

Research

Acupuncture and Stress

Research has found that "social stigmatisation, decreased self-esteem, unmet reproductive potential of sexual relationship, physical and mental burden of treatment, and the lack of control on treatment outcome are just some of the factors that can lead to psychological stress in any couple pursuing infertility treatment. In turn, stress may lead to the release of stress hormones and influence mechanisms responsible for a normal ovulatory menstrual cycle through its impact on the hypothalamic-pituitary-ovarian axis. ... acupuncture may provide an excellent alternative for stress reduction in women undergoing infertility treatment"

Role of acupuncture in the treatment of female infertility, Raymond Chang, M.D, Pak H. Chung, M.D. and Zev Rosenwaks, M.D, FERTILITY AND STERILITY® VOL. 78, NO. 6, DECEMBER 2002, Copyright ©2002 American Society for Reproductive Medicine

Article Link

A study conducted in the University School of Turin, Italy, found that "for infertile men, anxiety was also an important independent predictor of functional infertility, increasing the likelihood of having this form of infertility five-fold, while depression was more predictive of organic infertility. ... The results suggest the possibility of identifying a subgroup of infertile subjects where, beyond the distress that is consequent to the failure of repeated attempts to conceive a baby, there is also a poorly adaptive psychological functioning, which is likely to play an important role in the onset and course of functional infertility."

Fassino, Secondo, Human Reproduction, Vol. 17, No. 11, 2986-2994, November 2002

Article Link

Acupuncture and Assisted Reproductive Therapy (ART)

It has been found that "acupuncture seems to be a useful tool for improving pregnancy rate after ART."

The study involved 160 patients undergoing ART (In Vitro Fertilisation and Intra Cytoplasmic Sperm Injection). Clinical pregnancy was achieved in 26.3% of the control group (21 of 80), whereas clinical pregnancy was achieved in 42.5% of the experimental group (34 of 80).

Influence of acupuncture on the pregnancy rate in patients who undergo assisted reproduction therapy, Wolfgang E. Paulus, M.D., Mingmin Zhang, M.D., Erwin Strehler, M.D., Imam El-Danasouri, Ph.D., and Karl Sterzik, M.D., FERTILITY AND STERILITY® VOL. 77, NO. 4, APRIL 2002

Article LinkAcupuncture and Ovulation

This particular study used acupuncture to induce ovulation between 1989 to 1992. "Of 11 menstrual cycles, marked effect was shown in 5 cycles, effective in 5 cycles and failed in 1 cycle. Among the 10 markedly effective and effective cycles, ovulation was induced in 2 cases after needling and diagnosed pregnancy by blood HCG assay and ultrasonography."

Substitution of Acupuncture for HCG in Ovulation Induction, Cai Xuefen, Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine 17 (2):119-121,1997 (Obstetrical & Gynecological Hospital, Zhejiang Medical University, Zhejiang Province 310006)

Article Link

Another study found that in a sample of infertile women undergoing Intracytoplasmic Sperm Injection "significantly more follicles were recruited with acupuncture than without".

Acupuncture Treatment For Infertile Women Undergoing Intracytoplasmic Sperm injection, Sandra L. Emmons, MD Phillip Patton, MD, Medical Acupuncture, A Journal For Physicians By Physicians, Spring / Summer 2000- Volume 12 / Number 2

Article Link

Blood flow to the uterus, endometrial receptivity

Research has found that "acupuncture may contribute to reduce uterine artery impedance and therefore, increase blood flow to the uterus ... The ... impact of acupuncture in improving uterine artery blood flow and hence endometrial thickness also provides encouraging data".

Reduction of blood flow impedance in the uterine arteries of infertile women with electro-acupuncture. Stener-Victorin E, Waldenstrom U, Andersson SA, Wikland M., Human Reproduction, 1996;11:1314-1317

Article Link

Another article published at the New York Weill Cornell Medical Center found that acupuncture "increased blood flow to the uterus and therefore uterine wall thickness, an important marker for fertility".

Role of acupuncture in the treatment of female infertility, Raymond Chang, M.D, Pak H. Chung, M.D. and Zev Rosenwaks, M.D, FERTILITY AND STERILITY® VOL. 78, NO. 6, DECEMBER 2002, Copyright ©2002 American Society for Reproductive Medicine

Article Link

Acupuncture and Pregnancy

Stimulating particular acupuncture points appears to ease the symptoms of morning sickness, and acupuncture has been found to have a "clinically useful effect" in treating hyperemesis.

Acupuncture "Clinically Useful" for Morning Sickness, Michael Devitt, Acupuncture Today, January, 2001, Volume 02, Issue 01

Article Link

Acupuncture holds promise for the treatment of depression during pregnancy.

Acupuncture: a promising treatment for depression during pregnancy, Manber R, Schnyer RN, Allen JJ, Rush AJ, Blasey CM, Journal of Affective Disorders Volume 83, Issue 1 , 15 November 2004, Pages 89-95

Article Link

Acupuncture Helps Relieve Pregnancy's Low Back Pain, media coverage of Swedish research article

Article Link

Acupuncture is found to diminish disability and relieve low-back pain during pregnancy better than physiotherapy
A prospective randomized study comparing acupuncture with physiotherapy for low-back and pelvic pain in pregnancy, Wedenberg K, Moen B, Norling A. Acta Obstet Gynecol Scand 2000 May;79(5):331-5

Article Link

Acupuncture ... can shorten the time interval between the estimated date of confinement and the actual time of delivery.
Acupuncture for cervical ripening and induction of labor at term--a randomized controlled trial Rabi M, Ahner R, Bitschnau M, Zeisler H, Husslein P. Wien Klin Wochenschr , 2001 Dec 17;113(23-24):942-6.

Article Link

Acupuncture and Sperm Quality

Research has found that acupuncture could be a useful, non-traumatic treatment for males with very poor sperm density, especially those with a history of genital tract inflammation.

Does acupuncture treatment affect sperm density in males with very low sperm count? Siterman S, Eltes F, Wolfson V, Lederman H, Bartoov B., Institute of Chinese Medicine, Tel Aviv, Israel, *Andrologia*, Volume 32 Issue 1 Page 31 - January 2000

Article Link

Fertility and Obesity

Being overweight can impair fertility in both men and women, and being underweight can also affect male fertility. A study of 16,000 young Danish men found that sperm counts and sperm concentration were respectively 21.6% and 23.9% lower in those who were overweight, and 28.1% and 36.4% lower in those who were underweight. As far as women are concerned, analysis of nearly 6000 attempts at IVF found that the rate of successful implants of embryos in overweight women was significantly reduced (1 in 5) compared to healthy weight women (1 in 4). (American Society for Reproductive Medicine Meeting, October 2004).

Alcohol, Caffeine and Miscarriage

Couples who are trying to get pregnant would be well advised to avoid both alcohol and coffee. A new Danish study reports that alcohol consumption in the week prior to conception markedly increases the risk of spontaneous abortion (miscarriage). Female alcohol intake (especially ten or more drinks a week) was associated with a 2-3 times greater risk of miscarriage, whilst male alcohol intake was associated with a 2-5 times greater risk. The researchers speculate that the alcohol content of seminal fluid may interfere with the proper implantation of the foetus. The data also showed that a high caffeine intake by women or their partners doubled the risk of miscarriage. (*American Journal of Epidemiology*, Vol 160, No 7, 2004:661-67)

Acupuncture IVF and Pregnancy

A further study to the German study already reported carried out at the Reproductive Medicine and Fertility Centre in Colorado Springs, USA, has compared the pregnancy rates of 114 women, half of whom received acupuncture before and after embryo transfer, whilst the other half underwent transfer without acupuncture (control Group). The acupuncture group obtained a 51% pregnancy rate and a 8% miscarriage rate compared to 36% and 20% respectively in the control group. Acupuncture was also found to reduce the risk of tubal pregnancy and increase the live birth rate. (October 2004 meeting of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine)

Acupuncture reduces pain after IVF

In this study, 286 women were randomly assigned to receive either electroacupuncture plus para-cervical block or alfentanil (a powerful analgesic) plus paracervical block during oocyte aspiration (egg retrieval). Both interventions induced adequate analgesia, however the electroacupuncture group reported significantly less abdominal pain, other pain, nausea and stress than the medication group, and required significantly less additional analgesic medication. (*Hum Reprod* 2003;18: 1454-60).

Acupuncture for Pelvic and Back Pain in Pregnancy

In this Swedish study, 72 pregnant women (24-37 weeks) suffering pelvic or low back pain were randomly assigned to an acupuncture group or a control group. Traditional acupuncture points and ahshi points were needled (with deqi elicited) in individualised treatments, once or twice a week until disappearance of symptoms or delivery in the acupuncture group. Treatment was given for at least three weeks, twice weekly for the first two weeks, then once a week. The control group received no treatment. During the study period the pain decreased in 60% of patients in the acupuncture group compared to 14% of the controls, dropping to 43% and 9% respectively at the end of the study. (*Acta Obstet Gynecol Scand* 2004; 83(3):246-50).

Acupuncture and Cortisol Levels

During the first three weeks of pregnancy women with high cortisol levels are nearly three times more likely to miscarry than women with normal levels of cortisol, a study has found. Cortisol is a hormone responsible for several stress related activities in the body. The study found that miscarriages were 2.7 times more likely among women with increased cortisol levels. Miscarriages happened after an average of about two weeks of pregnancy. 90% of women with high cortisol

levels miscarried in the first three weeks of pregnancy. Acupuncture is a proven way to activate the body's relaxation response and therefore keep cortisol levels healthy and under control.

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Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA, 10.1073/pnas.0511183103 Pablo A. Nepomnaschy, Kathleen B. Welch, Daniel S. McConnell, Bobbi S. Low, Beverly I. Strassmann, and Barry G. England

[Article Link](#)

Acupuncture Improves Fertility in Men, Too

According to statistics from the National Infertility Association (an organization also known as RESOLVE), between 35 percent and 40 percent of infertility problems among couples are actually caused by male conditions. Several factors may be responsible for male infertility, including low sperm count, abnormal sperm shape and size, and reduced motility. Lifestyle, genetics, and physiological changes can also raise or lower male fertility levels, and can significantly affect a man's ability to produce offspring.

Previous research has shown that acupuncture can improve fertility levels in women. Fewer studies on male infertility have been conducted, although evidence suggests that acupuncture can have an effect on sperm production and quality, without causing any changes in behavior or sexual desire. A recent trial published in *Fertility and Sterility* has shown just how effective acupuncture can be in the treatment of this condition, leading to significant increases in the number of normal sperm and equally significant reductions in structural defects.

[Article Link](#)

Acupuncture Benefits for IVF Fertility

Fertility rates during embryo transfer can be doubled with the use of acupuncture, a new study has found. The latest University of Adelaide trial contributes to a growing body of research that suggests acupuncture may help with improving pregnancy outcomes for people undergoing IVF treatment.

Dr Caroline Smith, who conducted the first single blind and controlled randomised acupuncture trial in the University of Adelaide fertility clinic Repromed, said: "Our study showed encouraging results with an increase in the pregnancy rate in the acupuncture group (31% versus 23% in the control group) among women having an embryo transfer."

"The good news of the acupuncture use in fertility therapy is the benefit is not affected by age, meaning all age groups showed the increase in IVF success rates from the acupuncture therapy," said Dr Smith.

[Article Link](#) Acupuncture may help in IVF

Acupuncture can improve a woman's chances of successful fertility treatment, new research has shown. Patients on needle therapy during IVF had higher rates of pregnancy and lower rates of miscarriage, say researchers from the Reproductive Medicine and Fertility Centre in Colorado Springs. They studied 114 women undergoing IVF. Half of the women had acupuncture during the transfer, with needles placed in their ears and other areas; the other half had normal treatment without needles.

Only 36 per cent of the women on conventional treatment became pregnant, compared with 51 per cent of those who had acupuncture.

Just eight per cent of the acupuncture patients suffered a miscarriage, compared to 20 per cent of the other patients. The therapy also reduced the risk of ectopic pregnancy, and live birth rates in the acupuncture women were 23 per cent higher for each IVF cycle.

[Article Link](#)

Acupuncture for low back pain in pregnancy

This study was undertaken to investigate the effects of acupuncture in low back and pelvic pain during pregnancy. Average pain scores decreased by at least 50% over time in 78% of patients in the acupuncture group and 15% in the control group. Acupuncture seems to alleviate low back ache and pelvic pain during pregnancy, as well as to increase the capacity for some physical activities and diminish the need for drugs. (*Acupuncture Medicine*, June 2004)

Article Link

Effect of acupuncture on the outcome of in vitro fertilization and intracytoplasmic sperm injection: a randomized, prospective, controlled clinical study

In this study, a joint collaboration between researchers in Germany and China, Stefan Dieterle M.D and his colleagues set out to determine the effect of luteal phase acupuncture on the outcome of IVF/ICSI.

225 IVF/ICSI infertile patients were randomly assigned to 2 groups. One group received Traditional Chinese acupuncture and the other half received sham acupuncture. In the group that received true acupuncture, the clinical pregnancy rate and ongoing pregnancy rates (33.6% and 28.4%, respectively) were significantly higher than in sham acupuncture group (15.6% and 13.8%).

Fertility and Sterility Volume 85, Issue 5 , May 2006, Pages 1347-1351

Article Link

Acupuncture May Improve Sperm Quality

Acupuncture could be beneficial for men who have certain types of infertility, suggests a new study.

Pei J, Strehler E, Noss U et al. Quantitative evaluation of spermatozoa ultrastructure after acupuncture treatment for idiopathic male infertility. Fertil Steril 2005 Jul;84(1):141-7.

Article LinkAcupuncture May Be Helpful for Pelvic Girdle Pain During Pregnancy

March 21, 2005 — Stabilizing exercises and acupuncture are helpful for pelvic girdle pain during pregnancy, according to the results of a randomized, single-blind trial published in the March 18 Online First edition of the British Medical Journal.

Article LinkAcupuncture for insomnia in pregnancy

This controlled trial found that acupuncture in addition to sleep counselling is superior to sleep counselling alone in pregnancy.

Article LinkIncreased oocyte production after treatment with dehydroepiandrosterone and acupuncture

This study illustrates a case of dramatically improved ovarian reserve in a 42.7-year-old woman who was using the dietary supplement dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA) as well as acupuncture.

David H. Barad M.D., M.S.and Norbert Gleicher M.D., Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology and Women's Health, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, New York, New York, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Yale University School of Medicine, New Haven, Connecticut

Article LinkAcupuncture on the day of embryo transfer significantly improves the reproductive outcome in infertile women: a prospective, randomized trial.

This study found that acupuncture on the day of embryo transfer significantly improves the reproductive outcome of IVF/ICSI, compared with no acupuncture.

Article LinkQuantitative evaluation of spermatozoa ultrastructure after acupuncture treatment for idiopathic male infertility

This study of 40 men found an improvement of sperm quality, specifically in the ultrastructural integrity of spermatozoa,

after acupuncture treatment. It was carried out in the Christian-Lauritzen-Institut, Ulm, the IVF center Munich, Germany, and Department of General Biology, at the University of Siena, Italy.

Fertility and Sterility_ Vol. 84, No. 1, July 2005 141

[Article Link](#)

Electro-acupuncture reverses nerve growth factor abundance in experimental polycystic ovaries in the rat.

There is some evidence that nerve growth factor (NGF) is involved in the pathogenesis of PCOS. Therefore, seeking the pathogenesis of PCOS is important for controlling fertility. In traditional Oriental Medicine, acupuncture has been used for the function of ovaries. The present study was designed to determine whether electro-acupuncture (EA) could affect experimentally induced polycystic ovary (PCO) in the rat. EA treatment was found to partly reverse the NGF abundance, particularly in the ovaries, but not in the brain.

Gynecol Obstet Invest , 2004; 57(2): 80-5.

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