



Socio-economic impact of assisted reproductive technology cycles in a low-income country
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Introduction:

Assisted reproductive technology (ART) treatments can be frustrating for couples already struggling with infertility. It impacts their mental health, social life, and economic situation. It is important that care providers are aware of this distress and can address it.

Our study aimed to evaluate the impact of the ART process on couple’s socioeconomic status.

Methods:

Our study was conducted in a Tunisian ART center, over a period of two months. It included married heterosexual couples who were undergoing an ART cycle and agreed to fill in our questionnaire.

Results:

We included 50 couples in our study. About half of them (40%) were experiencing infertility for more than two years.

The impact on social life was significant for 70% of the patients included. Half of the couples reported feeling under pressure and 18% declared being jealous of pregnant couples around them. Supportive family was found in 56% of the cases.

The effect of ART cycles on the professional life was considered as moderate by 42% of the patients. The increase of stress at work and issues with time management were present in 64% and 50% of the cases, respectively.

Most couples (92%) also declared having financial problems related to ART costs. About one third of them borrowed money and 54% of couples had to reduce their expenditure on basic items.

These issues were caused by the limited health insurance funding in 52% of the cases.

Couples frequently (40%) hid their money problems and 68% of them reported a profound impact of the ART process on their life plans.

Discussion:

Infertility represents a tough experience for many couples worldwide [1]. The increase of ART techniques use can make the situation even harder. This negative aspect can be remarkable on the couple’s socioeconomic status. The findings of our study confirmed prior research in this matter.

In some cultures, such as ours, childless couples can be stigmatized whether it is their choice, or it is due to infertility. Therefore, they feel under pressure, and they are negatively affected in their marital life [2].

In contrast, family support, when present, can potentially help couples go through this hard process [3].

On the other hand, partners often have issues with their working life, including low performance, absenteeism and job instability. Time management can be a huge concern for these couples [4].

Finally, ART treatments are costly and are not always affordable. This burden is worsened by the unequal access to ART treatments in low-income countries, since the public insurance doesn’t cover all charges [5].

Conclusions:

The infertility diagnosis can have a remarkable negative impact on couples’ wellbeing. Undergoing ART cycles is another element that can increase the psychologic and socioeconomic stress. Thus, careful counselling should be provided to these couples through their treatment process.

References:

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