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NORFOLK FIRST WITH IVF OUTREACH CENTRES

James Paget and Queen Elizabeth partner with Bourn Hall Clinic to offer local care

IVF treatment for Norfolk couples has come closer to home. A partnership between Bourn Hall Clinic and hospitals in Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn will mean more patient choice and less need to travel for couples receiving fertility treatment.

The Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn NHS Trust, with clinics in King's Lynn and Norwich, and the James Paget University Hospital based in Great Yarmouth are to become outreach centres for couples receiving treatment at Bourn Hall Clinic. Both hospitals have excellent fertility departments and the agreement means that patients can choose to have elements of their treatment locally.

Dorian Ransome, the newly appointed Head of Patient Management at Bourn Hall, explains that the relationship will allow more flexibility for patient centred treatment.

"Our aim at Bourn Hall is to provide a supportive and welcoming environment for all. Fertility treatment is an emotional journey and we see developing closer relationships with the other caregivers as a way of smoothing the pathway and improving the experience for patients.

"Patients can choose to have some or all of their appointments up to and including egg collection at these local clinics. By creating the outreach centres couples will be able to choose to have tests and elements of treatment locally at Queen Elizabeth or James Paget with the team they have already got to know."

In May, the NHS East of England became the first region in the country to fund all eligible couples for up to three cycles of fertility treatment. This has made IVF more widely accessible and created a clearer and more consistent treatment pathway across the region.

To qualify for treatment couples must meet specific eligibility criteria. In particular, women must be aged between 23 and 39 with no children from the current relationship. Women must also be registered with a GP in one of the six counties in the East of England.

Mr Peter Greenwood, Lead Consultant for Sub Fertility at James Paget, sees strengthening the relationship with Bourn Hall as a positive move for Great Yarmouth patients.

“Before this year’s funding initiative, James Paget was one of the first hospitals to offer its patients a transport IVF service, with egg collection carried out here and embryo transfer performed at Bourn Hall. We see the outreach centre as an extension of that and will offer patients choice and access to the highest quality treatment. The geographical position of our unit allows us to continue offering this transport IVF service to many couples living in Suffolk as well.”

“The agreement will also see our Sub Fertility Department working closely with some of the most experienced embryologists in the world which helps share knowledge and best practice.”

Mr Hamed Al-Taher, lead Consultant at the Lynn Fertility Centre, The Queen Elizabeth Hospital, has welcomed this development to bring the service closer to patients, one that has been awaited for several years.

“Our aim has always been to help couples get the best quality, individualised and successful fertility treatment; now this can also be more convenient and closer to home. Our team has previously worked with Bourn Hall Clinic; the joint venture of transport IVF offers the best of the two worlds of a local service and an excellent world-renowned embryology service. This combination ensures cost-effective, successful and convenient IVF treatment.”

In the general population 70 percent of couples will conceive naturally within 18 months of trying for a baby and 90 percent after two years. The chance of natural conception can be improved through greater awareness of the woman’s monthly cycle and by making lifestyle changes such as stopping smoking, improving diet and losing weight. Couples that have already taken these measures and not conceived, or have a diagnosed cause of infertility, should see their GP to discuss the next steps.

GPs will refer couples with fertility issues to the relevant hospital where checks such as hormone tests will be undertaken to try and identify the cause of infertility before referral, as appropriate, to a specialist IVF clinic.

The NHS East of England Specialised Commissioning Group, who commission this service, are committed to ensuring that couples are offered a choice of where they wish to attend, from the five fertility centres agreed for the East of England.

The establishment of outreach centres means that if patients choose to have their IVF treatment at Bourn Hall they will be able to have some of their care at James Paget or Queen Elizabeth, reducing the number of journeys they will need to make to the clinic, which is near Cambridge. For many, this will make appointments more convenient and offer the best of both worlds.

Dorian Ransome of Bourn Hall Clinic comments,

“It was always the dream of Steptoe and Edwards when they established Bourn Hall as the world’s first IVF clinic, that treatment would be available to all who needed it. We believe that by developing the outreach centres we will be making IVF more widely accessible and supporting patients by making their treatment options clearer and more consistent.

– ENDS –

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About Bourn Hall Clinic www.bourn-hall-clinic.co.uk

Bourn Hall Clinic, the world’s first and best-known assisted conception clinic, was established in 1980 by Patrick Steptoe and Robert Edwards, the pioneers of IVF. Through innovative thinking the clinic maintains a leading role in the field.

Bourn Hall Clinic is an operating division of Bourn Hall Limited, and is located at Bourn Hall, Bourn, Cambridge, CB23 2TN, UK Tel: 01954 719 111.

Notes for editors

Six attempts include a maximum of three full cycles of IVF treatment with a maximum of a further three frozen embryo transfers, totalling a maximum of six embryo transfers.

More information about the East of England Specialist Commissioning Group’s announcement (May 2009) is available. <http://www.escg.nhs.uk>.

The Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) in the East of England have agreed a fertility policy that will offer more chances to childless couples. They have, by raising and standardising the number of fertility cycles that were previously offered in the region, fully embraced the recommendations made by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) in 2004.

