosocial, legal and health issues. Donors need to be aware that the interests of any child conceived are of greatest importance.



Counselling can assist in making informed decisions about donation

Donors, recipients and people born all have rights and responsibilities. It is important to be aware of all these details, even if you know the donor or recipient.

The clinical use of donated semen and eggs for infertility treatment may be anonymous in this State. However, Repromed's policy requires donors to consent to the release of identifying information if the child, on reaching the age of 16, makes a request to know his or her genetic parent. This would enable children to obtain this information if the legislation changes.

Clinic recruited donors are not entitled to know the identity of the recipient(s), or any resulting

children. However, they can receive non-identifying information on the number and sex of any children born after the use of their donated gametes.

Repromed works under the guidelines of the SA Reproductive Technology Act (Clinical Practices) 1988 SA. This states that the welfare of any child conceived using reproductive technology is of the greatest importance. Medical and counselling appointments will always take this into account prior to proceeding with treatment.

If you would like to enquire about becoming a donor we would welcome your interest. Please contact our donor coordinators on (08) 8333 8111.

Counting their 'blessings' and choosing to help others

Karen and Tony Densley consider themselves lucky participants in the "IVF journey."

Tony had a vasectomy after two children in a previous marriage before meeting and falling in love with Karen.

"Having more children was not in my scheme of things, but it was important for Karen," he said. "Therefore, it became important for me."

After a vasectomy reversal, the couple tried to conceive naturally before choosing intracytoplasmic sperm injection and IVF to achieve

a pregnancy. In total, five embryos were created through the IVF program. Karen became pregnant with the first implantation, giving birth almost four years ago to daughter, Leah.

"Our intention, if the IVF program was successful, was to have only one child, and we were lucky after one implant," Tony explained.

"We have been blessed with a beautiful, healthy daughter."

Karen and Tony have spent many hours determining what to do with the remaining four embryos in frozen storage.

"Disposal was never going to be an option, so it became a choice of whether to offer them for medical experimentation, or to donate them to help other couples striving for parenthood," Tony said.

"Technology has given so much to us, and we've decided to donate the embryos to help give others the chance we had on the IVF program. It is our way of giving something back to the program that helped us to have our beautiful daughter."



Study provides new insights to male infertility

Joint research by Repromed and the University of Adelaide has provided more defined analysis of the causes of male infertility.

The research, recently reported in the *International Journal of Andrology*, is providing valuable new information on DNA damage to sperm, a significant factor in male infertility.

Dr Michelle Lane, Repromed's Scientific Director, led the study, along with Andrology Scientist, Hassan Bakos. Dr Lane also heads the Gamete and Embryology Biology Research Group at the University of Adelaide's Research Centre for Reproductive Health. Hassan Bakos is a senior PhD candidate at the university.

The research team applied the TUNEL assay to patients

to accurately identify DNA fragmentation in sperm, which was then found to be associated with decreased fertilisation rates, decreased pregnancy rates, and increased risk of miscarriage.

Sperm DNA damage is predominantly induced by oxidative stress resulting from infection, smoking or advanced paternal age.

Oxidative stress occurs when the generation of free radicals exceeds the body's own anti-oxidant defence mechanisms, leading to cellular damage to sperm.

Mr Bakos said couples experiencing male factor infertility were being offered Menevit, an anti-oxidant medication, as an ancillary treatment with advice about possible modifications to lifestyle.

New units to meet demand for our services

In April, Repromed opened a new unit in the northern region of Adelaide to address local need for IVF services.

The unit, at 8B Light Common, Mawson Lakes, was opened by the South Australian Health Minister, John Hill.

While IVF procedures are still undertaken at Repromed's Dulwich facility, much of the preliminary work for couples in the north - blood tests, ultrasound scans - can be done at Mawson Lakes.

Repromed doctors now also regularly schedule consulting sessions at Mawson Lakes.

Repromed Medical Director, Dr Richard Henshaw, said the Mawson Lakes unit would make the IVF process simpler and more accessible for couples in the northern suburbs and beyond.

Meanwhile, Repromed has expanded its fertility services into New Zealand by partnering with local specialists in Auckland and Christchurch.

The trans-Tasman move resulted from contact by respected fertility specialists in New Zealand who recognised the opportunity to bring Repromed's experience and expertise into that country.

Repromed's General Manager, Roger Stables, said the initiative allowed the organisation to exchange clinical, scientific and management knowledge for the benefit of New Zealand couples experiencing infertility.

"In Auckland, we have set up a brand new IVF program to meet local demand," he said.

"In Christchurch, we worked with local specialists to purchase their existing IVF program off the Canterbury District Health Board and the University of Otago."



The Mawson Lakes unit

repromed Your dream is our goal

www.repromed.com.au

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