



Acupuncturist Diaries 1: “It Takes Two to Tango - Escaping the Blame Game in Cases of Infertility”

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“We got married quite late, and I even started taking herbal medication because we couldn’t get pregnant after three years. The doctor said things were normal on my end, so after some convincing, I got my husband tested for infertility. According to the tests, apparently his sperm count and activity are low.”

Thirty-four years of age, Miss P’s husband is said to be a liberal and reasonable man. However, Miss P was greatly disappointed by his attitude following the results of his infertility test. He was needlessly self-disparaging on one hand, berating himself as “not being a real man,” while refusing any medical intervention on the other.

“Everyone knows you need two to make a baby, so why do we never address the fact that infertility is also a problem for two? It’s frustrating that I’ve wasted so much time blaming myself for our infertility, but it’s also frustrating to see my husband becoming so dejected about his vitality decreasing with age. Is sexual vitality the only thing that makes a man?”

Couples that visit an acupuncturist for infertility tend to share some similarities. For one, it is almost always a woman who reaches out for an initial consultation. When couples come in together, we encourage male partners to join the consultation, but the responsibility of “fixing” infertility usually falls on the woman. However, infertility is actually a 50-50 issue among the sexes. Out of 100 infertility cases, 35 are due to the woman, 35 are due to the man, 25 are due to indeterminate causes, and 5 are due to both members of the couple. It is therefore imperative to consult both parties in order to know the true cause of a couple’s infertility. Once a diagnosis is made, it is equally important for both partners to keep a positive attitude and maintain a consistent treatment plan, whatever it may entail.

If the cause of infertility is determined to be the man, Eastern medicine uses various modalities and formulas to strengthen sexual energy and encourage healthy sperm production. For instance, many prominent traditional herbal recipes address premature ejaculation caused by stress. In conjunction with methods such as moxibustion, such formulas

help to boost sperm mobility, increasing the likelihood of pregnancy even in cases where sperm count is low.

Several years ago, I recommended moxibustion to a couple seeking treatment for infertility. Two acupoint spots below the navel are well-known for restoring qi and boosting vitality in men and women alike. Three months into taking herbal medicine and moxibustion treatment, the woman reported that her menses have become regular and painless, while the man reported feeling energetically balanced in the lower abdomen. After six months of this treatment, the couple finally conceived. According to the couple, their relationship became stronger once they felt the benefits of their treatment plan, and their stress of infertility diminished. Their story is still memorable to me, because it demonstrates the importance of mental wellbeing in cases of infertility. Of course, the moxa and herbal medicine were compatible additions to the couple's fertility journey. However, their pregnancy was achieved once the couple felt less pressure to conceive, and actively prioritized becoming healthy as a team.

Infertility can be a significant burden and stress upon a couple looking to conceive. If both parties can bear it together, however, it can prove to be a valuable opportunity for strengthening their connection.