

# BC BUSINESS

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### PETER BROWN

TELLS US WHAT HE REALLY THINKS

### BACK-COUNTRY BRAWL

AND FOR ONCE IT'S NOT THE LOGGERS' FAULT

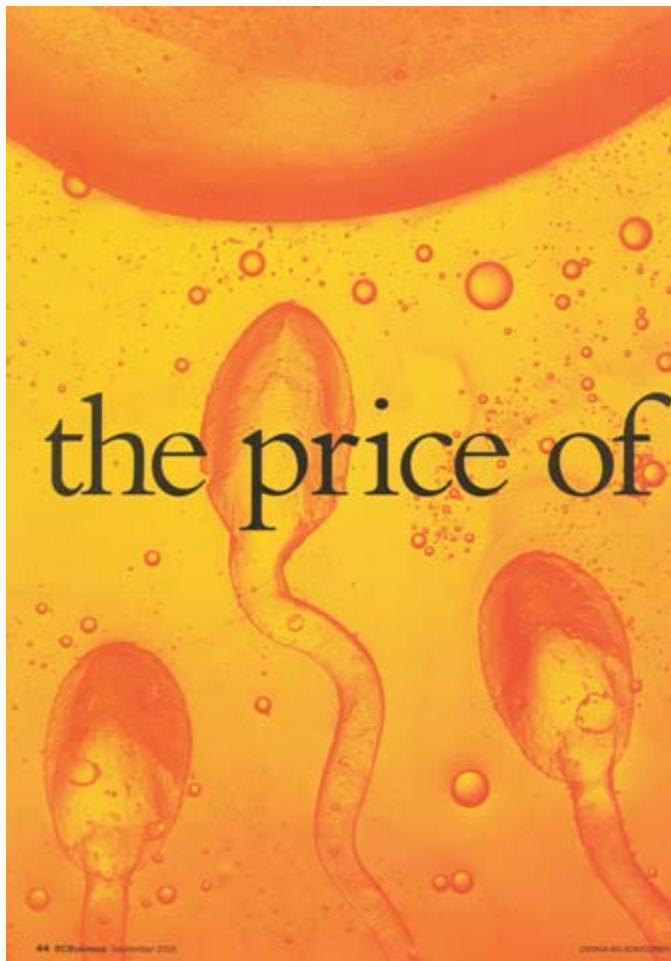
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Politicos you may need to know

## the business of Making Babies

**ALBERT YUZPE'S**  
CLINIC SEES 1,500  
NEW PATIENTS EACH  
YEAR. TREATMENT  
CAN COST \$30K.  
YOU DO THE MATH

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the price of

# Life

If you think parenting is tough, consider that one in six couples can't even get there. But there's a new baby boom underway and with it, fertility clinics are beginning to breed across the province. And though the prices aren't cheap, the procedures aren't easy and the odds aren't great, the business of babies has never looked better

» by Nick Rockel

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## A different kind of poke

**L**orne Brown has the low-key manner of a chartered accountant – which is what he was before going back to school to study traditional Chinese medicine. A licensed TCM practitioner, Brown opened his own practice in 2000. At the Acubalance Wellness Centre in Vancouver's Fairview neighbourhood, he uses acupuncture and other therapies to help women and men improve their reproductive health.

Brown says treating infertility accounts for more than 80 per cent of his business. "That's pretty much what I do all day," he explains to the accompaniment of New Age music, in a treatment room of his small, soothingly yellow office. Many clients are women who have

tried or are embarking on in vitro fertilization at a fertility clinic; they come to Acubalance to increase their odds of getting and staying pregnant.

After examining a patient's Western medical records, Brown creates a Chinese diagnosis and a treatment plan that typically involves acupuncture, herbal supplements, and diet and lifestyle changes. Besides stress reduction, one of the main goals for female patients is to increase blood flow to the reproductive organs, so the ovaries respond better to fertility drugs and the uterine lining is well-prepared to receive an embryo. A series of 12 sessions costs about \$900.

Is there any hard evidence that acupuncture helps? Brown cites the encouraging studies

posted on his website ([acubalance.ca](http://acubalance.ca)), including a 2002 paper from the journal *Fertility and Sterility*. In their survey of 160 patients undergoing IVF and ICSI (intracytoplasmic sperm injection) at Germany's Christian-Lauritzen-Institut, the authors found that the clinical-pregnancy rate for the 80 women who had acupuncture shortly before and after embryo transfer was 42.5 per cent, versus 26.3 per cent for the control group.

Still, some fertility doctors remain skeptical, according to Brown. "It depends on the clinic," he says. "A lot of them are much more open-minded, and they're comfortable and okay with their patients doing the acupuncture while they're preparing [for] and during the IVF cycle." At the Victoria

Fertility Centre, director Stephen Hudson has a practitioner of acupuncture and Chinese medicine on staff.

Brown notes that unlike Western fertility clinics, Acubalance also assists women throughout their pregnancies. "If you go eight weeks and then miscarry, you're a success in a fertility clinic for pregnancy, but you're a failure in our clinic," claims the New Brunswick native. At the same time, he will never turn away a would-be mom in her early 50s: although her chances of conceiving naturally are pretty much zero. Brown argues that the therapy she receives will enhance her well-being. "We don't play a big stat game because we take anybody."