

Béa Fertility, democratising access to fertility treatment

As part of our quick fire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Tess Cosad, Co-founder and CEO of Béa Fertility about removing barriers, creating a workplace that complements and supports the employees' personal lives and launching their first device.

Before starting Béa I'd been working on female-led ventures and femtech for a number of years, and was passionate about working on projects with impact. At around the same time as I met one of my first co-founders at Béa, I was becoming increasingly aware of the inadequacies in the system that make fertility treatment inaccessible to so many people, and felt strongly that this was a problem I wanted to help solve. Trying to fix these health inequities was one of the driving factors behind the creation of Béa Fertility and is at the heart of what we're building today.

Tell me about the business – what it is, what it aims to achieve, who you work with, how you reach customers and so

on?

Béa Fertility is a company that aims to democratise access to fertility treatment, starting with at-home treatments. We are developing the first clinical-grade at-home fertility treatment, which will enable people struggling to conceive to carry out a simple fertility treatment called Intracervical Insemination (ICI) safely at home. The aim of our ICI Treatment Kit is to make fertility care more accessible and affordable, by creating a new step on the fertility pathway for people who are trying to conceive. It will launch in the UK next year and will be a D2C product, available on subscription and supported by a digital health app to guide users through the fertility journey and access all the advice and support they might need.

How has the business evolved since its launch? When was this?

Since launching in 2020, Béa has come a long way. We initially started life as StepOne Fertility, rebranding the business before we secured our first injection of funding. Since then, we've been laser-focused on building out a great team and developing our product to secure clinical approval and get ready to go to market. After a successful Seed funding round last year, we're in a great position to launch next year and we can't wait to start that next phase of our journey.

Tell us about the working culture at Béa Fertility

I'm a huge advocate for an inclusive and supportive working environment. It's important to keep it fun (we work in fertility, which means you can imagine the kinds of conversations we often have in the office!) but we also remain respectful and sensitive to peoples' emotions: sometimes dealing with fertility issues everyday can feel heavy, and we're very mindful of that.

We also try really hard to make the workplace something that complements and supports our employees' family and personal time, rather than something that competes with it. Our company handbook expressly welcomes breastfeeding in the office - in meetings, in a private room, at your desk - wherever you feel comfortable. And we offer a fertility benefits programme through Apryl which means our staff can access fertility treatments subsidised by the company. Small changes like this can make an enormous difference to the people on your team and demonstrate a commitment to supporting your

team throughout their entire career.

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How are you funded?

We're currently VC-backed, which has enabled us to finish building our product and prepare to launch. To date, we've secured over £2M in VC funding.

It's also incredibly important to me that we have female investors on board – we need women at the table in every business, but especially in femtech – so I'm incredibly proud that our cap table has a 50/50 female-male split.

What has been your biggest challenge so far and how have you overcome this?

So far, the biggest challenge has been getting our product to a place that we're happy with. This has been a long and, at times, costly process – and one that's required lots of patience. After going through 90 different product design iterations for the Béa ICI Kit, we've finally landed on our most optimal design, and we're currently refining it to make sure that it's as effective and easy to use as possible. Having a great team around me and hiring regulatory experts to help us secure the necessary approvals for the product has been critical.

How does Béa Fertility answer an unmet need?

At the moment, the only fertility treatment options available in the UK are IVF (in-vitro fertilisation) and IUI (intrauterine insemination), but these treatments can be incredibly expensive. It can also be difficult to access the treatments on the NHS, depending on where you live and whether you're single, in a heterosexual relationship, or have a same-sex partner.

Béa removes many of these barriers. Our first treatment kit has been built with inclusivity as our top priority, meaning that it can be used by LGBTQ+ families, single women using known donor sperm, and women unable to have intercourse. It is also far cheaper than IVF or IUI, meaning it will be a far more affordable option for many.

What's in store for the future?

Next year will be a big year for us, as we'll be launching our first device. Once we've successfully launched in the UK, we'll get working on U.S. approval. Eventually, we hope to have a number of different treatment kits in our range, with something to help everyone access affordable, effective fertility care that can support them on their journey to parenthood, no matter their gender, relationship status or location.

We're also working hard on building a supporting digital health product, to ensure everyone who starts their fertility journey with us has a seamless and supported experience – so watch this space.

What's one piece of advice would you give other founders or future founders?

For founders looking to build new medical devices, I would advise you to hire the right regulatory person as early as you can afford to. Whilst regulation is essential and the only way to ensure quality and safety, it can be a complicated process. Having the right expertise in your team can help you to navigate the process more efficiently, and move towards product launch much quicker.

I'd also recommend building additional time into your product roadmap. Delays will always happen in a regulated environment, but overcoming them to build an even stronger product is what really counts.

And finally, a more personal question! What's your daily routine and the rules you're living by at the moment?

In the morning we'll usually have a stand-up meeting with the team to check in on what everyone is up to and talk through any challenges that might need the team's input. My job is to make sure the company has the resources it needs to

deliver on our main objective. Those resources are a high-performance team, and capital. So I spend a lot of my days finding those resources, basically: hiring or fundraising.

In terms of the rules I live by, I'm a big fan of Bullet Journaling to stay organised, clear my mind and create a system for organising my months, weeks and days. I start every week by Bullet Journaling my week ahead, listing out the big projects and milestones I need to deliver that week. Then, at the beginning of every day, I'll check back through that list for the week and pick one or two projects to focus on that day.

Tess Cosad is the cofounder and CEO of *Béa Fertility*.

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