High anxiety decreases chances of pregnancy through IVF, finds research

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Although depression and stress do not negatively impact chances of pregnancy through IVF, pregnancies are less likely when anxiety levels are high, finds research from Nazarbayev University (https://nu.edu.kz/) (NU) Department of Medicine and Department of Biomedical Sciences.

Many societies around the world still associate being ‘female’ with the ability to conceive and have children leading to a social stigma around infertility in women. Due to this, infertility can cause women to experience high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. However, the impact of this on attempts to conceive remain unclear. The aim of this study was to evaluate the effect of stress, depression, and anxiety on in vitro fertilisation (IVF), a clinical procedure made available for couples struggling to conceive.

Questionnaires were administered to assess psychological stress, depressed mood, and anxiety in 142 women referred to IVF clinics. They found that more than half of respondents were at risk of developing clinical depression and many also exhibited high stress scores; this supports previous studies which indicated patients struggling to conceive experience depression, anxiety, isolation, and loss of control. Eight weeks after undergoing IVF, patients then had an ultrasound to check whether the procedure was successful.

Their results showed that, although IVF outcomes were not associated with depression or stress, higher levels of state and trait anxiety were associated with lower chances of pregnancy after undergoing IVF treatment.

Gulzhanat Aimagambetova, Assistant Professor from NU School of Medicine (https://nusom.nu.edu.kz/) says,

“Neither the International Committee for Monitoring Assisted Reproductive Technologies, the American Society for Reproductive Medicine, nor the European Society for Human Reproduction and Embryology have formal requirements for psychological counselling for couples embarking on fertility treatments. However, we suggest that our findings provide reasoning for implementing psychological support in IVF clinics. The support should be provided by a certified specialist on a regular basis before and during treatment to alleviate anxiety and increase chances of successful IVF outcomes.”

These findings were published in the Journal of Clinical Medicine.

For more information, a copy of the research paper, or to speak with the researchers, contact Kyle Grizzell from BlueSky Education at kyle@bluesky-pr.com

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