The Utility of Fertility Awareness Based Methods in Primary Care

A Narrative Literature Review

BACKGROUND

Fertility Awareness Based Methods (FABMs) are family planning methods that involve identifying the “fertile window” in order to avoid or achieve pregnancy. By using physiologic observations such as basal body temperature, cervical mucus, and urinary hormones to identify this fertile window, FABMs can be used to either achieve or avoid pregnancy.

EFFECTIVENESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Perfect Use*</th>
<th>Typical Use*</th>
<th>Utilizes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marquette</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.0–6.8%</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creighton</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
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<tr>
<td>SymptoThermal</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NaturalCycles</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condoms</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCPs</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>4.0–7.0%</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirena IUD</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
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</tbody>
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*Values expressed as 1 year pregnancy rate

FABMs IN MEDICINE

MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE

- <1 hour spent teaching FABMs in Medical Schools
- 25–45% of FM Residencies provide no FABM education
- 4% of primary care physicians are trained in an FABM

COMMUNITY INTEREST

- 50% of physicians mention FABMs for family planning
- 20% of women are interested in using FABMs
- 73% of women use a menstrual tracking app when trying to conceive

PHYSIOLOGY OF FABMS

LH and Estrogens can be detected in urine using Fertility Monitors

Cycle lengths vary by an average of 2.6 days in any given person

Estrogen leads to increased cervical mucus 4–8 days prior to ovulation

Progesterone causes a 0.2°C increase in basal body temperature

ADVANTAGES OF FABMs

- Absence of side effects; reversible
- Educates patients on reproductive health
- Aids in early diagnosis of reproductive abnormalities
- Improves communication in relationships
- Affordable, Ethical, Low environmental impact

DIAGNOSE AND TREAT INFERTILITY

- 85% of couples using FABMs are able to achieve pregnancy by 6 months
- NaProTechnology is a protocol for infertility that combines FABMs with medical/surgical interventions
- NaProTechnology is a more conservative and affordable option than IVF/IUI and has a comparable live birth rate (50–66%)

REFERENCES:

2. Bull, J.R. et al. (2019). Real-world menstrual cycle characteristics of more than 600,000 menstrual cycles.

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