

NC Department of Health and Human Services
How to Use Fertility Awareness Based Methods (FABMs) in the Real World: Counseling and Applications Webinar

Rachel Peragallo Urrutia, MD, MA
 Medical Consultant, Women's Health Branch, NC Division of Public Health
 UNC-Chapel Hill

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Overview

- Review and Questions from Feb. 5, 2020 Webinar
- Application (App.) Overview
- Fertility Awareness Based Methods (FABMs) Counseling and Educational Tools
- Case Discussions
- Questions

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Medicaid Coverage For FABMs

- Per the NC Medicaid Family Planning Services Clinical Coverage Policy, ICD 10 code Z30.02 is listed in Attachment A, Table B as a covered diagnostic code for Medicaid/Be Smart beneficiaries.
- ICD-10 diagnostic code Z30.02 is described as "counseling and instruction in Natural Family Planning to avoid pregnancy."
- Counseling in natural family planning to avoid pregnancy would need to occur in either the annual exam for one of the allowed inter-periodic visits.
- The counseling code, Z30.02, without an E/M (preventive or problem visit code) would NOT be reimbursed
- If you have additional questions, contact Elizabeth.Draper@dhhs.nc.gov or 919-707-5719.

SOURCE: NC Medicaid Family Planning Services Clinical Coverage Policy, No: 1E-7; December 31, 2019
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FABM Applications (Apps)



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Internet Applications Advertised as Related to Fertility Awareness

- Hundreds of apps related to “fertility awareness”
- Vague and confusing advertising
 - *Have difficulty in remembering your period dates? Want reminders on your upcoming period? Are you confused by PMS symptoms? Want to use natural birth control for better sexual experience? With **** fertility tracker, it's easy to keep track of your menstrual cycle.*
 - ***** can also be used beyond ovulation tracking and charting for natural birth control and trying to get pregnant*

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Internet Applications Advertised as Related to Fertility Awareness (continued)

- Vague and confusing advertising
 - *The most sophisticated, accurate and comprehensive analysis of your fertility signs.*
 - *Note: ****app should not be used as a contraceptive (found at the very bottom of the app description)*

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Overview FABMs

FABM category	Examples of FABM methods
Calendar-based (menstrual cycle)	Dynamic Optimal Timing , Rhythm Method, Standard Days Method , many "Period trackers"
Cervical mucus-based	Billings Ovulation Method , Creighton Model Fertility Care System, Two-Day Method
Temperature-based	Bioself , Daysy, Marshall, Natural Cycles
Symptothermal (multiple indicator methods)	Couple to Couple League, Justisse, Sensiplan , Symptopro, Taking Charge of Your Fertility
Urinary hormone-based	Marquette , Persona

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Apps with Effectiveness Data

- **Natural Cycles**
 - Basal Body Temperature-Based
 - Cost \$90 per year or \$10 per month
 - Multiple languages
 - U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) Cleared
- **Dynamic Optimal Timing**
 - Calendar Based
 - Free
 - English only
 - Not available currently due to recent change in ownership

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Natural Cycles - Basal Body Temperature-Based

Considerations

- o Computer algorithm predicts daily chance of pregnancy based on woman's cycle history and daily basal body temperature
- o FDA approved
- o Learning time: none
- o Cost: \$10/month or \$80/year
- o For more information visit <https://www.naturalcycles.com/>
- o Can be used by all cycle lengths but may lead to long fertile window for those with long/irregular cycles

Perfect Use: 1.8%
Typical Use: 10%



Advantages

- o Removes prediction responsibilities from user

Disadvantages

- o Ongoing cost of app use
- o Potentially long fertile time while computer algorithm learns user patterns

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Calendar Methods – Dynamic Optimal Timing (DOT)**

Perfect Use: 1%
Typical Use: 5%

Considerations


- o For use only by women with 20 - 40 day cycles and less than 10 days of variation
- o Proprietary algorithm on app predicts days of high fecundity based on previous cycle lengths
- o Fertile window shortens over time
- o No learning or teaching required
- o Cost: free App

Advantages

- o Requires tracking of only last menstrual period
- o No ongoing cost
- o Removes prediction responsibilities from user

Disadvantages

- o Only works with regular cycles (20-40 days)
- o Less useful for trying to conceive or health monitoring and management



Courtesy of Cycle technologies

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Apps For Effective Methods

- **Marquette Method**
 - Urinary Hormone Based
 - *Marquette Fertility*
- **Billings Ovulation Method**
 - Cervical Mucus-Based
 - *Natural Family Planning (NFP) Charting*
- **Standard Days Method**
 - Calendar-Based
 - *Cycle Beads App*

**** Disclaimer:** apps have not been tested in effectiveness studies

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Symptothermal Charting Online

- There are no evidence-based apps for the symptothermal method
- A variety of apps exist with functionality
 - Clue, Fertility Friend, Glow, Kindara, Ovia
- **Recommend patients turn off features that allow app to predict fertile window as these are not evidence based**

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Discovery Questions

- Short/long term fertility intentions?
- Effectiveness needs?
- Learning style preference?
- Postpartum or breastfeeding?
- Long/irregular cycles?
- Physical or learning limitations?
- Financial or time barriers?
- Religious considerations?

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Decision Making Tool

Help me decide ...

	Simplon	Manuarta	Bilings	Two Day	Standard Day	Natural Cycles	LAM
I prefer in-person learning	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
I prefer online or self-paced education		•	•	•	•	•	•
I have irregular or long cycles*	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
I have an irregular sleep schedule	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
I prefer to choose track only one biomarker			•	•	•	•	•
I prefer to use an online charting tool		•	•	•	•	•	•
I have limited time to learn				•	•	•	•
I am breastfeeding without cycles*	•	•	•				•
Meets USCCB standards for Catholic diocesan NFP		•	•				

*Conditions such as nipple-feeding and sleep or breastfeeding without cycles may make use of some or all methods more challenging, please discuss with your medical provider.

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Case Study #1: Ada

- Ada is a 26 year old who has had five pregnancies, three of which were live births. She recently delivered an unplanned pregnancy and has three young children at home.
- She is not breastfeeding and is having regular cycles. She works in food service and has unreliable transportation.
- She has a new partner since her delivery and has not been using any method of contraception. She has previously tried the IUD and several oral contraceptives and did not like any of the side effects.
- She does not live with her partner; therefore, the timing of intercourse is somewhat unpredictable. She and her partner do not want to use condoms, but may be willing to do so on occasion. She is very interested in FABMs.

SOURCE:

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Case Study #1: Ada

- Patient discussion**
 - Believed she could negotiate the timing of intercourse
 - Did not feel she could attend educational sessions in person or online due to turbulent personal life and lack of reliable transportation
 - Had a smart phone and desired to use an app
 - Did not feel she could take her temperature daily and unsure about checking mucus

Dynamic Optimal Timing Standard Days Method
 Two Day Method Billings Ovulation Method
 Natural Cycle Sensiplan Syntrophal
 Marquette Symptom-Thermal

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Dynamic Optimal Timing (DOT)* - Calendar Based

Considerations

- o For use only by women with 20 - 40 day cycles and less than 10 days of variation
- o Proprietary algorithm on app predicts days of high fecundity based on previous cycle lengths
- o Fertile window shortens over time
- o No learning or teaching required
- o Cost: free App


Perfect Use: 1%
Typical Use: 5%

Advantages

- o Requires tracking of only last menstrual period
- o No ongoing cost
- o Removes prediction responsibilities from user

Disadvantages

- o Only works with regular cycles (20-40 days)
- o Less useful for trying to conceive or health monitoring and management



Courtesy of Cycle Technologies

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Standard Days Method – Calendar-Based

Perfect Use: 4 - 6%
Typical Use: 11 - 14%

Considerations


- o For use only by women with 26 - 32 day cycles
- o Uses a 12-day fixed fertile window on CD 8 - 19 for all cycles
- o Uses calendar, cycle beads, or free app to track cycles
- o Method is self taught and easy to learn/teach (30 minutes)
- o Cost: approx. \$14 for beads; free App
- o For more information visit www.cyclebeads.com

Advantages

- o Requires tracking of only last menstrual period
- o No ongoing cost

Disadvantages

- o Only works with regular cycles (26 - 32 days)
- o Less useful for trying to conceive or health monitoring and management



CycleBeads®

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Case Study #2: Bey

- Bey is a 22-year old with no kids who has been in a relationship for 2 years.
- She is graduating from college this year and planning to attend graduate school. She strongly wants to avoid getting pregnant.
- She has regular cycles. She has a very healthy lifestyle and really wants to avoid putting drugs or devices in her body. She wants to have more control of and knowledge of her bodily functions.

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Case Study #2: Bey

• Patient discussion

- Believed she could negotiate the timing of intercourse and/or barrier method use
- Wanted a highly effective method but not willing to use an IUD or implant
- Had time to attend educational sessions and actually looked forward to the idea of getting to know her body better
- Wanted to learn with the assistance of a teacher
- Preferred to use an app but open to paper charting; prefers low cost

Dynamic Optimal Timing

Two Day Method

Natural Cycles

Marquette Symptothermal

Standard Day Method

Billings Ovulation Method

Sensiplan Symptothermal

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Sensiplan - Symptothermal Method

Perfect Use: <1%

Typical Use: 2-3%

Considerations

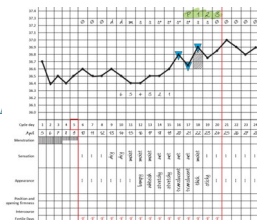
- o Cervical mucus is cross-checked with basal body temperature to identify fertile window
- o In-person training by certified instructor
- o Learning time: 4-6 hours over 4 sessions
- o Cost: Varies; may be billable through insurance
- o For more information visit <https://www.replyobjvyn.com/services/sensiplan>

Advantages

- o Can also be used for health monitoring and management
- o No ongoing cost

Disadvantages

- o Need literacy and basic math skills
- o Potentially long fertile time for those with long cycles



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Case Study #3: Cass

- Cass is a 32-year old who is 6 months postpartum from her first child. She is exclusively breastfeeding and has not yet gotten her period. She no longer qualifies for use of the Lactational Amenorrhea Method (LAM).
- She is interested in having another child in 2 or 3 years and wants to avoid hormones if possible while she is lactating and planning her next pregnancy.

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Case Study #3: Cass

• Important Discussion Points

- Believed she could negotiate the timing of intercourse and/or barrier method use
- Breastfeeding exclusively and amenorrheic
- Wants a method that removes the "guesswork" for her

Dynamic Optimal Timing ~~Method~~ Standard Days ~~Method~~
 Two Day Method ~~Method~~ Billings Ovulation ~~Method~~
 Natural Cycle ~~Method~~ Sensiplan Symptothermal
 Marquette Symptothermal

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Marquette Method – Symptothermal Method

Considerations

- o Cervical mucus is cross-checked with urinary hormones to identify fertile window
In-person or online training
- o **App available**
- o Learning time: Three 30 min sessions over 3-6 months
- o Cost: Varies; **may be billable through insurance**
- o For more information
visit <https://www.marquette.edu/nursing/natural-family-planning.php>


Advantages

- o Can also be used for health monitoring/management
- o Multiple user options available
- o **Perhaps a more objective view of fertile window?**

Disadvantages

- o Ongoing cost of test strips
- o May not detect urinary hormones of all women

Perfect Use: < 1.5%
 Typical Use: 6-7%



ClearBlue Family Monitor with Touch Screen
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Case Study #4: Dionne

- Dionne is 35 years old and has a diagnosis of polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS). She has cycles that range in length from 25-60 day. She is trying to manage her PCOS with lifestyle change and does not want to be on hormones so she can figure out what her body is doing on its own.
- She is also Catholic and tries to follow the teachings of the church about contraception, so she is not willing to use a contraceptive agent of any kind.
- She wants to avoid pregnancy for the next year or so, but would welcome a child if she did conceive.

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Case Study #4: Dionne

• **Important Discussion Points**

- Believed she could negotiate the timing of intercourse and/or barrier method use
- Long/irregular cycles
- Will need to use periodic abstinence during fertile window
- Wants to understand her health

Dynamic Optimal Timing ~~Method~~ Standard Days ~~Method~~
 Two-Day ~~Method~~ Billings Ovulation Method
 Natural Cycle ~~Method~~ Sensiplan Synthetic Thermal
 Marquette Symptom ~~Method~~

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Billings Ovulation Method - Cervical Fluid Based

Perfect Use: 1-3%
 Typical Use: 3-34%

Considerations


- o Available in Spanish online or by certified instructor
- o Helpful for long/irregular cycles
- o Preovulation intercourse is recommended only at the end of the day: every other day on non-fertile days
- o Learning time: 3 hours over 3-5 sessions
- o Cost: Varies; **may be billable through insurance**
- o For more information visit <https://www.boma-usa.org/>

Advantages

- o Requires tracking of only cervical mucus sensations
- o Can also be used for health monitoring/management
- o Can be used by reading/visually impaired

Disadvantages Reply Ob/Gyn & Fertility

- o Abstinence is recommended during first month of use



Reply Ob/Gyn & Fertility

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Conclusion

- FABM apps exist, but the vast majority are not evidence based
- Natural cycles is the only FDA-cleared app
- Other apps have some evidence to support their use
- FABMs are similar but not equal; there is no one-size fits all approach
- FABM counseling should be patient-centered as for other contraceptive methods

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Resources

- Two hour long online course for Standard Days Method (Free): <https://www.globalhealthlearning.org/course/standard-days-method>
- *Contraceptive Technology*, Chapter 12 on FABMs
- Reply OB/Gyn and Fertility Decision Making Tool and Sensiplan Workbook and Manual: <https://replyobgyn.com/store/>
- Urrutia and Polis article for providers in British Medical Journal (BMJ): <https://www.bmj.com/content/366/bmj.l4245/submit-a-rapid-response>
- Family Planning National Training Center <https://www.fpntc.org/search?keys=fertility+awareness+based+methods>

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Questions?

Contact After Webinar

Elizabeth Draper, RN
 State Family Planning Nurse Consultant
 Division of Public Health, Women's Health Branch
 919-707-5719 office
elizabeth.draper@dhhs.nc.gov

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The "live" educational activity evaluation will be open from March 05th until March 22, 2020.

For participants viewing the "archived/ending" webinar, you must complete the evaluation within two weeks after viewing the archived recording.

The professional development certificate will be provided to all individuals that complete the evaluation by the deadline.

Please Note: This will be your only option to receive evidence of the professional development contact hours and/or CPH Recertification Credits. **You will need to save this certificate.**

To complete the evaluation, go to
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/0117A>

The "archived/ending" educational activity will close on March 05, 2022. No evaluation will be permitted after this date.

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