

Fertility study finds acupuncture ineffective for IVF birth rates

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A study of over 800 Australian and New Zealand women undergoing acupuncture treatment during their IVF (in vitro fertilization) cycle has confirmed no significant difference in live birth rates. The findings published today in *JAMA* support recent guidelines from the American Society for Reproductive Medicine and two high-quality meta-analyses.

The researchers from NICM Health Research Institute (NICM), Western Sydney University, Flinders University, UNSW Sydney, University of South Australia, University of Adelaide and Greenslopes Private Hospital examined the effects of [acupuncture](#) administered prior to and following an embryo transfer (ET).

Undertaken across 16 IVF centres in Australia and New Zealand, the randomised clinical trial involved 848 women aged 18 to 42 undergoing an IVF cycle using fresh embryos between June 2011 and October 2015, whereby participants were given either acupuncture or a sham acupuncture control (a non-insertive needle placed away from the true acupuncture points).

The results showed the rate of [live birth](#) was 18.3 per cent among participants who received acupuncture versus 17.8 per cent who received the sham acupuncture control, a non-significant difference.

Professor Caroline Smith, chief investigator and professor of clinical research at NICM, says the study findings reflect the efficacy of a short course of acupuncture administered around the time of ovarian

stimulation and on the day of the ET.

"In clinical practice acupuncture treatment is individualised with variation in dosing, including more frequent treatment prior to and during the IVF cycle—the lack of frequent treatments was a limitation of our trial," says Professor Smith.

"Although our findings do not support acupuncture as an efficacious treatment compared to sham, some studies suggest reproductive outcomes maybe improved when acupuncture is compared with no [treatment](#)."

While a short course of acupuncture may statistically be no better than sham at improving live birth and pregnancy outcomes, a psycho-social benefit from acupuncture was reported by women undergoing IVF.

"We also examined the outcomes of psycho-social benefits in our study of which we are currently writing up in a further paper," says co-author Professor Michael Chapman, UNSW Sydney and President at the Fertility Society of Australia.

"Feeling relaxed and reporting relief from stress and women feeling good about themselves is to be welcomed for [women](#) as they undergo an IVF cycle," he said.

More information: *JAMA* (2018). jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/.../1001/jama.2018.5336

Provided by NICM, Western Sydney University

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