Women's Experience of Massage Therapy during High Risk Pregnancy

A Qualitative Study

PROJECT

Approximately one in four women will experience a high risk pregnancy. In Canada, in 2000, pre-term birth occurred in 7.6% of all pregnancies and accounted for 60-80% of all perinatal mortality. There are numerous known risk factors for pre-term birth, including stress. Partial or complete bed rest in hospital and/or at home is prescribed in 20% of all pregnancies to reduce the risk of preterm birth in pregnant women with a variety of medical conditions. Pregnant women on partial or complete bed rest in hospital or at home can experience significant and lasting physical and psychosocial side-effects including: muscle dysfunction and pain, fatigue, and increased stress. The objective of this qualitative study is to provide high risk, pregnant women in hospital and at home with massage therapy to obtain information from the experiences of women for the development of a larger study.

OBJECTIVES

1. Reduce muscle pain, fatigue and discomfort
2. Improve mood and quality of life
3. Increase gestational age achieved and infant birth weight
4. Collect and analyze data on the experience of the mother for potential
5. Relationships to the massage therapy intervention

OUTCOMES

In this case series (n= 4) the women rated reductions in stress and anxiety and increase in sleep, followed by reductions in muscle tension and pain as positive benefits from the massages. These findings are
consistent with current best evidence in massage therapy research. From the qualitative interviews, post massage, the women described feeling an increased sense of connection and comfort and a heightened sense of control over their feelings of helplessness which they attributed to the skill and compassion of the massage therapists.

Although the study was too small to draw any statistical conclusions, the massage therapy protocol used was feasible, and the outcomes described by the participants suggest that the protocol should be tested in a future large-scale study.

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