

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Can acupuncture improve IVF live birth rates?

Associate Professor Caroline Smith from the Centre for Complementary Medicine Research along with Associate Professors Sheryl de Lacey and Julie Ratcliffe from Flinders University and Professor Michael Chapman from the University of New South Wales have received National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) funding to investigate if acupuncture can improve the rate of live births for women undergoing In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF).

'Over the last 30 years clinical treatment of infertility has changed dramatically', says Associate Professor Smith. 'Due to the introduction of assisted reproductive technologies and the greater awareness of fertility treatment with Medicare funding, a greater number of women are attempting pregnancy at an older age when they are less fertile. IVF is one option but it is very costly. New therapies that improve reproductive outcomes and are cost effective are highly desirable. Evidence from randomised controlled trials of acupuncture administered on the day of an embryo transfer suggests acupuncture may increase pregnancy rates but a more robust study is needed.'

A multi-centre randomised controlled trial of more than a thousand eligible women aged less than 43 will be recruited from Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane and Auckland over a 30 month period. The women will be placed in one of two groups. One group will be given acupuncture, another placebo control. The researchers will also recruit women not planning to use acupuncture. Qualitative interviews will also be undertaken with a portion of the participating women to explore their perception of acupuncture and its effects, and data will be collected to examine the cost effectiveness of acupuncture as an adjunct to IVF.



The results of this research will assist policy makers, health care providers and women and men to make informed choices about the clinical and cost effectiveness of acupuncture to improve reproductive and other health outcomes.

Project Title: Acupuncture to improve live birth rates for women undergoing IVF: a randomised controlled trial

Funding has been set at: \$613,511

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