

## **Clinical Observations on Treating 166 Infertility Cases**

by Using Acupuncture and Chinese Herbal Medicine

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Infertility has long been a common problem in our human history, and still continues to be a problem in the modern era. Generally speaking, as many as one in every six couples requires help from specialists to treat infertility. Fortunately, Western Medicine has developed various treatment methodologies, especially the new assisted reproductive technology, which does increase the success rate. Despite this, nearly half of the couples among those who get treated by Western Medicine still fail to conceive.

On the other hand, in Asia there has been over a thousand years of history, a huge number of successful cases, and a lot of accumulated experience in treating infertility by using Traditional Chinese Medicine.

The goal of this article is to report the common and effective ways of applying these Traditional Chinese Medicine techniques--especially acupuncture with Chinese herbal medicine--which have been and still are being practiced commonly in China to treat infertility problems, and to report the success rate of my clinical practice in the USA. The results of these observations show that acupuncture combined with herbal medicine DOES cure infertility at a significant rate, and that the treatment provides new hope for those couples

who fail to respond to the Western Medical treatment. In other words, Traditional Chinese Medicine treatment, which includes acupuncture and herbal medicine, can be used as one of the best alternative therapies for infertility patients.

### **Clinical Material**

166 cases of infertility were treated in my clinic from 1995-2000. All the patients finished at least three cycles of the treatment. The ages of the patients were 27-47 with an average being 37. The average time of infertility was three and half years. Among these cases, 101 had primary infertility and 65 had secondary infertility. All the patients had been evaluated and diagnosed by their western medical doctor and most of them had received regular treatment, including the above-mentioned new assisted reproductive technology. The main causes of infertility were: 62 with ovulatory factor (37%); 31 with tubal factor (18%); 36 with endometriosis (21%); 29 with unexplained factor (17%); 8 with uterine or immune factor (5%).

### **Treatment Method**

TCM periodic therapy, which included both acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine, was applied to the infertility patients. For one cycle, from day 1 to day 28, the treatment is divided into three treatment phases, and for each phase, different acupoints and herbal formulas are used to stimulate and reach different functions.

Follicular phase (around day 5 of the cycle until day 11): One or two sessions of acupuncture treatment, using the acupoints CV3, CV4, ST29, Zi Gong, ST36, SP6. For ST29 and Zi Gong, slight electric stimulation was applied, and for ST36 and SP6, reinforcing methods were used. If the patients had Qi and Blood Stagnation or Blood Stasis, such as with endometriosis or tubal disorder, acupoints LI4 and LR3 were added. All these patients also took herbal medicine to tonify Essence and Blood. The formula was:

Gou Qi Zi (Barbary Wolfberry fruit), 15g; Tu Si Zi (Chinese Dodder Seed), 15g; Shu Di Huang (Rehmannia), 20g; Yin Yang Huo, (Epicedium) 9g; Chong Wei Zi (Leonurus Fruit), 9g; Huai Niu Xi (Achyranthes), 15g; etc.

One dose per day, and twice a day.

Ovulation phase (around day 12 of the cycle until day 16): Two to three sessions of acupuncture treatment, using the acupoints CV3, CV4, ST29, Zi Gong, SP6 and LR3. The points for application of electric stimulation were the same as in follicular phase; LR3 was applied with reducing methods. Herbal medicine was used to tonify kidney, to move Qi, and to induce ovulation. The formula was:

Gou Qi Zi (Barbary Wolfberry fruit), 15g; Tu Si Zi (Chinese Dodder Seed), 15g; Yin Yang Huo (Epicedium), 9g; Dang Gui (Chinese Angelica Root), 9g; Xiang Fu (Nut grass Galingale Rhizome), 12g; Chai Hu (Chinese Thorowax Root), 6g; etc.

One dose per day, and twice a day.

Luteal phase (around day 17 of the cycle until day 28): One to two acupuncture sessions were given. The acupoints used were ST29, Zi Gong (Ex.), ST36 and SP6. For all the points, reinforcing methods were used. The herbal medicine used was to tonify Qi and to strengthen kidney. The formula was:

Gou Qi Zi (Barbary Wolfberry fruit), 15g; Tu Si Zi (Chinese Dodder Seed), 15g; Shu Di Huang (Rehmannia), 20g; Yin Yang Huo (Epicedium), 9g; Dang Gui (Tang Shen Root), 15g; Bai Shu (Large head Atractylodes Rhizome), 12g; Sang Ji Sheng (Chinese Taxillus herb), 15g; etc.

One course of treatment consisted of three cycles. All the patients finished at least one course of treatment.

## **Results**

Among the 166 cases, 68 patients became pregnant after application of the above therapies. The success rate was 41%;

2. Looking at each of the infertility groups (arranged by cause of the infertility) and the outcome of the treatments, we have the following results:

**Table I. Observation of the effectiveness of the treatment for each cause of infertility**

Cause of infertility	Number of cases	Number of pregnancy cases	Success rate(%)
Ovulatory factor	62	30	48
Tubal factor	31	11	35
Endometriosis	36	13	36
Unexplained	29	14	48

Note: The results suggest that the success rates of the treatment in the Ovulatory Factor and Unexplained groups are clearly higher than in the Tubal Factor and Endometriosis groups, which means that the above treatments are more effective for the groups of Ovulatory Factor and Unexplained, at least.

2. Focusing on the 68 successful cases, the success rate for each treatment cycle is reported as follows:

**Table II. Observation of the effectiveness and the duration of treatment in 68 pregnancy cases**

Duration of the treatment	Number of pregnancy cases	Percentage (%)
1 <sup>st</sup> cycle	16	24%
2 <sup>nd</sup> cycle	17	25%
3 <sup>rd</sup> cycle	15	22%
4 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> cycle	20	29%

Note: The results suggest that, among pregnancy cases, about 70% of the patients became pregnant in the first course (first three months) of the treatment. Nevertheless, still close to 30% of the patients became pregnant during the second or third course of the treatment.

## **Conclusions**

### Acupuncture and Fertility Research

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Because of various limitations, we are unable to use the standard methods for this clinical observation. However, considering that the average time of infertility of these patients were three and a half years, that all the patients had been evaluated and diagnosed with infertility by their doctors, and that the majority of them had already received regular Western Medical treatment, the results of this observation can still give rise to the conclusion that acupuncture combined with herbal medicine DOES help to cure infertility, and that these remedies may especially provide a new hope for those patients who fail to respond to the Western Medical treatment. In other words, Traditional Chinese Medicine treatment, which includes acupuncture and herbal medicine, can be used as one of the best alternative therapies for infertility patients. Furthermore, when both Western medicine and TCM are combined, it obviously can increase the success rate of the infertility treatment. As a matter of fact, many studies in China have already shown this result. However, this needs to be proved much more scientifically.

According to a lot of clinical experience and reports in China, kidney tonic herbs have been used for many dysfunctional problems of the reproductive-endocrine system—e.g., irregular periods, dysfunctional uterine bleeding, amenorrhea, dysmenorrhea, PMS, menopause, etc--and most of them had satisfactory results. Many of the studies done on laboratory animals also suggest that acupuncture or herbal medicine may regulate the reproductive-endocrine system. Some of the clinical reports and animal studies have also shown that acupuncture or herbal medicine may also regulate the immune system. Some of the herbs used to improve the symptoms and the pathology of endometriosis cases have already been reported in China. All of these findings have suggested that acupuncture and/or herbal medicine might not only regulate the reproductive-endocrine system and immune system, but also improve the pathologic changes of endometriosis in treating infertility patients.

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