

Assessment of general health, stress coping and marital satisfaction in infertile women undergoing IVF treatment

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Abstract

Introduction: Nowadays, infertility has turned to a social distress and it is accompanied by numerous psychological and social problems. This phenomenon is known as an agonizing and disappointing stressor for couples, especially for women. Infertility stress can affect personal, social and marital relationships, may cause mental instability and lead to divorce. Likewise, studies have shown IVF may be accompanied by numerous and severe psychological disorders. Considering psychosocial and cultural importance of fertility, especially in women, and the high birth rate in Iran, a closer look at this phenomenon with an emphasis on its psychosocial aspects is of importance. Therefore this descriptive study was undertaken to determine mental well-being, marital satisfaction and stress coping in infertile women.

Materials & Methods: 150 infertile women attending the forth Shahid of Mehrab Hospital in Kermanshah were randomly selected during 2003. The data were gathered by the researchers, based on CRI-Coping Responses, Index of Marital Satisfaction (IMS) and the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28). For the statistical evaluation of the findings, chi-squared and t-test were calculated. P-values smaller than 0.05 were considered significant.

Results: The results showed that 44% of the subjects had psychological disorders based on GHQ. Based on the findings from this questionnaire, the cases were divided into two healthy and unhealthy groups. Anxiety rates among the unhealthy group and the functional disorders in the healthy ones revealed to be significantly high ($p < 0.01$). 34% of the infertile women, most of whom had been identified to have psychological disorders by GHQ, had excitement based reactions and 93% of the ones on the healthy group had problem-based confrontational responses. The findings also revealed that infertility had not had any unpleasant effects on the marital satisfaction of the healthy cases, whereas 35% of the unhealthy ones showed the opposite.

Conclusion: Regarding the results of this study, infertility may have numerous psychological impacts on the infertile and act as a predisposing factor for psychological disorders and matrimonial problems. Therefore, a team of psychiatrists accompanying infertility treatment experts is effective in the treatment process and prevention of psychiatric problems in these patients.

Key Words: General health, Marital satisfaction, Coping strategies, Infertility, IVF.

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