



Young Adults' Perceptions of their Future Fertility Potential

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PURPOSE: The purpose of this presentation is to better understand what young adults know of their future fertility potential and ability to family build. This research is designed to also help identify gaps in knowledge pertaining to this age group, which will hopefully assist with the creation of educational materials for future use.

METHODS: This qualitative pilot study was conducted in a large university, following IRB approval in Spring semester 2016. To be considered eligible to participate in the 12 open-ended question survey, the students needed to be between the ages of 18-24 years of age. Ten young female nursing students agreed to participate in this study. Data was analyzed for content, then organized into topics with frequency of responses to construct themes.

SIGNIFICANCE: The World Health Organization (WHO, 2016) defines infertility as, "a disease of the reproductive system defined by the failure to achieve a clinical pregnancy after twelve months or more of regular, unprotected sexual intercourse." With an estimated 1.9 % and 10.5% of women worldwide between the ages of 20-44 years old suffering from primary or secondary infertility respectively, the impact of infertility and subsequent fall out is felt by many (Ying, Wu & Loke, 2015). The current rate of infertility identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2015) is 10.9% in the United States alone. According to the American Society of Reproductive Medicine (ASRM) (ASRM, 2016) infertility affects men and women equally, with twenty-five percent of infertile couples having more than one factor contributing to their infertility diagnosis.

RESULTS:

- **Peak Fertility**
 - Majority (8/10) knew ovulation was considered the best time for conception
 - Few of the majority group did not know when in the menstrual cycle ovulation occurs
 - "The most fertile time is during ovulation, shortly before the beginning of your menstrual period."
 - "Ovulation, five days before your period."
- **Factors Negatively Impacting fertility**
 - Seven out of ten participants indicated there were multiple factors which impacted a person's fertility
 - Overwhelmingly, ninety percent listed drug/ETOH/tobacco use as factors negatively impacting fertility, indicating their understanding of these barriers to health
 - Most common causes listed were:
 - Previous medical history, endometriosis and sexually transmitted diseases/pelvic inflammatory disease
 - Other factors listed were:
 - Uterine factors, decreased sperm count, social factors (financial, work, stress, unstable relationships), miscarriage, polycystic ovarian syndrome, cancer, drug/ETOH/tobacco use, diminished egg production, ovarian cysts and inappropriate weight (being under- or over-weight)
- **Perceived Infertility Risk**
 - Fifty percent (5/10) of the participants felt they would struggle with infertility
 - Family history was most often stated as the factor contributing to their infertility risk
 - One participant said, "Yes, I am obese and my mother had fertility issues."

RESULTS Cont.,

- **Interest in Future Family Building**
 - One hundred percent reported an interest in future family building
 - Seventy percent (7/10) reported they are currently engaging in a healthy lifestyle to ensure future pregnancy
- **Intended Age at First Conception**
 - Twenty-five years of age or older was the target age of the participants for future pregnancy, with the majority of the group settling in at twenty-seven to twenty-eight years of age
 - Becoming established in a career was also a marker for when pregnancy could occur
- **Fertility Preservation Methods**
 - Sixty percent (6/10) of participants are not aware of fertility preservation methods available
- **Access to Fertility Education Materials**
 - Eight out of ten participants stated they would like to talk with their healthcare provider about their fertility

IMPLICATIONS: The responses from the participants in this pilot study were extremely positive. This researcher is hopeful that future enrollment is a success. It is evident by the answers given by the participants there are gaps in knowledge regarding conception and infertility. Future research will include more in depth interviews to further evaluate these gaps in knowledge with the hope of developing a tool which can be used in clinician practices to help educate young adults on their future fertility potential.

References Available Upon Request