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Factors that influence lifestyle behaviours of persons seeking fertility treatment

Submission date
17/09/2026

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
07/10/2026

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
11/11/2026

Condition category
Urological and Genital Diseases

[_] Prospectively registered
[_] Protocol
[_] Statistical analysis plan
[_] Results
[_] Individual participant data
[X] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Data from the Aberdeen Fertility Centre highlights that, in 1 year (April 2023 to April 2024), 30% of patients were deferred from receiving fertility treatment due to factors associated with modifiable lifestyle factors such as elevated body mass index (BMI) and/or smoking. These factors, particularly concerning BMI and smoking, are among those that can significantly hinder pregnancy success and delay access to NHS-funded fertility support. Delay in receiving fertility treatment has been found to be upsetting for couples and the emotional impact can manifest as mood disturbances, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and depressive ideas. Delay also increases the woman's age at the time of treatment and advanced age lowers success rates.
Weight management and smoking cessation are well-documented and publicised in their positive impact on fertility, often improving the chances of conception and creating a healthier environment for pregnancy. The data highlights that even in most motivated group there is a need of further intervention to facilitate lifestyle modifications as a proactive part of preconception care.
This study aims to interview patients seeking fertility treatment (where 100% come for preconception care and who are the most motivated group) to explore what factors influence their modifiable lifestyle behaviours.

Who can participate?
Patients aged 18 years and older referred to the Aberdeen Fertility Centre

What does the study involve?
Interviews with couples or individuals (each participant only participating in one session)

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
The information that participants will receive in interviews might be helpful for improving readiness for pregnancy by addressing modifiable risk factors in advance, increasing patient engagement and commitment to their care pathway and allowing more patients to proceed smoothly with their treatment by reducing deferrals.
There is the risk that participants might feel upset because of the information they will discuss in the interview about their current lifestyle and health behaviours.

Where is the study run from?
The study will be run from the Aberdeen Fertility Centre (UK)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
May 2026 to September 2026

Who is funding the study?
Funding is being provided from NHS Grampian Charities funds allocated to the Aberdeen Fertility Centre (UK)

Who is the main contact?
Dr Robyn Parkins, robyn.parkins@nhs.scot

Contact information

Type(s)
Principal investigator

Contact name
Dr Nicola Marconi

Contact details
Cornhill Road, Forrester Hill
Aberdeen
United Kingdom
AB25 2ZL
-
nicola.marconi@nhs.scot

Type(s)
Public, Scientific

Contact name
Dr Robyn Parkins

Contact details
Cornhill Road, Forrester Hill
Aberdeen
United Kingdom
AB25 2ZL
-
robyn.parkins@nhs.scot

Additional identifiers

Integrated Research Application System (IRAS)
359282

Study information

Scientific Title
Barriers and Facilitators for preconception optimization of modifiable lifestyle factors in people seeking fertility treatment

Study objectives
Primary objective:
To identify the key barriers and facilitators of a range of modifiable lifestyle and health behaviours for men and women referred for fertility treatment

Secondary objective:
To identify how couples or individuals would like to be advised or supported to improve modifiable lifestyle behaviours

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 09/03/2026, North of Scotland Research Ethics Committee (Summerfield House 2 Eday Road, Aberdeen, AB15 6RE, United Kingdom; +44 (0)1224558458; gram.nosres@nhs.scot), ref: 26/NS/0024

Primary study design
Observational

Secondary study design
Qualitative research

Study type(s)

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Infertility

Interventions
We will use online video (audio-recorded) interview discussions to collect data. The researcher will use an interview topic guide to structure the interview and initiate (and moderate) discussion with couples or individuals (in the case of single persons referred for treatment). The aim is to obtain opinions and views about the barriers and facilitators of a range of health behaviours by drawing from personal experiences and believes of participants and interaction among them.
Interview discussions are appropriate in this setting as the specific barriers and facilitators that influence preconception health behaviours may have not been considered by patients, clinicians and scientists. Even those who have accessed preconception health and lifestyle advice are unlikely to have discussed if the information or support offered is appropriate or effective. Such conversations can therefore be stimulated to occur within interviews. The use of an online interviews is ideal as participants will not have to travel to the Aberdeen Fertility Centre (the Centre provides services within the North East of Scotland and a large proportion of patients is highly dispersed).

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
1. Barriers to modification of lifestyle measured using interview and analysed using thematic analysis at baseline

2. Facilitators to modification of lifestyle measured using interview and analysed using thematic analysis at baseline

Key secondary outcome(s)

Completion date
30/09/2026

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Patients who are referred to the Aberdeen Fertility Centre (regardless of the cause of infertility, funding [National Health Service (NHS) or private], number of previous IVF cycles) and able to give informed consent
2. Able to understand written and spoken English
3. Individuals aged 18 years and older
4. Able to take part in a Microsoft Teams interview

Healthy volunteers allowed
Yes

Age group
Adult

Lower age limit
18 Years

Upper age limit
60 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
17

Key exclusion criteria
1. Not resident in Scotland
2. Declining audio recording
3. Those who cannot understand/speak English (as this is an exploratory study, we do not plan to have interpreters or other forms of communication support as there is no external funding available)
4. No intended pregnancy carriers (gamete donors)
5. Undertaking fertility preservation

Date of first enrolment

04/05/2026

Date of final enrolment
28/07/2026

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

Scotland

Study participating centre
Aberdeen Fertility Centre
Cornhill Road, Foresterhill
Aberdeen
Scotland
AB25 2ZL

Sponsor information

Organisation
NHS Grampian

ROR
https://ror.org/00ma0mg56

Funder(s)

Funder type

Funder Name
Aberdeen Fertility Centre

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary

Not expected to be made available