



WOMEN'S HEALTH

Acupuncture: Essential for C-Section Protocols?

Editorial Staff

Postoperative pain and associated mobility limitations are common following cesarean section, with postoperative opioids almost universally prescribed. Is there a safer, more effective way to reduce pain and restore movement? Preoperative acupuncture, suggests research.

A placebo-controlled [clinical trial](#) divided 180 expectant mothers scheduled for elective cesarean delivery into three equal comparison groups: acupuncture and placebo acupuncture (both randomized) or standard postoperative analgesia (nonrandomized). Patients in the acupuncture group received auricular (four points) and body (six points) acupuncture. Needles were placed before spinal anesthesia and "remained in situ for three days after cesarean delivery."

Postoperative analgesics (1 g oral paracetamol, four times a day, supplemented by 50 mg diclofenac potassium three times a day as necessary) were available to all patients. If neither achieved relief, 7.5 mg piritramide (an opioid) could be prescribed up to six times daily.



The primary outcome measure assessed was pain intensity upon movement (postoperatively on day one); secondary outcome measures of note included time to mobilization and removal of catheter following cesarean; total use of pain medication and side effects from use; and quality-of-life improvements following surgery (mood, sleep, enjoyment of life, etc., as impacted by pain). Findings suggest the following on day one postoperatively:

- 98 percent of acupuncture patients were fully mobilized day (vs. only 83 percent in the placebo group and 58 percent in the standard care group).
- Catheterization was removed in 93 percent of acupuncture patients (72 percent placebo, 70 percent standard care).
- "Other parameters were comparable across the 3 study groups."

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