EVALUATION OF INFERTILITY AND TREATMENT PLANNING: A COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW

DR. SANJAY MAKWANA
Chief Medical Director, Sr. Endoscopic Surgeon & A.R.T. Specialist, Vasundhara Hospital, Jodhpur, Rajasthan

Infertility, defined as the inability to conceive after 12 months of regular unprotected intercourse, affects approximately 10–15% of couples worldwide. The evaluation and treatment planning for infertility require a multidisciplinary, evidence-based approach that considers medical, psychological, and socioeconomic factors. Early and accurate assessment is critical to improving outcomes and reducing the emotional and financial burden on patients.

Diagnostic Evaluation

The initial step in infertility management involves a thorough clinical history and physical examination of both partners. For females, key assessments include:

- Ovulatory function: Evaluated through menstrual history, serum progesterone levels, trans vaginal scans and ovulation predictor kits.
- Ovarian reserve: Measured using anti-Müllerian hormone (AMH) levels and antral follicle count via ultrasound.
- Tubal patency and uterine anatomy: Assessed through hysterosalpingography (HSG), saline infusion sonography, or laparoscopy.
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For males, a semen analysis is the cornerstone of evaluation, examining sperm count, motility, and morphology. Additional hormonal or genetic testing may be warranted in cases of abnormal findings.

Treatment Planning

Treatment strategies are tailored based on the underlying cause, patient age, duration of infertility, and personal preferences. Common options include:

- Lifestyle modifications: Addressing obesity, smoking, alcohol use, and stress.
- Ovulation induction: Using agents like clomiphene citrate or letrozole for anovulatory women.
- Intrauterine insemination (IUI): Often used for mild male factor or unexplained infertility.
- Assisted reproductive technologies (ART): Including in vitro fertilization (IVF) and intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI), particularly for tubal disease, severe male factor, or failed prior treatments.

Cost and Accessibility

Infertility treatments, especially ART, can be prohibitively expensive and are often not covered by insurance. Cost-effectiveness analyses help guide decisions, particularly in resource-limited settings. Early diagnosis and appropriate triaging can reduce unnecessary interventions and improve efficiency.

Patient-Centered Care

Emotional support and counseling are integral to infertility care. Treatment planning should involve shared decision-making, respecting the couple's values, cultural beliefs, and reproductive goals. Psychological support improves adherence and reduces anxiety and depression associated with prolonged treatment.

Conclusion

A structured, individualized approach to infertility evaluation and treatment planning enhances clinical outcomes and patient satisfaction. Integrating clinical evidence with compassionate care ensures that couples receive timely, effective, and respectful support on their fertility journey.

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