

Acupuncture & Infertility due to Oligospermia

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Oligospermia or low sperm count is one of the common causes of male sterility or infertility. In issue #1, 2004 of *Hei Long Jiang Zhong Yi Yao (Heilongjiang Chinese Medicine & Medicinals)*, Pang Pao-zhen and Zhao Huan-yun published an article titled, "The Acupuncture Treatment of 128 Cases of Oligospermia Sterility." This article appeared on page 42 of that journal. A summary is given below.

Cohort description:

All the men in this study had been married two years or more with normal sexual relations and had failed to impregnate their wives. The wives had been ruled out as being infertile. All the men had a sperm count of less than $60 \times 10^6/\text{ml}$ on three separate occasions. Sperm motility and morphology and seminal fluid liquifaction were all normal. Six to seven days before collecting the sperm, the men were told not to have sex, not to masturbate, not to drink alcohol, or smoke tobacco. All these men were categorized as presenting a Chinese medical pattern of either kidney yin vacuity (53 cases), kidney yang vacuity (45 cases), internal brewing of phlegm dampness (10 cases), or liver depression and blood stasis (20 cases). Exclusion criteria included congenital defects, sperm cord blockage, testicular atrophy, second degree or higher spermatocele, cardiovascular disease, liver or kidney disease, or serious hematological disease, psychiatric disorder, use of anti-seizure or anticancer drugs, retroflow ejaculation, inability to ejaculate, or abnormal sexual activity. All the men were between 21-38 years old, with the majority 24-30. They had been sterile for 2-6 years.

Treatment method:

Acupuncture was done at *Shen Shu* (Bl 23), *Guan Yuan* (CV 4), *Pi Shu* (Bl 20), and *Zu San Li* (St 36) on all patients. If there was kidney yang vacuity, *Ming Men* (GV 4) was added. If there was kidney yin vacuity, *Tai Xi* (Ki 3) was added. If there was phlegm dampness or liver channel damp heat, *Tai Chong* (Liv 3) and *Yin Ling Quan* (sp 9) were added. If there was liver depression and blood stasis, *Xue Hai* (Sp 10) and *Qi Men* (Liv 14) were added. Even supplementing-even draining technique was used. One treatment was given per day, with 25 days equaling one course of therapy. There was a seven day rest between successive courses, and outcomes were analyzed after four such courses.

Study outcomes:

Cure was defined as the wife conceiving. Some effect meant that the sperm count was $10 \times 10^6/\text{ml}$ or higher. If there was no marked improvement in the sperm count after receiving the above treatment, this was classified as no effect. Based on these criteria, 42 cases were considered a cure, 76 cases got some effect, and 10 cases got no effect. Therefore, the total effectiveness rate was listed as 92.19%.

Discussion:

According to the Chinese authors, they chose *Shen Shu* because the kidneys govern reproduction and *Shen Shu* is the back transport point of the kidneys. *Guan Yuan* banks and supplements the kidney qi. Therefore, these two points supplement the kidneys and engender essence. *Pi Shu* and *Zu San Li* are able to move and transform water grains. Therefore, they promote and assist the middle burner's engenderment and transformation of qi and blood. This is the material basis for the engenderment of the essence. *Ming Men* is a point on the governing vessel and the governing vessel is the sea of all yang channels. Thus *Ming Men* is chosen in order to supplement true yang. *Tai Xi* boosts kidney water. *Tai Chong* clears liver heat. *Yin Ling Quan* is able to separate and disinhibit damp heat evils by promoting urination. *Xue Hai* has the ability to transform stasis and open the orifices, and *Qi Men* is the liver alarm point which can rectify the liver qi. This combination of points gets a relatively good effect in treating sterility due to oligospermia and has no toxic side effects. In general, the more the patient felt the needle sensation, the better the outcome. Conversely, the less they felt the needle sensation, the worse the outcome.

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