

Goji berries, acupuncture and 24 herbal tablets a day: Fertility guru reveals her secrets after helping a thousand women defy the odds to fall pregnant

- **Around one in seven couples suffer with infertility**
- **Dr Xiao-Ping Zhai offers help via with traditional Chinese medicine**
- **Uses acupuncture and prescribes course of Chinese herbs**

By [Lucy Waterlow for MailOnline](#)

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Around one in seven couples suffer with infertility and an increasing number are seeking alternative therapies in the hope it will bring them a longed for baby.

Those who can afford it can turn to London's famous private medical haven Harley Street, where Dr Xiao-Ping Zhai has been helping women conceive for decades using only traditional Chinese medicine.

Now she's invited BBC cameras inside The Zhai Clinic, which she opened in 1996, to reveal the secrets of her success.



Dr Xiao-Ping Zhai says she has used Chinese medicine to help a thousand women become pregnant

'I'm a doctor who initially trained in western medicine, then I studied Chinese medicine as I realised lots of problems couldn't be overcome by traditional

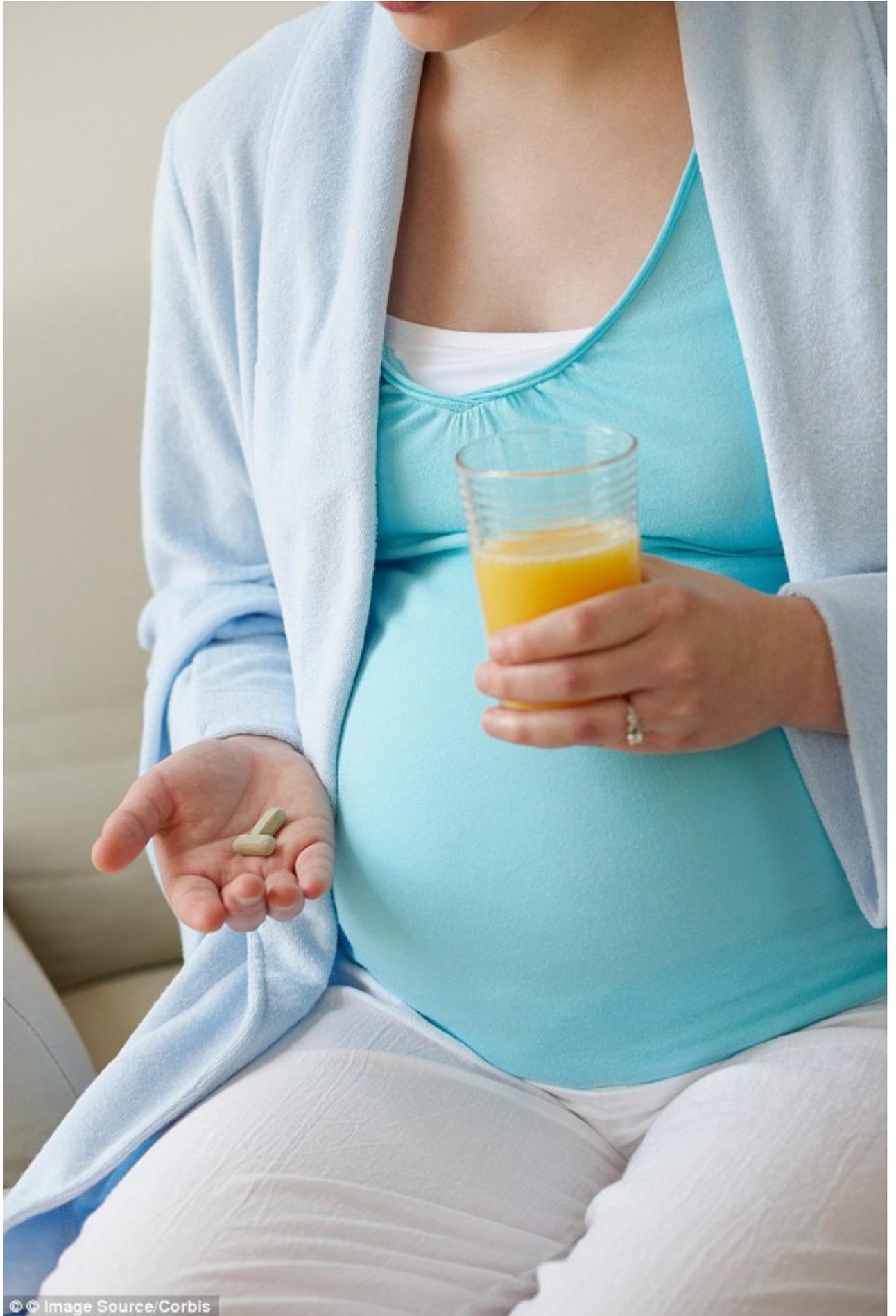
western medicine,' she explains to Vanessa Engle for the documentary Inside Harley Street, which airs tonight on BBC2.

Dr Zhai's methods include acupuncture and prescribing a bespoke combination of Chinese herbs which must be taken day and night. The herbs may be drunk as a tea or are provided as a vitamin tablet - 12 must be taken in the morning and 12 in the evening.

The vitamins contain natural ingredients such goji berries, Chinese yan and ginger.

Dr Zhai says as a result of her natural remedies: 'I have brought more than one thousand babies into the world.'

One of them was advertising director Jane Parker's son Rupert. He was conceived when she was 40.



[Dr Zhai prescribes a bespoke course of vitamins - 24 tablets a day for two weeks - containing Chinese herbs to help conception \(file photo\)](#)

Jane, from London, previously told the Mail On Sunday how she fell pregnant using Dr Zhai's methods after two failed cycles of IVF.

She said: 'I'd read an article about her, and had arranged it even before I'd had the IVF – she had a long waiting list. I was in an emotional state of shock when I saw her in December 2008.

'I was convinced she was going to tell me I was too old. Yet she was incredibly reassuring, giving me confidence without raising my hopes to unrealistic levels.

[One month later, I'd just returned from holiday and realised my period was late](#)
[Jane Parker](#)

'She ran a series of checks including blood tests and scans. She only prescribes after she's been through the results.

'In January 2009, alongside regular acupuncture sessions, I started taking specially prepared herbs, following her advice on which supplements to take and made several changes to my lifestyle (including giving up alcohol, taking no vigorous exercise and avoiding cold drinks).

'One month later, I'd just returned from holiday and realised my period was late. I bought a pregnancy test and discovered I was expecting! I carried on with the acupuncture, herbs and supplements throughout the first 12 weeks of pregnancy.

'I gave birth to Rupert in November 2009 when I was 41. I genuinely believe that if I hadn't seen Dr Zhai, I wouldn't have my son.'

The new BBC documentary, which airs this evening follows May Lyang, 36, who hopes to have a success story like Jane's after five years of trying.

She turned to Dr Zhai after losing a baby she conceived via IVF treatment on the NHS.

[Jane Parker had her son Rupert in 2009 when she was 41 after having treatment at Dr Zhai's clinic](#)

She said: 'I got pregnant and I carried through for 11 weeks but then I miscarried a month ago.

'I think about it every day but you have to move on so that's why I'm here. You have to take positive steps and not think about what is lost.'

May has an initial consultation with Dr Zhai which costs £250 for an hour. During the assessment, Dr Zhai quizzes her on her lifestyle and observes that she doesn't appear to be in the best health because of the appearance of her tongue and her pale complexion. But she tells her she had potential and she's confident she will conceive.

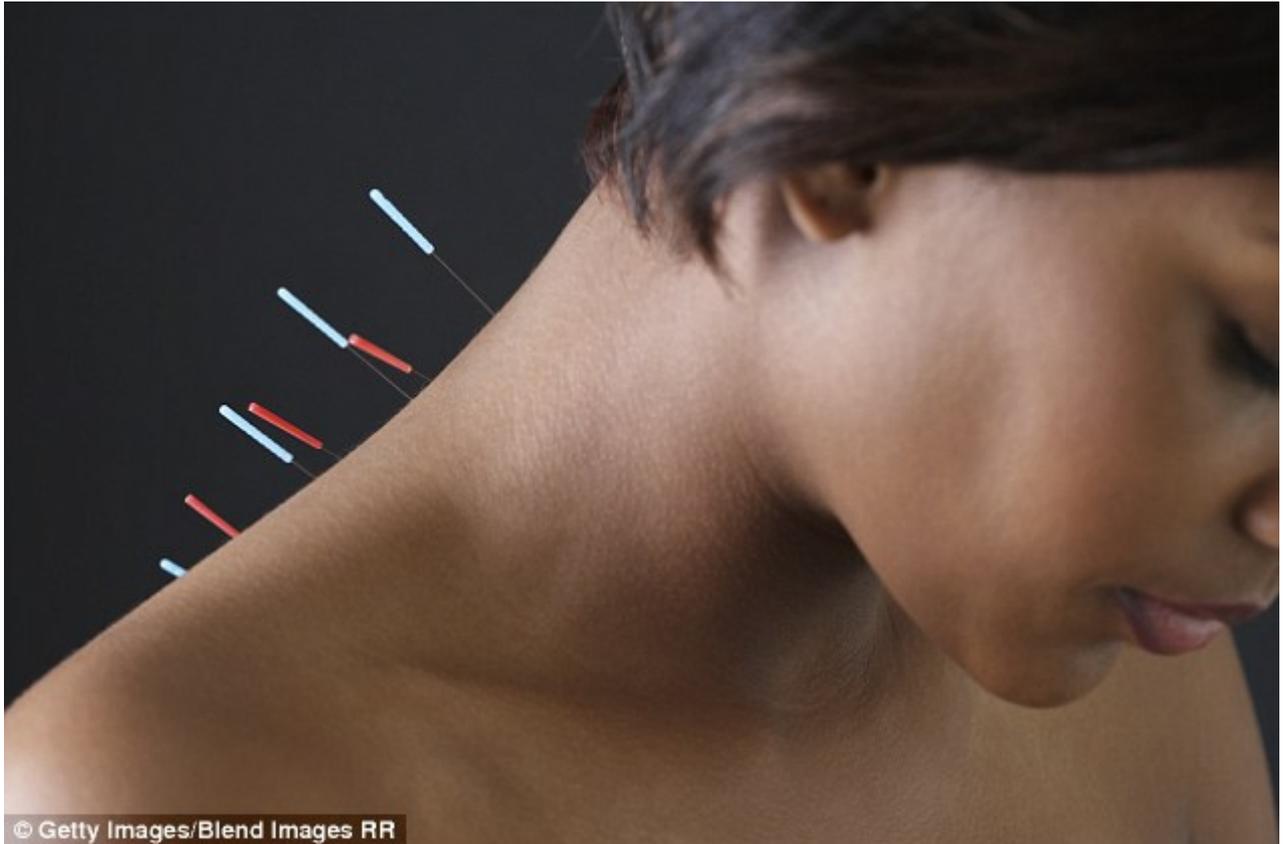
May pays £300 a month for tea made from Chinese herbs. Further check-ups with Dr Zhai will cost her £130, while three sessions of acupuncture at the clinic cost £350.

After a period taking the Chinese herbal tea, she is then prescribed a mixture of Chinese herbs in a pill form which must be taken 24 times a day (12 in the morning and 12 in the evening) for two weeks, costing around £150.

The BBC documentary catches up with May months on from her first appointment with Dr Zhai and while she still hasn't become pregnant, she remains hopeful.

She said: 'I've got the clinic on my side, this can happen. It doesn't bother me that I'm not pregnant yet. At my last consultation, Dr Zhai said I'm not ready yet, I need to fix what's inside.'

But May adds that if she still doesn't fall pregnant, she will ditch the alternative therapies in favour of IVF on the NHS again.



Dr Zhai said acupuncture aids fertility because it 'promotes your body's natural healing response and stimulates natural energy flow'

In her book, *How To Get Pregnant*, Dr Zhai said her methods work for those who can't be helped by IVF.

She writes: 'I believe that our success rate is high because most patients who have trouble conceiving are not suffering from mechanical problems such as blocked fallopian tubes (these can be fixed by surgery or bypassed using IVF).'



Goji berries are one of the ingredients that may be found in Dr Zhai's fertility boosting vitamins

'The most common causes of IVF failure are poor sperm production, poor quality eggs, malfunction of the ovaries or the blood supply with the abdomen not being healthy enough.

'Couples who find it difficult to conceive have problems that can often be helped by kick-starting the reproductive system, improving sperm quality and quantity and improving the menstrual cycle.'

She said the herbal medicine, combined with a change to a healthy diet and light exercise, can work because: 'Herbal medicine has powerful healing properties which work on the internal organs and the reproductive system.

'It aims to clear obstruction, rectifies the balance between yin and yang in the organs and helps to restore normal bodily functions.'

She also claimed: 'Most importantly, herbs have proved capable of reducing chromosomal abnormality in male sperm and female eggs so improving quality of both.'

When it comes to another of her recommended treatments - acupuncture - she writes on her website: 'Acupuncture is believed to work by promoting your body's natural healing response and stimulating and balancing natural energy flow (known as Qi or chi).



The BBC documentary [Inside Harley Street](#) also looks at other alternative therapies on offer for various ailments. 'Leech therapist' Maryam Rahbari, pictured, says the worms can work wonders for the health

'Practitioners are trained to understand that the network of the energy pathway (known as meridians) that connect the organs of the body.

'When one of these pathways becomes blocked or malfunctions, problems such as pain, illness or disease may result.

'By stimulating the specific acupuncture points, TCM [traditional Chinese medicine] practitioners are trained to clear blockages in the body's meridian system, with the aim of restoring balance in the body.'

Acupuncture involves inserting tiny needles into the skin and is an ancient Chinese treatment that is being embraced more widely in the west for problems such as stress and back pain.

It has not yet been proven to help women conceive but it is thought to increase the chances - possibly because it makes a woman more relaxed.

As well as looking at alternative therapies for infertility on Harley Street, tonight's documentary also looks at the other unusual treatments - such as applying leeches to the skin to relieve pain - that people are turning to when traditional western medicine hasn't helped them.

Inside Harley Street: Make Me Well is on BBC2 at 9pm