



The BCRM Fertility Counselling Service

Emotional Care and Support for BCRM Patients

What Emotional Care and Support does BCRM provide?

The BCRM Fertility Counselling Service offers independent support to all its patients. Counselling is an important requirement of legislation controlling all assisted conception treatments. It is recognised and understood by the HFEA, Doctors, Nurses and clinicians alike that fertility investigations and treatments can, at times, be highly emotionally challenging and that support for you throughout this process is essential.

BCRM also offers sensitive care for those who are experiencing pregnancy loss - especially if it comes after successful fertility treatment, or after recurrent miscarriages.

Counselling sessions are offered by BCRM's in-house specialist fertility therapists, Wendy Martin and Francine Blanchet who, between them, deliver a range of practical tools, techniques and opportunities to help you improve the quality of your lives and manage the stresses and strains associated with the fertility difficulties and any miscarriages you may be experiencing.

Wendy and Francine provide a range of ways to help support you while you are a patient in our care. These include: -

- Counselling
- Communication tools
- Self-hypnosis
- EMDR for trauma and post traumatic stress
- Guided visualisation and relaxation techniques
- Mindfulness

How does the BCRM Fertility Counselling Service work?

Counselling can be accessed right from the outset when you first come to the clinic.

For NHS patients, BCRM is pleased to offer one complementary counselling appointment for each NHS funded IVF or ICSI egg collection cycle.



For self-funded patients, BCRM offers one complementary counselling appointment during your investigation stage and a further three complementary sessions for each egg-collection IVF or ICSI cycle of treatment you may have.

Patients who are attending the Recurrent Miscarriage Clinic, can have one complimentary counselling appointment.

If you require further counselling support you are able to have as many sessions as you need but these are provided on a self-funding basis.

You can either come to BCRM for an in-person session or you can speak to Wendy and Francine remotely via zoom or over the phone.

Appointments last one hour.

The BCRM Fertility Counselling Service is confidential and separate from your medical investigations and treatments.

Counselling support is available for up to 6 months after any treatment has finished - whatever the outcome.

Please remember, you do not have to be in a crisis to access the service.

How do I make a Counselling appointment?

- Contact one of BCRM's patient advisors via telephone on **0117 259 1159**
- Email the BCRM via **admin@bcmr.clinic**
- Speak to a Patient Advisor or Receptionist whenever you are at the clinic

How might Counselling help me?

Undergoing fertility investigations and treatments and experiencing a pregnancy loss or recurrent miscarriages can sometimes engender a range of unexpected and difficult emotions and experiences while you try to achieve the family you desire. These can include:

- Tearfulness, being unable to control emotions
- Overwhelming feelings of sadness and loss
- Distress and jealousy when friends, relatives and colleagues become pregnant
- Feeling left out, left behind, isolated not part of the mainstream of life
- Anger, bitterness and frustration at a situation you cannot control
- Sex is no longer fun – it's a baby-making process
- Loss of identity, purpose and meaning
- A sense of being punished and singled out

- Not being able to decide when to stop
- Feeling in limbo – life is on hold
- Earlier feelings of disappointment and loss resurfacing
- Bafflement at your partners reactions

Having emotional support at this difficult and challenging time can help you get through. If you recognise any number of these feelings and experiences you might consider booking a counselling appointment.

Am I more likely to get pregnant if I have Counselling?

Although there is no scientific evidence that stress can in any way affect the outcome of assisted conception treatments such as IVF or ICSI*, at BCRM we are nonetheless still very interested in your emotional and psychological wellbeing while you are a patient at our clinic. It is important to us that your time spent in our care is as good as it can be. This is why, from the time you come to us for investigations and tests, and then throughout any treatment you have with us, we aim to help you maintain the optimum quality of life.

*'Emotional distress in infertile women and failure of assisted reproductive technologies: meta-analysis of prospective psychosocial studies' J Boivin, E Griffiths, C A Venetis 2011 British Medical Journal (BMJ) 342



Wendy Martin
Treatment Support Therapist



Francine Blanchet
Treatment Support Therapist

Confidentiality

What you discuss with the therapist will not be shared with the medical team. Confidentiality may only be breached if you disclose something that gives cause for serious concern (e.g., that you are considered to be a danger to yourself or others, or you or someone else are at risk of harm). In such rare cases this would be discussed with you first before taking it to the senior team.

Other sources of support

The Fertility Quality of Life questionnaire (FertiQoL) is a self-assessment tool that can be used to assess how well (or otherwise) you are doing while you are undergoing fertility tests, investigations and treatments.

This tool was developed by Professor Jacky Boivin who is the Professor of Health Psychology at the Cardiff Fertility Studies Research Group in the School of Psychology at the University of Cardiff.

Using FertiQoL you can assess your quality of life in terms of various psycho-social dimensions including: -

- Mind and Body
- Emotional
- Relational
- Social
- Environmental factors
- Tolerability of treatment

To find out more: <https://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/fertiqol/download/>

To fill in the FertiQoL online: <https://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/fertiqol/complete-fertiqol-online/>



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