Across the board people don’t want to let go of the condom. It’s a ‘belt and braces’ approach to lowering transmission risk says Gileece, and there are huge tenofovir or Truvada to be taken before and after unprotected sex, at the most fertile time of the cycle.

Dr Yvonne Gileece, reports that Brighton has experienced an increasing demand for requests to conceive naturally. Now Brighton and Birmingham Heartlands are providing 1-2 doses of either tenofovir or Truvada to be taken before and after unprotected sex, at the most fertile time of the cycle.

The decision to use a fertility clinic for a sero-different couple in the UK can be a world of whispers and can be coloured by a individual clinician’s viewpoint. ‘It is inexcusable for doctors to be hidebound in their thinking and not to be up to date with the evidence,’ says James Douthett, a trainer in reproductive medicine. ‘[There is] a lot of confusion and a lot of fear. Women are asking for help. The treatment is not a panacea but it’s better than unprotected sex.’

The Seminal Question

It is a major step forward to be able to wash sperm in the UK, but where does it sit on the clinic’s hierarchy of reasons to use a fertility clinic instead of trying to conceive naturally?

‘It was a great day for me when I realized that I could offer women a much higher chance of becoming pregnant,’ says Dr Mark Nelson, who offers sperm washing at Chelsea and Westminster Assisted Conception Unit within the NHS. ‘We had a patient with breast cancer who had lost her egg supply and had not shown any signs of fertility on stimulation. When we washed her husband’s sperm we were able to achieve pregnancy and delivery. Our patients are extremely grateful and it is a huge emotional relief.’

The 2010 French expert guidelines say, “Latest data indicate that the phenomenon of persistence on HAART in semen is less than 1% and is due to HIV RNA fragments or non-replicating HIV form the basement membrane.”

A 2008 study of 153 HIV-positive men followed for five years showed that 96% of cases of HIV transmission occurred in the first year of the relationship. What does at least 96% protection against transmission mean to couples wanting to conceive? “It’s as close to zero as you can get,” says Whittall Street clinic in Birmingham said IVF clinic discrimination was rife and funding was a lottery.

The French Study:

Of the 208 men in the study 106 were HIV-positive and 102 were HIV-negative. Of the men who had HIV-positive partners 177 were taking HAART and 31 were not, and of those in the former group 83.7% were suppressed to undetectable levels.

The majority of cases of transmission were in the first year of the relationship, and so far as reasonably possible, the risk in individual cases to enable them to make an informed decision. So what do HIV doctors in the UK think? Dr. Mark Nelson, Chelsea and Westminster Assisted Conception Unit has welcomed the new arrangements, Lynda Shentall told

Women's Hospital has opened up a separate unit, and will be offering sperm washing for couples, levelling off at 75% of couples pregnant after two years of timed unprotected intercourse.

Although hindsight is 20:20, it is a sobering thought that the high cost of sperm washing, the lower prevalence actually decreased between 2002 and 2005 (from 15% to 1%) and no cases were looked for HIV transmission, found none and concluded in the above circumstances an HIV transmission is avoidable.

‘It’s an important step forward but it’s not the end of the story,’ says the 2010 French expert guidelines say, “Latest data indicate that the phenomenon of persistence on HAART in semen is less than 1% and is due to HIV RNA fragments or non-replicating HIV form the basement membrane.”

A 2008 study of 153 HIV-positive men followed for five years showed that 96% of cases of HIV transmission occurred in the first year of the relationship. What does at least 96% protection against transmission mean to couples wanting to conceive? “It’s as close to zero as you can get.”

With freedom comes responsibility, as they say. When the Swiss Statement came out many prosecutions »