

Comments on article: 'Influence of acupuncture stimulation on pregnancy rates for women undergoing embryo transfer'

This article set out to prove or disprove the success rate of acupuncture during IVF. The findings showed that there wasn't a significant difference in those treated with and those treated without therefore rendering the result inconclusive.

I would like to make some comments and observations about the content of the trials.

It was noticeable that there was a lack of focus on the treatment of women as individuals and instead they were treated as a homogenous group. As we know in our field, treating infertility in women is not a generic process and each woman needs to be assessed and a treatment plan drawn up based on the unique characteristics of the patient. My second observation and a point worth making is that no reference was made to the factors which can contribute to infertility such as Yin Yang and the Qi and blood activities. As a practitioner with extensive experience in treating infertility in women, it was surprising to note the omission of conditions such as excess blood stasis, Qi stagnation and the important relationship between the kidney, liver, heart (brain) and the spleen. There are also additional factors to consider such as the woman's environment, work life balance as well as the effect different seasons can have. I would also like to challenge the concept that treatment for infertility starts once the infertility has been discovered. In TCM we very much believe that preventative treatment is hugely important so our approach is always to ensure that the woman's body is in the correct condition, that she has a regular menstrual cycle and that she is ready to receive a healthy pregnancy. This study doesn't place emphasis on the importance of the preventative approach so any patient who starts treatment at the point of discovering infertility will be less likely to be successful.

As the author concludes, the study isn't conclusive but the result does show some improvement when acupuncture is used as part of the treatment. In light of this and the above observations I feel this doesn't represent the effectiveness of acupuncture as part of an overall treatment plan, used alongside Chinese herbal medicine and general well being.

Shulan Tang, 23rd May 2018