

My husband and I had been trying to conceive for about a year when we formally sought help from the NHS. At this time I was 33 and my husband was 44. After a range of blood tests, ultrasounds and laparoscopic surgery, I was diagnosed with endometriosis and had a 7cm endometrioma removed from my left ovary. Around 2-3 months after my surgery, my husband and I decided to seek further assistance from our GP, who referred us to the fertility clinic at the hospital. Unfortunately this wasn't particularly helpful as the funding for assisted conception in our area had been cut, so we decided to pursue IVF privately. We began our first cycle of IVF around two and a half years after trying to conceive naturally.

We chose a clinic in London which had great statistics and had been recommended by a friend. After having all the necessary tests we were surprised to discover that my husband's sperm wasn't as normal as the GP had originally said and that there was a particular issue with the morphology. Because of this, they suggested ICSI as the most viable option for us and we decided to proceed. The whole process was quite stressful, partly due to the travel to and from London and partly because of the busy nature of the clinic. When the day came, we transferred our only good embryo, which was graded 3BB+. Unfortunately, we came home empty-handed. No pregnancy and no embryos to freeze. We were, of course, beyond disappointed and spent a few months recovering emotionally from the whole experience.

I decided that if we were going to try again, I wanted to give everything the best possible chance and so I changed my clinic in London to Bourn Hall Fertility Clinic, and also searched google for acupuncturists who specialised in IVF. That is how I found out about Lianne.

I explained to her that I wanted to spend at least 6 months preparing my body for the next round of IVF to ensure the best possible outcome. I followed a programme of treatment once a week in this interim period, which I complemented with a healthy diet and plenty of exercise. The sessions not only provided me with weekly boost of energy but also provided a safe place for me to talk through how I was feeling and discuss possible options along the way. After a month or so, my husband was convinced by my recommendations and decided to give acupuncture a go as well. He had fortnightly sessions which focused on helping the insomnia he had been suffering, as well as working to improve his sperm morphology. When it came to nearer the time for egg collection, we increased my sessions to twice a week and these were even more dynamic, determined by how I was progressing. This was based on Lianne's regular diagnosis, but also on the regular data provided by the clinic regarding numbers and sizes of follicles. After egg collection I was delighted to learn that they had collected 18 eggs with 14 that were mature enough to use. This was a big improvement compared to the 12 collected and 8 mature from my previous cycle. I feel the acupuncture played a vital role in this as it was so carefully tailored to my body and how it was responding.

Due to the problems we experienced in the previous cycle, we decided to try a newer method of fertilization called IMSI, which uses a higher-powered microscope to select the best sperm. We were incredibly nervous around this time as, in our previous cycle, we had started out with a good fertilization rate of 6 embryos but ended up with nothing. Lianne supported us through this time with information and research so that we could make the most informed decisions we could. I also continued my treatment to prepare my body for embryo transfer to ensure the most hospitable environment possible. When the day for transfer came we were a bundle of nerves. We sat down as the consultant came in to give us the news. She told us on that day we had two high quality embryos graded 4AB. We couldn't believe it! I felt so much more optimistic on that day knowing already that improvements had been made. We then learned a few days later that we had six embryos to freeze, ranging from 4AB to 4BC. We were so relieved and so grateful to know that at least we had a few more chances this time. Luckily, we haven't needed to dip into our frozen reserves as we got a positive pregnancy test two weeks later. Lianne continued to treat me with acupuncture through my first trimester until our 12 week scan, alongside which I had intralipid treatment through our clinic. The acupuncture helped to ease the nausea I was experiencing and helped me to maintain a calm mind through this crucial time. I experienced a healthy, normal, and low risk pregnancy. I am absolutely convinced of the importance of acupuncture in our fertility journey and will definitely return in the future. Our baby girl arrived at home, very recently, and we are thankful that we are all doing well.

We thank Lianne so much for the role she played in bringing her into the world.