

**A thoughtful research review on the use of acupuncture and its benefits for optimizing fertility with assisted reproductive technology (ART)****Artemis D Morris<sup>1,2</sup>**<sup>1</sup>The University of Bridgeport, USA<sup>2</sup>The Graduate Institute, Bethany, USA

According to a review by Miriam Delosantos (2012), the use of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) as an adjunct treatment to Western fertility treatments may provide an increase in the rate of pregnancy when compared to the use of Western fertility treatments alone. Nandi et. al. (2014) observed that acupuncture has gained popularity among the various complementary medicines available and many women go privately to have acupuncture while undergoing in vitro fertilization (IVF). The American Pregnancy Association, among other fertility resources, recommends acupuncture as an adjunct to fertility treatments (<http://americanpregnancy.org/infertility/acupuncture/>). A systematic review and meta-analysis by Zheng et. al. (2012) found clinical pregnancy rates and live birth rates improved when acupuncture was combined with IVF around the time of oocyte aspiration or controlled ovarian hyperstimulation. In addition, many review articles on acupuncture and IVF till now remain inconclusive due to paucity in randomized controlled trials and the difficulty in designing a study that encompasses the multidimensional factors of clinical practice. The mechanisms by which acupuncture may be improving fertility includes effects on the hypothalamic-pituitary-gonadal axis, regulation of immune function, improved circulatory function and regulation of hormones involved in reproductive success. Magarelli et. al. (2009) found a beneficial role of acupuncture in regulating cortisol and prolactin levels during the medication phase of IVF treatment. In understanding the benefit that acupuncture and indigenous eastern medicine can provide for women undergoing fertility treatments calls for better designed integrative research studies. Nonetheless, acupuncture is a safe treatment that addresses issues facing infertile women in a multidimensional integrative care model. Women undergoing acupuncture during IVF have shown positive outcomes in stress reduction, anxiety and depression according to Anderson and Rosenthal (2012). Research by Barr et. al. (2015) found that “acupuncturists assigned importance to providing a high standard of care through professional treatment and diagnosis, supporting and empowering women, developing positive therapeutic relationships and considering women’s perceptions of acupuncture, IVF and research.” This lecture will review the breadth of evidence of the effectiveness of acupuncture and ART, its potential mechanisms of action and its application through the lens of an integrative care model that is consistent with an indigenous approach to medicine.

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