

Evaluating Acupuncture and Standard care for pregnant women with Back pain (EASE Back): a feasibility study and pilot randomised trial

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Plain English summary

The EASE Back feasibility study and pilot randomised trial

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Plain English summary

Many pregnant women have back pain that impacts on their activities, work and sleep. Acupuncture is a promising intervention already used by physiotherapists in the NHS, but we do not know if it is better than standard care (SC).

Based on information from a survey of almost 500 physiotherapists across the UK and from interviews with 17 pregnant women, 15 midwives and 21 physiotherapists, we found that SC varies a lot and more needs to be done to help these women. We discovered that pregnant women are keen to take part in a study to find out if acupuncture is better than SC. Pregnant women and their midwives had few concerns about acupuncture although physiotherapists expressed some concerns and training needs that helped us design a brief training programme for them.

We performed a small study with 125 women to test whether or not acupuncture offers additional benefit over SC. We found that almost half of pregnant women with back pain agreed to join the study and three-quarters gave us information 8 weeks later. The results show that a much larger study in the NHS is possible and desirable but we need to make some minor changes to the ways we recruit and follow up women after treatment.

This prepares the way for a larger study involving three hospitals and linked physiotherapy services over several years. When it is finished we will know whether or not women with low back pain during pregnancy should be offered acupuncture in addition to SC.

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