

Evaluation of preparatory psychosocial counselling for medically assisted reproduction.

Abstract:

This study evaluated couples' perceptions of preparatory psychosocial counselling prior to participation in medically assisted reproduction (MAR). Eighty-three couples about to undergo IUI treatment were asked about their expectations regarding a subsequent single psychosocial counselling session and assessed in terms of their levels of infertility-specific stress, anxiety and depressive symptoms. Afterwards, participants rated their satisfaction with different elements of the session. Almost two-thirds of women and one-half of men expected counselling to be important, and the majority anticipated that the session would be helpful and informative. Views of preparatory counselling were significantly more positive afterwards, indicating that a focused session addressing issues of treatment concerns, goal setting and managing infertility stress was more beneficial than anticipated. Those experiencing higher levels of infertility-specific stress expected the counselling session to be more important, and elevated stress and greater utilization of social support were predictive of post-counselling satisfaction. Preparatory psychosocial counselling provided with a specific and practical focus appears to be a potentially important and helpful service prior to MAR. Clinics should not assume that patients can accurately judge the benefits of counselling before actually engaging in the session. Identifying patients most likely to benefit and providing a clear rationale may further increase receptivity to this proactive counselling service. While patients characterize this intervention as beneficial, it is not yet known if these benefits translate into improved management of treatment procedures.