

Auricular acupuncture in the treatment of female infertility

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Following a complete gynecologic--endocrinologic workup, 45 infertile women suffering from oligoamenorrhea (n = 27) or luteal insufficiency (n = 18) were treated with auricular acupuncture. Results were compared to those of 45 women who received hormone treatment. Both groups were matched for age, duration of infertility, body mass index, previous pregnancies, menstrual cycle and tubal patency. Women treated with acupuncture had 22 pregnancies, 11 after acupuncture, four spontaneously, and seven after appropriate medication. Women treated with hormones had 20 pregnancies, five spontaneously, and 15 in response to therapy. Four women of each group had abortions. endometriosis (normal menstrual cycles) was seen in 35% (38%) of the women of each group who failed to respond to therapy with pregnancy. Only 4% of the women who responded to acupuncture or hormone treatment with a pregnancy had endometriosis, and 7% had normal cycles. In addition, women who continued to be infertile after hormone therapy had higher body mass indices and testosterone values than the therapy responders from this group. Women who became pregnant after acupuncture suffered more often from menstrual abnormalities and luteal insufficiency with lower estrogen, thyrotropin (TSH) and dehydroepiandrosterone sulfate (DHEAS) concentrations than the women who achieved pregnancy after hormone treatment. Although the pregnancy rate was similar for both groups, eumenorrheic women treated with acupuncture had adnexitis, endometriosis, out-of-phase endometria and reduced postcoital tests more often than those receiving hormones. Twelve of the 27 women (44%) with menstrual irregularities remained infertile after therapy with acupuncture compared to 15 of the 27 (56%) controls treated with hormones, even though hormone disorders were more pronounced in the acupuncture group. Side-effects were observed only during hormone treatment. Various disorders of the autonomic nervous system normalized during acupuncture. Based on our data, auricular acupuncture seems to offer a valuable alternative therapy for female infertility due to hormone disorders.