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Article

Literature Review Benefits of Moxa Therapy for Postpartum Women

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A B S T R A C T

Background: The postpartum period is a crucial period for the mother's recovery after childbirth. One of the health problems that commonly occurs in postpartum mothers is low back pain (LBP), which can affect the quality of life and ability to care for the baby. Moxa therapy is a traditional treatment method that is believed to reduce pain and speed up recovery.

Objective: This article aims to review the benefits of moxa therapy for postpartum women

Method: A literature search was carried out through the PubMed, Google Scholar, and Scopus databases using the keywords Moxa therapy postpartum, moxibustion for postpartum recovery, moxa massage for postpartum mothers, and traditional Chinese medicine for postpartum. Articles that met the inclusion criteria were published within the last 5 years and discussed the benefits of moxa therapy for postpartum women.

Conclusion: Moxa therapy has various benefits in reducing lower back pain in postpartum women, including improving blood circulation, reducing inflammation, relaxing tense muscles, and improving quality of life. With increasing interest in traditional medicine, moxa therapy may be an effective and safe option for postpartum women with lower back pain.

I. INTRODUCTION

The postpartum period is an important period that begins after delivery and lasts up to six weeks. During this period, the mother's body undergoes intensive recovery to return to its pre-pregnancy condition. This process includes physical, emotional, and hormonal recovery. However, many postpartum mothers face various health challenges, such as muscle pain, fatigue, postpartum depression, and lactation disorders as well as low back pain (LBP). This condition can be caused by changes in posture during pregnancy, stretching of muscles and ligaments, and excessive pressure on the spine during labor (Ester Yohana, 2023)

Untreated problems experienced by postpartum mothers can affect the quality of life of postpartum mothers, including their ability to care for their babies and carry out daily activities. Conventional therapy such as the use of analgesics often causes side effects and does not provide a long-term solution. Currently, with the development of science, traditional healing has been developed, namely moxa therapy.

Moxa therapy is a traditional treatment method originating from traditional Chinese medicine. This therapy involves burning mugwort (Artemisia vulgaris) leaves which are applied to acupuncture points on the body. The heat produced is believed to stimulate the flow of energy (qi), increase blood circulation, and relieve pain. As interest in traditional medicine increases, moxa therapy has become an attractive option for postpartum mothers who experience lower back pain (B, Shen, 2019).

Moxibustion, as an important part of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), refers to lighting velvet or moxa sticks and then burning or smoking them at appropriate acupuncture points to prevent and treat diseases by means of heat or medicine. TCM theory argues that moxibustion has the function of warming and expelling colds, relieving pain, preventing and treating disease (L. Wang, 2018). To date, several systematic reviews of moxibustion therapy for pain management have been conducted, indicating that moxibustion has beneficial effects (Myong So Lee, 2010 and B, Shen, 2019). Recently, moxibustion has also received more attention as a means of managing CLBP.

Moxibustion is a technique that involves burning mugwort (moxa, Artemisia argyi), a small, sponge-like herb, to facilitate healing at specific acupuncture points. There are two types of moxibustion, direct and indirect. In direct moxibustion, a small cone-shaped amount of moxa is placed over the acupuncture point and burned. This type of moxibustion is further divided into two types: scarring and non-scarring. With moxibustion scarring, moxa is placed on a point, ignited, and allowed to remain on the point until it is completely burned off, which can cause localized scarring. With non-scarring moxibustion, moxa is placed on the point and lit, but extinguished or removed before burning the skin. Patients will feel a pleasant warm sensation that penetrates deep into the skin but does not cause pain, blistering, or scarring. Indirect moxibustion (called “deferred” moxibustion in this article) is, currently, the most popular form because there is a much lower risk of pain or burning. In indirect moxibustion, a practitioner lights one end of a moxa stick roughly the shape and size of a cigar, and holds it close to the selected acupuncture point for several minutes until the area turns red. Moxibustion can also be used in conjunction with acupuncture (Dubois, 2014)

This article aims to review the benefits of moxa therapy for postpartum women based on existing literature and provide insight into the mechanism of action and recommendations for the practice of this therapy.

II. METHODS

Literature searches were conducted through online databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, and ScienDirect using the keywords: "moxa therapy postpartum," "moxibustion for postpartum recovery," "moxa massage for postpartum mothers," and "traditional Chinese medicine for

postpartum." using inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria for journal searches are Full Text or Free Full Text Journals, Indonesian language journals indexed by Sinta (minimum Sinta 4), journals with publications at least in 2019 or within the last 5 years, primary, and indexed English language journals.

III. RESULT

Journal searches were carried out via PubMed, Science Direct, Google Scholar, Garuda Portal, then journal selection was carried out based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, journal duplicates, title, language, country category and topic relevance, resulting in 15 journals to be analyzed. Search for articles using Science Direct, PubMed, Scopus, Google Scholar Electronic Repository. Articles were selected using inclusion and exclusion criteria. Selected articles will be read in their entirety (full text). Articles relevant to the inclusion criteria will be used for further analysis. To find out which journals are indexed by Scopus, the journal containing the article will be identified through the indexing system on the website www.scopus.com. Meanwhile, national journals are identified via the website https://sinta.ristekbrin.go.id/ to find out SINTA indexed journals.

IV. DISCUSSION

Benefits of Moxa Massage/Moxa Therapy for Postpartum Mothers:

1. Improves Blood Circulation

After giving birth, mothers often experience decreased blood circulation which can cause fatigue and pain. Moxa therapy is known to stimulate acupuncture points which helps increase blood flow. The study conducted by Zhang et al. (2018) shows that moxibustion increases blood perfusion in the abdominal area and accelerates the process of uterine involution. The heat produced by moxa therapy can increase blood flow in the treated area. Good blood circulation helps the tissue healing process and reduces inflammation which is one of the causes of pain. Research by Li et al. (2019) found that postpartum mothers who underwent moxa therapy experienced increased blood circulation in the lower back area. Research by Cui J, 2021. In postpartum mothers, it was proven that postpartum bleeding 2 hours after giving birth in the group that received moxibustion was less than the other two groups and the difference was statistically significant..

2. Reduces Postpartum Muscle Pain and Cramps

Postpartum muscle pain and cramps are often complaints of postpartum mothers. The heat produced from moxa massage can relieve pain by relaxing tense muscles. Research by Li et al. (2017) found that postpartum mothers who underwent moxa therapy for one week reported a significant reduction in pain compared to the control group. Muscle pain and tension in the lower back area are problems that are often experienced by postpartum mothers. Moxa therapy is known to have a relaxing effect on tense muscles through the heat produced. The study by Zhang et al. (2018) showed that moxa therapy significantly reduced the level of pain in postpartum women experiencing LBP compared to the control group.

According to research by ZHU Tiang, 2019 moxibustion is potentially effective for reducing chronic low back pain, especially when combined with other therapies. Moxibustion can prevent and treat disease because it is anti-inflammatory and improves immune function. In studies, moxibustion can significantly reduce neurological function scores to improve symptoms of lower extremity dysfunction, reduce serum inflammatory cytokine levels, inhibit nerve root tissue and inflammatory cell infiltration of surrounding tissues, to relieve chemical inflammatory damage to nerve roots. Heat Produced by moxibustion activates local specific receptors, heat-sensitive immune cells, heat shock proteins and so on initiates the function of heating and dredging

and produces a total range of effects. The heating stimulus signal and its subsequent effects via nerve pathways and body fluids induce further effects on target organs and certain body systems.

3. Speeds up the uterine involution process

Uterine involution is the process of returning the uterus to its normal size after delivery. Moxa therapy is believed to stimulate healthy uterine contractions and speed up this process. The clinical study by Wu et al. (2019) showed that postpartum mothers who underwent moxa therapy for 10 days experienced faster uterine involution compared to the group who only received conventional treatment. Research by Gao L, 2024 proved that penetration-moxibustion therapy accelerates the recovery of uterine volume, relieves uterine contractions, shortens the duration of lochia, reduces lochia volume and encourages postpartum uterine involution, where the uterine volume in the observation group is smaller than the control group after treatment. Within 1 to 3 days of treatment, the decrease in uterine fundal height in the observation group was greater, the uterine contraction VAS score was lower, and the volume of lochia rubra was less than in the control group. The duration of lochia rubra and lochia was shorter in the observation group when compared with the control group. The rate of favorable uterine involution in the observation group was 95.0%, higher than the control group, which was 75.0%.

4. Reduces the risk of postpartum depression

Hormonal changes during the postpartum period can trigger postpartum depression. Moxa therapy is known to have a calming effect that can help reduce symptoms of depression. Research by Kim et al. (2020) found that postpartum mothers who underwent moxa therapy for two weeks reported improved mood and decreased symptoms of depression.

5. Increase breast milk production

Disruption of breast milk production is one of the challenges faced by postpartum mothers. The heat produced by moxa therapy can stimulate acupuncture points associated with breast milk production. Research by Chen et al. (2018) found that mothers who underwent moxa therapy at certain acupuncture points had an increase in breast milk production by 30% compared to the control group.

6. Improves sleep quality

Postpartum mothers often experience sleep disorders due to changes in their baby's sleep patterns and postpartum discomfort. Moxa therapy can help improve sleep quality by relaxing the nervous system and reducing muscle tension. The study by Huang et al. (2019) showed that mothers who underwent moxa therapy for three weeks reported increased sleep duration and quality.

7. Improves the immune system

After delivery, the mother's immune system can weaken, making her susceptible to infection. Moxa therapy is known to increase the body's immune response. The study by Lin et al. (2020) found that mothers who underwent moxa therapy had a significant increase in white blood cell levels compared to the control group**.**

8. Increases Flexibility and Mobility

Untreated back pain can cause limited mobility. Moxa therapy helps relieve muscle stiffness and increases flexibility in the lower back area. The study by Wu et al. (2021) showed that postpartum mothers who underwent moxa therapy for two weeks experienced increased back flexibility and better mobility compared to the group who did not receive therapy.

9. Improves Psychological Well-being

Chronic pain can affect the psychological condition of postpartum mothers. Moxa therapy, which provides a feeling of warmth and relaxation, is known to help reduce stress and anxiety. Research by Huang et al. (2019) found that postpartum mothers who received moxa therapy reported reduced stress levels and improved mood**.**

10. Stimulates the Release of Endorphins

Moxa therapy is known to stimulate the release of endorphins which are natural pain-relieving hormones. Research by Lin et al. (2020) found that postpartum mothers who underwent moxa therapy had a significant increase in endorphin levels, which contributed to a decrease in pain.

11. Improves Nervous System Function

Moxa therapy can stimulate acupuncture points related to nerve function. This can help reduce nerve disorders that cause lower back pain. The study by Zhao et al. (2021) shows that moxa therapy helps improve nerve responses and increases positive sensations in postpartum mothers.

12. Improves Body Posture

After delivery, the mother's body posture often changes due to changes in load during pregnancy. Moxa therapy can help improve body posture by relieving muscle tension that causes unbalanced posture. The study by Fang et al. (2022) found that moxa therapy improved postural balance and spinal flexibility in postpartum mothers.

Mechanism of Action of Moxa Therapy

Moxa therapy works by stimulating acupuncture points in the body that are associated with certain organs and systems. The heat produced from burning mugwort plants can penetrate body tissues, stimulate the flow of energy (qi), and increase blood circulation. In addition, the heat can also stimulate the release of endorphins which help relieve pain and improve mood. Moxa therapy is performed by heating acupuncture points associated with pain control. The heat from moxa stimulates the release of endorphins and other neurotransmitters that function as the body's natural analgesics. Research by Chen et al. (2020) showed that stimulation of acupuncture points with moxa significantly reduced pain intensity in postpartum women.

Limitations and Clinical Considerations

Although moxa therapy has many benefits, there are several limitations and considerations that need to be taken into account:

Side effects

Some mothers may experience skin irritation or minor burns due to the heat from moxa therapy. Certain Medical Conditions: Moxa therapy is not recommended for mothers with a history of hypertension or certain health conditions that can be worsened by heat.

V. CONCLUSION

Moxa massage or moxa therapy has various significant benefits for postpartum mothers, including improving blood circulation, reducing muscle pain, accelerating uterine involution, and increasing breast milk production. However, further research with more rigorous methods is needed to ensure the effectiveness and safety of this therapy.

Moxa therapy has various benefits in reducing back pain in postpartum mothers, including relieving muscle pain, increasing blood circulation, and providing a relaxing effect. However, further research is needed to ensure the effectiveness and safety of this therapy.

Clinical practice recommendations are for moxa therapy to be performed by a trained practitioner and accompanied by medical consultation to minimize the risk of side effects. Education regarding the benefits and contraindications of this therapy needs to be given to postpartum mothers as part of postpartum care.

With increasing interest in traditional medicine, moxa therapy can be a beneficial option for postpartum mothers in supporting their recovery process naturally.

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