



**2016 Annual Clinical & Scientific Meeting of The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologist
May 14-17, 2016 ● Washington, DC**

Title

Patients undergoing assisted reproductive technology (ART) treatments seek integrative approach to infertility

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Objective:

Women faced with infertility are offered a variety of Eastern and Western treatment options, such as assisted reproductive technology (ART) and/or complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) . Women may pursue therapies such as acupuncture and herbal remedies in concert with western reproductive endocrinology methods in hope of improving pregnancy outcomes and/or cope with psychosocial challenges. This study aims to describe the experiences of women who choose to pursue CAM as part of their fertility treatment.

Design:

Patient survey.

Material and Methods:

Patients who utilized treatment by CAM and ART therapy from January 2013 to March 2015 were included. The 40-question survey included patient demographics, medical history, lifestyle choices, CAM experience, stress levels (1: Low – 10: High Stress), and open-ended questions.

Results:

Over 26% of patients participated in acupuncture (n=68) in an attempt to address endometriosis or fibroids (n=18). After one month of CAM therapy, stress levels sourced from an infertility diagnosis reduced dramatically in participants' workplace ($\Delta=-0.98$) and in relationships with partners ($\Delta=-0.86$). It was "highly" important for 71.47% of participants that their ART doctor



and CAM specialist work together during treatment. It was “very” important in 81.3% of participants that their CAM doctor accepts the use of acupuncture during treatment.

Conclusions:

Study participants are “empowered” and feel “reduced stress and anxiety” with CAM. Nearly all patients (98.1%) would recommend CAM therapy, citing the “psychosocial and physical support” assist them during ART treatment. By adapting a holistic approach, practitioners may decrease patient stress, improve physician-patient communication and enhance patient retention and thus clinical outcome.