

The impact of acupuncture on IVF success rates: a randomized controlled trial on Female (in)fertility

Category **Clinical science**

Topic **Female (in)fertility (incl. oogenesis, diagnostic tests, prognostic models, intrauterine insemination, oocyte donation, body weight effects, smoking, ageing, immunology, sexually transmitted diseases, female contraception)**

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Presentation preference **Oral or poster presentation**

Abstract title **The impact of acupuncture on IVF success rates: a randomized controlled trial**

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Study question:

To examine in a sufficiently powered prospective randomized controlled trial, whether acupuncture during IVF treatment can improve IVF success rates.

Summary answer:

Acupuncture during IVF treatment significantly improves IVF success rates compared with a basically similar control group having no acupuncture.

What is known already:

Clinical trials to assess the benefits of acupuncture on IVF treatment results have differed in study design, protocol, outcome measures and commercial bias. This heterogeneity has precluded any firm conclusion regarding the efficacy or otherwise of acupuncture in this field. To address this heterogeneity, 15 international acupuncturists participated in Delphi questionnaires and reached a consensus protocol to be used in future research which, so far, has not been implemented. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to use this newly agreed standard protocol.

Study design, size, duration:

: In this single-centre RCT, conducted over 1 year, according to the power calculation 160 couples were randomized into two groups using computer generated randomization numbers distributed consecutively by central telephone. One group received acupuncture treatment 4 times spread throughout the treatment cycle in addition to our standard IVF protocol. The other group went through the identical standard protocol but with no acupuncture.

Participants/materials, setting, methods:

All couples in the study were undergoing their 1st or 2nd IVF cycle, age 23-43, BMI<30 and consented to randomization before their treatment cycle. Those randomised to the study group (n=80) received acupuncture based on the Delphi consensus protocol, between days 6-8 of ovarian stimulation, before egg retrieval and twice, before and after, embryo transfer. For both groups the IVF protocol was decided by the clinician, blinded to randomization. Primary end point was live birth.

Main results and the role of chance:

To date, a total of 127 results are available and have been analysed, 67 in the acupuncture (study) group and 60 controls. So far, the total ongoing pregnancy rate in the two groups is 34.6%. This comprises an ongoing pregnancy rate of 31/67 (46.2%) in the acupuncture group and 13/60 (21.7%) in the controls (P=0.004). Two couples withdrew from the control group. Live birth rates are being closely followed up and will be reported.

Limitations, reasons for caution:

The additional attention paid to the acupuncture group as opposed to controls may have had a positive psychological influence.

Wider implications of the findings:

The results of this study imply that acupuncture may be offered as a possible method of improving IVF outcome. This study is the first to follow a widely approved consensus protocol and therefore has settled disagreement in the literature and resolved previous disparity.

Trial registration number:

13/LO/1356

COI **I have no potential conflict of interest to disclose**

Documents [Karin Gillerman](#)

Keywords **IVF
Acupuncture**