



Dr. Li Qin Zhao



Natural fertility care

Starting a family can be the most natural thing in the world, but for some, it can be a trying time, with many turning to alternative methods. Annalise Cunild looks at treatments with a proven success rate.

Making babies is in our DNA. It is part of what makes us human; so when couples find themselves struggling to conceive it can be deeply distressing.

Not least because many people plan their future around the inevitability of having a family to nurture, and when that plan fails to materialise they feel an inescapable sense of emptiness.

Even more harrowing can be expensive failed attempts at IVF as well as repeated miscarriages. It can all cause stress, depression and can push some couples to the point of separation.

When even IVF doesn't work, rather than give up altogether many aspiring parents are now turning to the increasingly sought-after practise of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and acupuncture.

A research study published in the British Medical Journal (February 2008) concluded that "acupuncture can boost women's chances of conceiving through IVF by 65 per cent".

Dr. Li Qin Zhao is one of the UK's leading practitioners of TCM and

specialises in gynaecological and reproductive treatments including infertility.

She is qualified in both Western medicine and TCM including acupuncture with 25 years' experience working both in the UK and in China.

"Many people come to me with complicated fertility conditions or having gone through years of trying to conceive using IVF or IUI without any success, however most of them achieved the pregnancy they so desperately desired after following my TCM programme," said Dr. Zhao.

"Poor diet and lifestyle can contribute to infertility but there is also the fact that more and more people are trying to conceive later in life."

Long term use of the contraceptive pill can also have a significant impact on fertility according to TCM philosophy.

TCM is aimed at treating the underlying causes of illness using a range of diagnostic techniques.

The treatment works by stimulating certain pressure points in the body with

the insertion of ultra-thin sterile needles and a combination of Chinese herbal prescriptions to encourage the body's natural healing mechanisms.

Dr. Zhao uses acupuncture and Chinese medicine to help rebalance the hormone levels, increase blood supply to reproductive organs, improve egg and sperm quality, make the lining of the uterus more receptive to an embryo and of course promote eventual conception.

She has a study of 326 patients in her clinic aged between 28 and 50 who received TCM treatments; 67 per cent became pregnant which compares to the UK average success rate of 29.6 per cent for women aged under 35 through IVF alone.

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Four of Dr. Zhao's patients told us of their success stories...

Nurse **Kate Harrison**, 36, had been trying to conceive with her partner for eight years when she decided to try TCM.

"I was open minded about the effect of TCM as I had read articles (in medical journals) stating that TCM can help with sub-fertility.

"I decided to have TCM treatment with Dr. Zhao in preparation for, and during my first IVF treatment. The first two cycles failed as I had tremendous stress, accidentally broke my arm and developed severe cystitis during the treatment.

"However I became pregnant on my third attempt (from a frozen cycle) with twins. Sadly I miscarried one at seven weeks and the other embryo was in the fallopian tube and I had to have an emergency operation for a ruptured ectopic pregnancy and had the right fallopian tube removed.

"I was very ill and my menstrual cycle was very irregular and I felt extremely low physically and mentally so I went back to see Dr Zhao for further treatment.

"She managed to regulate my cycle very quickly and then as I waited to start another IVF cycle I found I was pregnant through TCM alone with only one tube!

"I was amazed and am eternally grateful to Dr Zhao! We had a beautiful, perfect girl.

"When we wanted to try for a sibling for our daughter we decided to give the embryos we had frozen from our previous cycles a chance and I became pregnant on the first try with Dr Zhao's expertise.

"We now have two beautiful perfect girls! We would have been happy to try using TCM alone again however as the embryos had already been created we felt we should give them a chance of life.

"I would absolutely recommend the treatment. My menstrual cycle went from being completely erratic to a 28-day cycle. Most importantly it works. I have two amazing examples of Dr Zhao's expertise."

Rebecca Ford, 34, had been on the contraceptive pill for 13 years and had

stopped menstruating altogether after she came off the pill at the age of 27.

"After being married for two years we wanted to start trying for a family but after a year of nothing happening I went to my GP. I was soon referred to an infertility specialist at our local hospital where I was diagnosed with Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS).

"For the next two years I underwent investigations and different treatments but nothing seemed to work, every month felt like a failure. I was eventually started on ovulation induction and finally I was responding but too much; they cancelled all of our treatment telling us there was nothing left they could do for us. We were left devastated.

"A friend introduced me to one of her friends who was pregnant following IVF. It was her who told me about Dr Zhao. She had had four failed IVF attempts and got into a lot of debt. She got pregnant on her first IVF cycle combined with acupuncture.

"I was a little sceptical about acupuncture as I didn't understand how it would work and I was a little nervous about having needles stuck in me.

"But I found the treatment very relaxing and it eased my stress from the whole situation. It never hurt, the needles were so fine I could hardly feel them going in.

"I had acupuncture throughout the IVF process and finally I fell pregnant! I continued with the acupuncture throughout my pregnancy and had a baby boy in December 2005.

"In 2008 we wanted to have IVF again to try for a sibling. We didn't expect it to work first time again, we didn't think we'd be so lucky. But I continued with the acupuncture and later found I was pregnant. We were amazed! Again I continued with acupuncture throughout my pregnancy. We had a daughter in January this year. I have all faith in Dr Zhao, she is amazing."

Linda and Mark Russell, both 45 years old, proud parents of a four-year-old daughter Minnie, had been diagnosed with male-factor infertility as Mark had poor sperm motility and morphology.

"We had been trying to conceive for eight years and had undergone nine IVF

attempts and achieved two pregnancies but both miscarried.

"We were referred to Dr. Zhao by our consultant when we were going through our tenth cycle of IVF.

"After both of us receiving a combination of acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine I had seven eggs collected and six of them fertilised and divided. We were told they were the best quality embryos we had ever produced so I continued with acupuncture before and after implantation.

"When I found out I was pregnant we were over the moon and we had a beautiful baby girl in January 2005. We are absolutely convinced that Dr. Zhao's invaluable professional help and advice made our dream come.

"There are a lot of people that might not realise how TCM could help them overcome infertility, they probably wouldn't even think about it but yet it can offer a lot."

Janet Dibbs, 34, was diagnosed with cancer at the age of 18. After surgery, chemotherapy and five years on Tamoxifen, she went into a chemically-induced early menopause.

"I was told that it was very unlikely that I'd ever be able to have children without IVF. At the age of 33 I decided that I wanted to try for children as I had just been told that my cancer was genetic and could affect my ovaries.

"Tests revealed I had very high FSH levels, too high to be considered for IVF. A friend who had seen Dr. Zhao and had a successful pregnancy recommended I give acupuncture a try.

"After six months of acupuncture and Chinese herbal treatment from Dr. Zhao, my hormone levels had improved remarkably and I was ready for IVF.

"However, I continued my treatment with Dr. Zhao and a few months before I was due to start my first cycle of IVF, I discovered I was pregnant naturally. My specialist was astonished yet extremely delighted for us.

"I had a very healthy pregnancy with no morning sickness and I now have a beautiful baby daughter who is a total miracle. She is a dream come true.

"I cannot thank Dr. Zhao enough for all her support, guidance and care but above all, expertise. I highly recommend her to help you achieve pregnancy."