

The Effectiveness of Acupuncture on Headaches in Women Undergoing IVF
Egg Stimulation: A Pilot Pre-Post Observational Study

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Study Protocol

ABSTRACT

Objective: To test the effect of acupuncture in treating headaches, as well as co-measures of stress and emotional distress, in participants during the hormonal stimulation phase prior to an oocyte retrieval.

Design: Pre- and post-treatment surveys were provided to participants who attended acupuncture appointments at the Southern California Reproductive Center. Participants were given a pre-treatment survey, then given an acupuncture treatment, then asked to complete a post-treatment survey. Surveys queried fertility protocol and headache intensity, location, quality, and onset. Co-measures were queried to determine if acupuncture treatment was also effective in reducing levels of stress and emotional distress.

Subjects: Identified females at birth experiencing a headache while undergoing a hormone stimulation cycle as part of in vitro fertilization or oocyte cryopreservation

Intervention: Individualized acupuncture treatment with needle retention for thirty minutes

Main Outcome Measures: Headache intensity, level of stress, level of emotional distress

Results: Of the 86 participants, 37 reported a headache at the time of acupuncture treatment. Thirty six of the 37 participants reported a decrease or complete cessation in headache intensity after acupuncture treatment. Of the same 37 participants, 31 reported a decrease in stress and 28 reported a decrease in emotional distress after acupuncture treatment.

Conclusion: The findings indicate that acupuncture is an effective treatment in reducing headache intensity as well as improving stress and emotional distress levels in participants undergoing hormonal stimulation during an oocyte retrieval cycle. Additional research is suggested to establish specific acupuncture protocols and to determine the long-term effects of acupuncture on individuals in these circumstances.

