

Undergoing multiple rounds of in vitro fertilisation (IVF): A qualitative study of women and couples' experiences

Presented by

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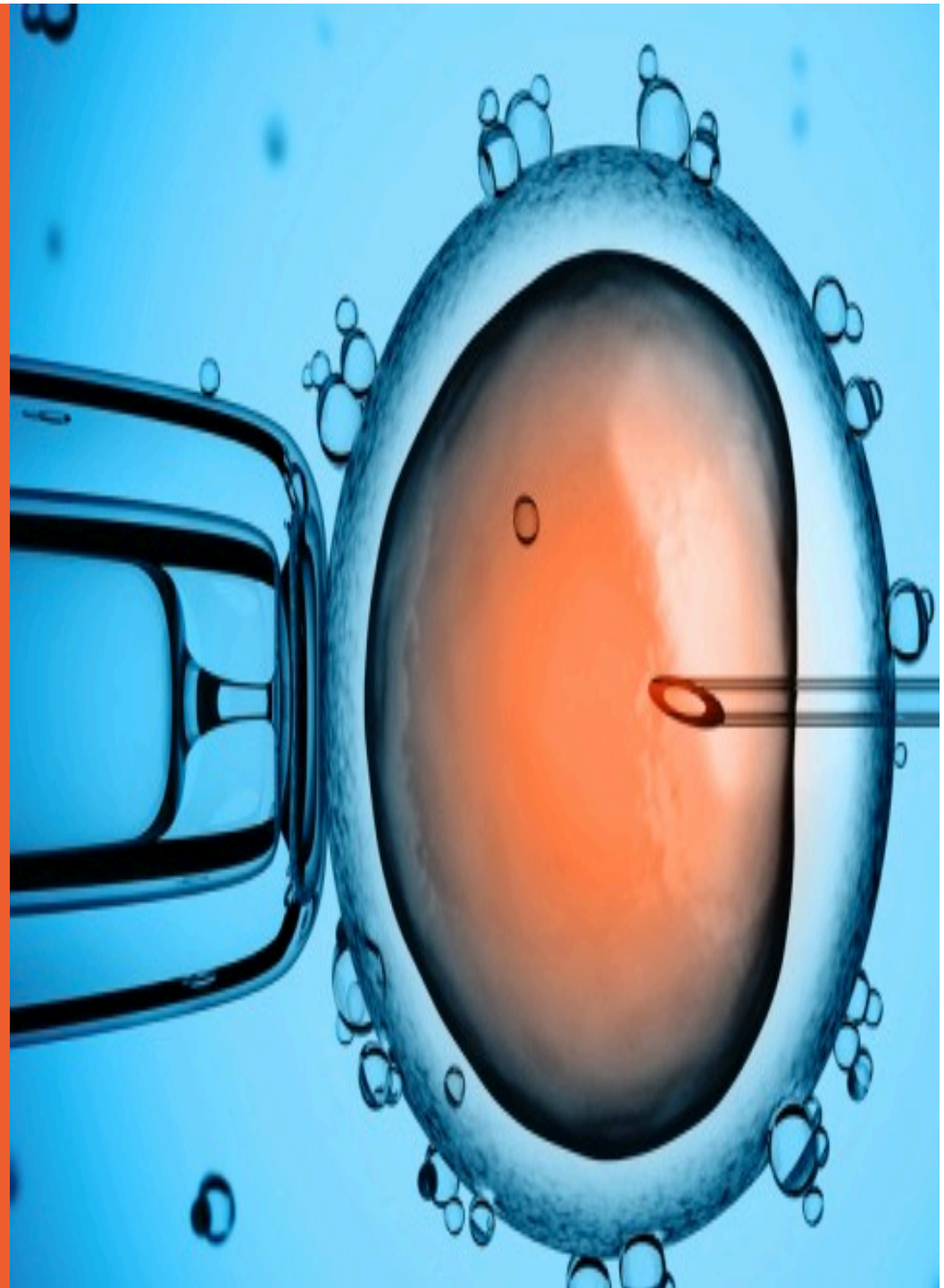
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A RESEARCH COLLABORATION FOR REDUCING
OVERDIAGNOSIS AND OVERTREATMENT



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Background

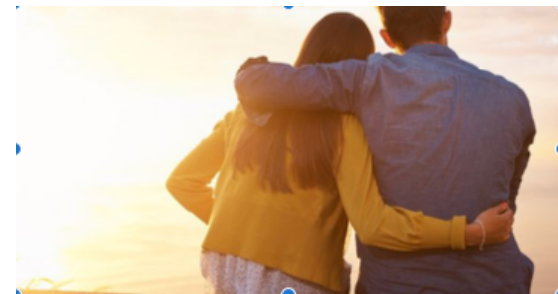
- Infertility affects about one in six Australian couples of reproductive age.
- Regarding in vitro fertilisation (IVF) some couples drop out of treatment too soon, whilst other couples continue for multiple rounds

Factors found to contribute to the decision to end treatment include:

- Financial cost
- Stress, anxiety and depression
- Disruption to lives and careers
- Physical impact and relationship strain
- Successful adoption

Gameiro, S., Boivin, J., Peronace, L., & Verhaak, C. M. (2012). Why do patients discontinue fertility treatment? A systematic review of reasons and predictors of discontinuation in fertility treatment. *Hum Rep Update*, 18(6), 652-669.

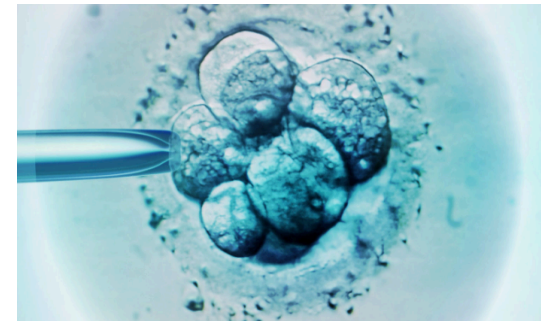
- Little is known about what factors contribute to an individual's/ couples decision to continue treatment after **multiple** IVF failure
- Given the increase of IVF treatments in Australia it is vital to understand the factors that contribute to the decision to continue or stop IVF treatment.



Study aim:

To examine the factors that influence women and couple's decision making after multiple unsuccessful rounds of IVF.

- **Reasons for continuing**



Method: Study design, eligibility & setting

Design:

- Semi-structured qualitative interviews
- Face-to-face or over the phone

Participants

- Women and their partners (if applicable) who have undergone 3 or more unsuccessful rounds of IVF.
- So far 11 out of a planned 25 interviews have been completed.

Setting

- Genea – private fertility clinic



Demographic characteristics

Characteristic	Number of participants
Gender	
Male	5
Female	6
Couples	5
Individuals	1
Age(years)	
30-34	1
35-39	7
40-45	3
Rounds of IVF	
3-5	6
6-8	3
9-10	2
Educational Background	
University degree	8
Technical degree	3
Children	
None	4
1	7

Preliminary results: Factors that influence decision making process for women to continue

Medical reasons

- Age (young > good chances, or old > time is running out)
- Doctor's advice and guidance

“I'm only 32...I think the advice that we've been given by most of the specialists that your chances of this working before you hit 35 are really high. It's just a numbers game. It's just luck and so – yeah, I mean, our intention now is – would be not to stop until I get to an age where the fertility specialists say, “Look, the chances are pretty slim.” (32 yrs F, rounds: 8)

- Unexplained infertility - No reason to stop

“There was one woman from Geneva and she was successful on her 12th cycle and I was like, Oh, gosh, I don't know if I'd be able to go 12 cycles. But then I'm also aware of my doctor she's had patients who just go one more cycle, one more cycle, and want to try one more, and it happens on that one more, so it makes you think, Oh, gosh, when do you stop then? Unless something medically – unless I was given some medical advice – very obvious medical advice that today that it definitely won't work...” (43yrs F, rounds: 4)

Emotional reasons

- Want to give it a good go, even if not optimistic - avoidance of regret
- Fear of stopping
- Unwilling to set a limit

“There's a part of me that goes, “You're just doing this so that one day you can say you tried. You're not doing this to have a baby.” I honestly feel like I'm doing this next cycle purely to avoid an emotional or psychological issue later in my life when I look back and think I didn't do enough. I don't believe for one minute, we're going to fall pregnant on these next two cycles.” (39yrs F, rounds: 3)

Societal expectation

- Females have children
- Family pressure

“that’s just what you do when you’re in the bush...is have big families.” (43 F, rounds: 10)



Factors that influence the decision making process for men to continue

Medical reasons

- Importance of age and timing
- Unexplained infertility- no medical reason to stop
- Cycle outcomes e.g. good egg collection, miscarriage
- Doctor's advice and guidance

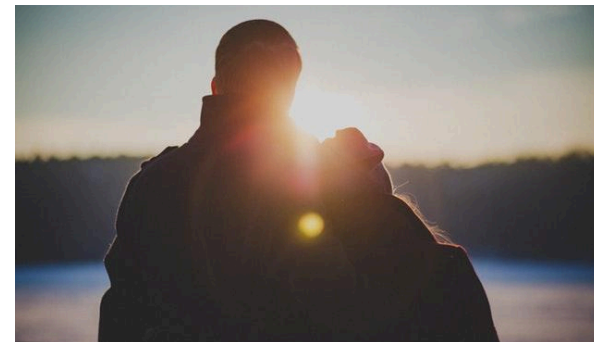
“...she's producing eggs and while she's producing good eggs, we'll try two more times and see.” (39yrs M, rounds: 3)

Emotional reasons

- Strong desire to have a child
- Partner deserves a child.

“I would probably do it more for her than anyone because she really does deserve it – I can see how she interacts with my child and other kids...as a good partner, you want to do whatever you can to help achieve that, and that’s what we’re trying to do.”

(39yrs M, rounds 3)



- Avoidance of regret

“If you say no that’s it.. No regrets just say yes.” (39yrs M, rounds: 10)

Societal influences

- The norm is 3-4 rounds
- Reading success stories online

Factors that influence decision making process for men who are uncertain about continuing:

- Not knowing why it didn't work and when to start and stop
- Financial burden
- Emotional toll



Discussion

- We have only managed to recruit 11 participants over 6 months. This highlights the sensitivity and the silence existing around the topic.
- Many participants had not told friends or family about their treatment.

Strengths and limitations

- First study to explore why patients continue.
- Small homogenous sample recruited from one private clinic who are well educated and not ethnically diverse.

Future directions

- More research is needed with more diverse samples from public clinics.
- Expand into quantitative research.
- The data collected will ultimately help to create a decision aid to better support couples undergoing IVF treatment.

Questions?

Thank you !
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