



From single child to family planning: infertility does not change the desired family size

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Introduction

Family planning is defined as a decision-making process that allows individuals and couples to regulate their fertility through the use of contraceptive methods, reproductive technologies, and educational strategies^[1,2].

Infertile couples may take a more complex path, involving medical diagnoses, treatments, and significant psychological impact. It is hypothesized that, given their reproductive history, their family planning goals may differ from those of the general population^[3].

Objectives

The aim of the present study is to assess family planning, the desire for parenthood, the approach to cryopreserved embryos and associated concerns in infertile couples undergoing an IVF cycle at Humanitas Fertility Center. We conducted a single-center survey including couples who underwent a second-level procedure (IVF/ICSI) at our center, regardless of whether it was their first cycle or a subsequent one. An anonymous questionnaire, consisting of 13 multiple-choice questions and one open-ended question, was administered to each couple in September 2024 and March 2025.

Results

A total of 142 patients participated in the study, of whom 45% were male and 54% female, with a mean age of 38.2 years. Among the couples, 89% were diagnosed with primary infertility. We found that 57% of couples desired two children, 23% desired three, 18% desired one, and 1% desired four. The mean number of desired offspring was 2.11 for females and 2.03 for males. Additionally, 64% of couples preferred achieving more than one pregnancy from a single stimulation cycle and 72.3% expect IVF to achieve the entire family plan (not just one child as soon as possible). Regarding the impact of cryopreserved material, 66.9% reported that they would not alter their family planning decisions, while 33% stated that they would. Notably, 75% of couples who had previously undergone an unsuccessful IVF cycle did not modify their family planning goals.

Conclusion

Our results indicate that the family planning practices of infertile couples are comparable to those observed in the general population. Notably, the prospect of cryopreservation offers a significant advantage, enabling couples to pursue a subsequent pregnancy and align their reproductive plans with their desired family size. Moreover, cryopreservation may serve as a pivotal factor in reshaping a couple's family planning decisions.

These findings underscore the importance of providing comprehensive family planning counseling to couples undergoing an IVF cycle.

Bibliography

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