Reproductive Assistance for Individuals with HIV
BIET 395B

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Abstract:
Due to the advancement of treatments for HIV, this previously terminal illness has become a treatable chronic disease. As a result, people who live with HIV now have longer life expectancies and wish to have children. People living with this chronic illness often turn to ARTs to assist them in reproducing safely and with a lessened risk of transmission of the HIV virus to their children. IVF-ICSI, and IUI are most commonly utilized for assistance in reproduction, which like treatment for HIV, have advanced to the point of having high success rates with patients with HIV. An increase in technology available to individuals with HIV, comes the ethical concern of equitable and accessible access to care. Our research indicates that serodiscordant couples (i.e. mixed status) are pursuing reproductive assistance in order to have children safely, however, they may also consider or practice unsafe measures. This begs the question of how individuals and serodiscordant couples can safely reproduce with the help of reproductive technology. Furthermore, it is important to note the role that socioeconomic status plays in disadvantaging women in access to information and healthcare services. In summary, as technology and treatments continue to advance for individuals with HIV, more conversations specific to their needs are necessary in order to prevent further discrimination in healthcare settings.

Introduction:
The HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States took place in the 1980s with over 700,000 people having died since the first cases were documented. HIV had and continues to have a disproportionate impact on the LGBTQ+ community. The mishandling of public health policy by the US government in the 80s (due in equal parts to anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment and poor management) resulted in far-reaching consequences and many avoidable deaths. In more recent years, antiretroviral therapy (ART) has reduced AIDS-related morbidity and mortality. As long-term outcomes for people living with HIV become a more necessary conversation, a debate on whether or not it is healthy or important for HIV discordant couples to have access to assisted reproductive technology has sprung up. Much of this debate involves stigma that has surrounded HIV/AIDS and negatively portrays people living with HIV/AIDS as potentially unsafe parents and completely ignores the medical developments in reproduction for individuals with HIV. In addition to this, the ethical concerns of reproductive technology for individuals with HIV/AIDS should have access to reproductive technology to safely have children.

Ethical Considerations:
Right to Reproduce:
- Couples pursue conceiving children while understanding the risks it may pose.
- Moral obligation to find solutions for individuals and couples living with HIV to reproduce successfully and safely.

Expansion of Reproductive Health Paradigm:
- More education and awareness for medical professionals in healthcare settings.
- Economically accessible/affordable options for low-income populations and communities.
- Whether in resource constrained or wealthier settings, women living with HIV should be offered choices for health interventions, to lead healthy lives.
- Promoting procreative freedom to give patients more options and autonomy.
- Issues with providing antenatal care for multiple locations of vulnerability.
- Discrimination/Prejudice:
  - Fear of violence women may be subjected to when status is communicated in a hospital setting—counselling support needed.
  - Cultural concerns due to the stigma and isolation that individuals with HIV may experience.

References/Citations:


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