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Complementary and alternative medicine for labor pain: A systematic review

Dra. Alyson L. Huntley, Dra. Joanna Thompson Coon, Dr. Edzard Ernst

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Abstract

Objectives

The purpose of this study was to systematically review the literature for, and critically appraise, randomized controlled trials of any type of complementary and alternative therapies for labor pain.

Study design

Six electronic databases were searched from their inception until July 2003. The inclusion criteria were that they were prospective, randomized controlled trials, involved healthy pregnant women at term, and contained outcome measures of labor pain.

Results

Our search strategy found 18 trials. Six of these did not meet our inclusion criteria. The remaining 12 trials involved acupuncture (2), biofeedback (1), hypnosis (2), intracutaneous sterile water injections (4), massage (2), and respiratory autogenic training (1).

Conclusion

There is insufficient evidence for the efficacy of any of the complementary and alternative therapies for labor pain, with the exception of intracutaneous sterile water injections. For all the other treatments

described it is impossible to make any definitive conclusions regarding effectiveness in labor pain control.