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Submitting author: Ms Peggy Wing Sum MAK

Post title: Advanced Practice Nurse, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, KCC

Women's evaluation on the use of Aromatherapy as non-pharmacological pain relief during labour

CHAN CN(1), Mak WSP(1), NG CW(1), TSANG SL(1)

(1)Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Queen Elizabeth Hospital

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Introduction

Aromatherapy is the art and science of utilizing naturally extracted essential oil from plants and makes use of their therapeutic effect to enhance physical and mental wellbeing. It can stimulate the release of endorphins to reduce the feeling of pain. Many Western Countries showed positive experience on adopting aromatherapy as one of the non-pharmacological pain relief methods for laboring women. In UK, aromatherapy is adopted for relieving anxiety and pain in labouring women, the needs on epidural analgesia is reduced. It can also facilitate the development of supportive rapport between labouring woman and midwives or even birth partners during administration of essential oil through massage.

Objectives

For promoting normal birth, aromatherapy acted as one of the complementary and alternative methods providing naturalistic and individualized care in childbirth. In view of its benefits, it was introduced in our department.

Methodology

Every laboring woman could opt for aromatherapy as one of the pain relief methods in her birth plan. Prior to the application, midwives who have Aroma-therapist qualifications would provide information to the laboring women on the choice of essential oil and the modes of application. Midwives would choose three different essential oils according to the woman's condition and needs. Then the woman could pick out one or two essential oils among the three upon their preference. The woman could also have choice on the modes of application, either inhalation or massage, or both. During the labour process, fetal wellbeing and maternal condition were under close monitoring. The Numeric Rating Scale was used to assess the women's feeling on pain, anxiety and stress before and after using aromatherapy.

Result

From June 2013 to November 2015, total 1101 women adopted aromatherapy as one of the pain relief methods during labour. Before starting aromatherapy, the average

pain score of the women was 7.57/10 whereas reduced to 6.2/10 after using aromatherapy for 15 minutes. The average rating on labour pain before aromatherapy was 3.679/5 and reduced to 3.358/5 at 15 minutes after. The rating on back pain was reduced from 3.249/5 on average to 3.003/5. The average rating on feeling of anxiety was reduced from 3.64/5 to 3.186/5. The rating on stress feeling in labour was reduced from 3.525/5 to 2.853/5. Among the women who adopted aromatherapy, 94.8% of them would like to recommend the service to others and 90% of them would consider the service again for next pregnancy. No adverse effect was observed on those women. The results demonstrated positive feedback from the women towards aromatherapy as one of the non-pharmacological pain relief methods during labour. Although further local research is recommended to explore the benefit of aromatherapy, it is an encouraging result for supporting the midwives to provide more choices on non-pharmacological pain relief methods for laboring women.