ACUPRESSURE / SHIATSU

Key words: acupressure, shiatsu, massage, labour pain, non-pharmacological pain relief

AIM

- To provide a safe, non-invasive method to facilitate relaxation and pain management for women in labour.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Acupressure originates from traditional Chinese manipulative therapy. "Shiatsu" is a form of acupressure, which was developed in early 20th century Japan, which incorporates western knowledge of anatomy and physiology with traditional eastern manual handling and healing techniques. The practitioner aims to reduce pain by stimulating points or meridians by applying stimulus at specific points linked to target organs. There are mixed results, with some small studies showing acupressure may be beneficial by reducing labour length (when used on the SP6 point) with no effect on birth method, whilst other studies show reduced assisted birth and caesarean section (compared to standard care). As data is limited, further research is needed.

KEY POINTS

1. Acupressure may have a role in reducing pain, increasing satisfaction with pain management and reducing pharmacological management. However, further research is needed.

2. Obtain verbal consent from the woman prior to using acupressure / shiatsu.

3. The practitioner providing the acupressure or shiatsu must have completed accredited training.

4. Force should not be applied when applying shiatsu. The practitioner's body weight is used to lean into a point or meridian when applying pressure.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

Use of acupressure / shiatsu should be avoided during labour in the following conditions:

- active skin diseases, burns, broken skin or scars
- osteoporosis
- tumours or cancers
- herniated vertebral discs
- thrombosis or varicosities
MANAGEMENT

1. Staff should be familiar with the KEMH Policy No W107 Use of Complementary Therapies.

2. Obtain written consent on the ‘MR810.01 Acknowledgement of Complementary Therapies’ form (found in the KEMH Policy No W107 directive as above) prior to use of acupressure or shiatsu.

3. Ensure that the practitioner applying acupressure has credentialed qualifications.


REFERENCES / STANDARDS


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