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TITLE: Acupuncture treatment during labour--a randomised controlled trial.

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ABSTRACT:

OBJECTIVE: To investigate acupuncture treatment during labour with regard to pain intensity, degree of relaxation and outcome of the delivery.

DESIGN: Randomised controlled trial.

SETTING: Delivery ward at a tertiary care centre hospital in Sweden.

POPULATION: Ninety parturients who delivered during the period April 12, 1999 and June 4, 2000.

METHODS: Forty-six parturients were randomised to receive acupuncture treatment during labour as a complement, or an alternative, to conventional analgesia.

MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES: Assessments of pain intensity and degree of relaxation during labour, together with evaluation of delivery outcome.

RESULTS: Acupuncture treatment during labour significantly reduced the need of epidural analgesia (12% vs 22%, relative risk [RR] 0.52, 95% confidence interval [CI] 0.30 to 0.92). Parturients who received acupuncture assessed a significantly better degree of relaxation compared with the control group (mean difference -0.93, 95% CI -1.66 to -0.20). No negative effects of acupuncture given during labour were found in relation to delivery outcome.

CONCLUSIONS: The results suggest that acupuncture could be a good alternative or complement to those parturients who seek an alternative to pharmacological analgesia in childbirth. Further trials with a larger number of patients are required to clarify if the main effect of acupuncture during labour is analgesic or relaxing.