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Efficacy of birth ball exercises on labour pain management.

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Abstract

OBJECTIVES. To evaluate the efficacy of a birth ball exercise programme conducted by physiotherapists on **pain** relief, psychological care, and facilitation of the **labour** process at a **labour** ward in a regional hospital. **DESIGN.** Case series with before-after comparisons. **SETTING.** Kwong Wah Hospital, Hong Kong. **PARTICIPANTS.** Chinese women admitted to the **labour** ward for spontaneous vaginal delivery between April and August 2012 were recruited. Physiotherapists taught birth ball exercises in groups or individually for 30 minutes. **Labour pain** intensity, **back pain** intensity, frequency of **labour pain**, stress and anxiety levels, and subjective pressure level over the lower abdomen were captured before and after birth ball exercises. Most of the parameters were measured using self-reported visual analogue scales. After the exercise session, physiotherapists measured the women's satisfaction level. Midwives recorded pethidine usage. **RESULTS.** A total of 203 pregnant women participated in this programme; 181 were in the latent phase group, whereas 22 were categorised into the no-**labour-pain** group. In both groups, there were statistically and clinically significant differences in **back pain** level, stress and anxiety levels, as well as pressure level over the lower abdomen before and after the exercise ($P<0.05$). In the latent phase group, significant decreases in **labour pain** and frequency of **labour pain** were demonstrated. Mean satisfaction scores were high, with visual analogue scale scores higher than 8.2 in both groups. Pethidine usage showed a further decreasing trend (6.4%) compared with the past 2 years. **CONCLUSION.** Birth ball exercise could be an alternative means of relieving **back pain** and **labour pain** in the **labour** ward, and could decrease pethidine consumption in labouring women.

KEYWORDS: Exercise, **Labor pain**, **Pain** management, Parturition, **Pregnancy**

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