



## Reproductive Technology Accreditation Committee (RTAC)

### TECHNICAL BULLETIN 11

## Use of Adjuvants in ART

November 2019

*To enhance the quality of service for patients, RTAC may communicate to units regarding issues, questions, or comments related to assisted reproductive technologies (ART). A Technical Bulletin is an educational communication to all units and Bodies certifying units to the RTAC Code of Practice, offering advice and guidance. Generally it is not enforceable unless incorporated into the RTAC Code of Practice.*

### Background

The goal of assisted reproductive technologies (ART) has always been the birth of a healthy baby. Unfortunately, the success rates of ART is not 100%. Some patients may undertake additional treatments which they believe will improve their chances of success. Adjuvants (also called “add ons”) are defined as ‘therapies undertaken in addition to recognised standard ART treatment regimens’. Such adjuvant treatments may be offered by health practitioners, as well as complementary and alternative therapists. Adjuvants may include supplements, registered medicines or procedures.

It is recognised that the evidence-base for adjuvant therapies will continue to grow and as a result some may become recommended treatment in the future. At present the efficacy of many adjuvants remains unproven. Adjuvants may also add significantly to the cost of ART treatment, and most adjuvant treatments have known side-effects and potential adverse health outcomes. Patients need to be made aware of these. This Technical Bulletin provides guidance to ART units and their staff in relation to the management of adjuvant treatment to patients.

### Adjuvants

Adjuvants (sometimes called “add ons”) are defined here as follows:

"A therapy undertaken in addition to recognised standard ART treatment regimens"

Adjuvants tend to be:

1. Treatments which are purported to improve outcomes, but for which there may be little or no supportive evidence.
2. Treatments for which extra cost is charged.
3. Treatments from which there may be known or unknown side effects and other harms.



## **Recommendation**

In order to minimise any risk, RTAC and the Fertility Society of Australia recommends that all ART Units should:

1. Provide patient access to a list of all adjuvant therapies offered at the ART unit.
2. Provide appropriate and accurate information regarding:
  - a. the effectiveness, including the strength of the evidence,
  - b. the risks, if known and if not known, advise patients of the uncertainty of the risk and
  - c. the costs of the any adjuvant therapies.
3. The ART unit should ensure written informed consent is obtained for all adjuvants administered.