

Dear Friends,

Greetings!

We have just passed by June which is a month of fertility awareness, and I am very happy to convey to you that FIGO along with SAFOG conducted a webinar on 1st June on “How to go about Infertility in Low-resource Setups” in regions like ours and FIGO launched its REI committee initiative on public awareness about fertility, along with IFFS and ESHRE, namely “Global Fertility Education Partnership”.

“Reproductive freedom is critical to a whole range of issues. If we can't take charge of this most personal aspect of life, we can't take care of anything. It should not be seen as a privilege or as a benefit, but as a fundamental human right”—*Faye Wattleton*

Reproductive freedom means freedom of individuals to control decisions regarding contraception, abortion, sterilization, and childbirth. It also means to have the information and the means to do so, to achieve the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health.

The reason why I am writing about this initiative here is that there are many studies available which suggest low level of awareness regarding fertility not only amongst the public, but also amongst other healthcare providers. Awareness regarding fertility is extremely important for both planning a pregnancy and also avoiding it. It empowers women and couples to take proper decisions regarding their family planning methods. More than a quarter of women do not remember the date of their last menstrual period, and another 5–15% do not have regular cycles and many of them are also not aware of their ovarian reserves. A lot of fertility-tracking apps are available but how many will actually use them and in spite of using them, the accuracy of prediction either way is just about 20%, which is as good as natural method. So, there is a very compelling need to make women aware about their fertility. This can be either as a part of education system in schools and colleges or can come from their doctors who have limited time or through the other healthcare providers who need to be knowledgeable. Thus, it is imperative to integrate fertility health literacy, to empower and promote reproductive health and rights amongst all women population.

I would really urge each one of us to educate and encourage people around us about fertility awareness so that a lot of unplanned pregnancies and abortions can be avoided and those women who are really seeking fertility, can optimize their time to pregnancy using these methods in the best possible way.

It is important for us to understand that these small opportunities of education and empowering women can have long-term positive consequences not only on our population but also lead to significant reduction in maternal morbidity and mortality.

However, this is a sensitive area of education, and a lot of thought must be put in place regarding a friendly approach towards provision of this information to various age-groups across various countries and social systems.

Lastly, I would only like to say that the onus lies on our shoulders as primary healthcare providers to utilize every opportunity to disseminate education, create awareness, empower girls and women of our countries so that their reproductive health and rights are taken care of.



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