

Male Infertility Treated with Acupuncture

(From “Examples of Effective Acupuncture Treatment for Male Infertility” by Qian Zhi-yun, *Zhong guo Zhen Jiu [Chinese Acupuncture & Moxibustion]*, #5, 1996, p. 11)

Study group:

The men in this study had all been married for more than two years and had yet remained childless. Gynecological examinations of their wives had found nothing abnormal. They were thus diagnosed as suffering from male infertility. The majority of cases of male infertility can be divided into the following few conditions:

1. Blockage in sperm production or seminal fluid abnormality
2. Sperm duct blockage
3. Inability of the seminal fluid to enter the vagina
4. No sperm

The latter is typically the number one cause of this condition. In that case, a seminal examination shows that the sperm count is low, sperm motility is poor, the sperm are dead and/or deformed, or the seminal fluid is not liquified.

Case 1. Male, aged 30, a laborer

Date of initial examination: May, 1984

Major complaint: In 1978, the patient had suffered an injury which had damaged his bladder and ripped his penis. He had had reconstructive surgery at a worker’s hospital. However, after this procedure, his penis did not become vigorously erect again. This had continued for six years before coming for treatment

with the author with acupuncture. Upon examination, he was found to have a 3.5 x 18cm scar from his navel to his pubic bone. After the operation, this wound had been infected for four months. This is what had caused his penis to shrink. It measured 2.5cm long and was 1.2cm in diameter. After the operation till now, his penis had been shriveled and non-functioning. The patient was extremely anxious.

His stomach intake (*i.e.*, his appetite) was good. He had two loose bowel movements per day. His sleep was not good. His bodily constitution was very good. His pulse was balanced and forceful, and he had thin, white (*i.e.*, normal) tongue fur. Based on the above symptoms, his pattern was categorized as external injury damaging the *chong* and *ren* vessels and the liver, spleen, and kidney channels. This had resulted in stagnation of the channel qi flowing along the yin channels. Hence the transport of qi and blood was impeded. As a result, the genitals did not receive sufficient qi and nourishment of blood. This then had led to the withering, shrinking, and dysfunction of his penis.

Treatment principles: Move the qi, quicken the blood, and dispel stasis while simultaneously supplementing the kidneys and invigorating yang in order to free the flow of the *chong*, *ren*, liver, and kidney channels.

Formula: *Qi Hai* (CV 6), *Guan Yuan* (CV 4), *Zhong Ji* (CV 3), *Zu San Li* (St 36), *Sam Yin Jiao* (Sp 6)

Hand technique: Draining method

Method treatment: After obtaining the qi at *Qi Hai*, *Guan Yuan*, and *Zhong Ji*, it was necessary to propa-

gate the needle sensation down along the conception vessel to the penis or to both testes. In order to achieve this, the needles were stimulated continuously for 2-3 minutes. The degree of intensity of the needle sensation was as great as the patient could bear. *Zu San Li* and *San Yin Jiao* were needled and the sensation was propagated along the stomach channel. It is also good if the sensation ascends upward along the spleen channel to the knee. The needles were retained for 30 minutes. Every five minutes, the needles were stimulated one time. In particular, the needle sensation should be conducted down along the conception vessel. This was done one time each day, with 15 times constituting one course of treatment.

After the first treatment, the patient felt continuous sensation for 36 hours. After one course of treatment, he reported that his penis had grown a bit. At night he began to have frequent urination which resolved itself (*i.e.*, was not painful or inhibited). After a week's rest (between courses), he went through a second course of treatment. During this course, the hand technique was first to drain and then to supplement.

After the second course of treatment was complete, his penis was able to attain a normal erection. When erect, the penis was 8.5cm long and 2.5cm in diameter. It was functioning and hard, so he was able to have sexual intercourse with his wife. After another course of treatment, his penis was 12cm long. Within one year, in September, his wife became pregnant and the next July gave birth to a baby.

Commentary: The patient had suffered an external injury which had affected and damaged various channels. Therefore, the movement and function of the qi and blood had lost its regulation. Hence the ancestral sinews (or gathering of sinews, *i.e.*, the penis) had lost its normal nourishment from the qi and blood. Yang had wilted and did not lift (*i.e.*, the patient was impotent). *Guan Yuan* and *Zhong Ji* are three foot yin channel intersection points. Needling these two points

functions to free the flow of the three foot yin channels and moves obstruction and stagnation of the qi and blood. Using a draining hand technique was in order to free the flow of the channels and quicken the network vessels, transform stasis and engender the new. Thus the genitals obtained sufficient qi and blood and consequently recovered very rapidly. In the *Zhen Jiu Zi Sheng Jing (The Acupuncture & Moxibustion Supplying Life Classic)* it states, "The point *Qi Hai* is the sea of qi in males." When the qi moves the blood moves. Therefore, needling *Qi Hai*, *Guan Yuan*, and *Zhong Ji* is able to not only supplement the kidneys and invigorate yang but also course and free the flow of the qi and blood stasis and stagnation of the two vessels of the *chong* and *ren* and the three foot yin channels, thus making the qi and blood of the three foot yin channels move and circulate. Needling *Zu San Li* and *San Yin Jiao* is able to quicken the blood and transform stasis, move and transport the qi and blood as well as supplement the latter heaven root of the source of qi and blood. Using all these points together thus achieved a good effect.

Case 2. Male, 31 years old

Date of initial examination: May 16, 1989

Major complaint: The patient had been married for five years and his wife had still not become pregnant. According to the patient, during sexual intercourse he chronically did not ejaculate. He would go up to that point, (continuing with intercourse), eventually become fatigued, lose his strength (*i.e.*, lose his erection), and then fall asleep. He had searched everywhere for a doctor for a number of years but had not yet found successful treatment. The patient's physique and complexion were robust. His stomach intake was good. His sleep was good. His tongue fur was white and his pulse was fine and rapid. In sum, the above symptoms indicated the Chinese medical pattern of yang strong (*i.e.*, persistent erection without ejaculation due to yin insufficiency).

Treatment principles: Enrich yin and subdue yang, clear heat and drain fire

Formula: *Guan Yuan* (CV 4), *Zhong Ji* (CV 3), *Zu San Li* (St 36), *San Yin Jiao* (Sp 6), *Tai Xi* (Ki 3)

Hand technique: Draining method

Method of treatment: *Guan Yuan* and *Zhong Ji* were needled with strong needle sensation, asking the patient if the needle sensation had reached the penis and both testes. After four treatments, the patient was ejaculating during sexual intercourse. Two months later, his wife became pregnant and subsequently gave birth.

Commentary: The patient's persistent erection with non-ejaculation was ascribed to hyperactive ministerial fire in turn due to insufficient kidney water. This caused yin and yang to become unbalanced. Yin vacuity leads to yang hyperactivity. Therefore, *Zhong Ji*, *Guan Yuan*, *San Yin Jiao*, and *Tai Xi* were chosen to drain hyperactive ministerial fire, supplement yin and invigorate kidney water. As it is said, "To boost the governor of water, restrain the *yang ming*." Therefore, *Zu San Li* was used to harmonize the qi and blood in the *yang ming* stomach channel. Treatment consisted of supplementing yin and invigorating water four times. Thus the fire was taken away from under the cauldron and the disease healed itself.

Case 3. Male, 30 years of age, an elementary school teacher

Date of initial examination: Mar. 1987

Major complaint: The patient had been married for four years and still had not become pregnant. His wife had had a number of gynecological examinations and each time everything was judged normal. According to the patient's seminal examination report, his sperm count was 800, the sperm motility was 40%, 25% of

the sperm were deformed, and there was no liquification within one hour after ejaculation. He reported that his diet was not good, his bowel movements were loose, and that his urination consisted of long voidings of clear urine. In addition, he urinated frequently, especially during the night. The patient's outward appearance was robust. His tongue fur was white and slightly slimy, while his pulse was fine and rapid. In sum, based on the above symptoms, his case was categorized as spleen-kidney yang vacuity.

Treatment principles: Supplement the kidneys and invigorate yang, fortify the spleen and disinherit dampness

Formula: *Guan Yuan* (CV 4), *Zhong Ji* (Cv 3), *Zu San Li* (St 36), *San Yin Jiao* (Sp 6)

Treatment method: First *Zhong Ji* and *Guan Yuan* were needled using supplementation method. The needle sensation was propagated to the penis and testicles. After that, even supplementation and drainage was performed, continuing the needle sensation for 3-5 minutes. The needles were retained for 40 minutes, stimulating the needles one time every 10 minutes. After needling, moxibustion was done for 30 minutes, causing erythema of the skin. Simultaneously there was a hot sensation along the conception vessel which moved up and down. This was done one time every other day, with 15 times equalling one course of treatment. After the first course of treatment, his wife became pregnant in April, 1987. In 1988, she gave birth to a daughter.

Commentary: Male infertility is mainly due to a reduced number of sperm, poor motility, dead sperm, or impotence, all of which may be categorized as either kidney yang vacuity or kidney yin vacuity. In Chinese medicine, it is believed that sperm production is related to kidney yin, while sperm movement is related to kidney yang. Seminal fluid which is not liquified due to reproductive organ abnormalities and

abnormal sensations during ejaculation also pertain to kidney vacuity. Therefore, *Guan Yuan* and *Zhong Ji* were needed to supplement kidney yin. *Guan Yuan* is a yang within yin transport point. Needling *Guan Yuan* and *San Yin Jiao* enables one to both supplement kidney yin and promote the production of sperm as well as stir and regulate of the moving qi within the kidneys and supplement kidney yang, hence also promoting sperm motility. Zhang Jie-bin said:

To successfully treat yang, one must search for yang within yin. When yang obtains the assistance of yin, its engenderment and transformation are limitless.

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