

2nd International Conference on

Reproductive Health and Medicine

June 26-27, 2017 London, UK

The experience of infertility: The male perspective (2016)

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Abstract for the Reproductive Health Conference 2017

Background: The experience of fertility may affect both men and women. However, the research on the experience of fertility focuses largely on the experiences of women, resulting in a paucity of literature on the experiences of men. The aim of this study was to explore the perceptions on men experiencing infertility; either themselves or through their partner and the infertility treatment.

Methods: This was an exploratory qualitative study, which recruited fifteen males, using both face to face and skype interviews. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used to analyse the data.

Findings: The participants reported that they found infertility and its treatments to be both psychologically and emotionally demanding. Themes developed from the data included five superordinate themes (with subthemes); perceptions of the views of others (infertility is a dirty little secret), exclusion from the patient-clinician relationship, natural conception versus assisted conception and negative emotions (guilt and loss of masculinity). The final theme included ways in which the fertility experience can be improved.

Discussion: The results of this study provide insight into how individuals experience and cope with a diagnosis of infertility. It also highlights areas for improvement in how treatment and support is delivered to those facing infertility. In addition to this, the findings further emphasize the psychological aspects for men dealing with infertility, which allow an understanding of the adjustment process of this group. The results also highlight the need for fertility treatments to be more inclusive of men to potentially counteract the negative psychosocial consequences of the experience.

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