

Can an Unknown Force Improve the Success Rate of In Vitro Fertilization (IVF)? An Examination of the Importance of Yin.

Recently, there has been significant media coverage showing that the application of acupuncture treatments increases the success rate during In Vitro Fertilization (IVF). One of the explanations which has been offered is that the acupuncture increases blood circulation to the uterus. The premise is that with enhanced blood flow, the probability of implantation of the embryo increases.

Also, research performed in China suggests that acupuncture may help normalize the hypothalamus-pituitary-ovarian-axis. Other studies indicate women with high levels of cortisol and adrenaline experience decreased fertility. The stimulation of specific acupuncture points helps regulate cortisol and adrenal hormones. With that regulation, it has been postulated that acupuncture increases fertility.

Despite various studies and research, a persistent question plagues the intellectual mind as to the functionality of acupuncture under this medical circumstance: "What is it about acupuncture that is helping women get pregnant? A quote attributed to Albert Einstein sheds light on this intriguing dilemma. He said, *"Not all things that count are countable."* It is quite possible that increased blood flow and hormone equilibrium are key factors supporting the implantation rate; however, as the quote implies, beyond the scientific and measurable, another component beyond our ability to measure and calibrate, is an energetic stimulation via the acupuncture treatment facilitating implantation and the growth of new life.

The strategy of manifesting states of equilibrium and harmony within the body, mind and spirit are fundamental principles of Chinese Medicine. One method of understanding the innate natural of harmony is to investigate the principles of Yin and Yang. The Yin and Yang theory was created in 1600 BC.

The theory states there are relative opposites in all aspects of the natural world. When the sun is illuminating (Yang) one side of the mountain the other side is in darkness (Yin); as time passes, with planetary movement, the sun begins illuminating that darkness, while simultaneously the other falls into the stillness and darkness. This is an example of Yang and Yin theory in observable action where there is equilibrium and harmony in the rhythm of movement - one action cannot exist without the other.

Today, modern culture places more emphasis and value on Yang characteristics that include male energy, action, awake, knowing, and bright; modern conveniences bring these aspect of life to the extreme. With indoor lighting our bodies are out of the natural rhythm of day and night; cell phones, email, satellites, planes, trains, automobiles have all facilitated a Yang lifestyle.

In 2001, it was reported that Americans work more hours than any other country in the industrialized world. Some state that we are working ourselves to death and using the language of Chinese Medicine, our country is suffering from the results of excessive Yang. As a result of this excess activity, we as a society – men, women and children, have developed Yang type pathologies such as insomnia, anxiety, restlessness, road rage and possibly - infertility. We wonder, “Where is the Yin energy, the things female, still, restful, unknown, and dark, to balance and maintain energetic equilibrium within our life?”

When we begin to evaluate cause of pathology, it becomes increasingly important to evaluate and acknowledge that our thoughts, actions and general behavior are excess Yang energy and come to the realization that rarely do we encourage moments of no thought with no activity, rarely are we aware of peace and quiet within our body, mind or spirit – our intuitive state of essential Yin energy.

For the past several years, a high percentage of our patient population at Metro Acupuncture in Atlanta , Georgia has consisted of women diagnosed with infertility, undergoing some type of assisted reproductive technology. We are honored to work with such a patient population and part of our initiative is to bring these patients into a more peaceful state to allow their bodies, minds and spirits to welcome the reproductive procedures. To facilitate this we encourage self care, meditation, exercise (such as yoga, Tai Qi or Qi Gong), and other activities which move the body's energy in a calm, serene and gentle manner. We encourage a more nutritionally balanced diet incorporating cooked foods and warm (decaffeinated) beverages as well as acupuncture treatments designed to address core constitutional Yin support. Over these years we have observed our patients not only become pregnant but develop a more balanced life style that has allowed each to enjoy and flourish as mothers.

This article was written by Mark Lewinter an acupuncturist at Metro Acupuncture in Atlanta , Georgia . Mr. Lewinter has treated women diagnosed with infertility since 2001 and he is a member of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine and a Fellow of the American Board of Oriental Reproductive Medicine (www.aborm.org). He works in conjunction with reproductive endocrinology centers in the Atlanta area such as Atlanta Center for Reproductive Medicine, Georgia Reproductive Specialists, and Reproductive Biology Associates. Patients undergoing IVF and other assisted reproductive technologies have seen Mr. Lewinter before, during and after fertility cycles. For more information he can be contacted at 404-255-8388.