

Managing fertility treatments and stress with astrology

When you've tried everything under the sun, should you look to the stars?

Disappointment can drive infertile couples to consider unusual or unconventional tactics for ensuring a successful pregnancy. Ancient lore associates particular astrological arrangements with fertility, and the possibility that astrology can be valuable in identifying optimal dates for fertility treatments is intriguing. Read on to learn how astrology has been successfully used as a counseling vehicle for managing concerns such as infertility and chronic pain.

Predicting treatment success

An astrological birth chart is a map of planetary positions in the sky at the time, date, and place of birth of any individual. Astrologers have observed that certain angular relationships of Venus and Jupiter to planets in the birth chart can identify years in a woman's life when she is most likely to bear children. This claim was tested in 2 studies, which sought to predict the outcome of fertility treatment using astrological indicators of Venus and Jupiter.

In a group of 27 women (N = 114 treatments), astrology and more than 30 other variables, including fertility problems of each partner, anxiety, episodic depression, age, and location of clinic, were considered together against the success and failure of treatment outcome in a logistic regression model.¹ Depression, clinic location, ferti-

ty history, and astrological factors were significantly correlated with treatment outcome. A replication study of 40 women (N = 55 treatments) tested only the factors found to be significant in the first study (depression, fertility, location, and astrology; the study took place in one location, so this factor was excluded). Only astrology was significant at the 10% level ($P = .056$).¹

The findings in the second study suggest that women can increase their chances of a successful fertility treatment outcome by using astrology to select the best time for treatment. When favorable astrological patterns were present, the chances of succeeding with fertility treatment increased from 9% to 23% for women who were sure of their birth time. Women who were not sure of their birth time could increase their chances of succeeding from 10% to 17%.

It is important to note that only 1 study has been done to correlate astrology with fertility, so it is not possible yet to confirm a true level of significance. There were only 4 viable pregnancies with enough data for testing by the model in the second study; therefore, further research on a larger sample with a greater number of testable successes is needed. However, for individuals who are curious about astrology, these results may be interesting.

Coping and stress management

Astrology is thought to be useful for addressing stressful issues because it may provide insight into a patient's individuality and unique situation. Having such information may provide patients with a sense of control over a situation that has been distressing, puzzling, or the source of prolonged misery.

Some evidence links astrology and positive management of stress.² A study investigated the role of astrology in coping among 50 students who attended courses

Pat Harris, PhD,
MSc, DfAstroIS
Deputy Convenor of the
Research Group for the
Critical Study
of Astrology
Editor, *Correlation*
Southampton, United Kingdom

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Patients pose challenging questions and as the stress of disease and failed treatments increases, they may ask for your opinion about non-allopathic procedures. Knowing the vocabulary and theories behind such remedies is often helpful in these discussions. Although the research results presented in the following article are not statistically significant, clinicians may benefit from learning more about opinions of astrologers and the work that they do.

Dr Harris reports no commercial or financial interests or other relationships with any company that provides medically related services.

KEY POINT

It is important that the patient understands that astrological indicators do not guarantee success.

RESEARCH IN ASTROLOGY: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Correlation is the peer-reviewed research journal of the Astrological Association of Great Britain (AA). Members of the worldwide scientific community comprise the membership of the AA.

The following associations can provide information about the critical study of astrology:

- Research Group for the Critical Study of Astrology: www.astrology-research.net
- The Astrological Association of Great Britain: www.astrologicalassociation.com

on astrology, psychology, or German language at higher education institutions in Helsinki. Results reported by astrology students suggested that astrology played a successful role in coping with acutely stressful situations. Astrology appeared to provide meaningful explanations for ambiguous and confusing experiences, giving participants a feeling of increased control over their own actions.

A small case study series at a National Health Service hospital in the UK explored the effect of astrological counseling on chronic pain management, stress reduction, and quality-of-life improvements.³ Astrological profiles of the patients and the history of their chronic pain were presented to the clinical psychologist in charge of the program, who compared them with the psychological profiles. The psychologist concluded that astrological information enhanced the insights obtained by traditional psychological methods and that the astrological analyses were comparable to the results of psychological analyses. In one case, astrological chart analysis and an interview by the astrologer revealed posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that had gone undiagnosed for 7 years. Conventional psychological interviewing had not detected PTSD. In another case, unresolved issues with a dominating mother were identified as the cause of the patient's inability to complete the rehabilitation process. After identifying and discussing these issues, the patient was able to complete the rehabilitation course and enjoy a better quality of life.

Indeed, there is a paucity of evidence to support counseling astrology in the diagnosis and management of PTSD or other stress disorders. However, it has the potential to be valuable if further research into this branch of astrology supports the limited findings to date.

Astrology in a medical practice

There are and have been medical practitioners with working knowledge of and some training in the application of astrology to health and health psychology. Most notable among them are Margaret Millard, who carried out analyses of astrological charts for times of attempted in vitro fertilization (IVF),⁴ and William Davidson, a general practitioner who used information about the planets and their association with the body in making diagnoses.⁵⁻⁷ Clinicians

without a background in astrology who wish to incorporate astrology in the fertility treatment process for date selection or stress management may need to consult with an astrologer.

In the future, online technology may make it easier for interested patients and clinicians to incorporate astrology into fertility treatment plans. A software program based on my research is under development that will enable women to find optimal dates for successful conception with or without assisted reproductive technology. Visitors to the site will be able to input the date, place, and time (within 30 minutes) of their birth and select a period of time (up to 12 years) in the future when particular years, months, and weeks are astrologically indicated as windows of fertility. Interested readers should contact the author for further details.

Conclusion

Research into the association between fertility and astrological indicators is ongoing, and predictive models continue to be refined. Clinicians may wish to consider use of astrology to select dates for embryo implantation because of its potential to increase the likelihood of a successful outcome. However, it is very important that the patient understands that astrological indicators do not guarantee success. My research shows only that attempts to conceive during optimal times have an increased likelihood of success compared with attempts made when the indicators are not present. It should also be made clear to patients that the absence of favorable astrological indicators means only that the chances of succeeding may be lower and does not portend a failed outcome. ■

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