

Q&A – update from Guy Gudex

9th April 2020

Kia ora koutou,

I wanted to touch base to let you know that all the Repromed staff have you at the centre of our thoughts. We are working hard from our collective bubbles at home, to plan for the moment when we can get back to providing our personalised service to you.

For those whose treatments have been disrupted or delayed by the COVID-19 lockdown, we really appreciate how this has caused so much extra distress for you. We want to assure you that you are at the top of our priorities when treatments resume.

Thank you for your questions, this update is to provide answers to many of those queries and provide new information regarding anticipated service levels ongoing and funding provisions.

Q&A

- **Will fertility treatment resume once the Covid-19 Alert Level is reduced from Level 4 to 3?** Current indications are that we will be able to commence new treatment cycles once we shift to Level 3. This is great news. Under Alert Level 4, fertility clinics have continued with virtual consultations and early pregnancy care and only provided ongoing care for fertility preservation such as prior to cancer treatment.
- **How will Repromed safely be able to provide treatments at Alert Level 3?** We will operate with suitable precautions, including pre-arrival screening of patients, maintaining social distancing in waiting areas, spacing appointment times, use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Some travel restrictions may still be in place, so extra precautions may be required for regional patients. Essentially, it means we will be delivering a service but it may look a little different to what you could have been used to.
- **Are you advocating for fertility services to be considered 'essential'?** It's fair to say that no fertility clinic or patient would dispute that fertility treatment is an essential service within New Zealand. Globally however, there is united agreement that the provision of fertility services during the most severe lockdown phase of a pandemic is unfortunately not in the best safety interests of patients, staff, the community or a burdened health system. Access to adequate PPE and demand on clinical staff are two of the many reasons for this.
- **Will there be a huge wait for treatment after the restrictions are lifted?** Over the past week, our clinical, nursing, counselling and scientific teams, have been busy planning innovative ways to operate at maximum capacity, while taking essential safety precautions within an Alert Level 3. This will include extending our normal hours of operation for instance so some of our staff can work in separate shifts. I feel confident

we will be doing everything possible to effectively and fairly manage the scheduling of patients, in the time leading up to a confirmed start date. What I anticipate at this stage, is that there will be a unified approach between NZ clinics to offer IVF/ICSI, Frozen Embryo Transfers (FET), Intrauterine Insemination (IUI), Donor Insemination (DI) cycles and Ovulation Induction (OI) during Level 3.

- **How will you prioritise who gets treatment first?** We will be prioritising our group of clients who were immediately disrupted by the Alert Level 4 lockdown, regardless of whether they were undergoing private or publicly funded treatment.
- **Will the lockdown make the public funding wait list longer?** Indications at this stage are that it looks like strong leadership and compliance of New Zealanders during this lockdown are effectively curbing this pandemic. If we are successful in transitioning from Alert Level 4 to Level 3 promptly as planned, I have every confidence that the impact on the current waiting list for publicly funded treatment at Repromed (12-15 months) should be minimal - weeks rather than months.
- **Are you anticipating any issues with IVF medicines or supply when you start back up?** We have been in contact with all our key culture media, plastic-ware, PPE and fertility drug suppliers who have reassured us that there is currently no issue with expiry dates and stocks. We have also explored alternative options should any delivery issues arise.

- **What about further testing requirements such as Karyotyping, AMHs and radiology?** We are in constant contact with the organisations that provide these tests and have seen that all of these tests are still continuing to be performed but in more of a batched way so that the length of time it takes to get the result may be slightly delayed. The staff at those facilities have been working under extra pressure at this time which we appreciate.
- **Is Repromed still offering early pregnancy monitoring during the lockdown?** Yes, pregnancy care is considered an essential service and we continue to offer this support.

I wish you all the very best during this challenging time. Please keep referring to the Repromed website and Facebook for the latest updates - there are further decisions being made next week so we will have more to share then. Please know that our doctors, nurses, embryologists and counsellors are here for you, if you have questions or require support.

Nga mihi nui,
Dr Guy Gudex
Medical Director