



A Motivational Assessment of Women Undergoing Elective Egg Freezing for Fertility Preservation

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OBJECTIVE

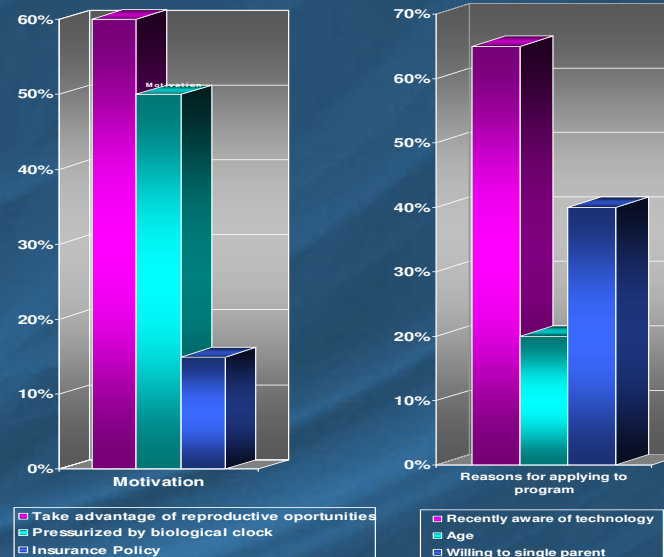
Although sperm and embryos have been successfully frozen and thawed to create healthy children for decades, it is only recently that human egg freezing has become a clinical reality. We undertook this study to determine the motivational factors for women that choose to freeze their eggs in order to retain their reproductive potential.

DESIGN

Retrospective analysis of psychological consultations of women prior to elective oocyte cryopreservation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Psychological consultations of 20 patients going through an elective egg freezing cycle at RMA of New York between July 15, 2005 and April 15, 2006 were reviewed. Demographic data were retrieved via an electronic medical database. Supplemental data were retrieved from patient's sessions with a psychologist (GW).



CONCLUSIONS

- ✓ This is the first psychosocial assessment to evaluate motivational and psychological factors in women who elect to cryopreserve their oocytes.
- ✓ Most notable was their high level of education and their overwhelming self-description as being "intelligent" and "extroverted".
- ✓ A number of women said they were interested in egg freezing to take the pressure off the search for relationships, since cryopreservation meant the freedom to wait, and to not settle for a mate because they were in a rush to conceive.
- ✓ The pivotal event leading to oocyte cryopreservation was becoming aware of advances in this technology.
- ✓ Had they heard that such a technology existed when they were younger, most stated that they would have made use of it.
- ✓ The mean age of cryopreservation may indeed drop as the news of this technology and accurate information about female fertility rates spread.
- ✓ A number of women said they would eventually consider thawing the oocytes, fertilizing them with donor sperm, and consider single parenting after the age of 40.
- ✓ It is important to prospectively assess the needs of this group of women to be certain that realistic expectations are being created and psychological needs are being met.

RESULTS

Mean patient age was 38.6 ± 1.83 . All patients had earned a bachelor's degree, and 75% had received their masters or professional degree. All patients were single, although 4/20 (20%) patients were in committed relationships. None had prior full-term pregnancies. With an open-ended question, patients were asked to categorize their motivation: 12/20 (60%) reported that they elected to freeze their eggs to be sure they had taken advantage of all possible reproductive opportunities. 10/20 (50%) said they felt pressured by their biological clock. 3/20 (15%) said they wanted to freeze eggs as an "insurance policy", but that they would probably never end up using them. When asked their reasons for applying to the program, 13/20 (65%) said they recently became aware of egg freezing technology. 4/20 (20%) said they were applying because of their age. 8/20 (40%) said they would definitely be willing to single parent, another 8/20 said they were unsure if they would be willing to single parent, and the final 20% said they would not be willing to single parent. Of those that said they would single parent, the average age they wanted to use their eggs was 40.75 (range 40-43 years). When asked to describe themselves, the most common descriptions were "intelligent" and "outgoing". Other self-descriptors cited were active, warm, focused, considerate, hopeful, happy, intense, adventurous, and determined.