

FEMALE INFERTILITY; SIMPLE ACUPUNCTURE AND PATENT HERBAL TREATMENTS:

Bernadette Ward. Lic.Ac.C.Ac, Nanjing Dip.Herb.C Herb Nanjing.

Many acupuncturists are receiving patients with infertility, both female and male, in this paper I will go through the aetiology, pathologies, and treatment strategies for simple female infertility. The focus is on TCM theory, and treatments with acupuncture and patent herbal combinations. I have found these strategies to be useful in the treatment of simple TCM deficiency patterns in female infertility,

Every journey begins with the first step, so see this as a first step towards successful treatment of infertility in your practice.

Primary Infertility is defined as a failure to get pregnant following two years of normal sexual relations, without contraception. As time is very often a factor, with many infertility patients in their mid to late thirties, women can start to become anxious about their failure to get pregnant after one year of normal sexual relations without result. In this article I will just describe primary infertility treatments.

As part of patient assessment, check if the standard medical checks have been done. If that is the case for both parties, and there are no organic obstructions and no male reproductive deficiencies, then you can take on such patients, assess and treat them with acupuncture and patent herbs.

It is important to give your patient realistic expectations and to ask for their cooperation in treatment, right from the beginning. You will need at least 3 menstrual cycles in order to carry out your treatment programme. If they are unwilling to commit to a 3 month strategy, then in my opinion it will be difficult to offer a potentially effective treatment. You also have to bear in mind that in many cases the patient and her partner have been round the houses of healthcare treatment and you may be a last "try out" while they wait for IVF. With enough confidence in your treatment plans and advice and information for your potential patients you should be able to get their cooperation. You can also treat your patients if they already going through IVF treatments, although many of the clinics will not permit herbs, so you may have to rely on your acupuncture only.

ETIOLOGY AND PATHOLOGY

The Kidney dominates reproduction, the organs involved in the following patterns are kidney through a yin or yang deficiency, also liver or spleen.

One or other of the following patterns could be seen in your infertility patients.

Kidney Yin deficiency; Kidney Yang deficiency; Stagnation of Liver Qi;

Phelgm-damp; Damp-heat; Stagnation of blood would mostly be indicated for secondary infertility, I will not outline this pattern here.

These patterns will be defined by a standard TCM assessment and diagnosis, in other words back to basics with your history taking, TCM assessments and Tongue and Pulse.

DIFFERENTIATION AND TREATMENT

Kidney Yin Deficiency

This can be identified by a shortened menstrual cycle with red scanty flow but no clots; or normal period, thin body build, irritability, thirst, restlessness, heat sensation in palms and soles, or thin body build, poor sleep, dizziness, palpitation, soreness in the lower back and legs, afternoon fever, thready rapid pulse, red tongue with scanty coating. Practitioners will recognise any or all of these symptoms as classic Kidney yin deficiency. This should be supported by a tongue reading, which could be red, dry, no or little coating.

Treatment Principle:

Nourish Yin, clear heat, nourish blood, harmonise Chong Channel.

Formula: Er Zhi Ding Huang Wan. Or Liu wei di huang wan (if herbs are allowed).

Acupuncture points: * Gi gong Extra ; Guan yuan (RN-4) Tai xi (KI-3) Fu liu (KI-7) Sanyinjiao (SP-6) Gan shu (BL-18) Shen shu (BL-23) * The location of Zi gong is 3 cun lateral to the midline, parallel to Ren 3.

Review and treat once a week.

Kidney Yang Deficiency

This will manifest as a prolonged menstrual cycle with scanty red flow and small amount of clots or no clots, or even amenorrhoea in a severe case, cold lower abdomen, thin vaginal discharge, low libido, aversion to cold worse in winter, thready pulse, pale or dark purple tongue.

Treatment Principle:

Tonify kidney yang, warm uterus.

Formula: Yu Ling Zhu (if allowed).

Acupuncture Points: Zi gong Extra; Guan yuan (RN-4) Ming meng (DU-4) Tai xi (KI-3) Shenshu (BL-23)

Moxa or heat lamp can be used with needles on all of these points (except KI 3).

TCM food advice, eat warm foods or foods with a warming action.

Review and treat once a week

Stagnation Of Liver Qi

While the following symptoms are typical of prolonged stagnation of Liver Qi, you can expect many of your patients to show some liver qi stagnation symptoms. Stress and frustration can go with the territory. This can be because acknowledging there is a problem in conception can be in itself very distressing. If they are already attending an IVF clinic, this can further add to stress and anxiety, however if the following symptoms are dominant, then you can use the following treatment principles and strategy.

Mental depression or worry, or tension, irregular menstrual cycles, distension of breasts before period, abdominal pain during period, irritability, normal tongue with thin white coating, wiry pulse.

Treatment Principle: Soothe liver, relieve stagnation, nourish blood, regulate spleen.

Formula: Yue Ju Wan, Xiao Yao wan.

Acupuncture Points: Ganshu (BL 18). Qihai (Ren 6) Guilai (St.29) Taichong (liv 3) Hegu (Li4). Zusanli (St.36). Sanyinjiao. (Sp. 6).

Review and treat once a week. Advise rest, relaxation, a little pampering and avoid stress. !

Phlegm-Damp (Spleen)

Excessive body weight, low energy, perhaps long term infertility, feeling of heaviness, delayed cycle, sometimes mid cycle pain, vaginal discharge. Tongue sticky white coating, tooth marks. Pulse, slippery.

Treatment principles: Resolve phlegm and damp, activate the channels, remove obstructions,

Formula: Gui Pi Wan (Restore the spleen.)

Acupuncture Points: Gi gong Extra ; Qihai (Ren 6) Pixu (Bl 20); Yinlingquan (Sp 9). Sanyinjiao (Sp.6);

Fenglong (St. 40); Sanyinjiao. (Sp. 6).

Review and treat once a week. Dietary and exercise advice.

DAMP-HEAT (Liver and Spleen)

Profuse vaginal discharge, white or yellow sticky, possibly foul, abdominal pain, irregular menstruation, yellow greasy tongue coating more pronounced at the root of tongue, thready wiry pulse.

Clear damp-heat, regulate Qi and blood.

Si Miao Wan, or Yu Dai wan (discharge pill) and Gui Pi wan (restore the spleen). Can be taken together, leave half hour between each formula.

Acupuncture points: Zhongji (Ren 3) Hegu (Li.4) TaiChong (Liv 3.) Yinlingquan (Sp 9). Sanyinjiao (Sp.6). Guqi (LI.11)

Review and treat once a week. Dietary and lifestyle advice

These would be the principle patterns you will see with your patients, presenting with primary infertility. Treat once a week, do a mini review each week and change or add points accordingly. As always keep detailed patient treatment and review notes.

Bernadette Ward. Lic.Ac.C.Ac, Nanjing Dip.Herb.C Herb Nanjing.

Visiting Professor to Nanjing University of TCM China (hon).

Principle of the Acupuncture Foundation, Irish Institute of Chinese Medicine.

www.acupuncturefoundation.com

References; AFI notes.

Chinese Herbal Medicine & Acupuncture, Zhou Zhong Ying ;Jin Hui DeObstetrics & Gynecology in Chinese Medicine. Giovanni Maciocia. Copyright Acupuncture Foundation)