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ACUPUNCTURE HELPS PREGNANT WOMEN TO MORE EASILY HANDLE DAILY TASKS

Women who are pregnant sometimes suffer from a condition where pain is felt through the buttocks and the pelvic girdle toward the front of the body. The condition is known as Pelvic Girdle Pain (PGP) and is reported to occur in about 20 percent of all pregnancies. Recently, a study was done to find out if Acupuncture could be beneficial to women who endure this condition.

The sensations of PGP can include stabbing pains for some women and dull aches for others. Pain is known to sometimes radiate down the back of the leg as well. Long periods of either sitting or standing can aggravate the condition as can turning in bed. Women who have previously suffered lower back pain or experienced some earlier trauma to the pelvis can be more susceptible to PGP.

Research into the possibility that Acupuncture could help women with this condition was recently completed at the Sahlgrenska Academy in Göteborg, Sweden. Since medical help for PGP typically includes counseling, light exercise and the use of a pelvic belt to offer support, researchers wondered if a more natural treatment alternative could offer relief as another component of treatment.

The study involved 115 women who were studied between June 2006 and May 2007. All of the women involved continued on their normal medically prescribed treatment that involved using the pelvic belt and home exercises to strengthen abdominal muscles. Of the women, 58 also received standard needle penetrating Acupuncture and 57 of the group received sham Acupuncture. All of the women were asked to keep diaries about their treatment and complete questionnaires regarding the pain they experienced.

The main benefit noted by researchers was that the women who received standard Acupuncture had a greater ability to take part in their routine tasks which they could not do before treatment. And while there was no real difference in the levels of pain experience by both groups, those who had Acupuncture were more able to engage in regular work. This seems to be an important finding since PGP is one of the most common causes of sick leave during pregnancy and sometimes causes long-term sick leave.

Dr. Helen Elden of Sahlgrenska Academy had this to say about Acupuncture and activity levels: "This study shows that Acupuncture had no superior effect compared with non-penetrating sham Acupuncture on pain relief but improved women's functional ability to perform daily activities. We therefore believe that needle penetration, at least to some degree, is one important component in Acupuncture therapy and provides additional support for the use of Acupuncture as one of several means of treatment of PGP in pregnant women." The results of the study will be published in the *BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology*.