Endometriosis-associated Subfertility
Biological aspects and treatment options

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Introduction

- **Endometriosis:**
  Presence of endometrial glands and stroma outside the uterine cavity

- **Incidence:**
  2.5 - 3.3 % in women in reproductive age
Pathogenesis

- No true etiologic factor, only risk factors.

**Actual theories**

1. Retrograde menstruation (Sampson)
2. Coelomic metaplasia
3. Remnants of Müllerian tubes

- Genetic factors: non-Mendelian polygenic disorder
Classification

- Minimal (I) and Mild (II)
- Moderate (III)
- Severe (IV)

(American Society for Reproductive Medicine, 1996)
Clinical features

Pain

Infertility
Endometriosis-associated infertility

- 20 - 68% in infertile patients

- In advanced stage:
  - anatomical distortion

- In early stages:

Association or causal link?
Possible mechanisms of endometriosis-associated infertility

- Effects on reproductive events
- Alterations of peritoneal fluid
- Host immunological dysfunction
- Aberrations in steroidogenesis (self-sustaining cycle)
Current treatment in infertility

- **Medical:** GnRH agonists or ovarian suppression, and controlled ovarian hyperstimulation
  (Hughes et al., 2001; Olive and Pritts, 2001)

- **Surgical:** Resection or ablation of minimal/mild endometriotic lesions

- **IVF and ART**
Future therapeutic options

- Immuno-modulation therapies
  (Balasch et al., 1997)

- Aromatase inhibitors
  (Scarpellini et al., 2000)
Conclusions

- **Endometriosis-associated infertility**  
  A causal relationship?

- **Current treatment:**  
  *Individual and selective (surgery, IVF)*

- **New strategies:**  
  *Link between early stages and infertility*