

Supplementary Table S1. STRICTA (2010) checklist for thread embedding acupuncture (TEA) in the present study

Reporting follows the revised *STandards for Reporting Interventions in Clinical Trials of Acupuncture (STRICTA)* 2010 checklist (ref. 25, main text). As thread embedding involves subcutaneous implantation of absorbable thread rather than conventional manual needling, item labels are adapted accordingly ("embedding" in place of "needling") while following the original six items and seventeen sub-items.

STRICTA item	Reported detail for the present study
1. Embedding rationale	
1a) Style of acupuncture	Absorbable thread embedding technique is a new method. The style of thread implantation at acupuncture points was independent of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) pattern differentiation.
1b) Reasoning for treatment (literature/consensus sources)	Treatment was derived from various sources, principally Giovanni's textbook on gynaecology, together with the clinical experience of the study's supervising practitioner (a full professor of acupuncture).
1c) Extent to which treatment was varied	Treatment consisted of the common points shared across all patterns.
2. Details of embedding	
2a) Number of insertions per subject per session	40 threads per treatment session.
2b) Names of points used (uni/bilateral)	BL17, BL18, BL20, BL22, BL23, SP4, SP6, SP9, SP10, CV3, CV4, CV6, CV12, ST25, ST29, ST40, LU7, LV3, LV8, KI3, KI6, LI4.
2c) Depth of insertion	Threads were implanted exactly at the site of reaching arrival qi (de qi) under the skin.
2d) Response(s) sought	Mainly after achieving a local muscle spasm (twitch) response during thread implantation.
2e–2g) Thread type, stimulation and retention	Absorbable PDO thread, size 0, 2 cm in length. Manufacturer: Ethicon. All threads were implanted after sterilisation with povidone-iodine (betadine) at the acupuncture point site.
3. Treatment regimen	
3a) Number of treatment sessions	Each patient received two thread-implantation sessions.
3b) Frequency and duration of treatment sessions	The time interval between the two thread-implantation sessions was 6 weeks.
4. Other components of treatment	
4a) Other interventions	During treatment, no other auxiliary modality was used for the patient.
4b) Setting and context; instructions to practitioners and patients	The location of all thread implantations was marked by the supervising practitioner to the highest quality standard in every treatment session.
5. Practitioner background	
5) Description of participating acupuncturist(s)	The supervising practitioner held a specialised doctorate (PhD) in Acupuncture and Massage from Beijing University of Chinese Medicine and held the rank of full professor.
6. Control or comparator interventions	
6) Control or comparator	There was no control (sham) for thread embedding in the intervention group.

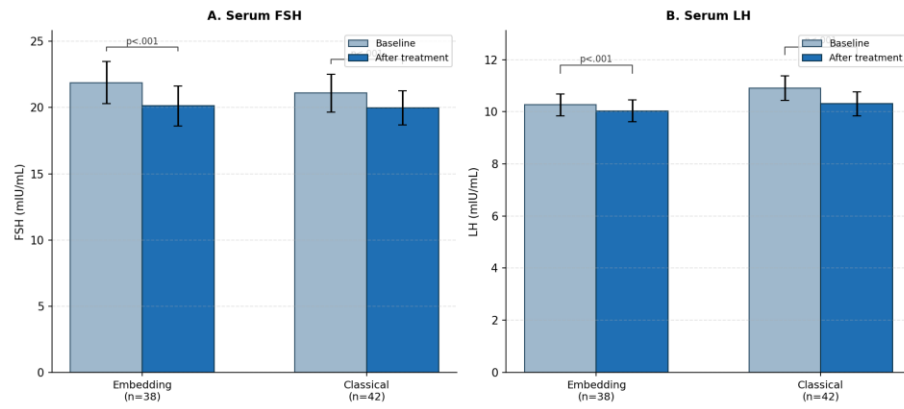


Fig. S1. Serum (A) FSH and (B) LH at baseline and after treatment by group (mean $\pm$ 95% CI). Brackets show within-group Wilcoxon signed-rank p-values; between-group differences were not significant at either assessment for either hormone (main-text Table 3).