

Effects of craniosacral therapy as experienced by pregnant women with severe pelvic girdle pain: An interview study

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: Pelvic girdle pain (PGP) affects 50% of pregnant women worldwide. PGP increases with advancing pregnancy with considerable impact on quality of life, interfering with sleep, daily activities, work, motherhood and close interpersonal relationships. The use of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) is increasingly prevalent among pregnant women, particularly for pregnancy-induced back pain. Craniosacral treatment (CST) is a CAM that has shown symptom relieving effects in pregnancy-related back pain. The purpose of this study was to describe women's experiences of the treatment.

METHODS: Twenty-seven women receiving CST plus standard treatment (ST) were interviewed following 3 of 5 treatments with CST by two qualified and experienced CST practitioners. Data were analysed using qualitative content analysis.

RESULTS: The experience of CST by pregnant women diagnosed with severe PGP can be described in three categories: An unfamiliar and different treatment method; description of treatment effects, and regaining a personal and social life. Women described how CST provided them with new awareness of their widespread muscle tension. They told of how they experienced increased body awareness, distraction from pain, relaxation and calm, and feelings of security and optimism. These factors may have helped them actively improve posture and lower muscle tension thereby relieving the symptoms of PGP.

CONCLUSIONS: The present study reports a contextual interpretation of previously published quantitative data, as it provides a deeper understanding of total symptom relief from PGP during pregnancy.

Trial registration: The trial is registered at Current Controlled Trials ISRCTN30566933.