



British
Fertility
Society

MINUTES

BFS Executive Meeting

15 June 2021

09:00 – 13:00

Attendees:

President: Jane Denton

Executive Officers: Raj Mathur (Chair), Kevin McEleny (Secretary), Marta Jansa Perez (Treasurer)

Elected: Uma Gordon, Mostafa Metwally, Harish Bhandari, Mark Wilcox, Bryan Woodward, Ippokratis Sarris, Angela Pericleous-Smith, Stephanie Gadd, Matt Noble, Yvonne Wedden, Debbie Evans, Jackson Kirkman-Brown

Co-opted: Stuart Lavery, Jacky Boivin, Yadava Jeve

Observers: Gwenda Burns (FNUK), Adam Balen (FEI), Melanie Davies (FPUK), Sarah Norcross (PET and ELP), Allan Pacey (Journal), Mark Hamilton (Chair of Trustees), Kate Brian (RCOG Women's Voices)

Invited: Colin Duncan (SRF), Jason Kasraie (ARCS), Rachel Cutting (HFEA), Clare Ettinghausen (HFEA)

Apologies:

Stephanie Gadd, Melanie Davies, Allan Pacey, Rachel Cutting

Minutes from last meeting

Action: Page 4 change SL to MJP supporting EY



1. Executive Committee membership

As per report

2. Membership:

a) Membership numbers

As per report

b) Lapsed & cancelled members

As per report

c) Honorary members

Not discussed

d) Membership working group

As per BW report.

- Decision taken not to offer a discount to members of ARCS at this stage. Perhaps in the future, all societies could offer a multi-society rate.
- Merging Paramedics and Associates.

Action: CB to find out who is in Paramedics as a Nurse & move to right category

3. Website update & tender

RFP sent to 10 companies replies due 8th July. Launch new website for Fertility 2023.

- Interviews 6th September – MN, IS, KB, and officers will be there. Also extended to anyone in the committee who would like to join.
- DE & JB expressed interest also.

Action: Please email CB if you want to attend.

4. Media & PR Update

Committee remain happy without an official PR person and making significant financial savings. RM would like to encourage other members of the Exec to volunteer to respond. MN volunteered.

Action: CB to include MN in press queries

5. Newsletter

As per report. Approximately 1 in 3 people are opening it.

Action: CB to tweet when newsletter has been sent

Action: CB to resend each time to those that have not opened

Action: CB put on website with dates of release

Action: CB make sure all new members are aware (and warn it may go to junk)

Action point – MM to contact NHS mail to check BFS email address being filtered



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6. Mentorship Programme
21 pairs working together

7. Trustees & Governance update
Detailed draft articles should be ready by 22nd June Trustees' meeting.
BFS Education Ltd – should be appearing soon.

MH – thinking about membership report – mention of code of practice. MH suggests there needs to be a statement when members join documenting professional expectations of a member and the use and care of their membership. Together with a warning that any unprofessional behaviour would lead to revocation of membership.

BW has sent a code of conduct which is with RM. Agreed between Exec that a more generic code with some specific examples would be appropriate.

Action: RM will extract something from BW's draft and send to MH for Trustees to consider.

MH will draft something too and look at these with Trustees and feed back to Exec.

8. Journal update
Open Access.

- 1) Purely financial aspect. Journal as it stands makes a loss for the Society between 20-25k a year. Open access would get rid of this loss and potentially make a profit
- 2) Principles. Do we want to have a journal that is open access but people have to pay to be published in? Would that mean a withdrawal of benefit to our members and would that be a barrier to people from less advantaged countries where the cost of 2-3k would stop them being able to publish.

There is a move to open access and some funding bodies are making this a requirement.

Concerns that open access would reduce the diversity of voices which is one of the benefits of HF.

One suggestion to mitigate this is to offer low cost submissions for BFS members – making it a member benefit. T&F are open to this.

Will it affect impact factor? T&F have looked at this and think it will increase the impact factor.

YJ – why does it cost so much? Is there a way to get around this? Reduce costs per head.

Discussion as to whether the Editor in Chief should be recognised financially, if there was a surplus from the journal.

Action: Check whether this responsibility should sit with T&F

Still need to get more financial information from T and F.

JD suggested the BFS look at other publisher's models and see how to do it differently



9. Finance update
a) Quarterly report

Education:

- Increase travel grants. Agreed by Exec.
- Study Week income should match or exceed 2020.
- Sponsorship also a very healthy income.
- Income from the RCOG week, we are confident will be over 10k.
- Main overhead is HMRC in Education. Total balance is very healthy.

Charity:

- Fertility conference surplus 10k.
- 15k from membership - important to continue to increase membership
- Main expenditure are the Secretariat charges and the commission that the Secretariat takes on sponsorship.
- Overall small negative balance but insignificant and reserves are increasing

We should be looking at investing in supporting membership where we can.

b) Sponsorship

Very successful – sponsorship this year is over 72k and managed to engage with 3 more sponsors – Cooper, Cryos, and Gedeon Richter.
Lost Mellowood and Silverlink

What do we do about members who work for corporates like ESB?
Allow them to continue to join as individuals as associate members.

Action: CB to admit the ESB member requests from individuals which have been on hold

10. Strategy & Development:

a) Planning (Strategy Meeting)

Action: Officers and JB to discuss the logic models sent by JB to RM.

Suggestions for topics –

- Website

JB: can we make topics broader so Website becomes 'Communication' so it includes social media/advertising etc.

SN – Trustees will discuss at the next meeting what they would like to see at the strategy day.

b) Royal Charter

Sent message to the membership – no replies

Should we have an event about the proposal for the Royal Charter, to give people a chance to think about it. Wait until we get an amber light from the Privy Council.

Action point: RM to write to Jason and Richard to set something up once a reply received from the Privy Council.



Sub-Committees

11. Meetings:

a) Fertility 2022

Rising to Global Challenges

Starts 5th Jan with SRF Satellite day. 6th Jan real meeting begins.

- All sessions are provisionally full.
- All BFS sessions have proposed speakers and topics.
- All our major plenaries and Patrick Steptoe have been confirmed.
- A message received from Gill Lockwood. She is retiring and has asked if she could give a presentation. Difficult as programme already agreed and invitations sent, and this is a joint meeting.
- **Action: SL will reply and let Gill know**

- Some sessions, instead of being pure BFS/ARCS sessions have become joint sessions
- Animation currently on the Saturday.
Action point: JB to contact SL with what she wants to show and how long they need

12. Training:

a) Study Week 2021

- Launched and doing very well. Same position financially as we were last year.
- Income about 64k so far (open until December). Numbers look good.
- Nurse study day doing very well and congratulations and thanks to JD, DE and YW.
- GP study day – doing very well in first year.
- HFEA PR Day – MM and MJP will meet with HFEA after this year's event, to discuss the shape of the course and the financial agreement agreement if Study Week returns to being held face to face.
- Leadership positions on the committee:

- Inviting Julia Kopeika as new module lead for FP and Shrividya for ET IUI. Melanie and Debbie will shadow for a year.

- There were a lot of applications, and MM has encouraged those who were unsuccessful this time to be invested and involved in the talks for their particular models next year.

- PU module lead will be advertised soon.

- RM mentioned that a concern was raised by a member about the GP study day – this has been investigated in line with the BFS complaints policy. RM happy to discuss investigation results with individuals.

Action: Clarified that when members are co-opted onto sub committees of the society, co-option is done by the lead for that sub committee or it can be by one of the Executive officers.



- AR submitted a new proposal as per paper in AOB for trainees – people can see paper in portal. Generally agreed a good idea, to be discussed further

- Training the Trainer to be introduced as an online training.
IS is leading and this will be submitted to the Executive when ready. This will be available on the website after agreement with the Exec and will be for trainers to complete once every couple of years to ensure they are up to date with what we do and how we teach.

b) Joint BFS/RCOG course
Held in April online – well received and feedback is excellent.
192 participating – used to have approx. 80. 24 countries participated.
All candidates bar 8 came for the full 4 days
Financially a big success and also having international delegates added value.
RM: Thank you to UG for the immense amount of work she put in. Thank you to Neelam who helped.

14. Policy & Practice

a) Consultations & Policies

Currently 4 papers at various stages of preparation.

- 1) Co-parenting led by Francesca Steyn. FS working on final draft will be ready very soon for Exec committee to review for consideration for publication.
- 2) Thromboprophylaxis led by Lisa Webber – again will be ready soon
- 3) Oocyte cryopreservation – Led by Ginny Bolton who is also the supervising author and then it will come to Exec.
- 4) ICSI – New lead – George Hughes. It has been decided that we publish this as joint ARCS/BFS expert opinion paper rather than BFS P&P.

Received two suggestions for development of two new guidelines.

First is Assessment and Optimisation of medical conditions prior to fertility treatment. Suggested by the RCOG. Team will be led by Dr Joseph Pundir and hopefully Catherine Nelson-Piercy

And

Management of women with endometriosis having assisted conception treatment. GDG to include Ephia Yasmin and Alfred Cuttner

RM: Stressed that it is important that guidelines reflect the felt needs of the society which is why one of the areas which needs addressing is how to deal with gamete donors who have had expanded carrier screening. Many clinics and clinicians across the country have expressed the need for guidance on this. RM has started a conversation with JK about this. It would be good if HB could facilitate a group that would produce guidance on this.



SN: happy to help if they want to find geneticists and genetic counsellors and also co parenting – she would be very interested to see this as the LPE sig would be interested and might be useful for them to cast an eye.

Action: RM and HB to get together to discuss membership of this group. MW to be involved.

CE: expanded carrier screening. HFEA been discussing with SABTO. Rachel will keep BFS in the loop with the outcomes so the BFS and HFEA could possibly do something collectively.

Action: HB will feedback to lead of group to reach out to Emma Cox

15. SIGs

a) SIG governance

Nothing to report

b) Fertility Preservation UK

Nothing to report

c) Fertility Education Initiative

Nothing to report

d) Andrology

Held second meeting in May.

Looked at all the patient information sheets on the website.

These need refreshing.

Action Point: MN to lead on reviewing patient information. Any that are out of date, remove from website pending review. Discuss patient information at strategy day

The SIG discussed producing an information sheet for clinicians, and then for patients. In order not to overburden HB, the SIG can bring the scope to the Exec, list of the guideline development group and after approval, they can then produce the guidance for the Exec to approve. This can then be circulated to the membership. In this way, the guideline will have gone through the same rigorous research and testing without overburdening the P&P committee.

Varicocele questionnaire going to be sent out to BFS members – Abha Maheshwari leading on it.

Mention was made of a body of work on the management of male hypogonadotropic hypogonadism.

Action Point: UG to liaise with HBV about this, Abha Maheshwari to be involved also.

e) Law, Ethics & Policy

2 meetings. First was a scoping meeting. 2nd was about the DHSC submission. James Duffy and IS led on drafting the response for this. Submitted. Document in portal.

Going forward top of list is Access to funding. Other subjects are Embryo and gamete storage limits, Welfare of the Child and Surrogacy.

CE shared the HFEA DHSC submission

It was agreed by the Committee that the Executive Officers could approve non-members of the BFS who wish to join a SIG



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16. HFEA Update

Treatment numbers in April – comparing 2021 figures with 2019.

NHS were about 76% up (slight decrease from 80%) Private well over 100%.

Rachel wrote to all PRs to identify if any regional or local concerns the HFEA could take to NHS England. There were some odd pockets of people having issues with treatment pathway but no trend. Reported back that delays are not taking place at licensed centres but happening at other parts of the process.

Spoke to FNUK to try and get feedback from patients

Prism further delayed due to problem with system supplier. Should be live July/August.

Developing inspection methodology. Trying to make on-site less time and less people. Looking how to revamp opening the register service.

Fertility trends report – 6% multiple births across all clinics.

Updates to code of practice: thanks to BFS for input .

Law commissions on surrogacy – liaising with them.

Thank you on behalf of Julia Chain who is very appreciative of all the input she has had and is very grateful for the invitation to speak at Fertility 2022.

ASA/CMA - can't inspect on ASA or CMA – wouldn't be able to nor would want to. However, they may come across things that they may refer to the CMA and ASA. Both these regulators have a 6 month bedding in period to allow clinics to look at their information and advertising and then they carry out an enforcement review to see if there are any breaches. HFEA role during this period – the inspectors will have some training from both regulators, and if the inspector does come across anything what should they do. Second step, more administratively, spending time drawing up strict protocols as to what is HFEA area and what is CMA and ASA.

HFEA questioning how they publish non-compliances on their website and should it be easier for patients to find.

Applies to NHS and private clinics. Focus on patients who are paying for their treatments.



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17. External Meetings:

a) RCOG World Congress

Will take place in London, June 2022.

2021 was online, 2800 delegates attended. 136 for reproductive medicine stream.

Next year we may have 3 or 4 talks.

Topics in consideration:

- Updating on ovulatory disorders
- WHO guidelines on infertility
- Male infertility.
- Check with UG for fourth

Action Point: Any suggestions please contact UG

Sarah suggested Evelyn Telfer

b) RCOG Professional Development Conference

November 23-25th.

Need a theme and 3 speakers.

Action Point: UG would welcome any suggestions.

18. Relationships with other organisations:

a) Associated Fertility Services

Chaired by ARCS. Meeting recently. Nothing to report.

b) FNUK/Fertility Fairness

Refresh of patient packs and options pack which are given at end of treatment. Both available hard copy and online. Also done a website refresh.

Submitted to women's health consultation.

Working planning Fertility Awareness Week.

Will be in touch as will want as may to take part as possible

FNUK have been shortlisted for an award for best mental health initiative for their mental health in the workplace initiative. Five others in the category including Bloomberg and Disney. Winners announced 24th June

Webinar upcoming with the CMA and HFEA on 29th June

Seed Trust is closing in August. FNUK have agreed to host some of their information.

Been involved in donor campaign in Scotland.



RCOG Women's voices – sharing CMA guidance and will update fertility pages on website to include this.

c) NHS England
Nothing to report

d) Dept of Health
Nothing to report

e) PET

Started project on how to improve conversations for patients who have unused embryos left at the end of treatment.

Anticipating guidance on human genome editing from the WHO.

Also interested to see the guidelines and recommendations from the international stem cell research group that came out last month. There is a shift in policy in relation to the 14-day rule on embryo research.

SN also involved in the ESHRE working group on add-ons

Extending what PET do in terms of interviewing people using zoom and making videos from those interviews.

Planning to start publishing comment pieces in BioNews from key opinion leaders on what they would like to see change in the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act.

Action Point: Anyone who would like to put something in please contact SN

19. BFS Representation on other committees:

a) IFFS
Nothing to report

b) RCOG Council, SST & Liaison committees
RM asked for volunteers for these committees. Yadava expressed interest and accepted for SST committee. IS volunteered and accepted for Liaison Committee. IS to liaise with EY to get more information.

c) NQAAP
UG – did meet in April. No decisions made.
Another meeting scheduled.

d) ESHRE
No updates

e) RMCSG
CSG doing well.
MM wants it to be more multi-disciplinary.

Action Point: anyone interested in being involved email MM.



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AOB:

- **Covid-19**
Joint working group – new guideline is due in July
It will be brief and probably about timing of vaccination for egg donors in relation to start of ovarian stimulation.
- **Discussions with PROGAR**
Document in the portal.
- **BFS rep on RCOG Subspecialty Committee and for National Casemix Office**
Action Point: Anyone who wants to volunteer please contact HB
- **Endometriosis guideline**
- **RM on behalf of all members thanked Jane for her contribution as President of the Society, as this was her last Exec Committee meeting**
- **Jane expressed her thanks and best wishes for the BFS**

Dates of next meetings:

20th Sept: Executive dinner in Manchester

21st Sept: Strategy meeting in Manchester

12th Oct: zoom



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Association of Royal colleges has updated

Will update on findings in next meeting.

Jacky Boivin

FEI update – Cambridge University Press has picked up some of the work they have been doing on Fertility education. In terms of sharing the website with all teachers.

Jane Denton last exec as President. It has been a delight and a privilege to have you as our President.

Thank you