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Egg sharing: from the donors' perspective

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**Women who face difficulties conceiving a child may consider various treatments, including 'egg sharing'.
But is it a practical, socially acceptable and ethical treatment option?**

Introduction

Infertility affects 1 in 7 couples in the United Kingdom (Human Fertilisation & Embryology Authority, 2006).

- In vitro fertilisation (IVF) treatment(s) may be the only way of possibly overcoming infertility.
- Egg sharing is one treatment option.
- An egg share donor agrees to share her eggs with up to two recipients.
- Egg share donors can access cheaper, quicker treatment (Blyth, 2002; Simons & Ahuja, 2005; Blyth & Golding, 2008).
- Some women may consider egg sharing because of their age or financial situation.

But is it ethical?

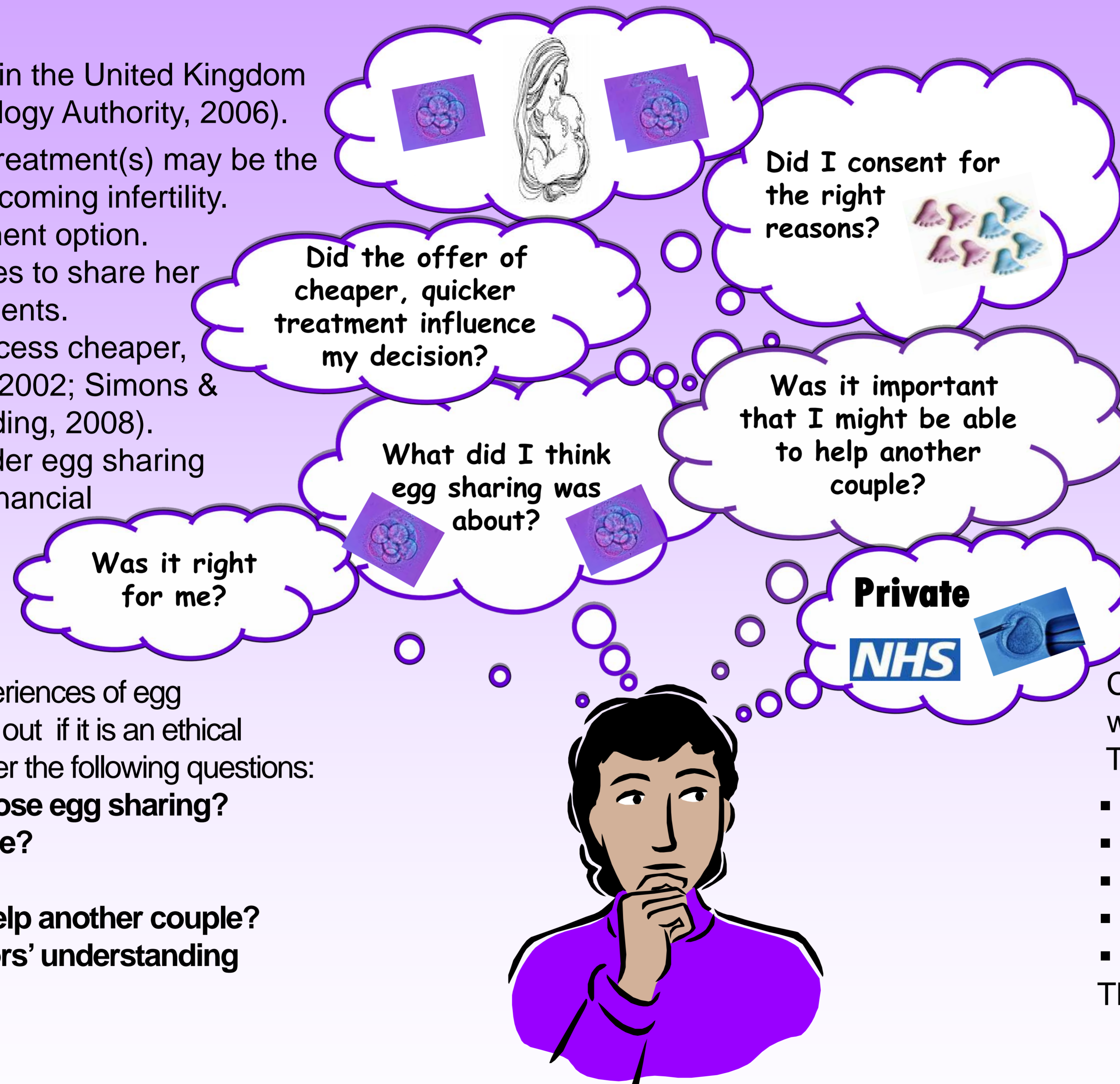
The Research

The research is exploring the experiences of egg share donors' in an attempt to find out if it is an ethical treatment option. It seeks to answer the following questions:

- **Why do some women choose egg sharing?**
- **What motivates their choice?**
 - Is it financial?
 - Is it because they can help another couple?
- **What is an egg share donors' understanding of 'informed consent'?**

References

- Blyth, E. (2002) 'Subsidized IVF: the development of 'egg sharing' in the United Kingdom'. *Human Reproduction*. Vol. 17. (12) pp. 3254 – 3259.
- Blyth, E and Golding, B. (2008) Egg sharing – a practical and ethical option in IVF? *Expert Review of Obstetrics & Gynecology* 3(4): 465-473.
- Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority. (2006) Facts and Figures. London: HFEA [online] Available at:<http://www.hfea.gov.uk/en/406.htm#The_Scale_of_fertility_problems> [Accessed 23rd May 2007]
- Simons, E. G. and Ahuja, K.K. (2005) 'Egg-sharing: an evidence based solution to donor egg shortages' *The Obstetrician and Gynaecologist*. Vol. 7, pp: 112-116.



Methods

Semi-structured e-mail interviews have been conducted with three egg share donors'. The interviews have asked:

- **How and why they decided to egg share**
- **What information they received about 'informed consent'**
- **What impact their decision has had on other family members**

Early Findings

Early findings from the interviews show that:

- Infertility significantly affects every aspect of a woman's life
- Deciding to become an egg share donor is not an easy decision.

Currently **five** reasons have been identified as to why women agree to become an egg share donor. These are:

- **There is a genuine wish to help another couple**
- **There is an inability to fund their own treatment**
- **NHS waiting times are too long**
- **They are able to get quicker treatment**
- **They are no longer eligible for NHS treatment**

The research is ongoing.