

Janet Walker, Osteopathic Manual Practice, Canadian College of Osteopathy

Abstract of Thesis, Presented August 22, 2007

The Effect of Osteopathic Treatment During Pregnancy on the Outcomes of Labour and Delivery

The purpose of this research was to determine the potential efficacy of osteopathic treatment on the outcomes of labour and delivery in primiparous women. A fully randomized, controlled trial of 58 primiparous women, between the ages of 25 and 35, was conducted. An experimental group receiving monthly osteopathic treatment (beginning in the second trimester of pregnancy, until delivery) was compared to a matched control group.

Following delivery, the medical records of both groups were used to determine the incidence of medical interventions (induction, epidural, episiotomy, forceps, vacuum, and caesarean). The study also examined the effects of osteopathic treatment on the degree of pain reported by mothers during labour, the initial health status of the neonate, self-reported maternal satisfaction, and psychological outcome. These were assessed using the short-form McGill Pain Questionnaire, Apgar score, Perception of Labour and Delivery Scale, and Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale respectively. The results were compared using chi-square tests and analysis of variance to determine any statistical difference between the two groups.

It was found that osteopathic treatment reduced the average number of medical interventions during childbirth. Specifically, the incidence of both medical induction and epidural anaesthesia was significantly less in the experimental group versus the control group (T-test; p-value 0.0032 and p-value .0202, respectively). No significant difference in reported labour pain, initial neonate pain or psychosocial outcome, was found between the two groups. However, these findings support the viability of osteopathic treatment administered during pregnancy, particularly in facilitating the natural onset of labour.