The importance of sharing information on treatment add-ons

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Introduction

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What is an ‘add-on’?

Definition

• optional extras, that are being charged for, which claim to improve the chances of having a healthy baby
• cover a range of interventions: genetic tests, drugs, surgery and equipment
• offered responsibly they can be a sign of healthy innovation in the fertility sector
• however, many of the add-ons currently offered are not evidenced / have limited evidence of effectiveness
What is the HFEA doing?

Move towards a more consistent and transparent approach:

• Traffic light rating system
  – Annual review by SCAAC
  – Annual horizon scanning process - from journal articles, conferences and contact with experts at Horizon Scanning meetings
  – Feedback via the National Patient Survey

• Expectations set out in:
  – The Code of Practice
  – Treatment Add-ons Consensus Statement - how treatment add-ons should be offered ethically in clinical practice in the UK
What is the HFEA doing?

Code of Practice:

Information specific to the centre

4.5 Before treatment is offered, the centre should give the woman seeking treatment and her partner, if applicable, information about:

- fertility treatments available, including any treatment add ons which may be offered and the evidence supporting their use; any information should explain that treatment add ons refers to the technologies and treatments listed on the treatment add ons page of the HFEA website:
  https://www.hfea.gov.uk/treatments/explore-all-treatments/treatment-add-ons/

Information about the treatment

4.6 Before treatment is offered, the centre should give the woman seeking treatment and her partner, if applicable, information about:

- the nature of the proposed treatment and any treatment add ons, including evidence of effectiveness – the centre should provide information in a lay format with reference to the HFEA website as outlined in 4.5 (d)
Consensus statement principles on information provision

Principles:

- Clinics should provide patients with up-to-date information about the evidence base supporting the use of add-ons.
- Information should be given to patients before obtaining their consent.
- Patients must be clearly informed of the experimental nature of any add-on offered, where there is no robust evidence of its safety and/or effectiveness.
- The fertility sector should continue to work together to improve the standards of treatment by sharing the evidence for add-ons.