

## ORIGINAL RESEARCH

# Fertility-awareness knowledge, attitudes, and practices of women seeking fertility assistance

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## Abstract

**Aims.** To report a descriptive study of fertility-awareness knowledge, attitudes, and practice of infertile women seeking fertility assistance.

**Background.** Previous research has suggested that poor fertility-awareness may be a contributing cause of infertility among women seeking fertility assistance at assisted reproductive technology clinics. The actual practices and attitudes towards fertility-awareness in this particular group of women are unknown.

**Design.** A cross-sectional questionnaire-based survey.

**Methods.** The study was conducted over 6 months, from 2007–2008, of women on admission to two assisted reproductive technology clinics in a major city in Australia.

**Results.** Two hundred and four of 282 distributed questionnaires were completed (response rate = 72.3%). Eighty-three per cent had attempted conception for 1 year or more, 86.8% actively tried to improve their fertility-awareness from one or more sources of the information, 68.2% believed they had timed intercourse mainly within the fertile window of the menstrual cycle in their attempts at conception, but only 12.7% could accurately identify this window. Ninety-four per cent believe that a woman should receive fertility-awareness education when she first reports trouble conceiving to her doctor.

**Conclusions.** Most women seeking assistance at assisted reproductive technology clinics attempt timed intercourse within the fertile window of the menstrual cycle. However, few accurately identify this window, suggesting that poor fertility-awareness may be a contributing cause of infertility.

**Keywords:** fertility-awareness, infertility, midwifery, natural family planning, nursing, primary health care, sub-fertility