

8 October 2009

Dear Colleague

Annual Conference – next steps

Over the last two years the HFEA has undertaken an extensive programme of change centred on building improved engagement with the sector. This culminated last week with our Annual Conference and the start of the new HFE Act and Code of Practice.

I am writing today to outline the key issues that arose from the lively and stimulating discussions held during the conference.

Before that, I wish to say a few words about what I hope was a new and refreshing approach to our annual event.

It was very heartening to see not only a wide range of centres taking part but also a broad spectrum of staff. The contribution of speakers from centres to workshops focusing on operational and regulatory matters added enormous value to the day. This built on the important work carried out during a busy and demanding year of public consultations, meetings and workshops. Lisa Jardine and I are committed to continuing this constructive dialogue.

Sharing information with those who couldn't attend

In the coming weeks we will make available on our website the:

- Audio and transcription of the plenary sessions
- Feedback from the workshops
- Answers to questions left in post-boxes during the day

Action points

We are still evaluating the wealth of feedback generated from the day. At this point, we've identified the following actions we are taking forward immediately.

Implications of FOI for centres

We will provide information by the end of this month on the implications for centres of the HFEA's responsibilities as a public body in relation to the Freedom of Information legislation.

Publishing incident reports

We all recognise the importance of reporting incidents as key way of learning from experience. To build on the advances over the last few years the Authority has committed to publishing incident reports.

We will by the end of October provide guidance to help centres understand what publication will mean to them and the opportunities this represents for improving standards of patient care.

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority

21 Bloomsbury Street London WC1B 3HF

Telephone: 020 7291 8200

Fax: 020 7291 8201

Website: www.hfea.gov.uk

Chair: Professor Lisa Jardine CBE

Interim Chief Executive: Alan Doran CB

Consent to disclosure of patient information for research

To complement the patient leaflet we sent last month to centres and the comprehensive information on our website at <http://www.hfea.gov.uk/consent-to-research.html>, we will, once again by the end of October, prepare FAQs on the transitional arrangements in this area.

Quality improvement

We are considering how to drive forward the quality improvement agenda. As a first step, Debra Bloor, HFEA Head of Inspection, will be speaking at next month's BFS Quality Management Study day. We will also look at other opportunities to share recognised good practice, including the feasibility of holding future HFEA workshops for centre staff. We will inform you of our proposed actions before Christmas.

Eliminating unnecessary duplication in inspections

By the end of the year we will review ISO requirements to assess the extent to which they cover the same ground as our newly designed inspections.

Sharing HFEA SOPs to aid inspections

By the end of April 2010 we will review, with a view to sharing them with centres, our inspection protocols, including witnessing and audit templates. To further help centres prepare for and get the most out of inspections, we will look at providing training / introductory videos for centre staff.

Patient feedback

Following a public consultation, the Authority decided, in principle, that patient feedback should be used and published by the HFEA to support patient choice. The practicalities and implications of this are obviously complicated with centres understandably interested in how this would be presented. In Spring 2010 the Authority will consider next steps and we will of course continue to engage with centres and others on how we plan to progress this.

Taken together I hope you agree these actions reflect what you had to say at the conference.

If you or your colleagues have any other questions, issues or comments, please contact me at alan.doran@hfea.gov.uk or my colleague, Alan Tipping, at alan.tipping@hfea.gov.uk

Best regards



Alan Doran CB
Interim Chief Executive