

Effects of LI-4 and SP-6 Acupuncture on Labor Pain, Cortisol Level and Duration of Labor.

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Abstract

Nowadays, acupuncture is widely used to manage pain, and childbirth is a condition requiring appropriate pain management interventions. The efficacy of acupuncture in the management of labor pain has recently been studied, but the results are not satisfactory and conflicts exist. In this study, we investigated the effects of acupuncture on labor pain, serum cortisol level, and duration of labor. We conducted a randomized, single-blind, controlled trial that included 63 nulliparous women: 32 in the study group and 31 in the control group. Acupuncture was performed at the SP-6 and the LI-4 points in the study group, and sham acupuncture was performed at the same points in the control group. Pain scores and serum cortisol levels were measured before and after the intervention. Changes in these measures and in the duration of labor were compared between the groups. No significant variations in pain scores or serum cortisol levels were observed between the two control groups. However, the duration of labor was significantly lower ($p < 0.001$) in the group receiving real acupuncture. Our results show that acupuncture is significantly associated with a decreased duration of labor, even though it was no better than a placebo for the treatment of labor pain.

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KEYWORDS:

acupuncture; cortisol; labor pain