

12.1.26.1 A TIME TO CONTEMPLATE

Fertility investigations and treatments can be a very trying experience for individuals, couples and their families. Some achieve success and others do not.

Some couples will have attempted all avenues of treatment and still not achieved a successful pregnancy. Some may have had to face the disappointment of their eggs not fertilising or their embryos not surviving especially post thawing. Many will reach a point where they have to make decisions about their future or the future of their remaining embryos. These decisions are never easy and couples may need support in considering the options available to them.

Couples will be encouraged to discuss these issues with trained staff to help them in their decision making. It is important that they allow themselves the time and opportunity to grieve properly and acknowledge any feelings that they may have.

Concept Fertility Centre has a range of highly qualified staff that can assist each couple with making their decisions. They include:

- An R.T.C.* Approved Counsellor
- Medical and Scientific Directors
- Clinicians
- Embryologists
- Nursing Co-ordinators

MAKING THE DECISION

There comes a point in time when some couples will need to consider the future outcome of their stored embryos. This is not an easy decision and options can be discussed with staff. They include:

- Donation of embryos
- Allowing embryos to succumb

DONATION OF EMBRYOS

If a couple chooses to donate their embryos there are certain procedures that must be followed to meet R.T.C.* guidelines. They will be explained by staff prior to any decisions being made. Couples can alter their decision at any point prior to the embryos being transferred to another couple.

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ALLOWING EMBRYOS TO SUCCUMB

For those couples that decide to allow their embryos to thaw and die naturally, there are several ways in which this can happen. They include:

- The couple attending Concept at the appropriate time and being with the embryos when they succumb.
- The couple may wish to take the succumbed embryos home with them to say goodbye in their own way.
- The couple not attending Concept but being advised when the embryos have succumbed.
- The couple can give permission to Concept to make the decision about the future of their embryos provided they have had counselling.

Each couple will be supported through their decision-making process and in fulfilling whatever option they have chosen. If they wish, couples will be provided with the opportunity to attend a "Service of Remembrance and Acknowledgement" as outlined later in the brochure.

The couple may develop other ideas of their own to mark this occasion and are encouraged to discuss the feasibility of these ideas with the appropriate staff member.

If you wish to discuss any of these options in more detail please telephone Concept on (08) 9382 2388 to arrange an appointment with the appropriate staff member/s.

Alternatively couples may choose to discuss their options outside of Concept so a list of R.T.C.* Approved Counsellors is available upon request. Other resources include: your General Practitioner, Counsellors and specialized Self Help Groups. See your White and Yellow Pages Telephone Directories for these listings.

** Reproductive Technology Council (R.T.C.) is the body that oversees all the Reproductive Centres in Western Australia. It ensures that the centres conform to current legislation and analyses their practises and outcomes on a regular basis.*

12.1.26.3 A TIME TO CONTEMPLATE

SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Many couples may experience loss during fertility investigations and treatments. This loss can arise from many sources including:

- loss of self-image when either partner is diagnosed with a medical condition responsible for the problems.
- failure to produce enough eggs/sperm.
- failure of eggs to fertilise or embryos to implant.
- early pregnancy loss.
- donation or succumbing of embryos.

These are all significant events in a couple's life and some couples may choose to remember them with some sort of ritual or ceremony. To date there have been limited or no rituals or ceremonies to mark such significant events i.e. the ceasing of treatments. Some may have planted a rose or tree for the child they would never have whilst others have gone away, reviewed treatments and begun to plan a new life.

To assist individuals, couples and their families with "moving on" Concept offers everyone the opportunity to participate in a "Service of Remembrance and Acknowledgement" if they choose.

The Pastoral Care Service of King Edward Memorial Hospital in co-ordination with Concept staff offers this opportunity. It is specifically for Concept's clients and their families. Couples can discuss any specific individual needs with the Chaplain by phoning K.E.M.H. on (08) 9340 2222 and asking for the Chaplain on ext 1036 or 1294.

It is important for individuals and couples to acknowledge that this may be a painful time. This pain does decrease over time. It is then that each person can begin to understand the sadness that may return upon reflection and realize that this is a normal response to grief.

With thanks to Genesis Support Group and The Donor Conception Support Group.