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How successful is repeat testicular sperm extraction in patients with azoospermia?

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BACKGROUND: Little is known about the extraction rate in repeated sperm retrieval procedures in azoospermic patients. This study aimed to assess the feasibility of repeated sperm recovery in these patients. **METHODS:** A total of 1066 azoospermic men had their first sperm recovery between 1 January 1995 and 31 December 2003. A total of 381 men had obstructive azoospermia (OA), 628 nonobstructive azoospermia (NOA) and 57 showed hypospermatogenesis. **RESULTS:** Overall, sperm could be retrieved in all procedures in the 598 cycles performed in OA men (100%). A total of 117, 57, 24, 11, 7 and 1 men underwent, respectively, two, three, four, five, six and seven sperm retrievals; all were successful. Of the 784 procedures performed on the 628 men with NOA, sperm could be retrieved in 384 procedures (49%). During the first testicular sperm extraction (TESE) procedure, sperm could be extracted in 261 men with NOA (41.6%). A total of 103 men had a second attempt, 34 had a third attempt, 11 had a fourth attempt, 6 had a fifth attempt and 2 had a sixth attempt. In these cycles, sperm could be extracted in, respectively, 77 (74.7%), 28 (82.3%), 11 (100%), 5 (83.3%) and 2 (100%) men. **CONCLUSION:** Repeated TESE ensures a high sperm recovery rate even in patients with NOA. In NOA patients, studies reporting on TESE may therefore overestimate the retrieval rate by reallocating successful patients. These data also show that when no spermatozoa can be obtained after thawing cryopreserved testicular sperm for ICSI in NOA patients, a repeat TESE procedure can be planned.

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