



Person-centred care for ART clinics



This Guidance was developed by the Victorian Assisted Reproductive Treatment Authority (VARTA) to help assisted reproductive treatment (ART) services provide the best possible care.

Person-centred care is respectful of - and responsive to - the preferences, needs and values of patients, as well as those supporting them. This is what person-centred care can look like for ART clinics.

A comfortable, inclusive environment that protects privacy

- Clinic spaces that are welcoming for all patient groups, including single people, LGBTQIA+ patients, donors, and those returning after many failed cycles. This could mean diverse images on brochures and forms with appropriate options.
- Processes to protect people's private information at reception, and before and after treatment procedures. Private information includes the outcome of egg and sperm collection procedures and laboratory results.
- Interpreter services and translated information for linguistically diverse patients.
- Scheduling calls with patients about sensitive information so they can be prepared to communicate in a suitable private space.

Thorough information delivered in multiple ways

Patients value face-to-face consultations with adequate time for questions and written information to understand the complexities of treatment. Use diagrams, graphs and other ways of presenting complex information. Printed information should cover:

- The available treatment options and potential risks and benefits.
- The chance of success considering a person or couple's personal circumstances.
- The high chance that multiple cycles may be needed for a reasonable chance of success.
- Comprehensive information about out-of-pocket costs.
- The evidence base for novel treatments or add-ons if offered.
- Systems for patients to access information about their treatment plan, appointments, medication and test results in a timely, streamlined manner.
- Contacts for patients to ask questions of during treatment, including out of business hours.
- Clear instructions for how a patient can provide feedback and make a complaint.

Continuity of care

Patients like continuity of care and building relationships with staff who know them and understand their circumstances. Explore the possibility of:

- One fertility specialist dedicated to consultations and procedures for a patient, with early communication to patients if that specialist is unavailable for a component of their care.
- Setting patients' expectations about communication from multiple people. For example, explaining to patients who will contact them and when during a cycle.
- Clear instructions for who patients can contact and when, so they always have an option available to them.
- Follow up discussions with patients to provide support and information about next steps regardless of their treatment outcomes.



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Emotional support for patients

Fertility treatment can be stressful and many patients say the emotional burden prompts them to stop treatment. Consider reducing this stress by:

- Giving patients the option of creating a support plan with a counsellor before the start of treatment. It can be updated to reflect their changing needs.
- Informing patients about internal and external psychological support options.
- Providing appropriate referral pathways in complex cases, including advice about obtaining a mental health plan from a GP.
- Creating a duty counsellor system for patients with urgent needs.
- Ensuring counselling remains available to patients for up to a year after treatment.

Systems to deliver person-centred care and train staff

Exceptional person-centred care requires leadership, training and systems to support it. This could include:

- Leaders prioritising and promoting person-centred care and leading by example.
- The appointment of a staff member to develop strategies and manage a cohesive program of person-centred care initiatives.
- Adequate staffing to ensure interactions with patients are not rushed.
- Ongoing training, education and support for staff so they have the skills and resources to deliver high quality person-centred care. This includes cultural awareness training and gender and sexual diversity training.
- Continual encouragement of staff to improve their patients' experience.
- Acknowledgement of successes and rewarding individuals and teams for contributions and effort to enhance person-centred care.
- Processes to listen to patient feedback and complaints so you can act on them quickly.
- Surveying patients at least annually to measure their experience and clinic performance over time.

| Potential benefits for patients | Potential benefits for staff | Potential benefits for clinics |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased satisfaction and emotional wellbeing. • Enhanced ability for self-care. • Better understanding of and compliance with treatment protocols. • Higher chance of continuing treatment until a viable pregnancy is achieved. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer complaints from patients. • Increased job satisfaction. • Less stress and more pride in their job. • Increased engagement and retention. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More patients persisting with treatment. • More positive patient reviews and recommendations to others. • Fewer negative reviews. |