



Asheville Center For Chinese Medicine

70 Woodfin Place Suite West Wing Two 828.258.2777 Asheville, North Carolina 28801

Info@AcupunctureAsheville.com

www.AcupunctureAsheville.com

Acupuncture May Improve Sperm Quality

Laurie Barclay, MD

July 25, 2005 — Acupuncture may improve sperm quality in idiopathic male infertility, according to the results of a prospective study reported in the July issue of *Fertility and Sterility*.

"Reports from uncontrolled trials using acupuncture on infertile men have shown a positive effect on sperm concentration and motility, an increase in testosterone, and some improvement in luteinizing hormone (LH) level," write Jian Pei, PhD, from Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine in the People's Republic of China, and colleagues. "These studies have also shown an increase of normally shaped sperm and a significant decrease in the percentage of morphologically abnormal sperm."

Of 40 men with idiopathic oligospermia, asthenospermia, or teratozoospermia, 28 (70%) received acupuncture twice weekly for five weeks, and their semen samples were randomized with semen samples from the 12 men in the untreated control group. The primary outcome was quantitative analysis by transmission electron microscopy.

After acupuncture, there was a statistically significant increase in the percentage and number of sperm and improvement in acrosome position and shape, nuclear shape, axonemal pattern and shape, and accessory fibers of sperm organelles, without ultrastructural defects in the total ejaculates. Specific sperm pathologies in the form of apoptosis, immaturity, and necrosis did not change significantly between the control and treatment groups before and after treatment.

"The treatment of idiopathic male infertility could benefit from employing acupuncture," the authors write. "A general improvement of sperm quality, specifically in the ultrastructural integrity of spermatozoa, was seen after acupuncture, although we did not identify specific sperm pathologies that could be particularly sensitive to this therapy."

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Reviewed by Gary D. Vagin, MD

Laurie Barclay, MD; is a freelance writer for Medscape.

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