Treatment of Obesity in Infertile Patients: Is there any Benefit?

Introduction: Obesity is epidemic in western societies with obesity rates among reproductive aged women approaching 50% in some countries. Obesity is clearly associated with reproductive failure in women, which has led to a common strategy advocating preconception weight loss prior to infertility treatment.

Methods/Methodology: Review of the literature including prospective pre-conception weight loss trials.

Results: Obesity is a WHO recognized disease which disproportionately affects minorities and women. Obesity alone, however, is only a minor contributor to reproductive failure and pregnancy complications. The attributable risk of obesity per se (i.e. without existing co-morbidities such as hypertension and diabetes) is low. Obesity treatment is largely ineffective in clinical practice or with limited availability to the most severely affected population, for example bariatric surgery for women with a BMI > 40. There are no convincing data documenting that preconception weight loss improves obstetric outcomes. In fact there are data to show that it is harmful or at best ineffective.

Conclusion: Recommending Weight loss prior to infertility treatment should be done in the proper balance of benefit to risk.