

## MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL: Thursday 3 November 2022

# Future families: Fertility hope for young women diagnosed with cancer

*Multidisciplinary oncology health professionals will hear about the “only fertility preservation option” for some young women with cancer at the Clinical Oncology Society of Australia’s Annual Scientific Meeting today.*

Sadly, many young women diagnosed with cancer must face their fertility before they’re ready. While cancer treatment will likely impact their chances of starting a family, studies show that the opportunity to have a child is one of the most important concerns for a young person with cancer.

A procedure called ovarian tissue cryopreservation is offering huge potential for the future fertility of young women with cancer. Recently updated clinical guidelines by the Clinical Oncology Society of Australia (COSA) no longer consider this procedure experimental, thanks to promising results at the Royal Women’s Hospital in Melbourne and several healthy babies.

Chair of COSA’s Fertility Preservation Guidelines Working Group and Head of Reproductive Services at the Royal Women’s Hospital and Melbourne IVF, A/Prof Kate Stern said “This procedure is the sole fertility preservation option for prepubertal girls and is increasingly being performed when there are no other fertility preservation options.”

“Essentially the procedure involves removing the egg-producing tissue from the ovary, freezing and storing it. When the woman wishes to fall pregnant, even years later, we can transplant the tissue back in her ovary,” she said.

The Royal Women’s Hospital is the only centre in Australia offering the procedure. Since 1994, the team have assisted over 750 women, adolescent and prepubertal girls to freeze their ovarian tissue (83.7 per cent due to a cancer diagnosis and 16.3 per cent for a benign condition requiring treatment).

From this cohort, 5 per cent of patients returned to use their tissue and out of the group of women who wanted to fall pregnant, 12 healthy babies have been born.

Dr Hector Georgiou, Reproductive Endocrinology and IVF Fellow at The Royal Women’s Hospital will represent the team and present the results at COSA’s Annual Scientific Meeting in Brisbane today.

“While there is a general acceptance of this innovative technology, there is still a lack of knowledge of its potential to re-establish fertility after cancer treatment,” said A/Prof Stern.

“We’re utilising COSA’s multidisciplinary platform to implore our oncology colleagues to talk to their young patients, and often the patients’ parents too, about ovarian tissue cryopreservation. If they need support, the COSA guidelines provide useful tools and recommendations to facilitate these conversations,” she said.

The procedure isn’t only available to patients in Melbourne too. The [National Ovarian and Testicular Tissue Transport and Cryopreservation Service](#) (NOTTCS) enables health

professionals from across Australia to offer ovarian and testicular cryopreservation to patients who are at risk of losing fertility because of their cancer or other serious disease or its treatment, and who would not otherwise have access because of where they live.

“We recognise there is a significant lack of opportunity for regional and rural patients who need medical fertility preservation,” said A/Prof Stern.

“All young people diagnosed with cancer should be given equal access to treatments and services which will both treat their cancer and increase their chances of having a family in the future, if they’d like to, no matter where they live” said A/Prof Stern.

The guidelines replace the 2011 *COSA fertility preservation guidelines for adolescents and young adults diagnosed with cancer*. The guidelines have been updated and expanded to include children, adolescents and young adults (AYAs) and adults of reproductive age.

The [COSA guidelines for fertility preservation for people with cancer](#) can be accessed on Cancer Council Australia’s guidelines platform.

## Session details

**Presentation:** Future fertility in female cancer patients: birth from frozen ovarian tissue  
**Presenter:** Ektoras (Hector) Georgiou  
**When:** 4:00pm-5:30pm, Thursday 3 November 2022  
**Where:** Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre  
**Twitter:** #COSA22 @COSAoncology

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## About COSA

The Clinical Oncology Society of Australia (COSA) is Australia’s peak multidisciplinary society for health professionals working in cancer research, treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care. COSA is recognised as an activist organisation whose views are valued in all aspects of cancer care. We are allied with and provide high-level clinical advice to Cancer Council Australia. For more information, [see our website](#).

## About the COSA Annual Scientific Meeting

The COSA Annual Scientific Meeting is Australia’s premier cancer meeting, and unlike other meetings, it brings together all health professionals who work in cancer care and control – oncologists, nurses, pharmacists, allied health professionals, scientists, policy makers and more.

In 2022, the event will focus on equitable cancer care for all: gender, identity, culture, geography, and disease should not matter. Top multidisciplinary national and international speakers will present the latest research and developments in cancer to more than 800 delegates, with a focus on the science, education, health services, treatments, supportive care, and epidemiology.

2-4 November 2022, Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre  
[Program](#) | [Invited Speakers](#)