

Poster presentation

Psychosocial problems of infertile people in Greece

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Background

Infertility is a growing social problem, because the population affected by the experience of infertility has increased dramatically in recent decades and is expected to continue to increase. Despite this growing need, the phenomenon of infertility has been largely overlooked by the social work profession. The contemporary understanding of infertility is too narrow. In the twentieth century, infertility has come to be defined almost exclusively as a medical condition. The psychological and social needs are not adequately addressed within the framework of such a medical model.

Materials and methods

This study was exploratory in nature and quantitative by design. Sixty individuals (43 women and 17 men), with history of infertility (diagnosed 1–5 years ago) of mean age of 34 years (34 ± 5), married, well educated, with no children at all, were participated in this study, that took place mainly in the three major Greek cities (Athens, Thessalonica and Patras) during June and August of 2005, answered 20 multiple choice questions included in the questionnaire, which was administrated. Data were collected and analyzed through SPSS statistical software and for correlation analysis Chi-square test was used.

Results

Describing and quantifying the experience of infertility among a previously unstudied population is descriptive for mean infertile individual in Greece today. According to our results severe (generally covered with silence) psychosocial problems impact the everyday life mostly the woman (74%) of an infertile couple that include feeling of stress (35%), angry (20%) and guilty for the infertility (73%), that use coping strategies with indirect effects (73%) and ask for health care professionals (79%), with

experience in psychology (70%), as well as for social intervention abilities in other systems as friends, and colleagues (70%) to help them.

Discussion

Infertility is not a new problem. However, as the number of people impacted by infertility grows and the complexity of the problem due to medical intervention continues to increase, social work must become more actively involved in addressing the problem of infertility by addressing the policy, research, and direct and indirect practice needs. This pilot study is an attempt to highlight the need for additional research in the field of infertility. Furthermore studying men and women as individuals and as part of couples, considering that infertility impacts more than the infertile system, diversity should also include other systems that are impacted such as extended families, friends, and colleagues.

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