

How acupuncture improves ovarian function and pregnancy outcomes in women with diminished ovarian reserve: a clinical and mechanistic study

Submission date 08/01/2024	Recruitment status Recruiting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prospectively registered <input type="checkbox"/> Protocol
Registration date 10/01/2024	Overall study status Ongoing	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan <input type="checkbox"/> Results
Last Edited 09/01/2024	Condition category Pregnancy and Childbirth	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Record updated in last year

Plain English Summary

Background and study aims

Approximately 10% to 35% of women may experience a premature diminished ovarian reserve (DOR) due to various reasons, and the incidence of DOR significantly increases with age. For DOR patients with infertility, in vitro fertilization and embryo transfer (IVF-ET) can shorten treatment duration and increase pregnancy rates. In IVF-ET, poor egg quality directly affects embryo quality and is one of the crucial factors influencing pregnancy rates. Acupuncture, as a non-pharmacological treatment, can improve ovarian function and egg quality, thereby enhancing pregnancy rates. This study aims to evaluate the effect of acupuncture on ovarian function and the pregnancy outcomes of IVF-ET in patients with DOR.

Who can participate?

Women aged between 20 and 42 years old with infertility due to DOR

What does the study involve?

Eligible patients will be randomly allocated to either the acupuncture group (AG) or the sham acupuncture group (SAG). Based on conventional treatment, patients in AG will receive acupuncture therapy, while the SAG will receive sham acupuncture treatment. Both groups will receive 8 weeks of acupuncture treatments.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

Both groups will receive basic treatment and symptomatic treatment. Participants' symptoms may be relieved in this study. Acupuncture may cause some slight side effects, including bleeding, hematoma, serious pain, and dizziness. These side effects are generally mild and rarely cause serious harm.

Where is the study run from?

Luohu District Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine (China)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
October 2023 to October 2026

Who is funding the study?

1. Sanming Project of Medicine in Shenzhen (No. SZZYSM 202101007)
2. 2021 Luohu District (First Batch) Soft Science Research Programme Project (No. LX20210102)

Who is the main contact?

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Contact information

Type(s)

Public, Scientific, Principal Investigator

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Additional identifiers

EudraCT/CTIS number

Nil known

IRAS number

ClinicalTrials.gov number

Nil known

Secondary identifying numbers

Nil known

Study information

Scientific Title

Effect of acupuncture on ovarian function and pregnancy outcomes in patients with diminished ovarian reserve: a prospective randomized controlled trial

Study hypothesis

Acupuncture therapy has better efficacy than sham acupuncture in improving ovarian function in women with diminished ovarian reserve (DOR) and improving pregnancy outcomes in in vitro fertilization-embryo transfer (IVF-ET).

Ethics approval required

Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)

Approved 06/12/2023, Medical Ethics Committee of Luohu District Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine (16 Xiantan Road, Luohu District, Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, 518004, China; +86 (0)755 82311699; lhzyykjk@163.com), ref: 2023-LHQZYYYXLL-KY-147

Study design

Single-center interventional two-armed single-blinded prospective randomized controlled trial

Primary study design

Interventional

Secondary study design

Randomised controlled trial

Study setting(s)

Hospital

Study type(s)

Treatment, Efficacy

Participant information sheet

See study outputs table

Condition

Women with infertility due to diminished ovarian reserve including those with or without transferable embryos

Interventions

Eligible patients will be randomly allocated to either the acupuncture group (AG) or the sham acupuncture group (SAG). The SPSS software version 26.0 will be used to generate a random number table at a 1:1 ratio. The concealment of the random allocation scheme will be ensured through sequentially numbered, opaque, sealed envelopes. Blinding will be employed for participants, outcome evaluators, and statistical analysts.

Based on conventional treatment, patients in AG will receive acupuncture therapy, while the SAG will receive sham acupuncture with acupoints located approximately 1 cm adjacent to those used in AG, involving superficial needle insertion of 1-2 mm into the skin. The acupoints for both groups will include Liangmen (ST 21), Huangshu (KI 16), Guanyuan (CV 4), Zhongji (CV 3), Zigong (EX-CA 1), Zusanli (ST 36), and Sanyinjiao (SP 6). Baihui (GV 20) and Shenting (GV 24) will be added for those with insomnia or anxiety.

Acupuncture treatment will be conducted for a continuous 8 weeks before entering the ovulation induction or transplantation cycle, with 3 sessions per week in the 1 to 3 weeks and 2 sessions per week in the following 4 to 8 weeks. Patients without transferable embryos receive

acupuncture treatment once a week until the day of hCG injection during ovulation induction based on 8 weeks of acupuncture treatment.

After routine disinfection of the skin at the acupoints, appropriate-length filiform needles will be used. ST 21 and KI 16 will be punctured perpendicularly at a depth of 20-30 mm; CV 4, CV 3, and EX-CA 1 will be punctured perpendicularly or obliquely at a depth of 25-40 mm; ST 36 and SP 6 will be punctured perpendicularly at a depth of 25-50 mm; GV 20 and GV 24 will be punctured horizontally or obliquely at a depth of 10-20 mm. Each treatment will last for 30 minutes.

Intervention Type

Procedure/Surgery

Primary outcome measure

Clinical pregnancy rate measured using data collection about on-site visits, telephone calls, or WeChat communications at 4 to 7 weeks after embryo transfer

Secondary outcome measures

1. Biochemical pregnancy rate measured using data collection about on-site visits, telephone calls, and WeChat communications at 2 weeks after embryo transfer
2. Live birth rate measured using data collection about on-site visits, telephone calls and WeChat communications monthly until the end of pregnancy
3. Miscarriage rate measured using data collection about on-site visits, telephone calls and WeChat communications monthly until the end of pregnancy
4. Anti-Müllerian hormone measured using blood samples at baseline and after 8 weeks of treatment
5. Basic hormone levels (follicle-stimulating Hormone, estradiol, luteinizing hormone, FSH/LH ratio) measured using blood samples at baseline and after 8 weeks of treatment
6. Antral follicle count measured using ultrasound at baseline and after 8 weeks of treatment
7. Anxiety assessment measured using the self-rating anxiety scale (SAS) at baseline and after 8 weeks of treatment
8. Endometrial thickness and morphology measured using ultrasound on the day of embryo transfer
9. Patients undergoing ovulation induction cycles measured using data collection about the following indicators within 1 to 7 days after ovulation:
 - 9.1. Gonadotropin (Gn) usage
 - 9.2. Oocyte retrieval
 - 9.3. Fertilization rate
 - 9.4. Cleavage rate
 - 9.5. Morphological assessment of oocytes
 - 9.6. Day 3 high-quality embryo rate
 - 9.7. Day 3 utilizable embryo rate
 - 9.8. Blastocyst formation rate
 - 9.9. High-quality blastocyst rate

Overall study start date

06/10/2023

Overall study end date

30/10/2026

Eligibility

Participant inclusion criteria

1. Women aged 20 to 42 years
2. Conforming to the clinical diagnostic criteria for DOR
3. Voluntary and written informed consent

Participant type(s)

Patient

Age group

Adult

Lower age limit

20 Years

Upper age limit

42 Years

Sex

Female

Target number of participants

164

Participant exclusion criteria

1. Male factor infertility characterized by severe oligospermia, asthenospermia, necrospermia, teratospermia, or azoospermia
2. Conditions such as severe hydrosalpinx, significant tubal or pelvic adhesions, and myomas invading the endometrium, which adversely affect the outcome of IVF pregnancies
3. Immune system disorders such as immune nephritis and systemic lupus erythematosus, which may lead to infertility
4. Endocrinopathies such as hyperprolactinemia, hyperandrogenemia, chronic adrenal insufficiency, and marked thyroid dysfunction
5. Infertility attributable to congenital malformations of the reproductive system, chromosomal anomalies, or other genetic etiologies
6. Coexistence of severe cardiovascular, cerebrovascular, hepatic, renal, or hematopoietic disorders, malignant neoplasms, or psychiatric conditions.
7. Contraindications to pregnancy or uterine non-viability for gestation
8. Received DOR-related interventions (ie. drugs, acupuncture, herbs, etc.) within 4 weeks
9. Subjects considered ineligible for trial participation based on researcher evaluation

Recruitment start date

30/01/2024

Recruitment end date

30/06/2026

Locations**Countries of recruitment**

China

Study participating centre

Luohu District Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine

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Sponsor information

Organisation

Shenzhen Municipal People's Government

Sponsor details

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Government

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Sponsor type

Government

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Funder(s)

Funder type

Government

Funder Name

Sanming Project of Medicine in Shenzhen Municipality

Alternative Name(s)

'sanming' project of medicine in Shenzhen, Sanming Project of Medicine in Shenzhen, San-Ming Project of Medicine in Shenzhen, Sanming Project of Medicine in Shenzhen Municipality

Funding Body Type

Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype

Local government

Location

China

Funder Name

Soft science Research Program of Luohu District

Results and Publications

Publication and dissemination plan

The researchers plan to publish the protocol before February 2024. They plan to publish results before October 2027.

Intention to publish date

30/10/2027

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

The datasets generated and/or analysed during the current study during this study will be included in the subsequent results publication.

IPD sharing plan summary

Published as a supplement to the results publication

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Participant information sheet			09/01/2024	No	Yes