



## Review Article

# Influence of complementary and alternative medicine in obstetrics

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### ABSTRACT

Complementary and alternative medicine is an array of health care approaches with a history of use or origins outside of mainstream medicine. Complementary medicine includes all such practices and ideas which are outside the domain of conventional medicine in several countries and defined by its users as preventing and treating illness, or promoting health and wellbeing. These practices complement mainstream medicine contributing to a common satisfying a demand not met by conventional practices, diversifying the conceptual framework of medicine, Institute of Medicine (IOM), U.S.A.

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## 1. Introduction

Complementary and alternative medicine is a growing area of health care within India and is increasingly popular with consumers and professionals. The word alternative medicine denotes “that does not fall within the field of conventional medicine”<sup>1</sup> Practices integrate themselves on traditional medicine, folk knowledge, spiritual beliefs, and newly conceived methods to healing.<sup>2</sup> Within maternity care use of complementary therapies has been driven by consumers who are looking for strategies to help them cope with the discomforts of pregnancy and labor.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Definition

Complementary and alternative medicine are defined as “a group of different medical and health care practices and products, which are not presently part of conventional medicine” Alternative medicine this field includes the more mainstream and accepted forms of therapies such as acupuncture, homeopathy, and Oriental practices. These

treatments have been experienced for centuries universal.<sup>4</sup>

Traditional alternative medicine includes.

1. Acupuncture
2. Acupressure
3. Homeopathy
4. Naturopathy<sup>4</sup>

## 3. Body

Healing by touching is created on the idea that sickness or injury in one part of the body can disturb all portions of the body.<sup>5</sup> Manoeuvring the injured body parts can be bringing back to optimum health. The body can completely focused on healing at the place of damage or illness. Body performances are often mutual with those of the mind. Examples of body therapies include:

1. Chiropractic and osteopathic medicine
2. Massage
3. Body movement therapies
4. Yoga<sup>6</sup>

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#### 4. Mind

The conventional medicine identifies the power of the connection between mind and body. Healing depends on person's good emotional and mental health. Therapies using the mind include.

1. Meditation
2. Biofeedback
3. Hypnosis<sup>7</sup>

#### 5. Acupuncture

Acupuncture therapist uses hair-thin, disposable needles to stimulate specific points on the body to restore the body's balance and to maintain its own health. Acupuncture is effective in treating minor discomforts in obstetrics such as morning sickness, constipation, backache, hemorrhoids, breech presentation, and pain during labor, and insufficient milk production during postpartum period with no side effects. Acupuncture therapies are correcting the imbalances flow of vital energy along internal pathways in the bodies. There are more than 1,000 acupuncture points running along the dozens of energy pathways known as meridians that traverse the body. During a session, these meridians are stimulated by the insertion of hair-thin needles, with the goal of relieving discomfort and helping maintain its own health. The points treated in acupuncture are Fingers (especially thumbs), Hands, Elbows, Knees, and Feet.<sup>8</sup>

#### 6. Acupressure

Acupressure is a system that comes from traditional Chinese medicine and has been practiced for more than 5,000 years. There are a number of active points located throughout the body along meridians, which are lines that run through the body like a river system and carry qi life force energy to internal organs, body and limbs. Pressing on these acupressure points stimulates energy flow, promotes the release of endorphins, pain-relieving, and helps to balance body systems. One of the most common complaints of early pregnancy is nausea, or morning sickness. Acupressure may provide natural, effective relief for this uncomfortable and annoying symptom of pregnancy. Acupressure during late pregnancy helps to prepare body for labor and birth.<sup>9</sup>

#### 7. Homeopathy and Naturopathy

A form of complete medicine that utilize the natural herbs for their remedial powers. Homeopathy is a pharmacological system of medicine using set principles and laws for administering specially prepared medical substances to correct individual's disease. Homeopathy can be used safely and effectively during pregnancy, labor and postpartum period to treat common ailments. Homeopathy can promote a normal labor with minimal and discomfort. For labour induction, acceleration and failure to progress,

for a variety of reasons, can be treated homeopathically.<sup>10</sup> *Caulophyllum* may be useful where the mother is exhausted, the cervix is rigid and there are spasmodic contractions. *Chamomilla* is appropriate when the woman is emotionally distressed and can't bear it any more. *Pulsatilla* can be used where there is uterine inertia, the cervix fails to dilate, the mother feels sick, distressed, has a dry mouth and a changeable mood.

Breast feeding problems such as mastitis may require *belladonna*, *bryonia*, *chamomill*, *phytolacca* or *silica*. Inadequate lactation may also respond to one of these. Sore nipples can be treated with *castor equi*.<sup>11</sup>

#### 8. Chiropractic Care

The process of realigning the spinal cord, the muscles and stuff that surround it to lessen pain and promote health throughout the body. Chiropractic care can reduce the miscarriage, control morning sickness, and lowers the risk of pre-term delivery. The chiropractor's realigns and relax the ligaments and muscles in the pelvis that helps breech babies to turn themselves, naturally.<sup>12</sup>

#### 9. Prenatal Massage

Prenatal massage is a technique involving deep bodywork designed to improve circulation reduce muscle stress and joints. During pregnancy prenatal massages will help not only to relax but may also relieve insomnia, joint pain, neck and back pain, leg cramping, and sciatica. Additionally, it can reduce swelling in the hands and feet as long as that swelling is not a result of preeclampsia, relieve carpal tunnel pain, and alleviate headaches and sinus congestion all common pregnancy problems. Massage may also lift depression without the use of medication.<sup>13</sup>

#### 10. Hydrotherapy

Hydrotherapy is any massage treatment using water counts particularly it is effective during pregnancy because the body's physiological response to water helps improve circulation, ease back ache, ease the pain of labor and delivery and generally makes the women to feel comfort. Hydrotherapy which is immersion in a tub of water for giving therapeutic effectiveness in relief of pain while promoting labour progress and by allowing the laboring women freedom to move and change positions. When immersed in water the laboring women may experience decreased environmental resistance, allowing her to move and change position easily. It also allows use of rhythmic movements, such as effleurage which may assist in coping during labour. Warm water promotes vasodilation that promotes muscle relaxation and reduces pain of tense muscles. Increased comfort with submersion and decreased stress hormone production may increase uterine contractility.<sup>14</sup>

## 11. Meditation

It is an assortment of alternative therapies that rely on breathing, muscle relaxation, and guided imagery to develop a positive outlook on pregnancy and soothe the mind and body. Deep relaxation techniques, meditation, and visualization can help to cope with a variety of physical and emotional stresses during pregnancy, enables to relax and focus on concentration, reduces the stress, lowers the high blood pressure, and enhance the peace of mind.<sup>15</sup>

## 12. Yoga

Yoga a word derivative from the Sanskrit term for combination, means a series of movements that were initially designed to convey people who practice it nearer to their god. Exercises consists of deep breathing exercises, body postures to stretch and strengthen muscles, and meditation to focus the mind and relax the body. It is helpful in reducing the pain of labor through its ability to relax the body and possibly through the release of endorphins that may occur.<sup>16</sup>

## 13. Hypnosis

Hypnosis is a state of mind when the conscious (rational) mind takes a backseat and the subconscious (feelings, memories, emotions) mind drives the car for a while. Usually, hypnosis includes music, guided visualization and soothing images. Once the analytical part of mind relaxes, it become more receptive to positive suggestions and affirmations. Hypnosis increases the mother's ability to relax both mentally and physically and bodily functions, thus reducing the tension and fear which contribute to pain.<sup>17</sup>

## 14. Conclusion

Complementary therapies are remedies that are not portion of the regular medical care typically approved by doctors. There are numerous types of complementary treatments, including massage, acupuncture and naturopathy. They are also referred to as 'integrative medicine'. These therapies are described as 'alternative'. Alternative therapies are used in place of conventional treatment from doctor or healthcare provider. Some women try for complementary therapies for the duration of pregnancy to assist decrease symptoms like nausea and vomiting, low back pain. Some women may also use these treatments to formulate for labour and to upsurge their chances of a simple birth.

## 15. Source of Funding

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## 16. Conflict of Interest

None.

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