

1. On Your website, you mention that you combine Eastern and Western medicine. In your opinion, what are the main differences and the similarities?

Both medicines cover physical and emotional/mental health but the main differences are in diagnosis methods, the differentiation of body syndromes, and treatment methods and tools.

Chinese medicine is holistic and more natural. It has very few side effects but sometimes requires time and commitment. I believe it is most beneficial when both medicines can work together, it builds a stronger health care system. Many countries in the world have begun this integration and have already placed acupuncture and herbal medicine into the mainstream.

**Treatment principles are very different.**

Eastern medicine seeks to treat the root cause of the patient's problem. We see the body as a whole, when we are in pain it suggests that the body is off balance. With acupuncture we try to balance the whole body system which in turn naturally relieves the symptoms. But Western medicine is different, they mostly seek to treat the symptoms and or how symptoms relate to the organs.

**Diagnosis method is different.**

**Chinese medicine** uses four methods to diagnose patients.

1. Inspection. Observation of patient's appearance, color, vitality, five sense organs and tongue.
2. Auscultation and Olfaction. Listening and smelling.
3. Inquiring. TCM Questionnaire: Such as experiencing: chills and fevers, perspiration, appetite, thirst, and taste, defecation and urination, pain, sleep, menses.
4. Palpation. Feeling of the pulse, palpation of different parts of the body.

Differentiation of syndromes: Eight Principles (interior and exterior, cold and heat, deficiency and access, and yin and yang). Theory of Qi and blood, theory of Organs, theory of meridians and collaterals.

**Western medicine** uses inquiring questions and physical exam, blood work, x-ray, ultrasound, MRI, CT scan etc. to collect the information and diagnosis. But more focus is on what appears to be symptom related.

Differentiation of syndromes: internal medicine, mental health, or musculoskeletal, which operating system of the body.

**Tools used for treatment are different:**

What are the side effects? Are the treatments invasive? Length of the treatment taken? Symptom relief or root cure?

**TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine):** acupuncture, herbal medicine, cupping, moxa, gua sha, tui-na (Chinese form of massage).

**Western Medicine:** drugs, surgery, physical or mental therapy, laser, hormone or drug injection.

2. Acupuncture is a form of alternative medicine and a key component of traditional Chinese medicine. How did this form of treatment become part of your practice?

By profession, I am a licensed Acupuncturist in California. Also, I have a NCCAOM Diplomates Certificate that allows me to practice in other states. Acupuncture is more recognizable and accepted by the health system and the general public in this country. That is why when we talk about Chinese Medicine doctors, we are often referring to Licensed Acupuncturists. Acupuncturists can choose not to practice herbal medicine, but I do choose to heal with both. The licensing exam contains four parts, Oriental medicine, acupuncture, herbology and Western medicine. In fact, herbal medicine has a significant impact and plays a major role in Chinese medicine globally. A good example would be the Herbal Medicines which have helped patients recover from coronavirus in China.

3. What do you tell people who would like to use acupuncture to aid them in their wellness, but they are afraid of needles?

Oftentimes a fear of needles comes from hypodermic needles that are hollow for injection purposes, large, and can be painful. Commonly used **acupuncture needles** are made of solid stainless steel, with **sizes** from 26 to 40 gauge and lengths from 0.5 inch to 2.5 inches. Because of the small **size**, quite often people describe an **acupuncture needle** as a “painless **needle**.” The tip of an **acupuncture needle** is blunt, even though it is very tiny. You may feel a quick pinch when the needle inserts, then you don't even know it is there. Have you ever had the eyebrow threading or tattooing? Oftentimes these procedures are more painful than acupuncture needles.

I would tell patients that comparing hypodermic needles to acupuncture needles is like comparing apples to oranges. The pain experienced from inserting an acupuncture needle is comparable to that of plucking out a healthy scalp hair rather than comparable to the pain of a hypodermic needle injecting or removing fluid. There are also methods of treatment without the use of needles. Additionally, there are places on the body that are more or less sensitive. I will always work individually with patients to make them feel safe and comfortable.

4. Infertility is more spoken about now than in previous generations, do you find that there are still some challenges when talking openly about these?

Yes. Definitely. People are struggling with this topic. They feel something wrong with themselves, or that they are broken. When in fact, 1 out of 8 couples have infertility issues. My patients are as young as 26 to as old as 46. Problems can be from both females or males, even when medically diagnosed with no problems. Over the last 7 years, treating infertility has become the main focus of my practice. I can tell you that every couple comes with a difficult or heart breaking story. Who are they going to talk

about this? Church? No. Family members? No. Friends? No. IVF clinic? No. Therapy? No. I become their therapist, counselor, and their support following their falls and rise of hope.

Two years ago, I started a Fertility Support Group that meets up every three months. I invited my patients who became successfully pregnant to come to share their story and experience with my current patients. It provides a safe space for women to give some personal advice or information that I may not have myself. It is a very helpful and hopeful space where women can meet women who have been through fertility difficulties and have now successfully conceived. I have a "We are all in this together" mentality with my patients.

5. Sperm count is just as important as egg health in conception. Do you have a consultation with both partners as part of your treatment plan?

Absolutely. Male and Female are each responsible for 50% for fertility. In some cases, males play the key of preventing miscarriage. I usually ask if the male partner has done a sperm analysis. If not I will either wait to see how the couples progress is going for a couple of months before deciding if the sperm needs to be tested. But I will recommend starting the male with a "boosting" herbal medicine which balances the overall yin and yang, qi and blood. This is done in conjunction with Moxibustion during the monthly fertility window.

6. What are some of the mental health components that you've come across while helping couples out to conceive?

General depression, anxiety, angry, irritability, insomnia, PTSD from miscarriage. It can be a very stressful process for couples.

7. What is the relationship between how we think/feel and how our bodies react when trying to conceive?

This is a very good question. I believe that we should prepare our body for reproduction then we should ease the mind, let nature take its own course. I have a method and set goals for my patients and myself. I need patients' dedication to come for treatment once a week, their discipline to do the homework I give to them, and the determination to stay focused and not give up so easily.

Most often I have two types of patients. Some will only focus on fertility, feeling there is nothing else in their life worthy to enjoy. They can over-stress about small things, like over focusing on diet or basal body temperature. Every month toward the end of the cycle is a life or death situation creating a very traumatic fertility journey.

Other people like to use distractions to not think about fertility. They choose to try to conceive at the same time they are buying a house, or going back to school for another degree, or looking for a career advancement. All these things are major tasks in a person's life. This creates more stress in some ways and sometimes chaotic

situations. They say they are trying to conceive but their minds are not focused on fertility. They are stretched too thin physically, mentally and financially.

8. Would you recommend journaling as part of clearing up some emotional buildup before and during treatment?

Absolutely, writing a journal is a wonderful way to release stress or bottled up feelings. And you can go back to read it, and rethink. Can you have a better attitude toward this issue? Any gratitude? What emotions do you release? Why? What feeling do you have during the treatment?

During treatment, I often tell my patient this is your own time. Relax, let it go. If you feel you want to cry, go ahead. If you fall asleep and snore, please do. Patients may have out of body sensation, tearing/crying, laughing, shaking, involuntary extremities movement. It means some stagnation has been unblocked, been released and there are qi and blood movements.

9. How do you recommend women deal with monthly disappointment when they don't conceive?

I firmly believe everything has its own timing. You set the goal, and continue to walk toward the goal. The path may be easy or full of difficulty or some unexpected situation happens. But do not worry, we will fix the path or change the path's direction. As long as we don't give up, we will get to the end of the path. No doubt. Discipline, Determination, Dedication. These are my 3D rules for life, regardless of what you want.

10. What are some communication strategies that couples can use to connect while trying to conceive?

First of all, no blaming regardless of who may be suffering from the infertility problem. And be supportive. Do things together. This means couples need to work together for a better diet, exercise, taking vitamins/herbs, visiting doctors, having blood work done or necessary exams related to fertility. Even acupuncture. There are so many times I have to consult a couple for various situations. It takes **TWO** to tango.

11. As an infertility specialist, how do you keep yourself grounded and cared for while supporting your clients?

I walk every morning on a nature path near my house. It is about 2.5 miles long. I use this time to meditate, doing some breathing exercise and qi gong. I talk to the hawks, birds, trees and any new life I see in the forest. I enjoy the wind/air, the sound of the animals and plants, the warmth of the sunlight and the beauty of the sky. I collect good energy and I am happy to go to work. I have gratitude that my patients trust me and give me the chance to walk this journey with them and to be their assistant. I thank nature for providing me with healing power that I breathe in. I do meditation before bed time to let go of the personal stress and stress from the work. I do some chakra meditation and relax my body. Sometimes I do acupuncture and moxa on myself,

just to target whatever problem I have too. I am the center and supporting pillar for my patients so I have to be centered and strong for them. Yes, no one wants to see a tired, unhealthy doctor.