



IRHEC Network Newsletter

Welcome to the International Reproductive Health Education Collaboration Network Newsletter!

May 2024

Who we are

We are a multidisciplinary collective of people from many different countries with an interest in reproductive health education and promotion. We first came together in 2019 and have since 2022 been very generously supported by the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology (ESHRE). We are a part of an ESHRE Special Interest Group (SIG) called Global and Socio-cultural Aspects of Infertility and have our very own [webpage](#) on the ESHRE website!

The committee meets regularly on zoom and three times per year face-to-face. We had a very productive two-day face-to-face meeting in Brussels in March 2024. Face-to-face meetings are also planned for July at the ESHRE conference in Amsterdam and November at a location to be decided.



How we operate

We operate as a [committee](#) with 11 members from different countries. The committee is chaired by Professor Joyce Harper from the UK, one of the founders of IRHEC. The Chair Elect is Dr Maria Ekstrand-Ragnar from Sweden who will step up as Chair at the 2024 annual ESHRE meeting; and Bola Grace from the UK will become deputy-chair. At that time Professor Harper will become Past Chair and continue to contribute to the committee's work. Other members of the committee have two-year terms after which there is a call for nominations for new members to replace them.

Two committee members, Lenka Soukal Libichova and Dr Karin Hammarberg, are stepping down from the committee at the ESHRE meeting in July 2024 and the **call for nominations to join the committee is now open**. If you are interested in joining the committee, please email Randi Sylvest randi.lykke-sylvest@regionh.dk with your expression of interest. Include a one-page document with the following: short bio, your areas of interest, and what you hope to contribute as a committee member. Submission deadline is midnight CET 14th June 2024. We aim to include one representative

from a country. Currently represented countries include UK, Portugal, Denmark, Sweden, Greece, Ireland, and Belgium. Committee members will assess the nominations and the two successful candidates will be notified and formally commence their role at the ESHRE meeting. We are hoping the two new members take on the roles of the leading the newsletter; and leading the maintenance of the publications database on the IRHEC webpage, as part of the Research Working Group.

Network members are also invited to join committee members on zoom for updates on IRHEC's work and brainstorm on future initiatives and collaborations. Maria Ekstrand-Ragnar, Randi Sylvest and maybe Joyce Harper will represent the committee at the next meeting which will be held on 10th June 2024 at 1 o'clock (CET). Please join us on Teams (link is in email).

What we do

IRHEC committee members have formed three working groups. Network members who want to contribute to any of the working groups can contact Joyce at joyce.harper@ucl.ac.uk

Here is the latest news from the working groups.

Education



After four studies with young people from different countries asking their views on a fertility poster developed in 2019, an updated version is about to be launched. It will be available in multiple languages and downloadable from our website. It can be used in all sorts of educational contexts and displayed in public spaces like universities and GP waiting rooms to raise awareness among young people about fertility and how to protect it.

The team is also putting the final touches on a resource to help teachers provide students with comprehensive and evidence-based information about reproductive health. The resource has been through an extensive consultation process with experts and users and will be launched very soon.

A series of fact sheets on different aspects of reproductive health are currently being co-designed with members of the public to make sure they are accessible, understandable, and useful to lay people. Once finalized, they will be available on our website.

Research

The research team has established a database of published papers on fertility education topics which can be found [here](#). We have also developed a page where you can read about fertility education [activities](#) in different countries and a page where you can view a broad range of fertility education [resources](#).

The protocol for a study to evaluate the Teachers' resource is currently being developed and we hope ESHRE will fund a part-time research position to conduct this study.

The research team also conducts studies with Network members who are interested in specific research topics. There are several research activities on fertility and reproductive health on social

media, fertility knowledge attitudes and behaviors, across different population groups, and on understanding research gaps from a global perspective.

Communication

The communications team manages IRHEC's social media. IRHEC is currently on three platforms: Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram. Please follow us 😊

The team manages the IRHEC Network and makes sure people who want to join are welcomed and their details included in the [Network database](#) which is now available on the website. People who want to join the Network are asked to send some information about themselves to Randi Sylvest randi.lykke-sylvest@regionh.dk who manages the database. We encourage Network members to contact us if they want to contribute to IRHEC's work or have ideas for collaborative projects.

We also publish a newsletter twice per year with updates of what is happening in IRHEC and add content to the IRHEC webpage.

Publications

IRHEC committee members have published three papers.

Harper JC, Hammarberg K, Simopoulou M, Koert E, Pedro J, Massin N, Fincham A, Balen A; International Fertility Education Initiative. The International Fertility Education Initiative: research and action to improve fertility awareness. Human Reproduction Open, <http://doi.org/10.1093/hropen/hoab031>

Mertes H, Harper J, Boivin J, Ekstrand Ragnar M, Grace B, Moura-Ramos M, Rautakallio-Hokkanen S, Simopoulou M, Hammarberg K, on behalf of the International Reproductive Health Education Collaboration (IRHEC), Stimulating fertility awareness: the importance of getting the language right, Human Reproduction Open, <https://doi.org/10.1093/hropen/hoad009>

Mariana V. Martins, Emily Koert, Randi Sylvest, Eri Maeda, Mariana Moura-Ramos, Karin Hammarberg, Joyce Harper, on behalf of The International Reproductive Health Education Collaboration (IRHEC), Operationalizing fertility education: recommendations for developing and implementing tools to improve fertility literacy, Human Reproduction, <https://doi.org/10.1093/humrep/dead253>

Looking ahead

Please follow us on social media to keep up to date with our work @eshre_IRHEC and visit our web site www.eshre.eu/IRHEC .

ESHRE Conference 7-10 July 2024

We look forward to meeting anyone interested in our work at an open meeting at the [ESHRE annual conference](#) in Amsterdam on Sunday 5 pm July 7 before the opening ceremony. We are announcing the room number later. This is a great opportunity to hear about IRHEC's work and bring ideas for new projects and collaborations. Contact Randi if you wish to attend.

Also, every year there is a dedicated IRHEC session during the ESHRE conference. This year's session will feature:

Chairs: Ilse Delbaere and Bola Grace

An update from IRHEC, Joyce Harper

Educating young people about reproductive health, Rina Biswakarma

The 6th European Conference on Preconception Health and Care 19-20 Sept 2024

Under the theme [Nurturing new beginnings](#) this multidisciplinary conference will be held in Leuven and will feature the latest advances and evidence in the field of preconception health and care, including fertility awareness.

