



Staff photo by Doug Koontz

Jessica Crist says acupuncture, along with fertility treatments, helped her conceive a son, Ryland. Her husband, Michael, is at left.

Acupuncture helps couples conceive

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The Crists had tried everything. After a year of unsuccessful attempts to get pregnant, Jessica, 32, and her husband Michael, 28, had turned to in vitro fertilization at Shady Grove Fertility Center.

Their first cycle was unsuccessful. They incorporated complementary techniques, like massage, and after the second cycle, doctors detected an ectopic pregnancy, which was terminated. Desperate, Jessica asked her doctor what else she could do.

Dr. Melissa Esposito, who opened the fertility center's Frederick office, had seen acupuncture help other patients conceive. She referred Crist to Dr. Ethan Borg, who at that time had a clinic in downtown Frederick. A month before starting her third IVF cycle, Jessica began weekly acupuncture treatments.

In addition to traditional needle acupuncture, Borg practiced Fu Xi Wen, a no-needle method that moves resonance and sound throughout the body.

Borg developed Fu Xi Wen using Chinese theory developed thousands of years before classical acupuncture, according to his website.

While the weekly treatments in Frederick added another leg to her already busy commute (between home in Chambersburg, Pa., work in Hagerstown, and IVF appointments in Rockville), Jessica said she left the hour-long sessions feeling relaxed and energized. After a few sessions, Crist said she could actually feel temperature changes in her body as Borg worked.

After one more IVF cycle, the Crists got their wish: Jessica was pregnant. She continued her acupuncture sessions throughout her first trimester, and their son Ryland was born June 24. Jessica said she believes the acupuncture was the missing link in the couple's struggle to conceive.

"It's the only thing I did differently from the other two cycles," she said. "Call it what you want, but to me, that's what made it happen."

While Borg specializes in Fu Xi Wen, Esposito said the type of acupuncture a practitioner uses is not as important as one's focus on a patient's needs.

"There are many types, Chinese, Japanese, and many forms within those types," she said. "It doesn't matter the type they practice as long as they are

familiar with infertility patients."

Acupuncture designed to increase fertility can regulate blood flow to the uterus, improving the endometrial environment, Esposito said. Studies have shown that regular treatments may also increase ovarian function, strengthen the immune system and decrease the rate of miscarriage, she said.

Borg moved his practice to New York this summer, but before he left Frederick, he met Eric Serejski, an acupuncturist with 16 years experience in treating those with fertility issues. Serejski took over Borg's office suite and some of his patients.

Serejski said he's seen acupuncture help many couples conceive, and that its cost, about \$600 for five sessions, is about 5 percent of that of a traditional IVF cycle.

Acupuncture has mental benefits too, providing a sense of control in an overwhelming process, Esposito said.

"One thing with fertility treatments is that they're very arduous, and patients feel so out of control with what's going on with their body," she said.

(See ACUPUNCTURE A-8)

