

## **Abstract**

Parenthood is undeniably one of the most universally desired goals in adulthood, and most people have life plans that include children. However, not all couples who desire a pregnancy will achieve one spontaneously and a proportion of couples will need medical help to resolve underlying fertility problems. Infertility has been recognized as a public health issue worldwide by the World Health Organization. In order to set up adequate and appropriate fertility services to meet this public health issue, one must know both potential need and demand for medical services and the treatment-seeking behavior patterns of the couples having fertility problems.

This study attempted to gather data on the treatment seeking behavior of subfertile couples and their socio-economic and demographic characteristics. The study will also look at the attitude of subfertile couple towards adoption. The main objective of the study was to find out the treatment seeking behavior pattern of subfertile couples who presented themselves to the subfertility clinics. The study was a cross sectional descriptive study. Interviewer administered questionnaire were used to gather information from patients. The study was carried out in the subfertility clinics at the Reproductive Health Unit of Family health Bureau and Castle Street Hospital for Women, Colombo. A total of 390 patients participated for the study.

Lack of knowledge was identified as a hindrance to the proper management of subfertility. This is highlighted at different points of the study. Only 55% knew about the

fertility period of the menstrual cycle, which led to only 30.3% using the fertile period to achieve conception. As reasons for delay in seeking proper medical treatment for subfertility, 6.4% mentioned lack of knowledge about subfertility and 39.5% mentioned not knowing from where to seek treatment. These factors lead to 47.7% seeking non-medical treatments as the first option. With a literacy rate of over 90%, these should not be problems for a country like Sri Lanka.

Early treatment and continuous treatment are important factors that determine the success of subfertility treatment, because the fecundity is dependent on the age of the female. However, 44.1% sought proper treatment for subfertility only after 12 months of trying to conceive and 53.3% of the couples have given up treatment at some point. These findings do not carry good prognosis for the management of subfertility.

The variables showing a correlation with a higher level of dissatisfaction are longer duration since marriage, longer duration of trying to conceive, longer duration of undergoing treatment, type of first contact, duration of given up treatment, investigation for blood hormones and non-willingness for adoption. From a practical point of view, there are few important points.

Based on the findings, several recommendations are drawn up and discussed.