

Information for people requesting an Egg or Sperm Donor

Background information

There is a shortage of egg and sperm donors in New Zealand. In order to support patients requesting donations, fertility clinics have attempted to recruit donors but demand has often exceeded the number of donors available. This has resulted in there being a long wait for a donor (a year or more) and a limited choice of donor.

Current practice

- Clinics attempt to recruit donors but a clinic cannot always provide a suitable donor.
- Donors can decide whether or not to donate to a particular person (under the Human Rights Act).
- It is likely that the availability of donors will continue to be limited, because of the ongoing demand and difficulty with recruitment of donors.
- Counselling is required for donors and recipients
- The fertility clinic reviews potential donors for suitability (e.g. age, important health factors).

One option to address the shortage of donors is for people to consider a personal donor, meaning they recruit their own donor, often a family member or friend. Currently about half of donor treatments are from personal donors; clinics encourage personal donors and can support patients with this process.

Under certain circumstances using a family member as a donor may require an ECART (a Ministry of Health ethics committee) application and there are costs associated with this that the recipient will need to pay for.

Process for Finding a Donor

Personal donors can be identified through advertising or through personal networks. Patients are encouraged to ask family or friends first. If this is not possible fertility clinics have a process for advertising for donors:

- the person wanting a donor places an advertisement in an appropriate newspaper or magazine, with advice on content from a fertility clinic (there can be costs associated with this for the patient)

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- replies to the advertisement are directed to the fertility clinic
- the fertility clinic reviews potential donors for suitability (e.g. age, important health factors)
- the clinic facilitates the exchange of information between the potential donor and recipient without disclosing identifying information
- the recipient and donor decide if they wish to proceed
- the donor and recipient undertake counselling
- if multiple donors respond there is potential for donors to be considered for other recipients.

Fertility clinics can also provide donors and recipients with information on legal and ethical requirements and greater detail on expectations for both parties. These include:

- No payment can be made to the donor, but some expenses can be covered
- All potential donors (whether recruited by advertising, or a friend or family member of the recipient) must undertake a suitability check and counselling (and may be declined, usually for health reasons)
- The donor is free to withdraw consent for the use of their gametes (sperm or egg) before fertilisation
- There is a waiting period of 6-9 months before treatment.

Publicly Funded Donor Treatments

Publicly funded *donor* treatment is offered when patients are eligible for funded fertility treatment and donor treatment is the most appropriate option.

