

MEDIA RELEASE

KNOWLEDGE GAP HAMPERS NURSES TALKING ABOUT FERTILITY WITH PATIENTS

More than half of nurses working in primary healthcare do not discuss fertility with their patients because of a lack of knowledge of the facts, a new research paper has found.

The paper, 'Knowledge, attitude and practices relating to fertility among nurses working in primary health care,' published in the [September – November 2016 edition of the Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing](#) found there was a range of barriers preventing Australian primary healthcare nurses from providing patients with appropriate information about fertility and the factors that influence their chance of conceiving.

The research was conducted to determine primary care nurses' understanding of the factors that affect male and female fertility in an attempt to identify ways to support them to discuss this routinely with their patients. The study was managed by Your Fertility, a government-funded program designed to promote understanding of how people can increase their chances of getting pregnant and having a healthy baby, and funded by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services.

"Primary health care nurses are on the coal face of patient care," said Louise Johnson, CEO of the Victorian Assisted Reproductive Treatment Authority, Your Fertility spokesperson and co-author of the paper. "Your Fertility wanted to have a better understanding of how well equipped nurses are to help their patients understand how to increase their chances of getting pregnant and having a healthy baby. We also wanted to know the best ways to help nurses provide support and information to their patients."

The study included responses from 102 nurses working in primary health, whose responses revealed:

- More than half overestimated the age when male and female fertility declines
- More than half overestimated the chance of women conceiving with IVF
- Only one quarter understood how much smoking affects female fertility.

"The survey results reveal some significant knowledge gaps for nurses working in primary health. These nurses play a very important role in providing information and advice to people and it is extremely important that they are fully informed themselves," said Dr Karin Hammarberg, Senior Research Fellow at Jean Hailes Research Unit and co-author of the paper.

"The results show that many nurses don't feel confident about discussing fertility and the factors that affect the ability to conceive," Dr Hammarberg said. "This lack of confidence might stop them from raising this important subject with their patients."



The study revealed that nurses were seeking a trustworthy website to which they could refer their patients and to have fact sheets they can give their patients to take home.

“We are thrilled to be launching a series of facts sheets **this week for Fertility Week 2016**, which begins today,” said Ms Johnson. “These should go a long way to help nurses feel more confident about talking to patients on these important issues – and will give patients the opportunity to access this information in a way that works best for them.”

“The Your Fertility website continues to be an accessible, evidence-based resource to which nurses can direct their patients – or seek information themselves,” Ms Johnson said. “However, this research shows us that there are still people who are not aware of this great resource. Despite the enormous success of the website to date, it looks like we still have a way to go to get on everyone’s radar.”

Your Fertility is a government-funded program provided by the Fertility Coalition ([Victorian Assisted Reproductive Treatment Authority](#), [Andrology Australia](#), [Jean Hailes for Women’s Health](#) and the [Robinson Research Institute](#)).

For more information about Your Fertility visit www.yourfertility.org.au, where you will also find a full list of the new facts sheets and other relevant information. The fact sheets were jointly created by Your Fertility and the Fertility Society of Australia’s Pre-Conception Health Special Interest Group and launched for Fertility Week 2016. Fact sheet topics include:

- [Age and reproductive outcomes](#)
- [Effects of caffeine, alcohol and smoking on reproductive outcomes](#)
- [Parenting begins before conception](#)
- [The role of exercise in improving fertility, quality of life and emotional wellbeing](#)
- [Understanding ovulation and the fertile window](#)
- [Vitamin and mineral \(micronutrient\) supplements](#)
- [Weight and reproductive outcomes](#)
- [Sexually transmitted infections \(STIs\) and reproductive outcomes](#)
- [How to get ready to be a dad](#)

The full research paper can be found at http://www.ajan.com.au/ajan_34.1.html

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