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Is fertility and its preservation discussed with girls undergoing treatment for cancer?

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Ovarian cryopreservation is an up-and-coming fertility preservation technique. The process involves laparoscopically removing slices of ovary and cryopreserving these sections, with a view to autotransplant back to the patient at a later date. Ovarian cryopreservation has already seen success in women of reproductive age; we now look to determine how it can be used in the context of paediatric oncology. Previously, girls and their parents had very limited options regarding the often-devastating effects of cancer treatment on their reproductive health. Many chemotherapies and radiotherapy have the potential to cause premature ovarian failure: resulting in infertility. Studies have shown that patient and parent groups see infertility as one of the most significant late effects of treatment, so something must be done to address both these concerns and the real risk of sterilising treatment. Therefore, the project explored to what extent a regional centre is considering the late effect of infertility in paediatric cancer patients. We assessed to what extent oncologists are discussing fertility issues, and whether ovarian cryopreservation is being advocated for young girls with cancer. Based on our findings, we suggest improvements for how we can better advocate patient's best interests in the topic of oncofertility.

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