

The Utility of Fertility Awareness Based Methods in Primary Care:

A Narrative Literature Review

Abstract:

Fertility Awareness Based Methods (FABMs) can be defined as a collective of family planning methods that involve identifying the “fertile window” in order to avoid or achieve pregnancy. These methods estimate the fertile window using physiologic observations such as basal body temperature, cervical mucus, urinary hormone excretion, and data from previous menstrual cycles. This narrative literature review aims to provide an overview of literature regarding different types of FABMs and their effectiveness, the implementation of FABMs in medical education, and their utility as a uniquely natural form of family planning.

This paper found that FABMs must be understood as unique and separate methods with their own effectiveness rates. Several FABMs including the Marquette Method, Creighton Method, Symptothermal Method, and Natural Cycles Method are as effective as oral contraceptive pills, NuvaRing, Depo-Provera, and condoms while being more effective than internal condoms, spermicides, and the withdrawal method.

FABMs have unique advantages to other forms of family planning including an absence of side effects, their use in infertility, increased health literacy, improvements in relationships, and low cost. Although 1 in 5 women are interested in FABMs, they continue to be underutilized in medicine, and are often not mentioned as an alternative to hormonal contraception, due to a lack of training in medical school and residency.