



ABDOMINAL EFFLEURAGE – A NON PHARMACOLOGICAL LABOUR PAIN CONTROL MEASURE

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ABSTRACT

Among laboring women, 30-70% experiences extreme level of pain. It is also found that about 31.7% have experienced back pain along with labour pain. Treating pain is important, because coping with pain influences the birthing experiences. There are many types of non- pharmacological methods of pain control, among those methods, massage has a potential benefits such as reducing the pain intensity, decreases muscle spasm and increasing physical activity. Effleurage is a therapy which includes deep or light stroke by using flat surface of hand over abdomen of laboring women which is usually repeated for several times over the same area on the abdomen. The physical benefits of effleurage which includes by stimulating blood supply to the tissues and facilitate in cleansing of the skin; relaxing muscle fibers and decreasing muscle tension. This method can be used for all women with labour pain.

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INTRODUCTION

Child birth is a natural process and the pain associated with it is also perceived as normal.¹ Labour pain is a universal experience to women, it is highly unpleasant sensation that cannot be shared with others. Labour pain is caused by the contracting uterus, pressure by the descending fetus on the cervix. And it is manifest as cramping in the abdomen, groin, thigh and back and mother experiences tired, achy feeling all over the body.²

Pain control during labour is a woman centered concept in which each women have an impact on how they express their pain by themselves and indeed of how they perceive during labour. Among laboring women, 30-70% experiences extreme level of pain. It is also found that about 31.7% have experienced back pain along with labour pain.³

Midwives are therefore required to give pain control rather than eradicating it and a clear differentiation must be made between the traditional goals of pain relief in labour. Midwives are therefore required to give control of pain to women rather than eradicating it and a clear differentiation must be made between the traditional goals of pain relief in labour.⁴

Non – Pharmacological Labour Pain Control Measures

Treating pain is important, because coping with pain influences the birthing experiences. There are many types of non- pharmacological methods of pain control; among those, homeopathy, music therapy, Transcutaneous electrical nerve

stimulation, acupuncture, application of hot and cold are the most common and widely applying techniques. Other methods of comfort therapy such as effleurage (light rhythm stroking of the abdomen), massage and hydrotherapy can reduce pain and decreases the need for narcotic analgesia or anesthesia by naturally creating impulses in the central nervous system that can prevent the painful stimuli of labour contractions from reaching the brain.⁵

Among those methods, massage has been widely used during labour, it comprises of deep stroking and superficial stroking. It is thought to work either by blocking pain impulses to the brain by increased alpha and beta fibre transmission or by stimulating the local release of endorphins due to more relaxation of soft tissue.⁶ Massage therapy has a potential benefits such as reducing the pain intensity, decreases muscle spasm, increasing physical activity, distracting from pain, promoting relaxation, reduces the duration of labour, decreases stress and anxiety. It has found to be an effective therapy to decreasing pain, anxiety, stress and a depressed mood during labour.⁷

Abdominal Effleurage on Labour Pain Control

Effleurage derived from the French word effleurer, meaning “to touch lightly.” This modality has been utilized by nurse midwives to relief pain during labour. Effleurage is one type of massage therapy which includes deep or light stroke by using a flat surface of hand or forearm over abdomen of laboring women which is usually repeated for several times over the same area on the abdomen. It stimulates nerve endings called "Meissner's corpuscles" which travel faster across the body than the signal of pain, thereby "blocking" the pain signal from reaching the brain so quickly.⁸

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Abdominal effleurage is a stroking movement in massage which is accomplished by moving the wrist. Concentrating on the coordination of stroking and breathing is believed that it blocks out some of the sensations created by the contracting uterus.⁹ Pregnant women in labour can perform effleurage when the contraction commence. It was performed in the mother's abdomen, with the technique of both palms doing a light sweep, firm and constant with a circular motion of the abdomen, starting from the lower abdomen above the pubic symphysis, pointing at the abdomen, continuing to the uterine fundus and then down to the umbilicus and back down the lower liver above symphysis pubis. The shape of the movement pattern is like "butterfly". It was performed for 30 minutes at an interval of 2 hours for 3 times. The physical benefits of effleurage which includes by stimulating blood supply to the tissues and facilitate in cleansing of the skin; relaxing muscle fibers and decreasing muscle tension.¹⁰

CONCLUSION

Although labour pain is a universal experience to women, it is highly unpleasant sensation that cannot be shared with others. Midwives are therefore required to give pain control rather than eradicating it and they should make a clear differentiation between the traditional goals of pain relief in labour. Now-a-days many number of non-pharmacological (complementary and alternative medicine) therapies like massage, therapeutic touch, hydrotherapy, music, heat and cold applications are being used to decrease pain or distress. Therefore, non-pharmacological therapies like massage are now finding a more substantial increase in the health care settings.

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