

User profile and satisfaction with a sympto-thermal NFP-method in Flanders (Belgium)

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Objectives

Long term use of NFP-DAG

To evaluate the long term use of a German sympto-thermal method defined by the German Arbeitsgruppe NFP (Deutsche Arbeitsgruppe NFP NFP-DAG) in avoiding a pregnancy in Flanders.

Design & methods

Strict guidelines applied by teachers

Teaching NFP-DAG

Training was standardised through strict guidelines applied by teachers from NFP-Vlaanderen. With a maximum of 4 couples meeting 4 times over a period of 3 months, the personal observations, proper recording and interpretation of several fertility signs (mucus and or cervix changes, temperature and secondary symptoms) are explained and evaluated by the teacher.

Data collection: phone interview

The user motivation, discontinuation rate and degree of satisfaction with NFP-DAG teaching and method is evaluated retrospectively by phone interview (April 2008) of one of the partners (mainly women) with history charts available over the period 1990-2008.

Results

309 of 481 NFP-DAG users over 18 years still using 164 (54%)

By means of a follow up of 481 NFP-DAG-users over a period of 18 years, it was possible to trace 309 (64%) by phone interview (April-July 2008). The socioeconomic demographics of the people who have not been traced are similar to those replying.

The main reason for using NFP-DAG is the health benefit (72%);

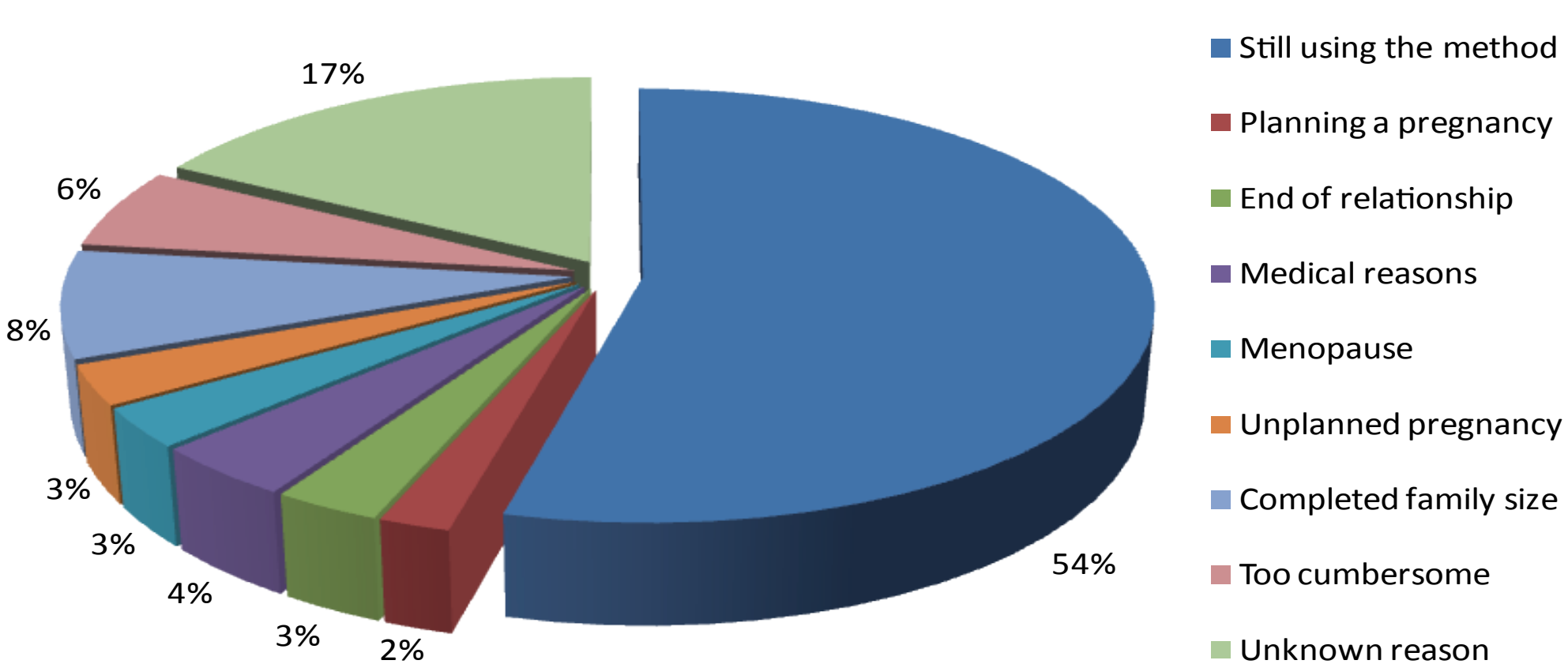
20% did not give a specific reason. Religious motivation was mentioned only in 4% of the clients. Over the entire period of 18 years, 142 dropouts out of 309 women (46%) were registered. Over a 60 months period, 76 out of 272 women (28%).

Satisfaction: 88% recommend the method to others

The majority is quite satisfied with the methodological approach of the NFP-DAG teaching and gives a rating of 9/10. 88% of all the traced users (309) would recommend the method to others. Out of 37 users the exact moment for discontinuing the method is unknown.

User profile

	Men	Women
Mean age at onset	33 (19-64) median 32	31 (17-53) median 30
High school education	150 (34%)	241 (50%)
University	112 (25%)	97 (20%)
Secondary school	87 (20%)	89 (19%)
Unknown	93 (21%)	54 (11%)
No partner at the time	39 (8%)	
Total	481 (100%)	481 (100%)



Long term use

Category	n	Years	Mean	Median
Active users	167	0.5 - 18 y	5.8 y	5.5 y
Drop-out users	142	0.5 - 9 y	3.5 y	3.0 y
Total	309		4.9 y	

Discussion

It is common knowledge that **effectiveness** is the main reason for using a particular method. The NFP-DAG method used by NFP-Vlaanderen has proved its effectiveness in several peer-reviewed prospective studies. With a **method failure rate of 0.4-1.3** and a **user failure rate of 1.8-2.7** this method can be classified into the most effective family planning methods. This seems in contradiction with the retrospective study of Moreau et al. (typical use 7.7) and the review of Mansour et al. (perfect use 0.7-3.1; typical use 3.8-20.4). But both studies are mixing quite different natural family planning methods (calendar methods, the Billings ovulation method and others). In the NFP-Vlaanderen study **9 unplanned pregnancies out of 309 users** were accounted for **over a period of 18 years**, all of them in the first 6 years of use, and 7 occurred in the first two years.

Only 15% stopped the NFP-DAG method because it was too cumbersome. Noteworthy is the great user satisfaction, since 88% would recommend the method to others, even if they stop using it themselves. This suggests that the fertility knowledge and experience conveyed to the couple has an intrinsic value, a way of emancipation comparable to the knowledge of reading and writing or car driving (6 months learning time).

The influence of friends, health care providers and media is important to motivate clients to use NFP-DAG. Although NFP-DAG is not really promoted in Flanders, **the drop out rate is relatively low, compared to other family planning methods**. Only a few GP's are proposing NFP-DAG, most of them are even disapproving it. Nevertheless **in connexion with the patient rights NFP-DAG should be proposed as a realistic and effective alternative** for motivated couples, as also emphasised by Laura Wershler (Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada)(Allison Cross 2010). The free choice has to be guaranteed. This can only be achieved by financing NFP-DAG through social security organisations in an analogue way as other contraceptive methods.

Conclusions

The efficacy of NFP-DAG after 2 years is comparable with the findings of Frank-Herrmann et al.

Compared to Moreau et al. the results are in the same range as the efficacy of pill and IUD over a period of 24 months. For long term use (60 months) the efficacy of NFP-DAG is even better.

The dropout of 28% at 60 months is acceptable.

For 88% of users the intrinsic value of NFP-DAG as emancipation factor is an important element in their appreciation of the method.

There is a strong need for a better promotion, follow up and support of NFP-DAG-users to limit the failures in the first 2 years.

The efficacy of NFP-DAG and the absence of adverse reactions are reasons to remunerate NFP-DAG-teachers through the social security system as to be fitting in the framework of the patient's rights.

Literature

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