









## Introduction to counselling at FA

Fertility Associates is fortunate to have a great team of Fertility Counsellors based throughout the clinics nationwide. All of our counsellors are registered health professionals from different backgrounds, such as Social Work and Psychology, and are registered with the Australian and New Zealand Infertility Counsellor Association (ANZICA). This document introduces a snapshot of topics our counsellors are experienced in supporting patients with and a little bit about what you might expect from a counselling appointment.

Fertility Counsellors are experts on the emotional and psychological experiences and needs of patients experiencing infertility in its different forms and have detailed knowledge around Assisted Reproductive Technologies (treatments) and the legislative frameworks surrounding treatment, donation and surrogacy. Our counsellors are only able to work with people located within Aotearoa New Zealand.

Many patients access counsellors to talk about the emotional aspects of infertility or treatment, and strategies for managing the processes and potential outcomes. Other topics include, but are certainly not limited to:

-  decision-making around treatment and options
-  support with closure
-  donor conception linking
-  fertility preservation
-  donation and surrogacy
-  preimplantation genetic testing
-  hysterectomy and tubal ligation
-  navigating impacts to intimacy

Treatment pathways such as donation, surrogacy, and preimplantation genetic diagnosis require those involved to attend counselling around the implications for themselves, their families, and any resulting children.

A first counselling appointment can start in a number of different ways - it comes down to your preferences and needs. A session may start with karakia and whakawhanaungatanga or general introductions. It's important to ensure everyone is aware of confidentiality and record-keeping. In general, detailed notes will be kept in a way that only counsellors within the organisation can access, and a brief note is viewable by all staff to outline that counselling has occurred and to note any follow-up planned.

Fertility Associates has a collaborative approach to treatment and care, so at times a counsellor might talk with you about whether information might be important to share with the other teams involved in your care. Exceptions and limitations to confidentiality would be discussed with you at the beginning of the session.

The focus of counselling sessions is collaboratively decided by the needs and preferences of the patient. For those pathways for which counselling is required, such as donation, the counsellors have a range of topics which can help guide the conversations. Taking the example of counselling for someone looking to be or use a donor, counselling sessions could include the steps in the process; people's understanding of the pathway; the legal framework in Aotearoa New Zealand; how treatment might impact on families and any resulting donor conceived individuals; the pathways for donor conception linking. The counsellors can also suggest resources available which might be of interest for you.

Ultimately, no two people are the same and so no two counselling appointments are exactly alike! Patients can attend counselling alone, together with a partner or a support person such as a friend or whanau. If you have any questions about counselling, please feel free to contact our team of counsellors.

If you'd like to book an appointment to speak with one of our counsellors you can do so by contacting your local clinic.