

can shed light on the new perspective of counselling by acknowledging the perceptual discrepancy between the psychological presence and physical absence of the baby. The acute experience of perinatal grief and depression highlights the need of psychological support at this critical point of healthcare provision.

**Study funding/competing interest(s):** Funding by University(ies), The University of Hong Kong.

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## POSTER VIEWING

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### PSYCHOLOGY AND COUNSELLING

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#### P-334 Alexithymia, coping and fertility related stress

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**Study question:** The aims of this study were to examine: (i) the prevalence of alexithymia in a sample of infertile women, and (ii) the association between alexithymia, coping strategies and fertility related stress, applying multivariate statistical techniques to control for the effects of demographic variables.

**Summary answer:** The prevalence of alexithymia in a sample of infertile women was 19.2%. Alexithymia was positively associated with avoidance coping and negatively associated with problem-management and problem-appraisal coping. Alexithymia and coping strategies were significantly related to fertility related stress after controlling for demographic variables.

**What is known already:** The investigation of the relationship between alexithymia and fertility related distress is a relatively neglected area of research. Only few studies have explored the role of alexithymia in infertility. Studies by Conrad et al., (2001) and by Lamas et al., (2006) have concluded that alexithymia rates are significantly higher in infertile group than in control group. These authors suppose raised the question of secondary alexithymia as a coping strategy in infertile patients.

**Study design, size, duration:** This was a cross-sectional study including 160 infertile women. This sample size was expected to produce at least the 119 participants needed to test the overall fit of a regression model with a medium effect size with up to 10 independent variables. The recruitment period lasted 8 months.

**Participants/materials, setting, methods:** The sample consisted of infertile women undergoing fertility treatment with in vitro fertilization in one of the largest public fertility clinics in Athens. Self-report instruments were used to measure alexithymia (TAS-20), coping (COPE) and fertility-related stress (FPI). Bivariate (Pearson's correlation, ANOVA) and multivariate statistical analyses (multiple linear regression) were used.

**Main results and the role of chance:** The response rate was 92%. 19.2 % of the sample scored in the high alexithymia range. High alexithymia score was positively associated with women's age ( $p < 0.001$ ) and infertility duration ( $p < 0.005$ ) and with low educational ( $p = 0.008$ ) and low economical level ( $p = 0.044$ ). Alexithymia was not significantly associated with marital status, aetiology of infertility and number of previous IVF trials. Alexithymia was positively associated with avoidance coping ( $p < 0.001$ ) and negatively associated with problem-management ( $p < 0.001$ ) and problem-appraisal coping ( $p < 0.001$ ). Multivariate analysis showed that when controlling for demographic factors, high avoidance coping, low problem-appraisal coping and high alexithymia were positively associated with fertility related stress ( $\beta = 0.309$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ,  $\beta = -0.203$ ,  $p = 0.006$ ,  $\beta = 0.151$ ,  $p = 0.050$ , respectively). The total proportion of variance in fertility related stress explained by all the independent variables was 33.9%.

**Limitations, reason for caution:** This study had some limitations. First, the study design was cross-sectional, which precludes drawing conclusions regarding the direction of relationships. Additionally, the present study did not control for other potentially important psychosocial factors (e.g. personality traits) and thus, the results obtained may be influenced by uncontrolled confounding.

**Wider implications of the findings:** Results of this study indicated that alexithymia prevalence in infertile sample was higher than Greek general population. In addition, the association between alexithymia and duration of infertility may be interpreted in the sense that secondary alexithymia acts as a coping strategy in infertile women. These findings are consistent with the findings of previous studies.

**Study funding/competing interest(s):** Funding by national/international organization(s). This study was partly funded by the Institute for Mental Health and Research and Treatment of Personality Disorders.

**Trial registration number:** This study was not a trial.

#### P-335 Sexual orientation and marital status of intended parents as seen by intended surrogates

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**Study question:** It's a preliminary report to clarify if the sexual orientation and marital status of intended parents are relevant for intended surrogates and might affect or influence their decision as for bearing a child.

**Summary answer:** Absolute majority of intended surrogates – 64.5% – consider that every intended parent regardless of sexual orientation or marital status has the right to parent a child and are willing to help.

**What is known already:** The general belief was that intended surrogates support most of all “traditional” families and oppose so called “new” families.

**Study design, size, duration:** The study has been conducted for 18 months from August 2012 to January 2014. Only gestational surrogacy was studied as traditional surrogacy, when own oocytes of a surrogate are used, is out of law in Russia since Jan. 01, 2012.

**Participants/materials, setting, methods:** 150 e-mail questionnaires were sent out to women who applied to European Surrogacy Center in Moscow to become a gestational surrogate in 2012. 124 participants completed the 30 question form by e-mail or in person.

**Main results and the role of chance:** The mean age of the entire group was 28.5 years. 51% were married, 16% divorced, 10% had a partner. All participants had children. 91% declared to be Orthodox Christians, 5.5% were Muslims, 2% did not indicate their religion, 1.5% were atheists.

64.5% declared that sexual orientation or marital status of intended parents was of no relevance for them. 11% wished to bear a child for a married heterosexual couple only. 2% could bear a child for any intended parents, though as they put it was desirable for them to deal with a married heterosexual couple. 2% could bear a child for a lesbian woman or for a lesbian couple, but not for a gay man or a gay men couple. 2% have nothing against single gay men but wouldn't bear a child for a gay couple. 18.5% would not consider gay men and gay couples as intended parents, though cohabiting heterosexual couples and single men and women being nevertheless eligible.

**Limitations, reason for caution:** A thorough psychological study of intended surrogates should be conducted before accepting them for a program for so called “new” families. Motives of non-acceptance of “new” families by intended surrogates and its implications should be thoroughly studied. Assignment of a “wrong” surrogate for a “wrong” program could lead to conflicts. Further studies of surrogates, their motivations and psychology should be conducted.

**Wider implications of the findings:** The main motive for the surrogates' refusal to accept single men or gays as intended parents was not hatred towards gays, but a concern about the future of the child to be born. A psychologist consultation should be recommended for any surrogate starting the program, especially with gay parents. To avoid any conflicts during the implementation of the program or after the birth only surrogates who share the belief that everyone has the right to parent a child can be assigned for “non-traditional” families.

**Study funding/competing interest(s):** Funding by commercial/corporate company(ies), Reproductive Law and Ethics Research Center. Moscow, Russia.

**Trial registration number:** 082/12.

#### P-336 Quality of life assessment in German female infertile patients: a prospective cohort study conducted at a university-affiliated infertility care center

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**Study question:** This study aimed at assessing quality of life (QoL) by means of an objective measurement tool (FertiQoL) in German infertile patients