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Original Article

Acupuncture plus moxibustion to resolve breech presentation: a randomized controlled study

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Abstract

Objective: In many Western countries breech presentation is an indication for elective Cesarean section. In order to correct fetal presentation, the stimulation of the acupoint BL67 by moxibustion, acupuncture or both has been proposed. Since no studies had previously been carried out on Western populations, pregnant Italian women at 33–35 weeks gestational age carrying a fetus in breech presentation were enrolled in a randomized, controlled trial involving an active BL67 point stimulation and an observation group.

Methods: A total of 240 women at 33–35 weeks of gestation carrying a fetus in breech presentation were randomized to receive active treatment (acupuncture plus moxibustion) or to be assigned to the observation group. Bilateral acupuncture plus moxibustion was applied at the BL67 acupoint (*Zhiyin*). The primary outcome of the study was fetal presentation at delivery.

Results: Fourteen cases dropped out. The final analysis was thus made on 226 cases, 114 randomized to observation and 112 to acupuncture plus moxibustion. At delivery, the proportion of cephalic version was lower in the observation group (36.7%) than in the active-treatment group (53.6%) ($p=0.01$). Hence, the proportion of Cesarean sections indicated for breech presentation was significantly lower in the treatment group than in the observation group (52.3% vs. 66.7%, $p=0.03$).

Conclusions: Acupuncture plus moxibustion is more effective than observation in revolving fetuses in breech presentation. Such a method appears to be a valid option for women willing to experience a natural birth.