

Fear of treatment puts stress on women undergoing fertility therapy

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Fear of treatment puts stress on women undergoing fertility therapy. Credit: Tahe Fertilidad

Fertility treatment has a strong emotional impact on women who want to have children. A study of European countries with the highest number of assisted reproduction cycles identifies which aspects of reproduction treatment contribute to psychological stress.

Inability to conceive is extremely stressful for women who want to have a family. This notion is shown by a study published in the *Human Reproduction* journal on patients in four countries with the highest number of cases of [assisted reproduction](#) cycles in Europe: France, Germany, Italy and Spain.

"Infertility causes a series of varied emotions that have a [negative impact](#) on important aspects of a woman's life," as explained to SINC by Juan García Velasco, one of the authors of the study, who is also director of the Infertility Institute of Valencia and lecturer in [Obstetrics and Gynaecology](#) at the Rey Juan Carlos de Madrid University. "It is linked to depression, anxiety, anger, cognitive imbalance and low self-esteem," he adds.

The study not only analyses the [emotional impact](#) of infertility on women but also identifies those aspects of [ovary](#) stimulation that contribute to the physical and [psychological stress](#) suffered by many patients.

The 445 women between the ages of 18 and 44 years taking part in the study had experienced difficulties in conceiving. While some had never undergone any [fertility treatment](#), others were receiving it at the time or had already received it in the past two years. Almost a third of the participants said they began to worry from the moment in which they started trying to get pregnant and nearly half claimed to have felt ashamed or like a failure as a woman.

It was found that anxiety toward injections and the [deterioration](#) of their relationship with their partner were the main causes of stress. In this respect, the women who actually received treatment said that they got closer to their partner (33% compared to 19%). The majority of participants felt that their partner supported them, especially those that received fertility therapy (63%).

Women undergoing treatment said they were more anxious when it comes to sex and negative emotions, such as impatience or frustration. Whereas those not having treatment said they felt "confused" and those undergoing treatment claimed to mostly feel "vulnerable and exhausted".

Despite being aware of the limitations of age, 68% never thought they would have a problem conceiving. According to García Velasco, "in order to overcome the physical and psychological challenges that such treatment implies, some form of protocol would be necessary that involves a minimal number of injections and an increase in readily available information in order to reduce stress and increase patient satisfaction."

Waiting two years to start treatment

García Velasco outlines that "[infertility](#) can significantly affect women's lives and their personal relationships." "However, despite its negative impact, many of those women trying to conceive do not seek medical help."

The reason why women wait for an average of two years before starting treatment is that they want to wait to see if they can conceive naturally. The authors believe that this waiting period causes anxiety and regret and almost 58% of participants feel that they waited too long.

The author concludes, "these results show the need to educate women to eradicate fear and better prepare them for the demands of treatment and its associated emotional effects."

More information: Alice Domar, Keith Gordon, Juan Garcia-Velasco, Antonio La Marca, Paul Barriere, Fabiola Beligotti. "Understanding the perceptions of and emotional barriers to infertility treatment: a survey in four European countries". *Human Reproduction*, Vol.27, No.4 pp. 1073, 2012

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