



I. Definition

NARRATIVE QUESTION: AFTER HOW MANY MONTHS OF UNPROTECTED INTERCOURSE SHOULD A COUPLE BE DEFINED AS INFERTILE?

Based on a wide-ranging analysis of 237 studies of unexplained infertility (UI), 85 of these related to the time of unprotected intercourse in their definition of UI; 46.5% specified 1 year, 39.5% specified 2 years and 14%, 3 years.

According to the International Committee for Monitoring Assisted Reproductive Technology (ICMART) definition of infertility, couples should have at least 12 months of regular, unprotected sexual intercourse before fertility interventions may be initiated (Zegers-Hochschild et al., 2017).

NARRATIVE QUESTION: SHOULD FREQUENCY OF SEXUAL INTERCOURSE AFFECT THE DEFINITION OF UI?

The definition of infertility includes a broad reference to “regular” unprotected sex, albeit without specifying what this term entails. In fact, the concept of “regular” coital frequency is extremely variable and particular to each couple, fluctuating not only over time, but also influenced by multiple factors including age, education, race, working status, exercise and mood, amongst others (Gaskins et al., 2018). Hence, applying strict bounds to define regular unprotected sex is not only unfeasible, but also unadvisable and could cause unnecessary stress in those seeking to conceive.

In their seminal study, Wilcox *et al.* assessed prospectively in 221 women whether sexual frequency within the six days preceding ovulation could affect the probability of conception (Wilcox et al., 1995). The authors found that predicted conception rates did not alter significantly when comparing women who perform sexual intercourse daily, every other day or twice during the fertility window. However, the number of conception cycles were indeed lower in those who had intercourse only once within the before mentioned timeframe. These results seem to reiterate that more frequent ejaculations do not seem to be detrimental to sperm quality in men with normozoospermia and, in fact, may even be beneficial (Agarwal et al., 2016). Hence, in couples seeking to conceive, it could be reasonable to advise to increase sexual intercourse to at least every 2-3 days within the fertility window to the extent that such suits their own preference.

The guideline development group (GDG) acknowledges that giving the indication of having sexual intercourse at least every 2-3 days can sometimes be stressful for individuals.