

Increased Utilization of Assistive Reproductive Technologies Amongst Female Orthopedists

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INTRODUCTION: Female orthopedists face infertility at a higher rate than the general population. While infertility amongst female orthopedists has been studied, the use of assistive reproductive technologies (ART) for fertility preservation or infertility has not. We aimed to assess the usage of ART by female orthopedists, as well as the financial burden of these treatments.

METHODS: An anonymous survey was distributed to female orthopedists via private online forums and through direct contact with residency programs. Categorical variables were compared using chi-squared or Fisher's exact. Continuous variables were compared using either two sample t-test or Wilcoxon rank sum.

RESULTS: 147 individuals responded to the study, with an average age of 37.5 years old. 43 respondents (29.6%) had been diagnosed with infertility, at an average age of 33.4 years old at diagnosis, which represents a significantly higher incidence of infertility ($p < 0.001$) at a younger age compared to the general population ($p = 0.0019$). 61 women had utilized elective fertility preservation or had ART-assisted pregnancies. Relative to the general population, female orthopedists undergo ART procedures more frequently ($p < 0.03$). Based on employer type, female orthopedists in non-academic positions paid significantly more out of pocket for ART treatments than female orthopedists in academic positions ($p = 0.0018$).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION: We found that there was a high number of women in orthopedics that utilized ART for fertility preservation or to become pregnant and that female orthopedists undergo these procedures more often than the general population. There was a high financial burden that was incurred because of these procedures. Relative to the increasing benefits for fertility treatments in the corporate world, healthcare employers are lagging behind and this may be a contributing factor to the difficulty recruiting and retaining women into orthopedics.