

REASONS FOR PRIMARY SUB-FERTILITY AMONG COUPLES ATTENDING SUB-FERTILITY CLINICS AT TWO GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS

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ABSTRACT

Sub-fertility is defined as a failure to conceive after one year of unprotected regular sexual intercourse. Primary sub-fertility occurs when a couple has never been conceived. A remarkable drop in fertility rates and an increase in primary sub-fertility have been noticed all over the world, including both developed and developing countries. Primary sub-fertility put significant burden to the couple and on the whole community. It could be arising due to one or more reasons in either or both partners. However, reasons for primary sub-fertility are not clearly identified in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this study aims to empirically investigate the reasons for primary sub-fertility among males, females and for both. This is a descriptive study based on primary and secondary data collected through self-administered questionnaires and clinic records respectively. A purposive sample of 150 couples with primary sub-fertility from two government hospitals; the De Soysa Hospital for Woman (DSHW) and Castle Street Hospital for Woman (CSHW) were recruited for the study after obtaining ethical approval and permission from the directors of those hospitals. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that sperm quality problems (33%), post testicular causes (23.1%) and testicular causes (18.2%) were the reasons identified in males for primary sub-fertility. Ovulatory problems (21.5%), premature ovarian failure (13.2%), fallopian tube problems (9.1%), endometriosis (7.4%), Poly Cystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) (5.8%) were female related reasons. Negative life style such as; obesity, lack of exercise, unbalanced nutrition and longer duration of primary sub-fertility were the common reasons for both partners. A considerable proportion of both male and females had primary sub-fertility of unexplained etiology. Furthermore, 53.7% of women believed they had timed intercourse mainly within the fertile window of the menstrual cycle in their attempts at conception, but only 16.6% could accurately identify this window. This result is suggestive of poor fertility awareness. Therefore, it can be concluded that the commonest reasons for primary sub-fertility among the sample were related to sperm quality problems, post testicular causes and testicular causes among men and ovarian problems, fallopian tube problems, endometriosis and poor fertility awareness among women. Therefore, it is better to take appropriate measures at the community level and national level to promote behaviors that maintain fertility.

KEYWORDS

Primary sub-fertility, fertility awareness

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