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Effects of ear and body acupuncture on labor pain and duration of labor active phase: A randomized controlled trial



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ABSTRACT

Objectives: This study sought to compare the effects of multi-point ear and body acupuncture on labor pain and the duration of labor active phase.

Design: Three-armed randomized controlled trial.

Setting: Kowsar Hospital, Qazvin, Iran.

Intervention: Participants in the body acupuncture group received acupuncture on GB21, GB30, BL32, LI4, and SP6 points, each for two minutes, at cervical dilation of four, six, and eight centimeters. For participants in the ear acupuncture group, adhesive auriculotherapy-specific Vaccaria seeds were attached to their auricles on the zero, genitalia, Shen Men, thalamic, and uterine 1 and 2 acupoints. The seeds were compressed every thirty minutes, each time for thirty seconds. Participants in the control group received routine care services.

Main outcome measures: Labor pain intensity was assessed using a visual analogue scale at cervical dilation of four and ten centimeters.

Results: While there was no significant difference between mean scores of pain among three groups, mean score of labor pain in both acupuncture groups was significantly less than that in the control group ($P < 0.001$). However, the difference between the acupuncture groups was not statistically significant ($P = 0.12$). Moreover, the duration of labor active phase in the ear acupuncture group was significantly less than those in the body acupuncture and the control groups ($P < 0.001$).

Conclusion: Ear acupuncture was significantly effective in reducing labor pain and shortening labor active phase. However, body acupuncture solely reduces labor pain. Therefore, ear acupuncture can be used to reduce labor pain and shorten labor active phase.