

Reproductive Immunology- Annex B

The following information is currently available on the HFEA website.

Immunological testing in fertility treatment

The HFEA is aware that a small number of licensed centres are providing diagnosis and treatment for immunological abnormalities that may be associated with infertility.

The presence of a number of antibodies in the blood of women, including Natural Killer Cells (NK cells), are said to cause pregnancy loss, IVF failures and infertility.

NK cells have attracted much public attention. They are the main type of white blood cells present in the lining of the womb (endometrium) at the time of implantation and in early pregnancy when the placenta is established.

The NK cells in the uterus are different from NK cells circulating in the blood. Although an increase in blood NK cell activity has been reported in women with a history of repeated miscarriages and failed IVF cycles, there is no evidence that this is linked to an increase in the number of NK cells in the uterus.

The HFEA supports the view of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) Science Advisory Committee that there is not enough data available to justify the extensive blood tests and endometrial biopsy analyses that are needed for such treatments.

The HFEA, through its' Scientific and Clinical Advances Group continues to monitor and review the evidence available for such treatments. However, licensed clinics that offer immunology treatment are reminded that they must comply with the requirements of the HFE Act 1990 and the Code of Practice. In particular, licensed clinics must ensure that suitable practices are used and that patients are provided with up to date information as to the lack of data to support treatment for immunological abnormalities.

If you require wish to obtain more detailed information please visit the RCOG's website