



# Chinese Medicine News

from the office of Michael Waterhouse, MA, OMD, LAc

## THE ROLE THAT T.C.M. PLAYS IN INCREASING FERTILITY AND IN THE MANAGEMENT OF PREGNANCY.

### FERTILITY.

It is estimated that up to twenty percent of couples in the U.S., having failed to conceive after one year are declared "infertile." The causes are divided equally among the sexes, although twenty percent of the time infertility is attributed to a combination of both male and female issues.

There is strong anecdotal evidence collected over many hundreds of years that acupuncture and Chinese Herbal Medicine has a profound effect on increasing both male and female fertility. A recent review of the medical literature has confirmed much of this empirical evidence. In a recent issue of Sterility and Fertility (2002;78:1149-1153), the author Dr.R.Chong of Cornell University stated that by reducing stress, increasing circulation to the reproductive organs and normalizing the ovulation and the menstrual cycle, acupuncture should be added to the list of fertility boosting treatments. Studies have shown that women who had acupuncture alone were just as likely to conceive as those who

took a fertility drug. Other studies have demonstrated that women who incorporate acupuncture into their I.V.F. treatment have a greater percentage chance of conceiving. Interestingly one of those studies (Human Reproduction, 1999, 14(10)2480-4) was using acupuncture only for analgesic purposes during egg retrieval but happened to find greater implantation rates in those patients.

Chinese Herbal Medicine has been used for millennia to correct constitutional imbalances and free circulatory blockages in both men and women which can enhance the chances of conception. I also recommend certain basic lifestyle changes such as quitting smoking, eating a healthy diet that is rich in Zinc (foods such as Legumes, soy products, and whole grains) and reduce caffeine and alcohol. Being over or under weight affects ovulation, while tight fitting underwear and too much bicycle riding reduces sperm count in men!

### PREGNANCY.

Once pregnant the body seems to become particularly sensitive to the benefits of acupuncture treatment. There are certain points that have been used traditionally at the end of each trimester which are said to help produce a healthy baby free from some of the health issues of their parents. This is of course anecdotal and difficult to test scientifically, other

conditions encountered in pregnancy have been the subject of considerable scientific scrutiny, none more so and with more success than "morning sickness". Recently a Swedish study reported in the Journal of Pain and Symptom Management that very severe morning sickness where weight loss and dehydration required hospitalization, responded more positively to acupuncture than to medication alone.

As the fetus continues to grow it puts more and more stress on the orthopedic structure of the body, and muscular and ligamentous pain of the back and particularly lumbar area can become increasingly uncomfortable. The growing baby also displaces the abdominal organs causing digestive problems and particularly heart burn, this also has the effect of restricting the passage of blood and fluids up the leg resulting in swollen ankles and pain. These problems all respond well to Chinese Medical treatment.

In the final trimester of pregnancy, acupuncture with moxibustion (the heating of acupuncture points with an herbal cigar) has proven to be effective in turning the fetus into the correct position. I have also used acupuncture to help "ripen" the cervix for a few weeks prior to the delivery date. Several European studies suggest that this treatment can induce late delivery, shorten the duration of labor and ease the pain.

The Newsletter will be published several times per year to inform patients interested in the rapidly evolving world of Chinese Medicine. Please feel free to talk to me if you need more information or have questions about this or related fields. You can always contact me via e mail or through my web site.

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**At four months pregnant I was suffering from nausea and back pain that was preventing me from sleeping. The treatment not only alleviated these symptoms but gave me peace of mind about having a joyful pregnancy.**

**L.G., Whittier, CA**