

IMPLEMENTATION OF A 12 WEEK PROGRAM TO OPTIMIZE FERTILITY THROUGH WEIGHT LOSS EDUCATION

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Purpose

Obesity is a widespread problem in the United States that has been correlated with multiple increased risks, including infertility. Studies have shown that improvements in weight loss and overall health improve fertility. We designed a low cost, high impact program to try to optimize diet and lifestyle through education and accountability. The present study aims to describe the prospective implementation of the program and retrospectively survey participants' experiences and attitudes after referral to this program by a Reproductive Endocrinologist and Infertility (REI) provider.

Methods

We conducted a retrospective telephone survey of all patients from a single site private practice fertility clinic that were referred to the Fertility Fitness Program (FFP) between July of 2020 through 2022 (n equals 102). The FFP consisted of a nutrition consult, 6 weeks of exercise coaching followed by 6 weeks of open gym, and weekly phone calls with a lifestyle coach. The responses from participants identifying barriers were analyzed using means/standard deviations and counts/frequencies to summarize population characteristics among survey respondents for continuous and categorical variables respectively. Counts/reasons for not enrolling in the Fertility Fitness Program were calculated among non-enrollees.

Results

This is a group of 102 patients from a single site private practice fertility clinic who were offered enrollment in the FFP. Overall, despite attempts at decreasing barriers for patients, participation rates in the actual program remained low. Of the 102 patients who were contacted after being offered the program, 26 participated in our survey. Survey results for barrier to participation were as follows: 19 percent cost, 50 percent time commitment, 38 percent convenience, 8 percent transportation, 4 percent changed physicians, 23 percent program burden, 27 percent readiness for change, 11 percent support, 4 percent childcare.

Participation Barriers

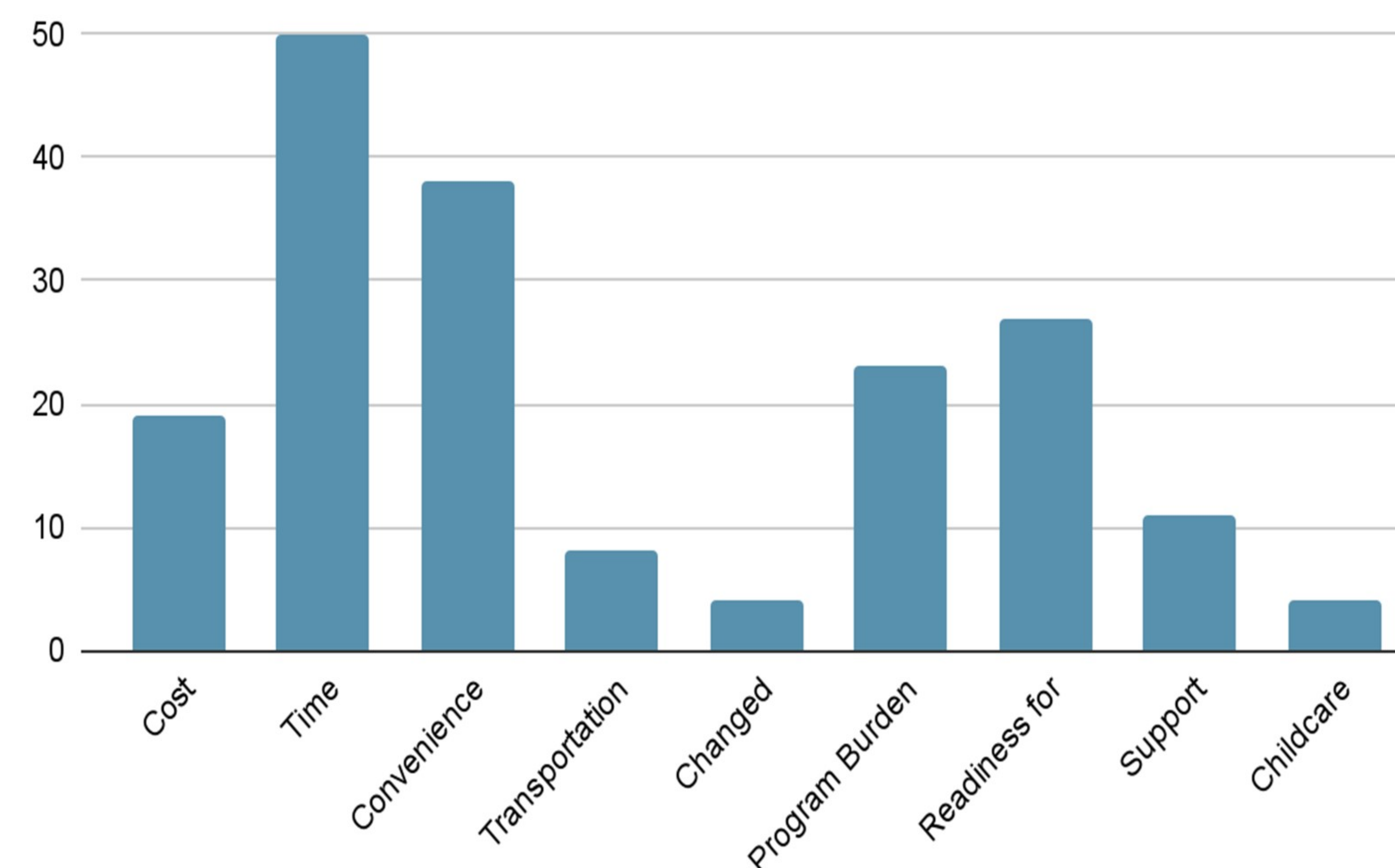


Figure 1: Counts/reasons that each barrier effected participation

Conclusions

Our findings affirm prior studies showing that participation in weight loss programs is extremely challenging, despite appropriate accommodations. In our study, time commitment was the most frequently experienced barrier to participation in a fitness program. The FFP was conducted during the COVID 19 pandemic which may have been further impacted our results and warrants further exploration.

References

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