

Online Research @ Cardiff

This is an Open Access document downloaded from ORCA, Cardiff University's institutional repository: <http://orca.cf.ac.uk/117876/>

This is the author's version of a work that was submitted to / accepted for publication.

Citation for final published version:

Farquhar, Cynthia M., Bhattacharya, Siladitya, Repping, Sjoerd, Mastenbroek, Sebastiaan, Kamath, Mohan S., Marjoribanks, Jane and Boivin, Jacky 2019. Female subfertility. *Nature Reviews Disease Primers* 10.1038/s41572-019-0062-7 file

Publishers page: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41572-019-0062-7> <<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41572-019-0062-7>>

Please note:

Changes made as a result of publishing processes such as copy-editing, formatting and page numbers may not be reflected in this version. For the definitive version of this publication, please refer to the published source. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite this paper.

This version is being made available in accordance with publisher policies. See <http://orca.cf.ac.uk/policies.html> for usage policies. Copyright and moral rights for publications made available in ORCA are retained by the copyright holders.



Female subfertility

Cynthia M. Farquhar¹, Siladitya Bhattacharya², Sjoerd Repping³, Sebastiaan Mastenbroek³, Mohan S. Kamath⁴, Jane Marjoribanks¹ and Jacky Boivin⁵

¹ Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

² College of Biomedical and Life Sciences, Cardiff University School of Medicine, Cardiff, Wales, UK

³ Amsterdam UMC, University of Amsterdam, Center for Reproductive Medicine, Amsterdam Reproduction & Development research institute, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

⁴ Department of Reproductive Medicine, Christian Medical College, Vellore, India

⁵ School of Psychology, College of Biomedical and Life Sciences, Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK

Correspondence to C.F.

c.farquhar@auckland.ac.nz

Abstract

Subfertility is common, and affects one in six couples, half of whom lack an explanation for their delay in conceiving. Developments in the diagnosis and treatment of subfertility over the past 50 years have been truly remarkable. Indeed, current generations of couples with subfertility are more fortunate than previous generations as they have many more opportunities to become parents. The timely access to effective treatment for subfertility is important, as many couples have a narrow window of opportunity before the age-related effects of subfertility limit the likelihood of success. Assisted reproduction can overcome the barriers to fertility caused by tubal disease and low sperm counts, but little progress has been made in reducing the effect of increasing age on ovarian function. The next 5-10 years will likely see further increases in birth rates in women with subfertility, greater awareness of lifestyle factors and possible refinement of current assisted reproduction techniques and development of new ones. Such progress will bring challenging questions regarding the potential benefits and harms of treatments involving germ-cell manipulation, artificial gametes, genetic screening of embryos, and gene editing of embryos. We hope to see a major increase in fertility awareness, access to safe and cost-effective fertility care in low-income countries, and a reduction in the current disparity of access to fertility care.

Author contributions

Introduction (C.F.); Epidemiology (S.B., M.S.K.); Mechanisms/pathophysiology (S.R., S.M.); Diagnosis, screening and prevention (S.B., M.S.K.); Management (C.F., J.M.); Quality of life (J.B.); Outlook (C.F., S.R., J.B., J.M., S.M.); overview of the Primer (C.F.).

Competing interests

J.B. has received funding from Merck Norway (Merck AB NUF) for the Norwegian translation of the Fertility Quality of Life (FertiQoL) tool and funding from Ferring International Center S.A. for the Czech translation of the FertiQoL scale. J.B. has also collaborated on an exploratory trial evaluating the benefits of a coping intervention on treatment discontinuation that was funded by Merck/Schering-Plough Pharmaceuticals. J.B. and her employer (Cardiff University) could one day receive royalties from the commercial use of Fertility Quality of Life (FertiQoL). J.B. has received speaker and consultancy fees to present on the psychological impact of infertility from Merck/Schering-Plough Pharmaceuticals, Merck KGaA, Actavis Generics, and IBSA Institut Biochimique. All other authors declare no competing interests.

[H1] Introduction

Subfertility (also commonly referred to as infertility) is defined as “a disease characterised by the failure to establish a clinical pregnancy after 12 months of regular, unprotected sexual intercourse or due to an impairment of a person’s capacity to reproduce either as an individual or with his/her partner”. A clinical pregnancy is defined as “ultrasonographic visualization of one or more gestational sacs or definitive clinical signs of pregnancy”. Both of these comprehensive definitions were reached through a consensus process at the World Health Organization (WHO), and were subsequently supported by regional fertility societies and international professional societies that address fertility care and infertility^{1,2}. Primary female subfertility refers to a woman who has never achieved a clinical pregnancy, whereas secondary female subfertility refers to a woman who has previously achieved a clinical pregnancy who cannot establish a subsequent clinical pregnancy.^{1,2} The definitions cited above are clinical definitions, designed for the early detection and treatment of subfertility. Other definitions are used for demographic or epidemiological purposes. For example, an alternative definition of primary subfertility is the inability to ever bear a live child, and an alternative definition of secondary subfertility is the inability to bear a live following a previous pregnancy or live birth^{3,4}.

Several critical steps are in achieving unassisted pregnancy in women. Follicular development leading to oocyte release from the ovary requires a normal menstrual cycle, which is coordinated by a complex interplay of pituitary and follicle-derived hormones. After an oocyte is released, it enters the fallopian tube where it can be fertilised by spermatozoa (sperm) that have travelled through the female genital tract (Figure 1). The fertilised oocyte develops as it moves through the fallopian tube into the uterine cavity, where it implants in the endometrium. In women, subfertility can involve any of these processes, whereas in men, subfertility centres around absent or inadequate sperm production (Box 1).

Common causes of female subfertility include ovulatory dysfunction (such as ovarian insufficiency or polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)), damaged or blocked fallopian tubes, endometriosis and uterine fibroids. Ovarian insufficiency is a loss of function of the ovaries that reduces the chance of pregnancy in all women from ~35 years of age, but occurs prematurely in some women. Blocked or damaged fallopian tubes can cause subfertility or an increased risk of tubal pregnancy^{5,6}. Endometriosis can create an unfavourable pelvic environment, whereas uterine fibroids can impede tubal transport, cause tubal obstruction or affect embryo implantation, both of which can lead to subfertility in women. In up to 30% of couples, no identifiable cause of subfertility can be found after completion of a standard investigation protocol and tests of ovulation, tubal patency and semen analysis, among others, are normal⁷. These cases are commonly referred to as “unexplained” subfertility in the literature; in this Primer, we retain this term for consistency with the literature, but with the proviso that ‘unexplained’ does not mean that subfertility has no underlying cause, rather that the cause has not been identified.

Over the last 20 years there has been a move towards evidence-based, cost effective and safer fertility treatment. In addition, there is a general recognition by clinicians that subfertility differs from many other health conditions that are diagnosed on the basis of demonstrable pathology. As a consequence, management strategies are appropriately moving away from a traditional aetiological approach towards a prognostic approach, in which the decision to treat is based on the balance between the unassisted and treatment-related chances of pregnancy. However, the physical, psychological and financial burden of treatment can be substantial. Timely access to effective treatment is important, as many couples have a narrow window of opportunity before age limits the likelihood of success.

This Primer reviews the epidemiology, pathophysiology, assessment and clinical and psychosocial management of subfertility in women and considers priorities for future research.

[H1] Epidemiology

Up to one in six couples in Western countries have subfertility⁸ and is a recognised cause of psychological distress in both men and women⁹. Between 48.5 and 72.4 million couples worldwide are estimated to have subfertility^{3,10}, with 10 million couples in Sub-Saharan Africa and 14 million couples in South Asia³. The prevalence of subfertility varies widely between studies owing to variability in the populations sampled and inconsistency in the definition of subfertility¹¹ and sampling methods used. Clinical definitions of subfertility that are based on lack of pregnancy after 12 months of unprotected sexual intercourse estimate a median prevalence of 9% globally¹⁰, although demographic definitions that are based on a 5 year period of childlessness (Figure 2) estimate rates of primary infertility as ~2% and secondary infertility of ~10%³.

Couples are typically referred for fertility investigations if they have not been able to conceive within 12 months of sexual intercourse without using contraception. Although some couples might equate their condition of subfertility with sterility, this is an oversimplification as many will subsequently conceive¹². The definition of subfertility is prognosis-driven and is based on data demonstrating that 84% of couples not using contraception would be expected to conceive within one year and 92% within two years¹³. However, to be meaningful, a prognosis-based approach should accommodate factors other than duration of subfertility, such as female age, frequency of intercourse, semen quality and the presence of pelvic pathology that could influence the chance of conception¹⁴. Ideally a model would also include psychological and lifestyle factors that affect fertility either directly or indirectly¹⁵. Few studies have examined long term trends in subfertility. Although the demand for ART has risen steadily over the last 20-30 years¹⁶, this trend does not seem to be accompanied by a corresponding increase in the observed prevalence of subfertility^{17,18}. Some of the reasons for increase in demand for ART are expanding indications for the IVF treatment such as unexplained infertility and diminished ovarian reserve, increased access to more patient friendly IVF program and appeal of newer technologies.

[H2] Risk factors

[H3] Lifestyle factors. In observational studies, lifestyle factors such as smoking, excessive alcohol consumption and caffeine use have been associated with reduced fertility^{19,20}. A case-control study in the United Kingdom identified negative lifestyle factors significantly associated with current subfertility, including overweight (by >13 kg), unprotected sexual intercourse with multiple partners and 'stress one cannot cope with'¹⁹. Cigarette smoking and marijuana use were significantly associated with increased time to conceive²⁰. However, prospective research is needed to confirm these cross-sectional associations. Occupations involving exposure to reproductive toxins that can affect fertility such as nitrosamines and formaldehyde should be documented²¹.

[H3] Age. One of the best-known and most well-established factors that affect fertility is the age of the woman (Figure 3)²². This risk factor is increasingly relevant as women worldwide delay childbearing and as the age at which a woman has her first child is rising in many societies²³. In addition, the fertility rate (that is, the total number of children that would be born to each woman if she were to live to the end of her child-bearing years), has also fallen substantially²⁴. For women, the likelihood of pregnancy is stable from puberty to ~30 years of age, after which, it declines in an accelerating rate until menopause when the chance of pregnancy approaches zero²⁵⁻²⁷.

[H1] Mechanisms/pathophysiology

Unlike many other conditions, subfertility involves two individuals (or three, in the case of donor gametes or surrogacy). An individual might experience subfertility with one partner but not with another, and with increasing age, all women have infertility secondary to the complete loss of oocytes. By contrast, men continue to produce viable sperm throughout their life.

A key concept is the chance of achieving pregnancy in a specific ovulatory cycle at any given point in time; in contrast to other species in whom chances of conceiving are close to 100% during every menstrual cycle, in humans, even at their most fertile stages of life, chances of conceiving are, at most, 30% in a menstrual cycle²⁸ presumably secondary to the short window of oocyte maturation in the human oocyte. Accordingly, distinguishing whether the absence of pregnancy in a single cycle is due to natural reproductive inefficiency or the result of a specific pathophysiological situation that requires treatment is often difficult. Likewise, decisions about treatment of subfertility should be made after considering the chance of establishing a pregnancy without treatment (see Management)¹²

[H2] Age and oocyte quality

Ovarian age is a strong predictor of the chance of pregnancy and reflects the number of follicles still present in the ovary. At birth, girls have ~2 million oocytes in their ovaries, of which more than half are lost before puberty. Following the onset of ovulation, a cohort of 40-500 follicles develop each month of which, usually only one (the so-called dominant follicle) releases an oocyte²⁹. The other follicles degenerate, and are ultimately lost through the process of follicular atresia. The number and quality of remaining oocytes reduces with increasing age (Figure 3)²⁵, leading to the age-related decline in female fertility. Estimation of the number of follicles inside the ovaries (that is, ovarian reserve) is possible using

Commented [MOU1]: Baker TG A quantitative and cytological study of germ cells in human ovaries. Proc Roy Soc London 1963: 158: 417, pg 101-102

ultrasonography to measure the antral follicle count (AFC) or by measurement of the serum anti-müllerian hormone (AMH) level ^{27, 30, 31}.

Recruitment and maturation of follicles in the ovary is a balanced interaction between hormones released by the hypothalamus and pituitary gland (such as follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) and luteinizing hormone (LH)), and those released in the ovary (AMH, inhibin A and inhibin B and estradiol) ²⁷. As these ovarian factors are produced by the granulosa cells of the antral follicles, reduced ovarian reserve results in lower levels of these hormones. This change in turn results in higher FSH levels. These aberrant hormonal levels cause menstrual cycle irregularities and affect the quantity and quality of available oocytes.

The effect of increased age on oocyte quality and chance of pregnancy is illustrated by pregnancy outcomes in women who receive oocytes from young donors ³²; oocytes from young donors have a higher rate of subsequent pregnancy than oocytes from older donors, even if the recipient is undergoing menopause. No established intervention to prevent this age-related decline in fertility is available, except for the use of donor oocytes.

The precise mechanism by which age affects oocyte quality is unknown. One hypothesis is an accumulation of DNA damage in the oocytes over time, through environmental stressors, for example by certain food or drug residues, or by reactive oxygen species (ROS) ^{33, 34}. Alternatively, a first-in-first-out principle (also known as a production line principle) has been proposed, whereby high quality oocytes are primarily ovulated early in life, causing lower quality oocytes to be ovulated at later ages. This hypothesis is based on the decrease in the frequency of chiasmata (the physical crossover of homologous chromosomes) in mouse oocytes with increasing maternal age ^{35, 36}. These reductions could also explain the increased number of aneuploidies in oocytes, embryos and other products of conception in miscarriages in older women ³⁷⁻³⁹.

In addition, data from mouse models suggests that shortening of telomeres in oocytes is also associated with increasing age and could also cause decreased oocyte and embryo competence ^{40, 41}. The female germ line could also be affected by general mechanisms underlying cellular aging, such as, epigenetic alterations, loss of proteostasis, dysregulated nutrient sensing, altered intercellular function, and mitochondrial dysfunction, which could contribute to subfertility ^{42, 43}. As previously mentioned, the age-dependent decline in oocyte quality accelerates between 35 and 40 years of age, suggesting that oocyte ageing is time limited rather than a gradual process. This finding suggests that an underlying biological threshold value or trigger is involved in oocyte ageing, for example, the number of primordial follicles dropping below a critical threshold, thereby triggering subtle physiological events, such as hormonal (such as growth hormone and androgens) changes. These hormonal changes could affect the oocytes themselves, the surrounding granulosa cells, the process of selection from the cohort of oocytes each menstrual cycle, and oocyte maturation.

Oocyte quality can also affect development of the preimplantation embryo ⁴⁴. This is supported by the increased presence of aneuploidies in oocytes of women of advanced age (Figure 3). However, this age-related increase in aneuploidies is likely to be a consequence of poor oocyte quality, rather than the cause. Oocyte quality also influences the embryonic and fetal development, as demonstrated by the increased risk of miscarriage in older women which can be reversed by the use of oocytes from young donors ^{46, 47}.

[H2] Specific causes of subfertility

[H3] Ovulatory dysfunction. Anovulation (a failure to ovulate) is indicated by a disturbed frequency and duration of the menstrual cycle (Figure 4). Typically, the menstrual cycle is 25-35 days in duration, but some women never menstruate (primary amenorrhea), some can menstruate but have prolonged episodes of >6 months without a period (secondary amenorrhea), or have an irregular menstrual cycle (oligomenorrhea).

Primary amenorrhea can result from the failure of normal gonadal development or be unexplained. The failure of gonad development can be idiopathic, or can be associated with a wide range of conditions, including Turner Syndrome (in individuals with a 45, XO karyotype), hypothalamic problems secondary to a spectrum of disorders (such as extremes of body weight, chronic disease such as coeliac disease, or

high stress levels). Structural anatomical conditions, including imperforate hymen and the complete absence of the genital organs owing to the failure of normal gonadal development may also present as primary amenorrhoea.

Secondary amenorrhoea and oligomenorrhoea can be caused by endocrine disorders involving the hypothalamus, pituitary gland, thyroid gland, the adrenal gland and the ovary⁴⁸. The correction of thyroid function is required before any fertility treatment commences, as disorders of thyroid function are associated with problems in fetal development⁴⁸. Pituitary adenomas produce high levels of prolactin, which inhibits gonadotropin-releasing hormone secretion and the production of gonadotropins, which leads to suppression of ovulation. Rarely, anterior pituitary failure occurs following severe postpartum haemorrhage (known as Sheehan Syndrome) and may result in hypopituitarism with low levels of gonadotropins, growth hormone, adrenocorticotrophin, thyroid stimulating hormone and prolactin. Replacement therapy will be necessary and when fertility is desired then ovarian stimulation with gonadotropins can be given.

The most-common cause of anovulation associated with oligomenorrhoea and amenorrhoea is polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)⁴⁹. The exact causes of PCOS are not known, but women with PCOS have an increased frequency of pulses of GnRH release from the hypothalamus, which increases the LH/FSH ratio leading to higher androgen levels, hampered follicle maturation and possible anovulation⁴⁹. Although women with PCOS have high rates of subfertility compared with women without PCOS, the majority do usually conceive with or without treatment⁵⁰.

[H3] POF and POI. In some women, decreased ovarian reserve occurs prematurely and menopause is reached earlier, in some cases when women are teenagers, which is referred to as premature ovarian failure (POF) or primary ovarian insufficiency (POI).

Causes of POF and POI include a low initial number of ovarian follicles, which can be idiopathic, or an abnormally high rate of follicular atresia (for example, Turner syndrome or fragile X syndrome) or can be caused by cytotoxic therapies. Some women with POI have a sufficient number of follicles but have specific genetic defects, enzyme deficiencies or specific autoimmune responses that affect follicular growth and maturation. In Turner syndrome, POF or POI is due to the accelerated loss of oocytes from the ovaries after the 18th week of fetal life or during the postnatal period⁵¹. Fragile X syndrome is caused by an increase in the number of CGG trinucleotide repeats in *FMR1* (encoding fragile X mental retardation 1 protein)⁵². Women with too many or too few CGG repeats in *FMR1* have an increased risk of menstrual cycle disturbances, POF, non-identical twinning and possibly increased rates of aneuploidy and miscarriage⁵².

[H3] Ovarian cysts. Ovarian cysts are frequently detected because of the increased use of imaging such as ultrasonography and MRI. They range from simple cysts associated with the menstrual cycle (such as persistent follicular cysts) to cysts of endometriosis (endometriomata) or teratomas such as dermoid cysts. In women who are seeking to conceive, these cysts generally do not negatively impact on fertility unless they are large enough to distort tubal anatomy. Indications for removal of these cysts will depend on the symptoms and the benefits and harms of the surgery.

[H3] Pelvic, uterine and tubal abnormalities. Tubal abnormalities range in severity from scarring and mild adhesions (fibrous bands between organs) to complete blockage or absence of the fallopian tubes. In some cases, the fallopian tube is blocked at least at the distal end and is filled with fluid (hydrosalpinx). Tubal abnormalities can be caused by infections (such as chlamydia, gonorrhoea, and tuberculosis) often transmitted sexually, that cause scarring and damage of the tubal tissue, in addition to peritoneal infection, previous surgeries, or endometriosis, and rarely, genetic defects⁵³. Subfertility is common in women with HIV, and is usually associated with tubal blockage (most commonly hydrosalpinges) particularly in women with a history of induced abortions and tubal pathologies⁵⁴. Uterine abnormalities can be caused by uterine fibroids, polyps or adenomyosis, or congenital malformations.

Endometriosis is a condition in which tissue from the lining of the uterine cavity grows outside the uterus into the peritoneal cavity. Endometriosis not only involves the fallopian tubes, but also will be present in the ovaries, and the tissue lining the pelvis which often leads to distorted and abnormal anatomy. This aberrantly located endometrial tissue is affected by the hormonal changes of the menstrual cycle, which makes it grow, thicken, and subsequently break down each cycle, which can lead to painful periods, heavy

Commented [MOU2]: M. Vassilakopoulou, E. Boostandoost, G. Papaxoinis, T. de La Motte Rouge, D. Khayat, A. Psyrris, Anticancer treatment and fertility: effect of therapeutic modalities on reproductive system and functions, Crit. Rev. Oncol. Hematol. 97 (2016) 328–334, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.critrevonc.2015.08.002>.

Commented [MOU3]: [Legendre G, Catala L, Morinie`re C, Laco`euville C, BouSSION F, Sentilhes L, et al. Relationship between ovarian cysts and infertility: what surgery and when? Fertil Steril 2014; 101\(3\): 608–14.](#)

Commented [MOU4]: Serafini P, Batzofin J. Diagnosis of female infertility. A comprehensive approach. J Reprod Med 1989;34:29–40.

Eftekhar M, Pourmasumi S, Sabeti P, Aflatoonian A, Sheikha MH. Mycobacterium tuberculosis infection in women with unexplained infertility. Int J Reprod Biomed 2015; 13: 749-754.

Commented [MOU5]: • [Krina T. Zondervan](#),

- [Christian M. Becker](#),
- [Kaori Koga](#),
- [Stacey A. Missmer](#),
- [Robert N. Taylor](#) &
- [Paola Viganò](#)

Endometriosis
Nature Reviews Disease Primers volume 4, Article number: 9 (2018)

menstrual bleeding or bleeding between periods. In addition, endometriosis causes subfertility, as the aberrant endometrial tissue can result in scar formations and adhesions. The severity of endometriosis depends on the number, size, location, and depth of the endometrial implants outside the uterus⁵⁵⁻⁵⁷.

Defects in the development of the Müllerian duct (which form the cervix, uterus, fallopian tubes and part of the vagina) can lead to abnormal development of these ducts and potentially subfertility. Approximately 1 in 4,500 women have Mayer-Rokitansky-Küster-Hauser (MRKH) syndrome, in which abnormal development of the Müllerian duct system results in the absence of the upper vagina, uterus and in some women, the fallopian tubes, but with intact ovaries and normal external genitalia⁵⁸. Genes that are involved in prenatal development are causative, but differ between individuals. More-subtle defects in Müllerian duct development can lead to a unicornuate uterus (only half of the uterus with a single fallopian tube is present), a bicornuate uterus (an indentation in the fundus of the uterus, leading to an approximately heart-shaped uterus), or a septate uterus (the uterine cavity is partly partitioned by a longitudinal septum). These congenital uterine malformations are of unknown cause. Women with these uterine malformations can be asymptomatic, can be unaware of having these conditions and can have normal pregnancies. Some uterine malformations are associated with an increased risk of recurrent pregnancy loss and preterm birth, but an association with subfertility is less clear⁵⁹⁻⁶².

Other uterine abnormalities can be caused by fibroids, polyps or adenomyosis (in which endometrial tissue grows within the walls of the uterus). Although these conditions are often thought to be associated with a reduced chance of ongoing pregnancy because of miscarriage, there is no conclusive evidence that they adversely affect conception^{63,64}. Rare uterine abnormalities can be congenital anomalies that are acquired through, for example, prenatal exposure to diethylstilbestrol or following surgery such as intrauterine adhesions with a thin endometrium (known as Asherman syndrome) and reduce the likelihood of implantation and ongoing pregnancy.

[H1] Diagnosis, screening and prevention

Few standard tests for the diagnosis of subfertility are available. Geographical variation in the uptake and availability of investigations is likely, owing to the affordability of these tests. Moreover, practice guidelines vary, as shown by recommendations on PCOS and systematic reviews of diagnostic evaluation of male infertility and of endometriosis⁶⁵⁻⁶⁷.

[H2] Diagnosis

In countries with fertility care provision, couples are generally investigated after 12 months of unsuccessful attempts to conceive, or earlier if there is a clear clinical indication¹. A comprehensive fertility assessment involves both partners and includes detailed history taking, clinical examination and appropriate investigations (Figure 5). The aim of this assessment is to identify underlying causes of subfertility and establish a prognosis for the couple^{15,68}.

[H3] Comprehensive history. A detailed history taking should document the length of time a couple has been trying to conceive, menstrual patterns, previous pregnancies, medical and surgical factors, lifestyle and family history.

The age of menarche should be recorded, as an absence or delay in the onset of menarche could be associated with ovulatory dysfunction. Regular menstrual cycles are suggestive of ovulation, whereas irregular cycles and abnormal flow can be suggestive of hormonal, endometrial or uterine pathology. Dysmenorrhoea (menstrual cramps), chronic or cyclical pelvic pain and dyspareunia (painful sexual intercourse) can indicate the presence of pelvic endometriosis, whereas pressure symptoms (for example on the bladder or other organs) can be indicative of uterine fibroids and ovarian cysts. Contraceptive history is important, as some hormonal methods (such as, combined oral contraceptives) can lead to a temporary disturbance in menstrual cyclicity⁶⁹, and a discussion of lifestyle is important, as some factors can affect fertility.

Examining the medical and/or surgical treatment history and any associated infection of women with a history of miscarriage or abortion might be useful to identify potential causes of secondary subfertility. A history of ectopic pregnancy and salpingectomy (the surgical removal of a fallopian tube) is suggestive of tubal damage, whereas amenorrhoea associated with peri-partum or post-partum haemorrhage might be

Commented [MOU6]:

- Alessandro Conforti [Email author](#),
- Carlo Alviggi,
- Antonio Mollo,
- Giuseppe De Placido and
- Adam Magos
- The management of Asherman syndrome: a review of literature. *Reproductive Biology and Endocrinology* 2013 **11**:118

associated with either pituitary infarction or intrauterine adhesions (Asherman syndrome) due to vigorous dilatation and curettage.

In addition, the presence of co-existing or previous medical conditions should be carefully evaluated. Any symptoms and signs of breast disease should be investigated and a cervical smear history sought. A history of gonadotoxic therapy for a malignant disorder or an autoimmune condition can affect ovarian reserve⁷⁰, whereas infectious diseases such as tuberculosis or HIV can be associated with pelvic inflammatory disease and subfertility^{71,72}. Pelvic operations can result in adhesions leading to distorted pelvic anatomy, and can affect tubal function, whereas ovarian surgery, such as for endometriomas (endometriotic cysts), can compromise ovarian reserve.

As previously mentioned, fertility can be affected by disorders such as PCOS, ovarian insufficiency and endometriosis, which can be familial; the identification of these disorders might require clinical assessment and appropriate genetic counseling. In some contexts, cultural practices such as female genital mutilation and consanguinity can be associated with fertility problems^{73,74}. The occupation of both female and male partners should be documented and where relevant, risk of exposure to reproductive toxins should be assessed.

[H3] Physical examination. A general physical examination includes evaluation of body mass index (BMI), blood pressure, for thyroid enlargement and general assessment of secondary sexual characteristics and hair distribution, and is useful for the diagnosis of hyperandrogenism, endocrinopathies and uterine, pelvic and ovarian abnormalities.

Clinical signs of hyperandrogenism such as acne and hirsutism can suggest PCOS. The modified Ferriman Galloway score is used to assess hirsutism objectively and the score is interpreted in the context of the woman's ethnicity. For example, for women from South East Asia, it is suggested to use a cut-off point lower than the conventionally agreed threshold, as these women have a lower density of facial terminal hair⁷⁵. Acanthosis nigricans, observed in women with PCOS, is characterized by hyperpigmented velvety skin patches on the back of the neck, axilla and inguinal creases⁷⁶. Androgen-secreting tumours such as tumours of the adrenal gland or ovaries lead to more pronounced signs of androgen excess compared with PCOS, characterized by features of virilization (masculine traits, such as severe acne, deepening of voice, male pattern baldness and clitoromegaly). Demonstrable galactorrhoea (milky discharge from breast unrelated to pregnancy or breastfeeding) should trigger investigations to rule out a prolactinoma.

Surgical scars suggest the type of previous surgery and can guide decisions about future diagnostic or therapeutic procedures. Clear swelling in the lower abdomen can indicate a large fibroid or ovarian cyst, which can be confirmed using radiographic imaging. External inspection of the genitalia followed by a speculum examination should be carried out to assess the cervix and rule out the presence of infection, cervical polyps and vaginal septum or double cervix which helps identify congenital uterine abnormalities such as uterine didelphys and bicornuate uterus. A high vaginal and chlamydial swab can be obtained at the same time as speculum examination to assess for infectious diseases.

Transvaginal ultrasonography of the pelvis is an accurate way to visualize the uterus and ovaries and can identify ovarian cysts, endometriomas and hydrosalpinges, among other disorders. However, transvaginal ultrasonography should be used as an adjunct to, rather than a replacement for, bimanual pelvic examination. The latter remains the best way of assessing the position, consistency and mobility of large pelvic masses such as fibroids and ovarian cysts before surgery, whereas palpation of a retroverted fixed uterus and nodules in the pouch of Douglas (also known as the recto-uterine pouch) may be the only signs of deep infiltrating endometriosis⁷⁷.

[H3]Ovulation tests. A history of regular menstrual cycles is suggestive of satisfactory ovulation in most women although a test to confirm ovulation such as a mid luteal phase progesterone is usually recommended.⁷⁸ Many women may choose to use regular menstrual diaries or fertility tracking software or applications to track ovulation⁷⁹. In terms of clinical tests of ovulation, serum mid luteal progesterone levels is considered the gold-standard, and is the most commonly used; the timing of this test is important, and samples should ideally be taken 7 days before the expected onset of the next menstrual period. Progesterone tracking (taking two or three samples over several days) can be helpful in women whose cycle length, although regular, can vary by a few days⁸⁰. Other diagnostic tests to assess ovulation include ultrasonography-based monitoring of a developing follicle and detection of an LH surge by means of serial

measurements of serum or urinary LH levels. Although the detection of secretory endometrium via endometrial biopsy is suggestive of ovulation, this procedure is invasive and requires correct timing, and is, therefore, no longer recommended in contemporary practice⁸⁰.

The choice of ovulation test depends on patient preferences, and the cost and availability of resources to do these tests. Ultrasonography for the detection of ovulation relies on findings such as the detection of the collapse of a dominant follicle and has a sensitivity of 84% and a specificity of 89% for the confirmation of ovulation⁸¹. One of the advantages of urinary LH estimation is that this allows self-testing, and has a concordance rate of around 90 - 97% with ultrasonography-detected ovulation^{82,83}.

In women with very irregular cycles, amenorrhoea or confirmed anovulation, measurement of serum levels of estradiol, FSH, LH, thyroid-stimulating hormone, testosterone and prolactin are warranted to identify the cause of anovulation. Anovulation can be classified as WHO Type I (or hypogonadotrophic hypogonadism), Type II (or normogonadotrophic) or Type III (hypergonadotrophic), based on serum gonadotrophin and estradiol levels (Table 1). PCOS is the most-frequent cause of anovulation in general, and Type II anovulation in particular, and is often associated with hyperandrogenism. PCOS is defined by presence of two out of the three following features: oligo-ovulation or anovulation, clinical and/or biochemical signs of hyperandrogenism or polycystic ovaries detected using ultrasonography, after excluding other related disorders⁸⁴. Rarely, adrenal disorders or an androgen-producing tumour could cause ovulatory dysfunction associated with hyper-androgenism. In these cases, measures of 17-hydroxyprogesterone, serum testosterone, androstenedione and dehydroepiandrosterone levels are advised to discriminate between ovarian and adrenal causes.

[H3]Assessment of tubal patency. Tubal patency tests are used when initial tests confirm ovulation and, in male sexual partners, normal semen parameters. In women with anovulation, patency tests can be used prior to ovulation induction, or can be delayed until after three drug-induced ovulatory cycles. Tubal patency testing is generally considered unnecessary in couples who require ART to conceive either because of severe male factor infertility (for example, sperm count < 5 million/ ml) or women with advanced age because in ART the embryo is directly placed into the uterine cavity, bypassing the fallopian tubes. Women with a recent intrauterine pregnancy loss do not require tubal patency testing, unless post-miscarriage infection is indicated.

Commonly performed tubal patency tests include hysterosalpingography (HSG), hysterocontrastsalpingography (HyCoSy) and diagnostic laparoscopy with chromotubation. HSG involves the injection of water or oil-based radio opaque iodine dye through the cervix, under fluoroscopic guidance, and has a sensitivity of 53% and a specificity of 87% for tubal pathologies (46% and 95% for bilateral tubal pathologies, respectively)⁸⁵. HSG is useful in ruling out tubal blockage, but has limited diagnostic value for other tubal pathologies, such as peritubal adhesions⁸⁶. HyCoSy is less invasive than HSG and carries no risk of exposure to radiation, and involves the injection of a contrast fluid during a transvaginal ultrasonography to outline the uterine cavity and Fallopian tubes. HyCoSy has a sensitivity of 80% and a specificity of 84% for tubal pathology compared with laparoscopy⁸⁷. Although diagnostic laparoscopy and chromotubation is considered the gold standard for tubal patency assessment, this procedure is invasive and expensive. Laparoscopy and chromotubation is performed under general anaesthesia, allows direct visualization of the entire pelvis and facilitates the detection of, for example, endometriosis and pelvic adhesions (Figure 6). In addition, this procedure allows for surgical interventions such as treatment of endometriosis, adhesiolysis for pelvic adhesions or cannulation for tubal blockage (see Management). Complication occur at a rate of 0.6 per 1,000 laparoscopies and major risks include anaesthetic complications as well as blood vessel and bowel injury⁸⁸.

The choice of tubal tests depends on the presence of risk factors, such as history of pelvic inflammatory disease, or clinical considerations such as BMI and previous abdominal surgery. Tubal patency tests should be scheduled immediately after menses (up to day 12) to avoid disruption of an early undetected pregnancy. These tests are invasive and are associated with risk of infection, therefore, chlamydia screening and prophylactic antibiotic administration where necessary are required.

[H3]Assessment of uterine and peritoneal factors. All women with infertility are offered a transvaginal ultrasonography (TVS) if they have symptoms suggesting underlying pathology⁷⁷. TVS can detect uterine cavity abnormalities, fibroids and adenomyosis, allows visualization of the ovaries (to detect and assess ovarian cysts or endometriomas) and can be used to assess AFC. The accuracy of TVS for detecting

Deleted:

intrauterine lesions varies from 52.6% to 77.2%, but is ~90.6% for uterine malformations^{89, 90}. Saline infusion sonography (SIS, whereby saline is inserted into the uterine cavity to allow visualization of the intra cavity pathology) has a sensitivity of 0.88 and a specificity of 0.94 for detecting all intrauterine abnormalities⁹¹. MRI is superior to ultrasonography for the detection of congenital malformations of the uterus and lower genital tract and might be useful to guide management of fibroids and recto-vaginal endometriosis^{66, 92}.

Diagnostic hysteroscopy is the gold standard procedure for assessing the uterine cavity, and concurrent treatment can be provided for conditions such as endometrial polyps, uterine septum and intrauterine adhesions. The overall complication rate and risk of uterine perforation with diagnostic hysteroscopy is ~0.28% and 0.13%, respectively⁹³. However, there is no evidence that routine hysteroscopy in women before assisted reproduction improves chances of conception^{64, 94}.

[H3] Tests for ovarian reserve.

Ovarian reserve tests can be used to identify women with POF, and are used to identify women at high risk of compromised ovarian function due to increased age (>35 years of age), a family history of early menopause or previous gonadotoxic therapy or ovarian surgery. Tests of ovarian reserve are essentially tests of ovarian responsiveness to exogenous stimulation and can be useful for planning the dose of ovarian stimulation in women who intend to have ART⁹⁵. Common tests of ovarian reserve include levels of FSH, AMH and the AFC. Increased levels of serum FSH during the early follicular phase of the menstrual cycle are associated with reduced ovarian reserve. AMH is secreted by the granulosa cells of pre-antral and small antral follicles (<8 mm), and AMH levels are a more-accurate test of ovarian reserve, as it shows minimal intra and inter cycle variation⁹⁶. However, concerns have been raised about the lack of universal standards for AMH resulting in differences in results based on alternative assays.

The number of ovarian antral follicles (measuring 2–10 mm in diameter) seen in the early follicular phase can be measured by TVS. An AFC of ≥ 12 or ≥ 20 per ovary when measured using a transvaginal transducer with frequencies of 7.5 MHz or 8 MHz, respectively, is used to define polycystic ovarian morphology^{67, 84}, whereas an AFC of ≤ 10 is suggestive of diminished ovarian reserve⁹⁷. A low AFC (3–6 total antral follicles) is a predictor of poor response during IVF⁹⁸. AMH levels and AFC are good predictors of ovarian response to gonadotrophin stimulation during IVF, but are poor at predicting pregnancy⁹⁹.

[H2] Screening and prevention

Prior knowledge regarding fertility, levels of anxiety, previous medical history and cultural pressures are drivers for health-seeking behaviour. In many countries, social-cultural issues, misconceptions and lack of education and/or funds act as barriers and can lead to underestimation of the burden of subfertility¹⁰⁰.

Educational interventions should be directed at improving knowledge of fertility health, which is currently modest. Indeed, one large international study surveyed fertility knowledge in 10,045 people from 79 countries who had been trying to conceive for an average of 2.8 years, and demonstrated an average correct score of 57% on a 13-item correct/incorrect scale of risk factors, misconceptions and basic fertility facts¹⁰¹. Women should be educated to understand the effects of increasing age on decreasing fertility and should be encouraged to check their personal reproductive risk profile¹⁰², with fertility awareness tools to facilitate informed choices about their own fertility health^{20, 103}. Tools are available to provide women with personalised fertility guidance such as FertiSTAT. However, as increased knowledge of fertility problems can be associated with increased anxiety, particularly in younger men and women, psychological approaches are also needed to alleviate possible anxiety caused by fertility information^{104, 105}. In addition, the use of tools tailored to cultural contexts is important to provide education globally¹⁰⁶.

Tubal diseases associated with pelvic infections accounts for up to 35% of female subfertility in many parts of the world¹⁰⁷. Screening, early detection and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, particularly chlamydia and gonococcal infections, are important steps in reducing the long-term complications of these disorders, such as tubal subfertility. In addition, postpartum and post-miscarriage infections can cause tubal damage, and antibiotic prophylaxis should be considered whenever indicated to reduce the risk of infections. Genital tuberculosis continues to be a major cause of tubal and uterine factor subfertility in regions with high burden of the disease such as South and South East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa^{71, 108}, although the early detection and treatment of this condition helps reduce the risk of damage to reproductive organs¹⁰⁹.

Addressing exposure to environmental or lifestyle risk factors for subfertility could be used for prevention of this disorder. Exposure to several environmental toxins, such as dioxin, certain phthalates, pesticides and heavy metals, has been linked to subfertility^{110, 111} and whenever possible, exposure to these toxins should be avoided. In terms of lifestyle factors, smoking and obesity are associated with subfertility¹⁵. The cessation of smoking and the optimization of body weight through health promotion initiatives involving increased awareness and availability of support are integral preventive measures for subfertility, but are not always effective. Fertility preservation is a key preventive measure in women who require chemotherapy and pelvic radiotherapy. In these women, interventions for fertility preservation include cryopreservation of oocyte or embryos, GnRH suppression and laparoscopic ovarian transposition (surgically moving ovaries out of the radiotherapy field) for those women who require pelvic irradiation. A multidisciplinary approach between the treating physician and fertility specialist is key to an effective preventive strategy.

[H1] Management

The initial management of women with subfertility requires explanation of any identified cause of subfertility, the provision of a realistic prognosis (with and without treatment), advice on management options (including non-intervention) and provision of information and support¹¹² (Table 2). The clinician should check that all couples are aware of the basic concepts of fertility such as timed intercourse, and should provide advice as required on lifestyle factors such as smoking, alcohol consumption and weight (Box 2).

[H2] Unexplained subfertility

[H3] Expectant management. The likelihood of unassisted pregnancy for women with unexplained subfertility can be estimated using a prognostic model, such as the Hunault model, which takes several factors into account, including female age, duration of trying to conceive, source of referral (from secondary or tertiary care), sperm motility and the occurrence of previous pregnancy regardless of outcome¹¹³. For couples with a good prognosis (defined by the Hunault model as $\geq 30\%$ chance of spontaneous conception within 1 year), expectant management is appropriate as many couples will conceive without fertility interventions. Indeed, in a prospective cohort study, 60% of women with unexplained subfertility achieved pregnancy without treatment within five years¹¹⁴. However, prognostic models do not indicate when couples should stop expectant management in favour of active treatment. In addition, the currently available models are limited to prediction at the time of diagnosis, and cannot compare the effectiveness of different treatments at multiple points in time¹¹⁵. These models do not take account of other considerations, such as family size.

Dutch fertility guidelines recommend 6-12 months of expectant management for couples with a good prognosis of spontaneous pregnancy, as defined by the Hunault model¹¹⁶. This approach was as effective as starting medically assisted reproduction immediately, and did not compromise ongoing birth rates, in an audit of guideline adherence in 25 clinics¹¹⁷. By comparison, the 2013 NICE guidance in the United Kingdom recommend that IVF is offered to women with unexplained infertility who have not conceived after 2 years of regular unprotected sexual intercourse, which can include up to 1 year before their fertility investigations, and can be shorter in women >36 years or older⁸⁰.

If expectant management is not effective, or in women with a poor prognosis, options for active intervention include hysterosalpingography, intrauterine insemination or IVF, any of which might be the next step depending on prognostic factors, patient preference and treatment availability. All treatment options require a shared-decision making approach¹¹⁸.

[H3] HSG. HSG is a routine test carried out as part of fertility work-up, but might also have a role in the treatment of subfertility. Tubal flushing with an oil-based dye increases pregnancy rates in women with normal fallopian tubes (39.7%), compared with tubal flushing with a water-based dye (29.1%), both of which are well-tolerated^{119, 120}. The mechanism of action of HSG on subfertility is not well understood but might involve altering the immunological environment in the peritoneal cavity to make it more favourable for fertility and/or it may facilitate the passage of oocytes through the fallopian tubes¹²¹. HSG

with lipiodol (an oil-based medium) is associated with subclinical hypothyroidism in a proportion of women and thyroid function testing is recommended before and after this procedure¹²². Whether any type of HSG is superior to expectant management in terms of the chances of conceiving naturally is unclear owing to lack of evidence.

[H3] Intrauterine insemination. Intrauterine insemination (IUI) is widely used as a relatively low-cost and minimally invasive intervention for unexplained subfertility. Spermatozoa isolated from the ejaculate are directly inserted into the uterus at the estimated time of ovulation, either during a natural menstrual cycle or after ovarian stimulation using oral medications such as clomiphene citrate and letrozole or injectable gonadotropins. However, until recently, this intervention had little supporting evidence¹²³. Three randomised controlled trials (RCTs) have compared IUI to expectant management; two trials demonstrated no benefit of IUI^{124,125}, although one trial demonstrated a beneficial result. However, the positive RCT differed from the other trials as it used ovarian stimulation and included women with an unfavourable prognosis and average of four years of infertility (Hunault score <30%). This trial demonstrated that three cycles of IUI are more effective than expectant management, with live birth rates of 31% and 9%, respectively¹²⁶.

Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) is a potential complication of IUI, but the average incidence of PID in a general population of IUD users is only 1.6 events per 1,000 person years¹²⁷. Use of oral ovarian stimulation with IUI might be associated with a small increased risk of multiple pregnancy (6%) and, rarely, of ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome (OHSS)¹²³. The 2013 NICE guidance recommends against use of IUI⁸⁰; however, few clinics use this advice¹²⁸, and some evidence suggests that IUI with ovarian stimulation is a safe and effective treatment for women with unexplained infertility who have an unfavourable prognosis for natural conception.

[H3] IVF. IVF is a fertility treatment whereby mature oocytes are collected from the ovaries, are fertilized by sperm outside the body and the resulting embryo(s) judged to have the best chance of pregnancy are introduced directly into the uterus (Figure 7). A related treatment is in vitro maturation (IVM), whereby immature oocytes are collected and are matured outside the body.

IVF is the mainstay of treatment for women with tubal disease and men with poor sperm quality, but is also frequently used for unexplained subfertility although the evidence supporting the effectiveness of IVF in this population is scant. A Cochrane review found no conclusive evidence that IVF is more effective than expectant management or IUI with ovarian stimulation, in treatment-naive women with unexplained subfertility¹²⁹. Five RCTs compared IVF versus IUI with ovarian stimulation. Four of these included treatment-naive women and found no evidence of a difference between the two treatments. However, one RCT in which all women were pre-treated with IUI and clomiphene demonstrated a higher live birth rate in women who proceeded straight to IVF than in women who received further pretreatment with gonadotrophins and IUI before IVF.¹³⁰ Conversely, one small RCT demonstrated a benefit of IVF compared with expectant management in extensively pre-treated women, but the birth rate in the expectant management arm was very low¹³¹. IVF was more effective than unstimulated IUI^{132,133}.

The success rates of IVF are similar regardless of the cause of subfertility. Reporting and comparing data about the outcomes of IVF is difficult owing to a lack of universally agreed way of reporting and difficulties in accounting for differences between women (for example, age and length of infertility) and in the number of embryos transferred. Data from over 144,000 embryo transfer cycles in European centres in 2013 (including women with all causes of infertility) reported a clinical pregnancy rate of 34.5% per embryo transfer¹³⁴. Single embryos were transferred in 31% of women, whereas two embryos were transferred in 56% of women¹³⁴. In Australia and New Zealand in 2016, 87.7% of cycles transferred one embryo and the overall clinical pregnancy rate was 33% for cycles that reached embryo transfer¹³⁵.

The treatment pathway for IVF is complex, comprising many steps and decision points; each step has alternative clinical approaches, some of which are supported by robust evidence whereas others require more research¹³⁶ (Supplementary Table 1 and Figure 7). Several factors can hinder the success of IVF or can increase the risk of adverse effects, such as smoking, obesity, hydrosalpinx, septate uterus,

Deleted:

Deleted:

endometrial polyps and sub-mucosal fibroids, and should be addressed before IVF starts. Some women do not respond well to the ovarian stimulation drugs and might be described as 'poor ovarian responders'; however there is little agreement about the definition of "poor response" or the best management strategy for these women^{137,138}. Single embryo transfer (SET) during IVF reduces the risk of multiple pregnancies, and a strategy of successive SETs achieves similar outcomes to double embryo transfer but with reduced multiple pregnancy rates¹³⁹. Several factors are important for embryo transfer, including the use of drug regimens to increase the receptivity of the endometrium, timing of embryo transfer, type of transfer catheter and use of ultrasonography for guidance¹³⁶. The retrieval of multiple oocytes after ovarian stimulation the cryopreservation of spare embryos and further embryo transfers, which could avert the need for repeated ovarian stimulation and oocyte retrieval. Pregnancy outcomes similar with frozen embryo transfer and fresh transfer¹⁴⁰.

In both unassisted pregnancy and IVF cycles, implantation is a key step in achieving pregnancy, and accordingly, is often referred to as the 'rate-limiting step'¹⁴¹. If three IVF attempts are unsuccessful, a diagnosis of repeated (or recurrent) implantation failure (RIF) is often made^{142,143}. However, some data suggest that a reliable diagnosis of RIF cannot be made after three IVF cycles, and that diagnosis is likely to be more reliable and cost-effective after six IVF cycles, especially in women with a poor prognosis and in centres with lower IVF success rates¹⁴⁴. Cohort data support a change to the definition of RIF, as the live birth rate associated with the 4th embryo transfer cycle was not significantly different from the rate associated with the 3rd cycle¹³⁵. Women with RIF can be offered further investigations to establish causation, including endometrial receptivity tests, pre-implantation genetic screening, time-lapse imaging and immunological tests, but these tests can be invasive and costly.

[H2] Ovulation disorders

The first line treatment for subfertility in women with PCOS is lifestyle management. Advice can be aligned with recommendations that are applicable to the general population, such as obtaining a healthy weight, smoking cessation, omitting alcohol, performing exercise and management of mental health issues¹⁴⁵. Women with ovulatory disorders who are overweight or obese can be advised to lose weight to improve menstrual regularity¹⁴⁶. Indeed, in one RCT a 6-month weight loss intervention increased the rate of live births conceived within 24 months in obese women who were anovulatory but not in those who were ovulatory¹⁴⁷. A post-hoc analysis demonstrated that among anovulatory women, the likelihood of having a live birth conceived within 24 months of the intervention was 40%¹⁴⁷.

If lifestyle management is not effective, women with anovulatory PCOS and no other subfertility factors should be offered ovulation stimulation, and should be educated about timed intercourse. The first line ovulation induction drug is letrozole, an oral aromatase inhibitor, and is associated with higher rates of ovulation and live births than clomiphene citrate (an oral antioestrogen drug), and possibly with fewer multiple pregnancies^{145,148,149}. If barriers to letrozole use are apparent, such as cost or unavailability, other drugs can be used, such as clomiphene citrate, with or without metformin^{148,150}. Metformin reduces insulin resistance and improves ovulation and pregnancy rates when used in combination with clomiphene citrate, in women with PCOS who do not respond to clomiphene alone⁶⁷. All women should be advised of potential complications associated with ovulation induction agents (such as multiple pregnancy). Women should also be advised if the use of such agents is off-label (though permitted) in countries where this is the case¹⁴⁵. Women who have achieved regular ovulation with oral induction agents can continue this treatment for up to 12 months, as pregnancy and complication rates are acceptable for this time period¹⁵¹. However, prolonged use of ovulation induction agents should be avoided owing to low success rates¹⁴⁵.

A second-line treatment for women who fail to respond to oral induction agents is gonadotrophins, which are injectable drugs¹⁵². Administration of FSH (a type of gonadotrophin) is associated with higher live birth rates than clomiphene citrate (52% versus 41%) but is expensive and requires strict cycle monitoring due to the risk of multiple pregnancies. FSH is administered by daily subcutaneous injection in a chronic low-dose regimen¹⁵³. The addition of IUI to gonadotrophins does not significantly improve the chance of conception in women with anovulatory PCOS¹⁵². Preliminary evidence suggests that metformin might increase the live birth rate in women undergoing ovulation induction with FSH, compared to use of FSH alone¹⁵⁴.

A surgical option for ovulation induction is laparoscopic ovarian surgery, which can be offered to women with PCOS. No difference in pregnancy rates has been demonstrated between laparoscopic ovarian surgery and FSH therapy as second line treatment for women resistant to clomiphene citrate¹⁴⁸. Multiple pregnancy rates are markedly decreased following ovarian surgery compared with gonadotrophins¹⁵⁵. When other ovulation induction therapies have failed, women with PCOS and anovulatory infertility can be offered IVF as a third-line treatment, in the absence of a clear indication for IVF. However, IVF is usually only necessary in women with PCOS who have other factors contributing to subfertility¹⁴⁵

[H2] Fallopian tube disease

Subfertility associated with tubal adhesions may be treated surgically, ideally using laparoscopic techniques to remove adhesions and restore normal anatomy as much as possible. The surgery may be a stand-alone procedure, or may precede IVF. The safety and effectiveness of surgery for tubal subfertility is unknown, as no randomized studies have been conducted. Tubal surgery is associated with higher pregnancy rates in women with mild tubal disease than in those with severe tubal pathology¹⁵⁶. Fertility may be restored in women with restored tubal patency, which might allow for more than one live birth to occur; however, these women have an increased risk of ectopic pregnancy¹⁵⁷.

Bilateral tubal blockage was the original indication for the use of IVF and is considered a first-line intervention for this indication. RCTs are generally considered unnecessary for women with tubal subfertility as the majority of women will have complete tubal blockage and no potential alternative treatment. Tubal surgery (such as salpingectomy or tubal occlusion) improves IVF success rates in women with hydrosalpinges,¹⁵⁸; although the mechanism of action is unknown, it probably involves improvement of implantation by reducing inflammation in the genital tract.

[H3] **Fibroids.** The best way to treat fibroids to enhance fertility is controversial. Most clinical guidelines recommend hysteroscopic myomectomy for symptomatic fibroids International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) types 0 and 1 in women seeking to conceive, and this procedure is also recommended for asymptomatic fibroids by some guidelines⁹². However, a 2015 Cochrane review recommended that studies are needed to prove the effectiveness of this intervention⁶³. A recent review suggests that the decision regarding such surgery can be guided by the location, size and number of fibroids, and by the availability of clinical expertise and equipment¹⁵⁹. Research is in progress on medical therapies (such as selective progesterone receptor modulators) as an alternative or adjunct to surgery for treating fibroids in women seeking fertility, but there is no conclusive evidence in this area¹⁵⁹.

Commented [MOU7]: I thought that there were no studies on this topic

[H3] **Endometriosis.** For women with minimal or mild endometriosis, excision of the lesions improves pregnancy rates in the 9-12 months following surgery (compared with ablation alone), and laparoscopic surgery is more effective than diagnostic laparoscopy¹⁶⁰. In women with endometriosis undergoing ART, a 3 three month course of GnRH agonist improves pregnancy rates.¹⁶⁰ As ovarian surgery may diminish ovarian reserve, the need for surgery should be very carefully considered, especially in the case of recurrent endometriosis. There is no good evidence that medical treatment is effective¹⁶⁰.

[H2] POI

Approximately 5-10% of women with POI have a chance of spontaneous pregnancy, but most will require oocyte donation and IVF¹⁶¹. Oocyte donation involves a woman with good ovarian reserve allowing several of her oocytes to be aspirated, following ovarian stimulation during IVF treatment¹⁶¹. The oocytes are then fertilized and the resulting embryos transferred to the uterus of the prospective mother. Oocyte donation can also be used for women with ovarian failure following chemotherapy or pelvic radiation.

[H1] Quality of life

Quality of life (QOL) and emotional wellbeing are important considerations for the management of subfertility, and supporting women and their partners should be an integral part of fertility care. Although fertility clinic staff share this aim, they often lack the resources, such as time and know-how to do so¹⁶². Guidelines from the European Society for Human Reproduction & Embryology provides helpful tools for clinic staff to optimise patient support (for example, pocket guides, screening tools, patient information leaflets and patient administered interventions)¹⁶³.

The effect of subfertility and associated treatment on wellbeing has been extensively studied using self-report questionnaires about general health and fertility-specific QoL (e.g., FertiQoL¹⁶⁴) and emotional distress (such as anxiety and depression). Subfertility is consistently associated with poorer QoL and higher levels of emotional distress compared with population norms and healthy or gynaecological controls (typically, women attending gynaecology services for non-fertility reasons)¹⁶⁵⁻¹⁶⁷. In addition, the effects of subfertility on emotional distress can persist into pregnancy; women undergoing ARTs report more anxiety about fetal viability and health than women with good fertility^{168,169}, but have a similar rate of postpartum depression¹⁷⁰. Longer-term adjustment to subfertility in longitudinal research (> 10 years) shows positive adjustment for most women¹⁷¹.

The negative effect of subfertility on wellbeing is principally due to the unfulfilled child wish¹⁷¹ but also to the presence of reproductive disease and treatment. The physical aspects of underlying disorders can be stigmatising, painful and emotionally demanding (such as hirsutism and acne in PCOS^{172,173}, and severe pelvic pain and dyspareunia in endometriosis¹⁷⁴), similar to components of treatment such as ovarian stimulation¹⁷⁵, waiting for pregnancy test results¹⁷⁶, and treatment failure¹⁷⁷. Pre-existing psychological disorders¹⁷⁸ and coping through avoidance (such as by avoiding pregnant women) can amplify these effects, whereas perceived partner and social support can be attenuating¹⁷⁹.

Psychosocial interventions has been recommended to support women with subfertility, but consensus about their effect and evaluation has not been reached. The benefits of psychosocial interventions on pregnancy (if any) are likely indirect, via treatment uptake. This benefit has been suggested by evidence that distressed individuals undergo fewer treatments¹⁸⁰, and meta-analyses have demonstrated that emotional distress is not associated with the failure of a single ART cycle¹⁸¹ but is associated with failure in studies with a longer follow-up period¹⁸². Also supportive is the finding that 22% of women discontinue treatment before achieving pregnancy¹⁸³; the most commonly cited reason for discontinuation is the psychological and relationship burden of treatment¹⁸⁴.

Systematic reviews of QoL studies in individuals with infertility are limited by the fact that most of the primary studies include with women undergoing treatment who are from Western countries (in which women may be more resilient and have greater support). A review of population studies shows that clinical populations represent only ~55% of the infertile population in well-developed (Europe, USA) and less well developed (Chile, Gambia, Malawi, India) countries¹⁰. Danish register-based cohort studies show that women undergoing ART have a lower rate of depressive disorder¹⁸⁰ and relationship dissolution than age-matched population reference groups within five years of starting treatment^{167, 180}. Severe social effects, such as social stigma, marital instability and harassment by in-laws are more common and consistently reported in reviews of non-Western¹⁸⁵ than Western samples^{165,166}.

[H1] Outlook

Alongside efforts to improve established ART techniques, we also support three priorities for future research, such as addressing the preventable causes of subfertility, providing support and alternatives for individuals with subfertility, and encouraging new initiatives to increase the global accessibility, affordability and acceptability of ART¹⁸⁶.

[H2] Subfertility in low-income settings

A lack of political interest coupled with the high cost of ART has led to a huge gulf between high-income and low-income countries in the provision of fertility treatment. In these countries, education, prevention, development of low cost interventions and provision of more equitable access to new technologies could be achieved¹⁸⁷.

Given the competing priorities for public funding, coupled with the severe effect of childlessness in developing countries, significant efforts should focus on prevention of subfertility^{185,188}. To this end, subfertility might be resolved in low income countries by improved education and utilisation of existing resources. However, tubal blockage is very common in some areas^{107,189}, most likely secondary to the high prevalence of infectious diseases (such as genital tuberculosis and HIV), maternal sepsis, and unsafe abortion, and in these cases IVF is often the only treatment option. Despite the global expansion of fertility services over the past decade, IVF remains inaccessible in many parts of the world, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa¹⁹⁰. New low-cost initiatives are needed to improve the worldwide accessibility,

affordability and acceptability of IVF and other subfertility treatments¹⁸⁶. Indeed, simplified techniques are being developed to increase the global accessibility of IVF¹⁹¹⁻¹⁹³ and to provide high quality affordable centres in low-income countries that integrate subfertility care (including IVF) within family planning¹⁹⁰.

[H2] Improving diagnosis

Prompt diagnosis of fertility problems is another challenge. One third of women with PCOS had to wait for more than two years to reach a diagnosis, and nearly half had been seen by three or more health professionals in the process, in one international study. Timely diagnosis of PCOS is important, as this facilitates early lifestyle interventions that might prevent subsequent fertility problems¹⁹⁴. There has also been a call for early diagnosis of common reproductive disorders such as endometriosis¹⁹⁵ and uterine fibroids,¹⁵⁹ though few data are available regarding the benefit on fertility outcomes of earlier diagnosis followed by treatment for both conditions. Such conditions often have few or no symptoms to differentiate them, and diagnostic tests are expensive or invasive. No longitudinal studies of increased surveillance for endometriosis or uterine fibroids have been undertaken, making any recommendations about screening or earlier diagnosis difficult to support^{66,92}. Accordingly, greater investment in the research of the prevalence of these conditions and the value of earlier detection is required. In addition, investigation and treatment of non-tubal causes of infertility, such as male infertility, should not be overlooked.

[H2] Improving Prevention

Education is key to preventing subfertility in both high-income and low-income nations, and many young adults lack understanding of the potential limitations of their fertility (and its treatment) and how to optimize their chance conceiving^{101,104,196,197}. Indeed, one randomised controlled trial in Japan showed accelerated birth timing in 12 months following provision of fertility education compared to healthy pregnancy information in partnered individuals¹⁹⁸. Given the steady increase in the median maternal age at first birth, future research should address the potential link between fertility knowledge, treatment beliefs and planning of parenthood. Public health programmes need to raise awareness of the effects on fertility of lifestyle choices, and of practices such as female genital mutilation and consanguineous marriage¹⁰⁶. Increased research is required on effective ways to address lifestyle factors that affect fertility. In addition, some cases of subfertility could be averted by improved education on STI prevention and more comprehensive screening for STIs, including HIV and hepatitis¹⁸⁷. Depending upon local prevalence rates, screening should include STIs, in addition to pregnancy or abortion-related infections and genital tuberculosis. There has been a call for more research into the pathogens responsible for subfertility¹⁹⁹. When subfertility cannot be prevented, more global effort is needed to de-stigmatize childlessness, and to support those – mainly women – who find themselves ostracized within societies where parenthood is socially mandatory^{186,200}.

[H2] ART

[H3] Current ART procedures will continue to improve. Research continues to seek improvements in ART outcomes, including better ways to assess embryo and oocyte quality, refinement and individualisation of stimulation and triggering protocols, optimizing culture media, improvements in ovary, testicular tissue, gamete, and embryo preservation, and techniques for identifying and optimising endometrial receptivity^{201,202}. Treatments are currently lacking that directly target the age-related decline in oocyte quality.

Many ART clinics around the world are currently offering “add-on” interventions including, time-lapse imaging, preimplantation genetic screening, mitochondrial DNA load measurement, and assisted hatching²⁰³⁻²⁰⁵ that may be still in the early stages of development, lack clinical evidence of safety and effectiveness, and are often costly^{205,206}. It could be argued that encouraging women and couples to pay for untested and unproven technologies deprives them of the genuine added chance of pregnancy associated with having more cycles of conventional treatment¹⁸³. In addition, some procedures (such as assisted hatching and preimplantation genetic screening) have been offered in routine clinical practice for more than a decade despite having been demonstrated by RCTs as ineffective or even reducing the likelihood of pregnancy^{205,206}. Thus, it is our view that high quality evidence of the safety and effectiveness of ART interventions should precede, not follow, their introduction in routine clinical practice. Reproductive medicine will benefit from investment in proper evaluation of current and new procedures and finding out what is of true benefit to the patient.

[H3] Safety and ART. ART has several ongoing safety concerns, including the need to reduce multiple pregnancies and OHSS, and to ascertain the outcomes of gamete donation and the long term health of the mother and offspring. Despite good evidence favouring repeated SET over double embryo transfer, and despite improvement in cryopreservation techniques and evidence that frozen transfers are at least as good as fresh transfers¹³⁹, there has been slow uptake of SET in many parts of the world including China, the United States, the United Kingdom and other parts of Europe, and >15% of births following ART are still multiple (Figure 8)²⁰⁷. The UK attempted to improve the uptake of SET by providing a target of <10% for multiple pregnancies but this was abandoned in 2013 following a legal challenge²⁰⁸. Successful strategies to encourage SET uptake have been to provide sufficient funding of ART. If only one IVF cycle is funded or if IVF is self-funded, couples might be less likely to accept SET. Countries with good uptake of SET (for example, Belgium, Sweden, Australia and New Zealand) have relatively generous IVF state funding arrangements and have some of the lowest multiple pregnancy rates (≤5%)^{32,134,207,209}. To reduce the morbidity and mortality of multiple pregnancy rates, governments funding fertility clinics need to consider linking the provision of ART with mandatory SET for the first few cycles. The savings in neonatal, child and maternal health care would more than offset the provision of IVF²¹⁰.

Deleted:

OHSS — a life-threatening complication of ART — has been reducing in prevalence over the past decade, owing to a greater recognition of risk factors and improved management options. Hospital admission for OHSS is relatively rare (0.4% of stimulated cycles in European countries reporting that information in 2013) although there were three deaths in 2012 and two deaths in 2013 in the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology report¹³⁴. Recommendations for further research include appropriately powered, well-conducted RCTs to support the current evidence base for interventions to prevent OHSS, including dose-finding studies and research to determine the optimal timing of interventions²¹¹.

Increased imprinting disorders have been reported in children conceived through IVF and ICSI although there was insufficient evidence of an association between ART and methylation in other imprinted genes²¹².

[H3] Better fertility studies. Long term follow up studies to measure important clinical outcomes in mothers who underwent ART and in their offspring, both in childhood and beyond, are needed²¹³. With the exception of national or large longitudinal studies, most IVF monitoring stops shortly after birth²¹⁴ and in clinical trials, simple outcomes such as birthweight are rarely reported²¹⁵ and later child outcomes are mostly absent²¹⁶. Accordingly, the development of a core outcome set for subfertility trials will improve reporting²¹⁷.

Owing to the increasing use of gamete donation and surrogacy, following the health of donors and the resulting children for physical and psychological health is important²¹⁸. In some parts of the world, notably the United Kingdom, some states in Australia, New Zealand, Netherlands, Sweden and Finland, donors can no longer remain anonymous and must consent to the release of their identity if offspring request it when they reach 18 years of age. In other regions, no disclosure is required or disclosure is prohibited, for example in Spain. In the UK, no children have yet reached the age where they can access information themselves: this will be possible in 2023. However, donors and offspring can find each other in other ways (such as registers). Positive outcomes have been reported, resulting from donor/offspring meetings²¹⁹. A greater understanding about these sometimes complex social issues would be welcome.

Deleted:

[H3] New ART approaches. Radical new approaches in ART include the use of stem cells to create oocytes or sperm, the creation of synthetic embryos, gene-editing, prolonged embryo culture, artificial gametes, and the development of an artificial uterus. Although these are exciting approaches, careful development and evaluation is crucial, as there is a risk that these techniques might progress to clinical use without sufficient attention to safety, effectiveness, and their societal and ethical implications²²⁰. A large Dutch cross-sectional survey of clinicians, subfertile couples and the general public found that such treatments were considered acceptable for six out of eight proposed indications, but that they required regulation, preferably by a national bioethics committee²²¹.

Responsible implementation of novel techniques is particularly important for reproductive medicine, as their effects can potentially affect future generations^{221,222}. The example of the widespread enthusiasm to introduce add-ons before there was evidence of their effectiveness suggests the need for

greater investment in evaluative research. The lack of evidence-based medicine for subfertility may be in part due to strong beliefs, which are often guided by the commercial interests of pharmaceutical companies, device manufacturers and clinics. Individuals undertaking fertility treatment are often not sufficiently knowledgeable in this regard, and leaders in the field have a responsibility to provide them with effective treatments underpinned by quality research. Some individuals have recommended that fertility clinics and national and international bodies have a 'duty of care' to collect "long term data pertaining to the health of any children born as a result of their use"²⁰⁵. Furthermore, doctors and scientists who recommend an unproven procedure to their patients should provide comprehensive information about the lack of evidence on the safety of the intervention on the offspring and "that regulatory bodies should require clinical trials to ensure long-term maternal and neonatal follow-up"²⁰⁵. One issue with informed consent, is that a patient could agree to treatment with a technique of unknown effectiveness, but that the clinician still remains responsible for what he or she does²²³. Unproven procedures should only be offered within properly designed trials.

[H2] Barriers to treatment

Barriers to fertility care are evident world-wide. Women with subfertility in the United States were more likely to receive a medical subfertility evaluation if they were younger, had healthy lifestyle behaviours, a male partner with highly educational attainment and state-mandated insurance coverage for subfertility treatment²²⁴. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, only 57% of women with subfertility reported seeking any medical or professional help and those with lower incomes were less likely to have sought help²²⁵, mirroring the global pattern of infertility medical-help-seeking among subfertile women¹⁰. Other studies have reported that greater affordability of ART is associated with greater ART use²²⁶. In addition, affordability is also a driver of the use of safer ART practices²²⁷. In women who receive interventions for subfertility, many choose to discontinue due to the emotional, relational and physical burden of treatment¹⁸⁴. Therefore better care, organization and support for patients should be a priority. The recent report of an international commission suggests that the affordability of ART could be dramatically improved by the use of cheaper drugs for ovarian stimulation, and simpler laboratory and culture systems for IVF and embryo transfer¹⁸⁷.

Box 1. Male subfertility

Male factor infertility is also a cause of subfertility. The male's contribution to fertility is limited to the production of functional spermatozoa that are capable of fertilizing the oocyte. A decrease in motility (asthenozoospermia) or abnormal morphology (teratozoospermia) of spermatozoa, in addition to the presence of a low number of spermatozoa (oligozoospermia) or the complete absence of spermatozoa in the ejaculate (azoospermia) can lower the chance of pregnancy ²²⁸.

Azoospermia can be caused by an obstruction or absence of the vas deferens (obstructive azoospermia), or reduced or absent sperm production in the testis (non-obstructive azoospermia). Most men with obstructive azoospermia and approximately half of men with non-obstructive azoospermia still have residual spermatogenesis in their testes, which allows for surgical retrieval of spermatozoa for intracytoplasmic sperm injection and subsequent genetic parenthood ²²⁹. If no sperm are available in the testis, donor sperm can be used to establish a pregnancy. Men who have non-obstructive azoospermia and who also do not produce functional spermatozoa in their testis either have a block in meiosis (maturation arrest), a complete absence of germ cells (Sertoli-Cell only syndrome) or a combination of both. Several molecular mechanisms underlie maturation arrest, of which, deletions of small or large parts of the Y-chromosome are the most common detected cause ²³⁰. Such deletions cause the loss of genes that are essential for sperm production. Azoospermia can also be an adverse effect of chemotherapy or local radiotherapy. In such cases, cryopreservation of ejaculated or surgically retrieved spermatozoa before chemotherapy is commonly used to preserve fertility in adult men. In prepubertal boys with cancer in whom spermatozoa cannot be cryopreserved before treatment, the surgical retrieval of testicular tissue to allow for future fertility restoration using testicular transplants or spermatogonial stem cell transplantation is currently under development ²³¹.

Box 2. Lifestyle factors and the management of female subfertility.

The likely benefit of a weight loss programme for improving fertility in women is unclear. One systematic review of weight loss interventions for treating subfertility²³² included six randomized controlled trials (RCTs) reporting pregnancy in subfertile women, and demonstrated a higher rate of pregnancy in women who underwent a combination of reducing diet and exercise (54.8%), compared with standard care (49.9%). However, live birth rates did not differ significantly between the groups (48.9% versus 46.8%). The largest RCT in this systematic review, (which the review authors assessed as having at lowest risk of bias) included 577 women with obesity and infertility, and demonstrated that a 6-month weight loss intervention before fertility treatment did not increase rates of a vaginal birth of a healthy singleton at term within 24 months, compared with immediate IVF^{147, 233}. In this trial, only 38% of participants achieved their target weight loss and 22% discontinued the intervention, and the unassisted pregnancy rate in the intervention group was 26% (versus 16% in controls), suggesting some benefit with weight reduction.

Obese and overweight women with infertility should be encouraged to lose weight, but as no compelling evidence supports the use of weight loss to improve live-birth rates in women undergoing IVF, it may be advisable to start fertility treatment earlier than previously recommended in women who fail to meet weight targets despite their best efforts²³⁴. A healthy weight prior to starting fertility treatment not only improves pregnancy outcomes with or without assisted reproductive technologies (ART), but also reduces maternal and perinatal complications during pregnancy²³⁴. The long-term health of offspring is also a factor, as maternal obesity (that is, a BMI >30kg/m²) is associated with an increased risk of premature death in adult offspring²³⁵. No RCTs have been carried out on the effect of on fertility outcomes of smoking cessation or abstinence from alcohol. A systematic review of preconception lifestyle advice found a single RCT, which examined the effect of advising women with subfertility to stop smoking and found no evidence that this influenced readiness to stop smoking. This RCT did not report fertility outcomes²³⁶. However, animal and observational studies indicate that cigarette smoking impairs all aspects of fertility in women, including ovarian function, fallopian tube function, fertilisation and implantation²³⁷.

Figure 1. The female genital tract and factors that affect fertility. Several steps are required for conception, including the appropriate development and release of a mature oocyte from the ovaries, fertilization by spermatozoa, passage through the fallopian tubes and implantation into the uterus. Aberrant development of sperm (including low sperm count, low motility or low number of sperm with normal morphology) or oocytes (such as caused by anovulation), or the failure of the sperm to reach and fertilize the oocyte (such as due to a blockage, malformation or infection of the female or male genital tracts) prevents the generation of an embryo. The embryo can fail to develop during the preimplantation stages, implant outside of the uterus (ectopic pregnancy) or fail to implant in the uterus. A receptive uterine environment is required for proper embryo implantation and development, including appropriate biophysical conditions (such as temperature and pH) and developmental synchrony between a healthy embryo and a functionally competent endometrium, and a successful molecular dialogue between the two²³⁸⁻²⁴¹. Consequently, uterine abnormalities or fibroids can finally prevent the implanted embryo to develop further. In addition, the cervix needs to be accessible, open and have the right environment to allow for passage, activation and capacitation of sperm. The position of the embryo in the genital tract during each stage of development is unknown and the timings in this figure are an estimation only.

Figure 2. The prevalence of primary infertility in 2010 [Au: I've edited the title of this figure to reduce repetition with the legend, and to ensure that the term 'primary infertility' is used herein, as this is also used in the original paper - OK?]

These data are from women between 20 and 44 years of age with no previous live births, in 2010. A demographic definition of infertility was used in this study, which was based on childlessness after 5 years of unprotected sexual intercourse.

Adapted from³.

Figure 3. Decline in natural fertility with increasing age.

The decline of the ovarian follicle or oocyte pool with increasing age likely dictates the onset of declining fertility, the transition from regular to irregular cycles and the onset of the menopause. Aging is associated with a logarithmic decline in the number of ovarian follicles. Simultaneous to a reduction in oocyte number with increasing age, there is a decrease in oocyte quality. In this figure, reduced oocyte quality is reflected by an increased percentage of embryos with aneuploidies. Reproduced and adapted from de Bruin JP, te Velde ER, in Tulandi and Gosden RG (eds) Preservation of Fertility. London UK.

Taylor and Francis p3, 2004 and JM Franasiak Fertil Steril. 2014 doi: 10.1016/j.fertnstert.2013.11.004.

Commented [AL8]: Please add these two references into the list using your reference manager

Figure 4. The ovarian and menstrual cycle

Follicular stimulating hormone (FSH) is mildly raised at the start of the menstrual cycle and promotes the growth of the follicles. Luteinising hormone (LH) rises one to two days after the FSH and in a natural cycle ensures ovulation. Progesterone is released following ovulation and rises until the corpus luteum starts to degenerate, and has a role in preparing the endometrium for implantation. Estradiol is secreted by maturing follicle stimulated by gonadotrophins (FSH and LH). The very high levels at the end of the late follicular phase of menstruation are responsible for the LH surge required for ovulation to occur. Basal body temperature rises by 0.2 °C approximately 24 hours after ovulation. The endometrium changes from the proliferative under the influence of rising estradiol levels to secretory in the post ovulation luteal phase under the influence of progesterone and enables implantation. If no pregnancy occurs, then the progesterone levels fall and menstruation commences.

Figure 5. Investigations for subfertility.

The baseline investigations for subfertility consist of tests for confirming ovulation and transvaginal ultrasonography for female and semen analysis for male partner. Tubal patency tests are advised for suspected tubal diseases whereas hormonal tests (for example, serum prolactin, follicle stimulating hormone (FSH) and luteinizing hormone (LH) levels) are advised for suspected ovulatory dysfunction. For suspected uterine abnormalities, 2D ultrasonography is the first line investigation, whereas women at risk of diminished ovarian reserve are offered ovarian reserve tests (e.g. AMH). AFC- antral follicle count; AMH- anti mullerian hormone. CAT – chlamydia antibody test; DHEAS – dehydroepiandrosterone sulphate; HSG- hysterosalpingography; HyCoSy- hysterosalphino-contrast-sonography; MRI –magnetic

resonance imaging; SIS- saline infusion sonography; TSH- Thyroid stimulating hormone; TFT – thyroid function test; TVUS – transvaginal ultrasonography.

Figure 6. Assessment of tubal patency.

Pelvic images during laparoscopy :A| normal pelvic anatomy. B| Pelvic inflammatory disease with bilateral hydrosalpinges (complete tubal blockage). C| Pelvic endometriosis with right ovarian endometrioma and adhesions. Adapted from Manual of Gynecological Laparoscopic Surgery. Authors Luca Mencaglia, Arnaud Wattiez. Edition illustrated. Publisher Endo-Press, 2006.

Figure 7. IVF procedure.

Gonadotrophins are given to stimulate the growth of ovarian follicles and gonadotrophin releasing hormone (GnRH) agonists are given to suppress the natural menstrual cycle and down-regulate the pituitary gland (step 1). GnRH antagonists are an alternative to GnRH agonists as they are not associated with hypoestrogenic adverse effects, flare-up, or a long down-regulation period and can be used at any time during the follicular phase; both regimens have similar live birth rates²⁴². During the ovulation stimulation phase, regular monitoring by ultrasonography (with or without blood tests) is undertaken to assess the growth of the ovarian follicles and to avoid ovarian hyperstimulation²⁴³. When the follicles have reached an appropriate size, final maturation of the oocytes is induced (ovulation triggering). Human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG) is commonly used as a trigger, but can negatively affect endometrial receptivity and embryo quality, and increase rates of ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome (OHSS). An alternative, is the agonist trigger which is given if there is an increased risk of OHSS. Oocytes are collected, usually with a transvaginal ultrasonography probe for guidance, under general or local anaesthetic with sedation (step 2). Oocytes and sperm are combined in a petri dish for fertilisation (IVF) or alternatively, intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ISCI) can be used when sperm concentration and motility is low (step 3). The fertilised oocyte, now called a preimplantation embryo, is cultured for 2-6 days in vitro (step 4). From the pool of available embryos, one (on occasion, two) embryo is selected for transfer (step 5). Supernumerary embryos of good quality are cryopreserved and can be thawed and transferred one-by-one if pregnancy was not established after fresh embryo transfer or if the couple desires an additional child. Drugs such as progesterone or human chorionic gonadotropin are administered for luteal support, to improve the likelihood of implantation and pregnancy and are usually stopped at 12 weeks' gestation²⁴⁴.

Figure 8. SET and birth outcomes.

The proportion of assisted reproductive technology (ART) cycles using single embryo transfer (SET) has increased since 2004 (not shown); during the same timeframe, the multiple pregnancy rate has reduced.

Table 1. WHO classification of anovulation^a

WHO classification	Cause	Examples	Hormonal alteration
Type I	Hypothalamic-pituitary failure	Low body weight, Excessive exercise	Low levels of circulating gonadotropins and serum estradiol
Type II	Hypothalamic - pituitary - ovarian axis dysfunction	Polycystic ovarian syndrome	Normal levels of circulating gonadotropins and serum estradiol
Type III	Ovarian failure	Premature ovarian failure	High levels of circulating gonadotrophin and low levels of serum estradiol

^a Advances in methods of fertility regulation: report of a WHO scientific group. *World Health Organization technical report series* 527, 1 (1973)

Table 2: Options for fertility treatments [\[Au: references for display items need to be included in the main reference list; as all of the references in this table were included in the main list, I've managed to copy them into this table on your behalf so you don't need to do this. However, I've added a query after each reference I have added - please check them all carefully to ensure they are all correct!\] THANKS! I will check when cleaning up the references next week, in case they jump around JM](#)

Category	Unexplained infertility	Anovulation or PCOS	Tubal Factors, Endometriosis or Fibroids	Advanced age , diminished ovarian reserve and POI
Early management options	<p>Use a locally applicable prediction model for natural conception E.g. (using Hunault model ¹¹³)</p> <p>If prediction score $\geq 30\%$ then continue trying for unassisted pregnancy for up to 3yrs plus risk reduction ²⁰ [Au: ref OK? See Janes comment I THINK THIS IS THE WRONG REF AND THAT IT IS 113]</p> <p>If prediction score $< 30\%$ then consider 3 cycles of intrauterine insemination with oral ovarian stimulation ¹²⁶ [Au: ref OK?] .</p>	<p>Ovulation induction with oral agents (up to 12 cycles) ¹⁵¹ [Au: ref OK?]</p>	<p>Fibroids</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Merits of surgery are uncertain. Consider hysteroscopic myomectomy ^{63, 92} [Au: refs OK?] • More severe disease: Fertility outcomes uncertain: decide about surgery on considerations of pain rather than fertility ⁹² [Au: ref OK?] <p>Endometriosis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal disease: surgical excision of lesions ¹⁶⁰. [Au: ref OK?] • If undergoing ART, pretreat with 3 months of GnRH agonist ¹⁶⁰. [Au: ref OK?] 	N/A
Second line early management options	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ovulation induction with gonadotroph in ¹⁵¹ [Au: ref OK?] 	N/A	N/A

Commented [JB9]: Reference 9 was a linked recommendation when advised to continue trying for unassisted pregnancy. The recommendation is that couples should identify and address lifestyle behaviours that compromise fertility

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laparoscopic ovarian drilling for women who do not ovulate at maximum daily dose of clomiphene citrate ¹⁵⁵ [Au: ref OK?] 		
Assisted Reproduction	IVF	IVF (third-line) ¹⁴⁵ [Au: ref OK?]	IVF with and without GnRH analogues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced age or diminished ovarian reserve : IVF POI : Oocyte or embryo donation ¹⁶¹ [Au: ref OK?]

GnRH, gonadotropin-releasing hormone; IVF; in-vitro fertilization; PCOS, polycystic ovarian syndrome. POI, primary ovarian insufficiency; WES World Endometriosis Society EFI Endometriosis Fertility Index. (Johnson et al 2017)

Prediction model <https://www.freya.nl/probability.php>

References

1. Zegers-Hochschild, F. *et al.* The International Glossary on Infertility and Fertility Care, 2017. *Fertil. Steril.* **108**, 393-406 (2017).
2. Zegers-Hochschild, F. *et al.* International Committee for Monitoring Assisted Reproductive Technology (ICMART) and the World Health Organization (WHO) revised glossary of ART terminology, 2009. *Fertility and Sterility* **92**, 1520-1524 (2009).
3. Mascarenhas, M. N., Flaxman, S. R., Boerma, T., Vanderpoel, S. & Stevens, G. A. National, Regional, and Global Trends in Infertility Prevalence Since 1990: A Systematic Analysis of 277 Health Surveys. *Plos Medicine* **9**, e1001356 (2012).
4. <http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/infertility/multiple-definitions/en/>.
5. Shaw, J. L. V., Dey, S. K., Critchley, H. O. D. & Horne, A. W. Current knowledge of the aetiology of human tubal ectopic pregnancy. *Human reproduction update* **16**, 432-444 (2010).
6. van der Steeg, J W *et al.* Pregnancy is predictable: a large-scale prospective external validation of the prediction of spontaneous pregnancy in subfertile couples. *Human Reproduction* **22**, 536-542 (2007).
7. Ray, A., Shah, A., Gudi, A. & Homburg, R. Unexplained infertility: an update and review of practice. *Reproductive Biomedicine Online* **24**, 591-602 (2012).
8. Oakley, L., Doyle, P. & Maconochie, N. Lifetime prevalence of infertility and infertility treatment in the UK: results from a population-based survey of reproduction. *Human Reproduction* **23**, 447-450 (2008).
9. Greil, A. L., McQuillan, J., Lowry, M. & Shreffler, K. M. Infertility treatment and fertility-specific distress: A longitudinal analysis of a population-based sample of US women. *Soc. Sci. Med.* **73**, 87-94 (2011).
10. Boivin, J., Bunting, L., Collins, J. A. & Nygren, K. G. International estimates of infertility prevalence and treatment-seeking: potential need and demand for infertility medical care. *Human Reproduction* **22**, 1506-1512 (2007).
11. Gurunath, S., Pandian, Z., Anderson, R. A. & Bhattacharya, S. Defining infertility-a systematic review of prevalence studies. *Hum. Reprod. Update* **17**, 575-588 (2011).
12. Snick, H. K. A., Snick, T. S., Evers, J. L. H. & Collins, J. A. The spontaneous pregnancy prognosis in untreated subfertile couples: the Walcheren primary care study. *Human Reproduction* **12**, 1582-1588 (1997).
13. te Velde, E. R., Eijkemans, R. & Habbema, H. D. F. Variation in couple fecundity and time to pregnancy, an essential concept in human reproduction. *Lancet* **355**, 1928-1929 (2000).
14. Evers, J. L. H. Female subfertility. *Lancet* **360**, 151-159 (2002).
15. Homan, G. F., Davies, M. & Norman, R. J. The impact of lifestyle factors on reproductive performance in the general population and those undergoing infertility treatment: a review. *Hum. Reprod. Update* **13**, 209-223 (2007).

16. Stephen, E. H., Chandra, A. & King, R. B. Supply of and demand for assisted reproductive technologies in the United States: clinic- and population-based data, 1995-2010. *Fertil. Steril.* **105**, 451-458 (2016).
17. Chandra, A., Copen, C. E. & Stephen, E. H. Infertility and impaired fecundity in the United States, 1982-2010: data from the National Survey of Family Growth. *National health statistics reports*, 1 (2013).
18. Bhattacharya, S. *et al.* The epidemiology of infertility in the North East of Scotland. *Human Reproduction* **24**, 3096-3107 (2009).
19. Hakim, R. B., Gray, R. H. & Zacur, H. Alcohol and caffeine consumption and decreased fertility. *Fertil. Steril.* **70**, 632-637 (1998).
20. Bunting, L. & Boivin, J. Development and preliminary validation of the fertility status awareness tool: FertiSTAT. *Human Reproduction* **25**, 1722-1733 (2010).
21. Pak, V. M., Powers, M. & Liu, J. Occupational Chemical Exposures Among Cosmetologists Risk of Reproductive Disorders. *Workplace Health & Safety* **61**, 522-528 (2013).
22. Eijkermans, M. J. C. *et al.* Too old to have children? Lessons from natural fertility populations. *Human Reproduction* **29**, 1304-1312 (2014).
23. https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/SF_2_3_Age_mothers_childbirth.pdf.
24. http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/fertility-rates/indicator/english_8272fb01-en.
25. van Noord-Zaadstra, B. M. *et al.* Delaying childbearing: effect of age on fecundity and outcome of pregnancy. *British Medical Journal* **302**, 1361-1365 (1991).
26. Tulandi, T. & Gosden, R. G. in *Preservation of fertility* (Taylor & Francis, 2004).
27. Broekmans, F. J., Soules, M. R. & Fauser, B. C. Ovarian Aging: Mechanisms and Clinical Consequences. *Endocrine Reviews* **30**, 465-493 (2009).
28. Wilcox, A. J., Weinberg, C. R. & Baird, D. D. Timing of Sexual Intercourse in Relation to Ovulation -- Effects on the Probability of Conception, Survival of the Pregnancy, and Sex of the Baby. *The New England Journal of Medicine* **333**, 1517-1521 (1995).
29. Hodgen, G. D. The dominant ovarian follicle. *Fertility and Sterility* **39**, 54-73 (1983).
30. Hansen, K. R. *et al.* A new model of reproductive aging: the decline in ovarian non-growing follicle number from birth to menopause. *Human Reproduction* **23**, 699-708 (2008).
31. Iliodromiti, S., Kelsey, T. W., Wu, O., Anderson, R. A. & Nelson, S. M. The predictive accuracy of anti-Müllerian hormone for live birth after assisted conception: a systematic review and meta-analysis of the literature. *Human reproduction update* **20**, 560-570 (2014).
32. 2015 Assisted Reproductive Technology: National Summary and Fertility Clinic Success Rates Reports;2017 ASI 4204-23.1. *US Dept of Health and Human Services* (2017).

33. Harman, D. Aging: a theory based on free radical and radiation chemistry. *Journal of gerontology* **11**, 298-300 (1956).
34. D T Armstrong. Environmental stress and ovarian function. *Biology of Reproduction* **34**, 29-39 (1986).
35. Polani, P. E. & Crolla, J. A. A test of the production line hypothesis of mammalian oogenesis. *Human genetics* **88**, 64-70 (1991).
36. Henderson, S. A. & Edwards, R. G. Chiasma Frequency and Maternal Age in Mammals. *Nature* **218**, 22-28 (1968).
37. Hassold, T. & Hunt, P. To err (meiotically) is human: the genesis of human aneuploidy. *Nature Reviews Genetics* **2**, 280-291 (2001).
38. van Echten-Arends, J. *et al.* Chromosomal mosaicism in human preimplantation embryos: a systematic review. *Human Reproduction Update* **17**, 620-627 (2011).
39. Nakagawa, S. & FitzHarris, G. Intrinsically Defective Microtubule Dynamics Contribute to Age-Related Chromosome Segregation Errors in Mouse Oocyte Meiosis-I. *Current Biology* **27**, 1040-1047 (2017).
40. Kalmbach, K. H., M.S *et al.* Telomeres and human reproduction. *Fertility and Sterility* **99**, 23-29 (2013).
41. Keefe, D. L., Marquard, K. & Liu, L. The telomere theory of reproductive senescence in women. *Current opinion in obstetrics & gynecology* **18**, 280-285 (2006).
42. May-Panloup, P. *et al.* Ovarian ageing: the role of mitochondria in oocytes and follicles. *Human Reproduction Update* **22**, 725-743 (2016).
43. López-Otín, C., Blasco, M. A., Partridge, L., Serrano, M. & Kroemer, G. The hallmarks of aging. *Cell* **153**, 1194-1217 (2013).
44. Ziebe, S. *et al.* Embryo quality and developmental potential is compromised by age. *Acta Obstetricia et Gynecologica Scandinavica* **80**, 169-174 (2001).
45. Mantikou, E., Wong, K. M., Repping, S. & Mastenbroek, S. Molecular origin of mitotic aneuploidies in preimplantation embryos. *BBA - Molecular Basis of Disease* **1822**, 1921-1930 (2012).
46. Schieve, L. A., Tatham, L., Peterson, H. B., Toner, J. & Jeng, G. Spontaneous abortion among pregnancies conceived using assisted reproductive technology in the United States. *Obstetrics & Gynecology* **101**, 959-967 (2003).
47. Andersen, A. N., Wohlfahrt, J., Christens, P., Olsen, J. & Melbye, M. Maternal age and fetal loss: population based register linkage study. *BMJ* **320**, 1708-1712 (2000).
48. Vissenberg, R. *et al.* Pathophysiological aspects of thyroid hormone disorders/thyroid peroxidase autoantibodies and reproduction. *Human reproduction update* **21**, 378-387 (2015).
49. Azziz, R. *et al.* Polycystic ovary syndrome. *Nature Reviews Disease Primers* **2**, 16057 (2016).

50. Glintborg, D., Hass Rubin, K., Nybo, M., Abrahamsen, B. & Andersen, M. Morbidity and medicine prescriptions in a nationwide Danish population of patients diagnosed with polycystic ovary syndrome. *European journal of endocrinology* **172**, 627-638 (2015).
51. Folsom, L. J., MD & Fuqua, J. S., MD. Reproductive Issues in Women with Turner Syndrome. *Endocrinology and Metabolism Clinics* **44**, 723-737 (2015).
52. Noto, V., Harrity, C., Walsh, D. & Marron, K. The impact of FMR1 gene mutations on human reproduction and development: a systematic review. *J Assist Reprod Genet* **33**, 1135-1147 (2016).
53. Collins, J. *et al.* Genetic aspects of female reproduction. *Human Reproduction Update* **14**, 293-307 (2008).
54. Adegoke, A. A., Anthony, E., Olumide, A. B., Folake, O. & Idowu, A. A. Hysterosalpingographic Tubal Abnormalities in Retroviral (HIV) Positive and Negative Infertile Females. *Journal of clinical and diagnostic research : JCDR* **7**, 35 (2013).
55. Somigliana, E. *et al.* Management of Endometriosis in the Infertile Patient. *Seminars in reproductive medicine* **35**, 31-37 (2017).
56. Tomassetti, C. & D'Hooghe, T. Endometriosis and infertility: Insights into the causal link and management strategies. *Best Practice & Research Clinical Obstetrics & Gynaecology* **51**, 25-33 (2018).
57. Ana Maria Sanchez *et al.* Is the oocyte quality affected by endometriosis? A review of the literature. *Journal of Ovarian Research* **10**, 1-11 (2017).
58. <https://www.acog.org/Clinical-Guidance-and-Publications/Committee-Opinions/Committee-on-Adolescent-Health-Care/Mullerian-Agenesis-Diagnosis-Management-and-Treatment>.
59. Beth W Rackow & Aydin Arici. Reproductive performance of women with müllerian anomalies. *Current opinion in obstetrics & gynecology* **19**, 229-237 (2007).
60. Airoidi, J., Berghella, V., Sehdev, H. & Ludmir, J. Transvaginal ultrasonography of the cervix to predict preterm birth in women with uterine anomalies. *Obstetrics and gynecology* **106**, 553-556 (2005).
61. Ma, S., Bian, X. & Lang, J. Pregnancy and its outcome in women with malformed uterus. *Zhonghua yi xue za zhi* **81**, 415 (2001).
62. Propst, A. & Hill III, J. Anatomic Factors Associated with Recurrent Pregnancy Loss. *Semin Reprod Med* **18**, 341-350 (2000).
63. Bosteels, J. *et al.* Hysteroscopy for treating subfertility associated with suspected major uterine cavity abnormalities. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* **2**, CD009461 (2015).
64. Smit, J. G. *et al.* Hysteroscopy before in-vitro fertilisation (inSIGHT): a multicentre, randomised controlled trial. *Lancet* **387**, 2622-2629 (2016).

65. Esteves, S. C. & Chan, P. A systematic review of recent clinical practice guidelines and best practice statements for the evaluation of the infertile male. *Int. Urol. Nephrol.* **47**, 1441-1456 (2015).
66. Hirsch, M. *et al.* Diagnosis and management of endometriosis: a systematic review of international and national guidelines. *BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology* **125**, 556-564 (2018).
67. Teede, H. J. *et al.* Recommendations from the international evidence-based guideline for the assessment and management of polycystic ovary syndrome. *Fertility and Sterility* **110**, 364-379 (2018).
68. Thonneau, P. *et al.* Incidence and Main Causes of Infertility in a Resident Population (1850000) of 3 French Regions (1988-1989). *Human Reproduction* **6**, 811-816 (1991).
69. Huggins GR, C. V. Fertility after contraception or abortion. *Fertility and Sterility* **54**, 559-573 (1990).
70. Nielsen, S. N. *et al.* A 10-year follow up of reproductive function in women treated for childhood cancer. *Reproductive Biomedicine Online* **27**, 192-200 (2013).
71. Sharma, J. *et al.* Laparoscopic findings in female genital tuberculosis. *Arch Gynecol Obstet* **278**, 359-364 (2008).
72. Marston, M. *et al.* The effects of HIV on fertility by infection duration: evidence from African population cohorts before antiretroviral treatment availability. *AIDS* **31**, S76 (2017).
73. Inhorn, Marcia C., Ph.D.|Kobeissi, Loulou, Dr.P.H.|Nassar, Zaher, M.D.|Lakkis, Da'ad, M.D.|Fakih, Michael H., M.D. Consanguinity and family clustering of male factor infertility in Lebanon. *Fertility and Sterility* **91**, 1104-1109 (2009).
74. Seher, Tanja|Thiering, Elisabeth|al Azemi, Majdah|Heinrich, Joachim|Schmidt-Weber, Carsten B.|Kivlahan, Coleen|Gutermuth, Jan|Fatemi, Human M. Is parental consanguinity associated with reduced ovarian reserve? *Reproductive BioMedicine Online* **31**, 427-433 (2015).
75. Yildiz, B. O., Bolour, S., Woods, K., Moore, A. & Azziz, R. Visually scoring hirsutism. *Human Reproduction Update* **16**, 51-64 (2010).
76. Michael T. Sheehan. Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome: Diagnosis and Management. *Clinical Medicine & Research* **2**, 13-27 (2004).
77. Armstrong, S. C. *et al.* Baseline anatomical assessment of the uterus and ovaries in infertile women: a systematic review of the evidence on which assessment methods are the safest and most effective in terms of improving fertility outcomes. *Hum. Reprod. Update* **23**, 533-547 (2017).
78. Lynch, K. E. *et al.* Assessment of anovulation in eumenorrheic women: comparison of ovulation detection algorithms. *Fertil. Steril.* **102**, U252 (2014).
79. Moglia, M., Nguyen, H., Chyjek, K., Chen, K. & Castaño, P. Evaluation of Smartphone Menstrual Cycle Tracking Applications Using an Adapted APPLICATIONS Scoring System. *Obstetrics & Gynecology* **127**, 1153-1160 (2016).

80. O'Flynn, N. Assessment and treatment for people with fertility problems: NICE guideline. *The British journal of general practice : the journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners* **64**, 50-51 (2014).
81. Ecochard, R. *et al.* Sensitivity and specificity of ultrasound indices of ovulation in spontaneous cycles. *European Journal of Obstetrics Gynecology and Reproductive Biology* **91**, 59-64 (2000).
82. Guermandi, E. *et al.* Reliability of ovulation tests in infertile women. *Obstet. Gynecol.* **97**, 92-96 (2001).
83. Behre, H. M. *et al.* Prediction of ovulation by urinary hormone measurements with the home use ClearPlan (R) Fertility Monitor: comparison with transvaginal ultrasound scans and serum hormone measurements. *Human Reproduction* **15**, 2478-2482 (2000).
84. Fauser, B C J M *et al.* Revised 2003 consensus on diagnostic criteria and long-term health risks related to polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). *Human Reproduction* **19**, 41-47 (2004).
85. Broeze, K. A. *et al.* Are patient characteristics associated with the accuracy of hysterosalpingography in diagnosing tubal pathology? An individual patient data meta-analysis. *Hum. Reprod. Update* **17**, 293-300 (2011).
86. Mol, B. W., Swart, P., Bossuyt, P. M., van Beurden, M. & van der Veen, F. Reproducibility of the interpretation of hysterosalpingography in the diagnosis of tubal pathology. *Human reproduction (Oxford, England)* **11**, 1204-1208 (1996).
87. Tanawattanacharoen, S., Suwajanakorn, S., Uerpaiojkit, B., Boonkasemsanti, W. & Virutamasen, P. Transvaginal hysterosalpingo-contrast sonography (HyCoSy) compared with chromolaparoscopy. *J. Obstet. Gynaecol. Res.* **26**, 71-5 (2000).
88. Harkki-Siren, P., Sjoberg, J. & Kurki, T. Major complications of laparoscopy: A follow-up Finnish study. *Obstet. Gynecol.* **94**, 94-98 (1999).
89. Aboulghar, M. M., Shoeir, I. K., Momtaz, M., El Mohammady, M. & Ezzat, H. A comparative study of 2-dimensional sonohysterography versus 3-dimensional sonohysterography in infertile patients with uterine cavity lesions and abnormalities. *Middle East Fertility Society Journal* **16**, 67-71 (2011).
90. Ludwin, A., Pitynski, K., Ludwin, I., Banas, T. & Knafel, A. Two- and Three-Dimensional Ultrasonography and Sonohysterography versus Hysteroscopy With Laparoscopy in the Differential Diagnosis of Septate, Bicornuate, and Arcuate Uteri. *Journal of Minimally Invasive Gynecology* **20**, 90-99 (2013).
91. Seshadri, S., El-Toukhy, T., Douiri, A., Jayaprakasan, K. & Khalaf, Y. Diagnostic accuracy of saline infusion sonography in the evaluation of uterine cavity abnormalities prior to assisted reproductive techniques: a systematic review and meta-analyses. *Hum. Reprod. Update* **21**, 262-274 (2015).
92. Stewart, E. A. *et al.* Uterine fibroids. *Nature Reviews Disease Primers* **2**, UNSP 16043 (2016).
93. Jansen, F. W. *et al.* Complications of hysteroscopy: A prospective, multicenter study. *Obstet. Gynecol.* **96**, 266-270 (2000).

94. Tarek El-Toukhy *et al.* Hysteroscopy in recurrent in-vitro fertilisation failure (TROPHY): a multicentre, randomised controlled trial. *The Lancet* **387**, 2614-2621 (2016).
95. Diagnostic evaluation of the infertile female: a committee opinion. *Fertility and Sterility* **103**, e50 (2015).
96. La Marca, A. *et al.* Anti-Müllerian hormone (AMH) as a predictive marker in assisted reproductive technology (ART). *Human Reproduction Update* **16**, 113-130 (2010).
97. Kline, J., Kinney, A., Kelly, A., Reuss, M. L. & Levin, B. Predictors of antral follicle count during the reproductive years. *Human Reproduction* **20**, 2179-2189 (2005).
98. Hendriks, D. J., Mol, B. J., Bancsi, L. F. J. M. M., te Velde, E. R. & Broekmans, F. J. M. Antral follicle count in the prediction of poor ovarian response and pregnancy after in vitro fertilization: A meta-analysis and comparison with basal follicle-stimulating hormone level. *Fertility and Sterility* **83**, 291-301 (2005).
99. Broer, S. L. *et al.* Added value of ovarian reserve testing on patient characteristics in the prediction of ovarian response and ongoing pregnancy: an individual patient data approach. *Hum. Reprod. Update* **19**, 26-36 (2013).
100. White, L., McQuillan, J., Greil, A. L. & Johnson, D. R. Infertility: Testing a helpseeking model. *Social Science & Medicine* **62**, 1031-1041 (2006).
101. Bunting, L., Tsibulsky, I. & Boivin, J. Fertility knowledge and beliefs about fertility treatment: findings from the International Fertility Decision-making Study. *Human Reproduction* **28**, 385-397 (2013).
102. Boivin, J., Bunting, L. & Gameiro, S. Cassandra's prophecy: a psychological perspective. Why we need to do more than just tell women. *Reproductive biomedicine online* **27**, 11 (2013).
103. Karin Hammarberg *et al.* Development of a health promotion programme to improve awareness of factors that affect fertility, and evaluation of its reach in the first 5 years. *Reproductive Biomedicine & Society Online* **4**, 33-40 (2017).
104. Boivin, J. *et al.* An experimental evaluation of the benefits and costs of providing fertility information to adolescents and emerging adults. *Human reproduction (Oxford, England)* **33**, 1247-1253 (2018).
105. Maeda, E. *et al.* Effects of fertility education on knowledge, desires and anxiety among the reproductive-aged population: findings from a randomized controlled trial. *Human reproduction (Oxford, England)* **31**, 2051-2060 (2016).
106. Bayoumi, R.R., van der Poel, S., El Samani, E. Z. and Boivin, J. An evaluation of comprehensiveness, feasibility and acceptability of a fertility awareness educational tool in Sudan and Middle East. *Reproductive biomedicine & Society*. (2018).
107. Dun, E. C. & Nezhat, C. H. Tubal factor infertility: diagnosis and management in the era of assisted reproductive technology. *Obstetrics and gynecology clinics of North America* **39**, 551 (2012).
108. World Health Organization. Global tuberculosis report 2018. (2018).

109. Jai Bhagwan Sharma *et al.* Effect of Antitubercular Therapy on Endometrial Function in Infertile Women with Female Genital Tuberculosis. *Infectious Disorders - Drug Targets* **16**, 101-108 (2016).
110. Buck Louis, G. M. *et al.* Heavy metals and couple fecundity, the LIFE Study. *Chemosphere* **87**, 1201-1207 (2012).
111. Buck Louis, G. M. *et al.* Urinary bisphenol A, phthalates, and couple fecundity: the Longitudinal Investigation of Fertility and the Environment (LIFE) Study. *Fertility and sterility* **101**, 1359 (2014).
112. Cahill, D. J. & Wardle, P. G. Management of infertility. *Br. Med. J.* **325**, 28-32 (2002).
113. Hunault, C. C. *et al.* Two new prediction rules for spontaneous pregnancy leading to live birth among subfertile couples, based on the synthesis of three previous models. *Human Reproduction* **19**, 2019-2026 (2004).
114. Brandes, M. *et al.* Unexplained infertility: overall ongoing pregnancy rate and mode of conception. *Human Reproduction* **26**, 360-368 (2011).
115. van Eekelen, R. *et al.* Constructing the crystal ball: how to get reliable prognostic information for the management of subfertile couples. *Human Reproduction* **32**, 2153-2158 (2017).
116. <http://www.nvog-documenten.nl/uploaded/docs/Landelijke%20netwerkrichtlijn%20Subfertiliteit%20def.pdf>.
117. Kersten, F. A. M. *et al.* Tailored expectant management in couples with unexplained infertility does not influence their experiences with the quality of fertility care. *Human reproduction (Oxford, England)* **31**, 108-116 (2016).
118. Elwyn, G. *et al.* Shared Decision Making: A Model for Clinical Practice. *Journal of General Internal Medicine* **27**, 1361-1367 (2012).
119. Dreyer, K. *et al.* Oil-Based or Water-Based Contrast for Hysterosalpingography in Infertile Women. *N. Engl. J. Med.* **376**, 2043-2052 (2017).
120. Mohiyiddeen, L. *et al.* Tubal flushing for subfertility. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, CD003718 (2015).
121. Izumi, G. *et al.* Oil-Soluble Contrast Medium (OSCM) for Hysterosalpingography Modulates Dendritic Cell and Regulatory T Cell Profiles in the Peritoneal Cavity: A Possible Mechanism by Which OSCM Enhances Fertility. *Journal of Immunology* **198**, 4277-4284 (2017).
122. Kaneshige, T. *et al.* Changes in Serum Iodine Concentration, Urinary Iodine Excretion and Thyroid Function After Hysterosalpingography Using an Oil-Soluble Iodinated Contrast Medium (Lipiodol). *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism* **100**, E472 (2015).
123. Veltman-Verhulst, S. M., Hughes, E., Ayeleke, R. O. & Cohlen, B. J. Intra-uterine insemination for unexplained subfertility. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, CD001838 (2016).

124. Bhattacharya, S. *et al.* Clomifene citrate or unstimulated intrauterine insemination compared with expectant management for unexplained infertility: pragmatic randomised controlled trial. *Br. Med. J.* **337**, a716 (2008).
125. Steures, P. *et al.* Intrauterine insemination with controlled ovarian hyperstimulation versus expectant management for couples with unexplained subfertility and an intermediate prognosis: a randomised clinical trial. *Lancet* **368**, 216-221 (2006).
126. Farquhar, C. M. Intrauterine insemination with clomifene citrate versus expectant management for unexplained infertility (TUI): a pragmatic, open-label, randomised, controlled, two centre trial. *Lancet* **17**, 32406-6 (2017).
127. Hubacher, D. Intrauterine devices & infection: review of the literature. *The Indian journal of medical research* **140 Suppl**, 53 (2014).
128. Kim, D., Child, T. & Farquhar, C. Intrauterine insemination: a UK survey on the adherence to NICE clinical guidelines by fertility clinics. *BMJ open* **5**, e007588 (2015).
129. Pandian, Z., Gibreel, A. & Bhattacharya, S. In vitro fertilisation for unexplained subfertility. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, CD003357 (2015).
130. Reindollar, Richard H., M.D.|Regan, Meredith M., Sc.D.|Neumann, Peter J., Sc.D.|Levine, Bat-Sheva, M.D.|Thornton, Kim L., M.D.|Alper, Michael M., M.D.|Goldman, Marlene B., Sc.D. A randomized clinical trial to evaluate optimal treatment for unexplained infertility: the fast track and standard treatment (FASTT) trial. *Fertility and Sterility* **94**, 888-899 (2010).
131. Hughes, E. G. *et al.* A multicentre randomized controlled trial of expectant management versus IVF in women with Fallopian tube patency. *Human reproduction (Oxford, England)* **19**, 1105-1109 (2004).
132. Goverde, A. J. *et al.* Intrauterine insemination or in-vitro fertilisation in idiopathic subfertility and male subfertility: a randomised trial and cost-effectiveness analysis. *The Lancet* **355**, 13-18 (2000).
133. Elzeiny, H. *et al.* A randomised controlled trial of intra- uterine insemination versus in vitro fertilisation in patients with idiopathic or mild male infertility. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* **54**, 156-161 (2014).
134. Calhaz-Jorge, C. *et al.* Assisted reproductive technology in Europe, 2013: results generated from European registers by ESHRE dagger The European IVF-monitoring Consortium (EIM)(double dagger) for the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology (ESHRE). *Human Reproduction* **32**, 1957-1973 (2017).
135. Fitzgerald O, Paul RC, Harris K, Chambers GM. Assisted reproductive technology in Australia and New Zealand 2016. (2018).
136. Farquhar, C., Rishworth, J. R., Brown, J., Nelen, Willianne L D M & Marjoribanks, J. Assisted reproductive technology: an overview of Cochrane Reviews. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, CD010537 (2015).

137. Humaidan, P., Alviggi, C., Fischer, R. & Esteves, S. C. The novel POSEIDON stratification of 'Low prognosis patients in Assisted Reproductive Technology' and its proposed marker of successful outcome. *F1000Research* **5**, 2911 (2016).
138. Ferraretti, A. P. *et al.* ESHRE consensus on the definition of 'poor response' to ovarian stimulation for in vitro fertilization: the Bologna criteria. *Human Reproduction* **26**, 1616-1624 (2011).
139. Pandian, Z., Marjoribanks, J., Ozturk, O., Serour, G. & Bhattacharya, S. Number of embryos for transfer following in vitro fertilisation or intra-cytoplasmic sperm injection. *The Cochrane database of systematic reviews*, CD003416 (2013).
140. Wong, K. M., van Wely, M., Mol, F., Repping, S. & Mastenbroek, S. Fresh versus frozen embryo transfers in assisted reproduction. *Cochrane database of systematic reviews (Online)* **2017** (2017).
141. Su, R. & Fazleabas, A. T. Implantation and Establishment of Pregnancy in Human and Nonhuman Primates. *Regulation of Implantation and Establishment of Pregnancy in Mammals: Tribute to 45 Year Anniversary of Roger V.Short's Maternal Recognition of Pregnancy* **216**, 189-213 (2015).
142. Coughlan, C. *et al.* Recurrent implantation failure: definition and management. *Reproductive biomedicine online* **28**, 14 (2014).
143. Polanski, L. T. *et al.* What exactly do we mean by 'recurrent implantation failure'? A systematic review and opinion. *Reproductive biomedicine online* **28**, 409-423 (2014).
144. Somigliana, E. *et al.* Repeated implantation failure at the crossroad between statistics, clinics and over-diagnosis. *Reproductive Biomedicine Online* **36**, 32-38 (2018).
145. Teede H, Misso M, Costello M, Dokras A, Laven J, Moran L, Piltonen T, Norman R. International evidence-based guideline for the assessment and management of polycystic ovary syndrome . <https://www.monash.edu/medicine/sphpm/mchri/pcos/guideline> (2018).
146. Moran, L. J. *et al.* Dietary composition in the treatment of polycystic ovary syndrome: a systematic review to inform evidence-based guidelines. *Hum. Reprod. Update* **19**, 432 (2013).
147. van Oers, A. M. *et al.* Cost-effectiveness analysis of lifestyle intervention in obese infertile women. *Human Reproduction* **32**, 1418-1426 (2017).
148. Wang, R. *et al.* Treatment strategies for women with WHO group II anovulation: systematic review and network meta-analysis. *Bmj-British Medical Journal* **356**, j138 (2017).
149. Franik, S., Eltrop, S. M., Kremer, J. A., Kiesel, L. & Farquhar, C. Aromatase inhibitors (letrozole) for subfertile women with polycystic ovary syndrome. *The Cochrane database of systematic reviews* **5**, CD010287 (2018).
150. Morley, L. C., Tang, T., Yasmin, E., Norman, R. J. & Balen, A. H. Insulin-sensitising drugs (metformin, rosiglitazone, pioglitazone, D-chiro-inositol) for women with polycystic ovary syndrome, oligo amenorrhoea and subfertility. *The Cochrane database of systematic reviews* **11**, CD003053 (2017).

151. Weiss, N. S. *et al.* Gonadotrophins versus clomifene citrate with or without intrauterine insemination in women with normogonadotropic anovulation and clomifene failure (M-OVIN): a randomised, two-by-two factorial trial. *The Lancet* **391**, 758-765 (2018).
152. Weiss, N. S. *et al.* Gonadotrophins for ovulation induction in women with polycystic ovarian syndrome. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, CD010290 (2015).
153. Homburg, R. & Howles, C. M. Low-dose FSH therapy for anovulatory infertility associated with polycystic ovary syndrome: rationale, results, reflections and refinements. *Human reproduction update* **5**, 493 (1999).
154. Bordewijk, E. M. *et al.* Metformin during ovulation induction with gonadotrophins followed by timed intercourse or intrauterine insemination for subfertility associated with polycystic ovary syndrome. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, CD009090 (2017).
155. Farquhar, C., Brown, J. & Marjoribanks, J. Laparoscopic drilling by diathermy or laser for ovulation induction in anovulatory polycystic ovary syndrome. *The Cochrane database of systematic reviews*, CD001122 (2012).
156. Tran, D. Can open tubal microsurgery still be helpful in tubal infertility treatment? *Gynecol Surg* **7**, 385-400 (2010).
157. Ankum, W. M., Mol, B. W. J., Van der Veen, F. & Bossuyt, P. M. M. Risk factors for ectopic pregnancy: a meta-analysis. *Fertility and Sterility* **65**, 1093-1099 (1996).
158. Johnson, N., van Voorst, S., Sowter, M. C., Strandell, A. & Mol, B. W. J. Surgical treatment for tubal disease in women due to undergo in vitro fertilisation. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, CD002125 (2010).
159. Donnez, J., Arriagada, P., Donnez, O. & Dolmans, M. Emerging treatment options for uterine fibroids. *Expert opinion on emerging drugs* **23**, 17-23 (2018).
160. Brown, J. & Farquhar, C. Endometriosis: an overview of Cochrane Reviews. *The Cochrane database of systematic reviews*, CD009590 (2014).
161. Nelson, L. M. Primary Ovarian Insufficiency. *The New England Journal of Medicine* **360**, 606-614 (2009).
162. Boivin, J., Bunting, L., Koert, E., Ieng, U. C. & Verhaak, C. M. Perceived challenges of working in a fertility clinic: a qualitative analysis of work stressors and difficulties working with patients. *Human Reproduction* **32**, 403-408 (2017).
163. Gameiro, S. *et al.* ESHRE guideline: routine psychosocial care in infertility and medically assisted reproduction—a guide for fertility staff. *Human reproduction (Oxford, England)* **30**, 2476-2485 (2015).
164. Boivin, J., Takefman, J. & Braverman, A. The Fertility Quality of Life (FertiQoL) tool: development and general psychometric properties. *Fertil. Steril.* **96**, U479 (2011).
165. Luk, B. H. & Loke, A. Y. The Impact of Infertility on the Psychological Well-Being, Marital Relationships, Sexual Relationships, and Quality of Life of Couples: A Systematic Review. *J. Sex Marital Ther.* **41**, 610-625 (2015).

166. Chachamovich, J. R. *et al.* Investigating quality of life and health-related quality of life in infertility: a systematic review. *Journal of Psychosomatic Obstetrics and Gynecology* **31**, 101-110 (2010).
167. MV Martins, D Vassard, CO Hougaard, L Schmidt. The impact of ART on union dissolution: a register-based study in Denmark 1994–2010. *Human Reproduction* **23**, 434-40 (2018).
168. Hammarberg, K., Fisher, J. R. W. & Wynter, K. H. Psychological and social aspects of pregnancy, childbirth and early parenting after assisted conception: a systematic review. *Hum. Reprod. Update* **14**, 395-414 (2008).
169. Gourounti, K. Psychological stress and adjustment in pregnancy following assisted reproductive technology and spontaneous conception: A systematic review. *Women Health* **56**, 98-118 (2016).
170. Ross, L. E., McQueen, K., Vigod, S. & Dennis, C. Risk for postpartum depression associated with assisted reproductive technologies and multiple births: a systematic review. *Human reproduction update* **17**, 96-106 (2011).
171. Gameiro, S. *et al.* Do children make you happier? Sustained child-wish and mental health in women 11-17 years after fertility treatment. *Human Reproduction* **29**, 2238-2246 (2014).
172. Veltman-Verhulst, S. M., Boivin, J., Eijkemans, M. J. C. & Fauser, Bart J C M. Emotional distress is a common risk in women with polycystic ovary syndrome: a systematic review and meta-analysis of 28 studies. *Hum. Reprod. Update* **18**, 638-651 (2012).
173. Li, Y. *et al.* Polycystic ovary syndrome is associated with negatively variable impacts on domains of health-related quality of life: evidence from a meta-analysis. *Fertil. Steril.* **96**, 452-458 (2011).
174. Jia, S., Leng, J., Shi, J., Sun, P. & Lang, J. Health-related quality of life in women with endometriosis: a systematic review. *Journal of Ovarian Research* **5**, 29 (2012).
175. de Klerk, C. *et al.* The psychological impact of mild ovarian stimulation combined with single embryo transfer compared with conventional IVF. *Human Reproduction* **21**, 721-727 (2006).
176. Boivin, J. & Lancaster, D. Medical waiting periods: imminence, emotions and coping. *Women's health (London, England)* **6**, 59-69 (2010).
177. Milazzo, A. *et al.* Depression and Anxiety Outcomes Associated with Failed Assisted Reproductive Technologies: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Plos One* **11**, e0165805 (2016).
178. Verhaak, C. M. *et al.* Women's emotional adjustment to IVF: a systematic review of 25 years of research. *Hum. Reprod. Update* **13**, 27-36 (2007).
179. Rockliff, H. E. *et al.* A systematic review of psychosocial factors associated with emotional adjustment in in vitro fertilization patients. *Hum. Reprod. Update* **20**, 594-613 (2014).

180. Sejbaek, C. S., Hageman, I., Pinborg, A., Hougaard, C. O. & Schmidt, L. Incidence of depression and influence of depression on the number of treatment cycles and births in a national cohort of 42 880 women treated with ART. *Human Reproduction* **28**, 1100-1109 (2013).
181. Boivin, J., Griffiths, E. & Venetis, C. A. Emotional distress in infertile women and failure of assisted reproductive technologies: meta-analysis of prospective psychosocial studies. *Br. Med. J.* **342**, d223 (2011).
182. Matthiesen, S. M. S., Frederiksen, Y., Ingerslev, H. J. & Zachariae, R. Stress, distress and outcome of assisted reproductive technology (ART): a meta-analysis. *Human Reproduction* **26**, 2763-2776 (2011).
183. Gameiro, S., Verhaak, C. M., Kremer, J. A. M. & Boivin, J. Why we should talk about compliance with assisted reproductive technologies (ART): a systematic review and meta-analysis of ART compliance rates. *Human Reproduction Update* **19**, 124-135 (2013).
184. Gameiro, S., Boivin, J., Peronace, L. & Verhaak, C. M. Why do patients discontinue fertility treatment? A systematic review of reasons and predictors of discontinuation in fertility treatment. *Human Reproduction Update* **18**, 652-669 (2012).
185. van Balen, F. & Bos, H. M. W. The social and cultural consequences of being childless in poor-resource areas. *Facts, views & vision in ObGyn* **1**, 106-21 (2009).
186. Inhorn, M. C. & Patrizio, P. Infertility around the globe: new thinking on gender, reproductive technologies and global movements in the 21st century. *Hum. Reprod. Update* **21**, 411-426 (2015).
187. Starrs, A. M. *et al.* Accelerate progress—sexual and reproductive health and rights for all: report of the Guttmacher–Lancet Commission. *The Lancet* **391**, 2642-2692 (2018).
188. Pennings, G. Ethical issues of infertility treatment in developing countries. *Human Reproduction* **2008**, 15-20 (2008).
189. Cates, W., Farley, T. M. M. & Rowe, P. J. WORLDWIDE PATTERNS OF INFERTILITY: IS AFRICA DIFFERENT? *The Lancet* **326**, 596-598 (1985).
190. Gerrits, T. *et al.* Infertility in the Global South: Raising awareness and generating insights for policy and practice. *Facts Views and Vision in Obgyn* **9**, 39-44 (2017).
191. Van Blerkom, J. *et al.* First births with a simplified culture system for clinical IVF and embryo transfer. *Reproductive Biomedicine Online* **28**, 310-320 (2014).
192. Ferraretti, A. P., Gianaroli, L., Magli, M. C. & Devroey, P. Mild ovarian stimulation with clomiphene citrate launch is a realistic option for in vitro fertilization. *Fertil. Steril.* **104**, 333-338 (2015).
193. Ombelet, W. & Goossens, J. Global reproductive health - Why do we persist in neglecting the undeniable problem of childlessness in resource-poor countries? *Facts Views and Vision in Obgyn* **9**, 1-3 (2017).

194. Gibson-Helm, M., Teede, H., Dunaif, A. & Dokras, A. Delayed diagnosis and a lack of information associated with dissatisfaction in women with polycystic ovary syndrome. *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism* **102**, 604-612 (2017).
195. Gordts, S., Puttemans, P., Gordts, S. & Brosens, I. Ovarian endometrioma in the adolescent: a plea for early-stage diagnosis and full surgical treatment. *Gynecological surgery* **12**, 21-30 (2015).
196. Sorensen, N. O. *et al.* Fertility awareness and attitudes towards parenthood among Danish university college students. *Reproductive Health* **13**, 146 (2016).
197. Abiodun, O., Alausa, K. & Olasehinde, O. Ignorance could hurt: an assessment of fertility awareness, childbirth intentions and parenting attitudes among university students. *Int. J. Adolesc. Med. Health* (2016).
198. Maeda, E., Boivin, J., Toyokawa, S., Murata, K. & Saito, H. Two-year follow-up of a randomized controlled trial: knowledge and reproductive outcome after online fertility education. *Human reproduction (Oxford, England)* **33**, 2035-2042 (2018).
199. Tsevat, D. G., Wiesenfeld, H. C., Parks, C. & Peipert, J. F. Sexually transmitted diseases and infertility. *Obstet. Gynecol.* **216**, 1-9 (2017).
200. Cui, W. Mother or nothing: the agony of infertility. *Bull. World Health Organ.* **88**, 881-882 (2010).
201. Casper, R., Haas, J., Hsieh, T., Bassil, R. & Mehta, C. Recent advances in in vitro fertilization. *F1000Research* **6**, 1616 (2017).
202. Vinolas, C. *et al.* Medical techniques of fertility preservation in the male and female. *Journal of Visceral Surgery* **155**, S9 (2018).
203. Twisk, M. *et al.* Preimplantation genetic screening for abnormal number of chromosomes (aneuploidies) in in vitro fertilisation or intracytoplasmic sperm injection. *The Cochrane database of systematic reviews*, CD005291 (2006).
204. Armstrong, S., Arroll, N., Cree, L. M., Jordan, V. & Farquhar, C. Time-lapse systems for embryo incubation and assessment in assisted reproduction. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, CD011320 (2015).
205. Harper, J. *et al.* Adjuncts in the IVF laboratory: where is the evidence for 'add-on' interventions? *Human Reproduction* **32**, 485-491 (2017).
206. Heneghan, C. *et al.* Lack of evidence for interventions offered in UK fertility centres. *BMJ* **355**, i6295 (2016).
207. Multiple Pregnancies Following Assisted Conception. *BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology* **125**, e18 (2018).
209. Maheshwari, A., Griffiths, S. & Bhattacharya, S. Global variations in the uptake of single embryo transfer. *Human reproduction update* **17**, 107-120 (2011).

210. Ledger, W. L., Anumba, D., Marlow, N., Thomas, C. M. & Wilson, E. C. The costs to the NHS of multiple births after IVF treatment in the UK. *BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology* **113**, 21-25 (2006).
211. Mourad S, Brown J, Farquhar C. Interventions for the prevention of OHSS in ART cycles: an overview of Cochrane reviews. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* (2017).
212. Lazaraviciute, G., Kauser, M., Bhattacharya, S., Haggarty, P. & Bhattacharya, S. A systematic review and meta-analysis of DNA methylation levels and imprinting disorders in children conceived by IVF/ICSI compared with children conceived spontaneously. *Human reproduction update* **20**, 840-852 (2014).
213. Shankaran, S., M.D. Outcomes from infancy to adulthood after assisted reproductive technology. *Fertility and Sterility* **101**, 1217-1221 (2014).
214. Davies, M. J. *et al.* Reproductive technologies and the risk of birth defects. *The New England journal of medicine* **366**, 1803 (2012).
215. Kleijkers, S. H. M. *et al.* Influence of embryo culture medium (G5 and HTF) on pregnancy and perinatal outcome after IVF: a multicenter RCT. *Human reproduction (Oxford, England)* **31**, 2219-2230 (2016).
216. Wilkinson, J., Roberts, S. A., Showell, M., Brison, D. R. & Vail, A. No common denominator: a review of outcome measures in IVF RCTs. *Human Reproduction* **31**, 2714-2722 (2016).
217. Duffy J *et al.* The development of a core outcome set for infertility trials (COMMIT). *Hum Reprod Open* (2018).
218. Raes, I., Ravelingien, A. & Pennings, G. The right of the donor to information about children conceived from his or her gametes. *Human reproduction (Oxford, England)* **28**, 560-565 (2013).
219. Jadv, V., Freeman, T., Kramer, W. & Golombok, S. Sperm and oocyte donors' experiences of anonymous donation and subsequent contact with their donor offspring. *Human reproduction (Oxford, England)* **26**, 638-645 (2011).
220. Bredenoord, A. L. & Hyun, I. Ethics of stem cell- derived gametes made in a dish: fertility for everyone? *EMBO Molecular Medicine* **9**, 396-398 (2017).
221. Hendriks, S., Dancet, E. A. F., Vliegthart, R. & Repping, S. The acceptability of stem cell-based fertility treatments for different indications. *Mol. Hum. Reprod.* **23**, 855-863 (2017).
222. Hendriks, S., Vliegthart, R., Repping, S. & Dancet, E. A. F. Broad support for regulating the clinical implementation of future reproductive techniques. *Human Reproduction* **33**, 39-46 (2018).
223. Dondorp, W. & de Wert, G. Innovative reproductive technologies: risks and responsibilities. *Human Reproduction* **26**, 1604-1608 (2011).
224. Farland, L. V. *et al.* Who receives a medical evaluation for infertility in the United States? *Fertil. Steril.* **105**, 1274-1280 (2016).

225. Datta, J. *et al.* Prevalence of infertility and help seeking among 15 000 women and men. *Human reproduction (Oxford, England)* **31**, 2108-2118 (2016).
226. Chambers, Georgina M., Ph.D., M.B.A., B.App.Sci.|Hoang, Van Phuong, Ph.D., M.P.P., B.Econ.|Sullivan, Elizabeth A., M.D., M.P.H., M.Med., M.B.B.S.|Chapman, Michael G., M.B.B.S.|Ishihara, Osamu, M.D., Ph.D.|Zegers-Hochschild, Fernando, M.D.|Nygren, Karl G., M.D., Ph.D.|Adamson, G. David, M.D. The impact of consumer affordability on access to assisted reproductive technologies and embryo transfer practices: an international analysis. *Fertility and Sterility* **101**, 198.e4 (2014).
227. Hamilton, B. H. & McManus, B. The effects of insurance mandates on choices and outcomes in infertility treatment markets . *Health Economics* **21**, 994-1016 (2012).
228. Cooper, T. G. in *WHO laboratory manual for the examination and processing of human semen* , Geneva, 2010).
229. Cissen, M. *et al.* Prediction model for obtaining spermatozoa with testicular sperm extraction in men with non-obstructive azoospermia. *Human reproduction (Oxford, England)* **31**, 1934-1941 (2016).
230. Liesbeth Visser & Sjoerd Repping. Unravelling the genetics of spermatogenic failure. *Reproduction* **139**, 303-307 (2010).
231. Struijk, R. B., Mulder, C. L., van der Veen, F., van Pelt, Ans M. M & Repping, S. Restoring Fertility in Sterile Childhood Cancer Survivors by Autotransplanting Spermatogonial Stem Cells: Are We There Yet? *BioMed Research International* **2013**, 1-12 (2013).
232. Best, D., Avenell, A. & Bhattacharya, S. How effective are weight-loss interventions for improving fertility in women and men who are overweight or obese? A systematic review and meta-analysis of the evidence. *Human reproduction update* **23**, 681-705 (2017).
233. van Oers, A. M. *et al.* Effectiveness of lifestyle intervention in subgroups of obese infertile women: a subgroup analysis of a RCT. *Human Reproduction* **31**, 2704-2713 (2016).
234. Norman, R. J. & Mol, B. W. J. Successful weight loss interventions before in vitro fertilization: fat chance? *Fertility and Sterility* **110**, 581-586 (2018).
235. Reynolds, R. M. *et al.* Maternal obesity during pregnancy and premature mortality from cardiovascular event in adult offspring: follow-up of 1 323 275 person years. *BMJ : British Medical Journal* **347**, f4539 (2013).
236. Anderson, K., Norman, R. J. & Middleton, P. Preconception lifestyle advice for people with subfertility. *The Cochrane database of systematic reviews*, CD008189 (2010).
237. Hart, R. J. Physiological Aspects of Female Fertility: Role of the Environment, Modern Lifestyle, and Genetics. *Physiol. Rev.* **96**, 873-909 (2016).
238. Galliano, D., Bellver, J., Díaz-García, C., Simón, C. & Pellicer, A. ART and uterine pathology: how relevant is the maternal side for implantation? *Human reproduction update* **21**, 13-38 (2015).

239. Shapiro, Bruce S|Daneshmand, Said T|Desai, Jyoti|Garner, Forest C|Aguirre, Martha|Hudson, Cynthia. the risk of embryo-endometrium asynchrony increases with maternal age after ovarian stimulation and IVF. *Reproductive BioMedicine Online* **33**, 50-55 (2016).

240. Ng, K. Y. B., Mingels, R., Morgan, H., Macklon, N. & Cheong, Y. In vivo oxygen, temperature and pH dynamics in the female reproductive tract and their importance in human conception: a systematic review. *Human reproduction update* **24**, 15-34 (2018).

241. Berkhout, R. *et al.* High-quality human preimplantation embryos actively influence endometrial stromal cell migration. *J Assist Reprod Genet* **35**, 659-667 (2018).

242. Farquhar, C. *et al.* Management of ovarian stimulation for IVF: narrative review of evidence provided for World Health Organization guidance. *Reproductive Biomedicine Online* **35**, 3-16 (2017).

243. Kwan, I., Bhattacharya, S., Kang, A. & Woolner, A. Monitoring of stimulated cycles in assisted reproduction (IVF and ICSI). *The Cochrane database of systematic reviews*, CD005289 (2014).

244. Linden, M. v. d., Buckingham, K., Farquhar, C., Kremer, J. A. M. & Metwally, M. Luteal phase support for assisted reproduction cycles. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* **7**, Cd009154 (2015).