J Adv Nurs. 2014 Mar 9. doi: 10.1111/jan.12360. [Epub ahead of print]

A systematic review investigating the effectiveness of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) for the management of low back and/or pelvic pain (LBPP) in pregnancy.

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Abstract

AIM:

To evaluate and summarize the current evidence on the effectiveness of complementary and alternative medicine for the management of low back pain and/or pelvic pain in pregnancy.

BACKGROUND:

International research demonstrates that 25-30% of women use complementary and alternative medicine to manage low back and pelvic pain in pregnancy without robust evidence demonstrating its effectiveness.

DESIGN:

A systematic review of randomized controlled trials to determine the effectiveness of complementary and alternative medicine for low back and/or pelvic pain in pregnancy.

DATA SOURCES:

Cochrane library (1898-2013), PubMed (1996-2013), MEDLINE (1946-2013), AMED (1985-2013), Embase (1974-2013), Cinahl (1937-2013), Index to Thesis (1716-2013) and Ethos (1914-2013).

REVIEW METHODS:

Selected studies were written in English, randomized controlled trials, a group 1 or 2 therapy and reported pain reduction as an outcome measure. Study quality was reviewed using Risk of Bias and evidence strength the Cochrane Grading of Recommendations and Development Evaluation Tool.

RESULTS:

Eight studies were selected for full review. Two acupuncture studies with low risk of bias showed both clinically important changes and statistically significant results. There was evidence of effectiveness for osteopathy and chiropractic. However, osteopathy and chiropractic studies scored high for risk of bias. Strength of the evidence across studies was very low.

CONCLUSION:

There is limited evidence supporting the use of general CAM for managing pregnancy-related low back and/or pelvic pain. However, the restricted availability of high-quality studies, combined with the very low evidence strength, makes it impossible to make evidence-based recommendations for practice.