Executive Licensing Panel - minutes

Centre 0067 (St Mary's Hospital)

Interim Inspection Report

Research Project R0026

Friday, 6 October 2017

HFEA, 10 Spring Gardens, London SW1A 2BU

Panel members	Juliet Tizzard (Chair) Ian Peacock Anna Quinn	Director of Strategy and Corporate Affairs Systems Manager Scientific Policy Manager
Members of the Executive	Bernice Ash	Secretary
External adviser		
Observers		

Declarations of interest

- Members of the panel declared that they had no conflicts of interest in relation to this item.

The panel had before it:

- 8th edition of the HFEA Code of Practice
- Standard licensing and approvals pack for committee members.

1. Consideration of application

1.1. The panel noted that St Mary's Hospital is a treatment and research centre.

1.2. The current research project R0026, entitled 'In-vitro development and implantation of normal human pre-implantation embryos and comparison with uni- or poly-pronucleate pre-embryos', was first licensed in June 1996.

1.3. The panel noted that the current research licence is due to expire on 31 December 2018.

1.4. The panel noted that at the time of the inspection on 11 July 2017, there were no areas of non-compliance or poor practice.

1.5. The panel noted that the Person Responsible (PR) had informed the inspector, that due to building and layout changes at the hospital, the postal address for the centre had changed. The centre has not changed its physical location and the change of address is solely an administrative change. There is no application form available for this type of change and no fee is due. The new address for the centre is:

The Department of Reproductive Medicine
Old Saint Mary's Hospital
Oxford Road
Manchester
M13 9WL

1.6. The panel noted the inspectorate's recommendation for the continuation of the centre's research licence with no additional conditions. The inspectorate also recommends the licence is varied to reflect the change of address.

2. Decision

2.1. The panel congratulated the centre on their lack of non-compliances and endorsed the inspectorate's recommendation to continue the centre's research licence, with no additional conditions, varying the address.

3. Chair's signature

3.1. I confirm this is a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Signature

Name

Juliet Tizzard

Date

18 October 2017

Research Interim Inspection Report

Date of Inspection: 11 July 2017
Purpose of inspection: Interim inspection of research licence
Length of inspection: 6 hours
Inspectors: Dr Vicki Lamb

Inspection details:
The report covers the pre-inspection analysis, the visit and information received from the centre.

Date of Executive Licensing Panel: 6 October 2017

Centre details

Project title	In-vitro development and implantation of normal human pre-implantation embryos and comparison with uni- or poly-pronucleate pre-embryos.
Centre name	St Mary's Hospital
Centre number	0067
Research project number	R0026
Previous centre address	The Department of Reproductive Medicine, St Mary's Hospital Whitworth Park Manchester M13 0JH
New centre address	The Department of Reproductive Medicine Old Saint Mary's Hospital Oxford Road Manchester M13 9WL
Person Responsible	Professor Daniel Brison
Licence Holder	Sue Kimber
Treatment centres donating to this research project	0007 Hewitt Fertility Centre 0008 IVI Midland 0033 Manchester Fertility 0078 Wolfson Family Clinic 0144 Nuffield Health Woking Hospital 0196 Jessop Fertility 0295 Bristol Centre for Reproductive Medicine
Date licence issued	01/01/2016
Licence expiry date	31/12/2018

Additional conditions applied to this licence	None

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Purpose of the Inspection report

The purpose of the inspection is to assess whether research using human embryos is carried out in compliance with the Human Fertilisation and Embryology (HF&E) Act 1990 (as amended) and the Code of Practice and that progress is made towards achieving the stated aims of the project. The report summarises the findings of the inspection highlighting areas of firm compliance and good practice, as well as areas where improvement may be required to meet regulatory standards. It is primarily written for the Authority's Executive Licensing Panel which makes the decision about the centre's licence.

Report to Executive Licensing Panel

Brief description of the centre and its licensing history:

Centre 0067 is a treatment and research centre. The current research project, entitled “In-vitro development and implantation of normal human pre-implantation embryos and comparison with uni- or poly-pronucleate pre-embryos” (R0026), was first licensed in June 1996.

The current licence is due to expire on 31 December 2018, having been renewed for three years by a Licence Committee on 5 November 2015. There are no additional conditions on the licence.

Summary for licensing decision:

In considering overall compliance, the inspection team considers that it has sufficient information drawn from documentation submitted by the centre prior to inspection and from observations and interviews conducted during the inspection visit to draw a conclusion on the continuation of the centre’s licence.

The Executive Licensing Panel is asked to note that at the time of the inspection there were no areas of practice that required improvement.

Additionally, the PR has informed the inspector that due to building and layout changes at the hospital, the postal address for the centre has changed. The centre has not changed its physical location and the change of address is a solely administrative change. There is no HFEA application form available for a change of this kind. No fee is due for a change of this kind.

The new address of the centre is:
The Department of Reproductive Medicine
Old Saint Mary’s Hospital
Oxford Road
Manchester
M13 9WL

Recommendation to the Executive Licensing Panel:

The inspection team considers that overall there is sufficient information available to recommend the continuation of this centre’s licence without additional conditions. In making this recommendation it is noted that no recommendations were made.

The inspection team also recommends that the licence is varied to reflect the change of address.

Summary of project

Lay summary of the research project:

We plan to continue our current project to understand early human embryo development by studying sperm, eggs and embryos donated by IVF patients at our participating centres. For this we use some eggs and embryos which have been frozen in IVF procedures. We culture the embryos up to day 8 after fertilisation, well before the limit of 14 days post-fertilisation. We are looking at the effect of freezing on how the embryos develop using molecules which tell us about their health and normality and their ability to implant in the wall of the womb and develop. We are looking at how the different cells in the embryo differ from one another and how naturally occurring molecules added to the culture medium affect the components that the embryos make, and their ability to implant. These studies will help us to be able to identify what the normal time course of molecular changes are in early human development and what goes wrong. This work will ultimately benefit IVF treatments by increasing our understanding of human embryo development and implantation.

Objectives of the research:

We aim to continue our current licence aims to include:
1) studies of gene expression in order to understand normal and abnormal embryonic development and in particular the regulation of cell fate and lineage allocation, including analysis of individual embryonic cells, and genes involved in implantation. We will also include in this analysis of genes involved in the implantation process.
2) the impact of cryopreservation, including vitrification, on oocyte and embryo development.
3) the impact of sperm DNA damage on embryonic development, including the influence of the environment e.g. lifestyle factors and environmental exposures to compounds such as bisphenol-A and nicotine (advanced glycosylation end products; known as AGEs) on sperm parameters and DNA integrity.
4) the impact of the environment on oocyte and embryonic development, including growth factors, and AGEs, and the extracellular matrix molecular hyaluronate.
In some studies human embryos may be created by chemical activation. These studies are important and have proved very revealing in the past (Sneddon et al., 2011) as a model of abnormal human embryo development.

Donation and use of embryos:

In the period from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2016, the project has used 76 fresh and 1 frozen embryo. This is slightly lower than anticipated due to staffing issues which have now been resolved, and the fluctuating availability of embryos.

Details of inspection findings

Inspection findings

Ensure that all licensed research by the centre meets ethical standards, and is done only where there is both a clear scientific justification and no viable alternative to the use of embryos
(Guidance note 29, 30, 31)

What the centre does well.

The centre was granted a renewal of its research licence by a licence committee in November 2015 for the following activities:

- Creation of embryos in vitro
- Keeping embryos
- Using embryos
- Storage of embryos

None of these activities are prohibited by the HF&E Act 1990 (as amended). The renewal of the licence was approved to allow research for the following designated purposes:

- Promoting advances in the treatment of infertility
- Increasing knowledge about the causes of miscarriage
- Increasing knowledge about the development of embryos

At the last renewal, a peer reviewer agreed that the use of human embryos was necessary and justified for the proposed research project.

The research project has been approved by the NRES Committee South Central - Berkshire B Ethics Committee, and this approval remains in place.

What they could do better.

Nothing noted.

Have respect for the special status of the embryo when conducting licensed activities
(Guidance note 15, 18, 22, 25, 26)

What the centre does well.

On inspection, a review of centre documentation and discussions with centre staff demonstrated that:

- Proper records of the storage of embryos in the research project are maintained.
- Robust procedures are in place to ensure proper records of the use of embryos are maintained from donation to the project, use in research through to disposal at the end of the research process (RLC R13).
- The researchers have a documented procedure for ensuring that embryos do not

develop beyond 14 days post-fertilisation or the appearance of the primitive streak, whichever is earlier (RLC R28).

- Discussions with the PR provided assurance that all embryos donated to the project will only be used for the objectives authorised by the licence to meet the defined statutory purposes (RLC R5 and R23). This is facilitated by restricted access to embryos during storage and use, and supervision of research staff by the PR.
- A storage log is maintained which records the storage consent expiry dates for any embryos in storage for research purposes. All frozen embryos in storage were within their consented storage period (RLC R39).

An audit of donor records showed that:

- Effective consent for the use of the embryos in the research project had been documented by the gamete providers (RLC R18).
- Embryos are not allowed to develop after 14 days or the primitive streak has appeared (if earlier) (RLC R28).

The PR has ensured that appropriate records of embryo use are maintained and that annual use is reported to the HFEA (General Direction 0002 and RLC R13, R14 and R15).

What they could do better.

Nothing noted.

Changes and improvements since the last inspection

Following the renewal inspection in 2015, recommendations for improvement were made in relation to three major areas of non-compliance.

The PR provided information and evidence that recommendations to address all the areas of non-compliance were fully implemented within the agreed timescales.

Areas of practice that require the attention of the Person Responsible

The section sets out matters which the Inspection Team considers may constitute areas of non-compliance. These have been classified into critical, major and others. Each area of non-compliance is referenced to the relevant sections of the Act, Regulations, Standard Licence Conditions, Directions or the Code of Practice, and the recommended improvement actions required are given, as well as the timescales in which these improvements should be carried out.

Critical area of non-compliance

A critical area of non-compliance is an area of practice which poses a significant direct risk of causing harm to a patient, donor or to an embryo. A critical area of non-compliance requires immediate action to be taken by the Person Responsible

Area of practice and reference	Action required and timescale for action	PR Response	Executive Review
None			

Major area of non-compliance

A major area of non-compliance is a non-critical area of non-compliance:

- which poses an indirect risk to the safety of a patient, donor or to an embryo through the procurement, use, storage or distribution of gametes and embryos, which do not comply with the centre's licence;
- which indicates a major shortcoming from the statutory requirements;
- which indicates a failure of the Person Responsible to carry out his/her legal duties
- a combination of several "other" area of non-compliance, none of which on their own may be major but which together may represent a major area of non-compliance.

Area of practice and reference	Action required and timescale for action	PR Response	Executive Review
None			

Other areas of practice that requires improvement

Areas of practice that requires improvement is any area of practice, which cannot be classified as either a critical or major area of non-compliance, but which indicates a departure from good practice.

Area of practice and reference	Action required and timescale for action	PR Response	Executive Review
None			

Additional information from the Person Responsible
Thank you for the inspection visit and report, we are very pleased with the positive nature of both.