

Acupuncture found effective against depression during pregnancy

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In a study to be presented today at the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine's (SMFM) annual meeting, The Pregnancy Meeting, in Chicago, researchers will unveil findings that show that acupuncture may be an effective treatment for depression during pregnancy.

"Depression during pregnancy is an issue of concern because it has negative effects on both the mother and the baby as well as the rest of the family," said Dr. Schnyer, one of the study's authors.

About 10% of [pregnant women](#) meet criteria for [major depression](#) and almost 20% have increased symptoms of depression during pregnancy. The rates of depression in pregnant women are comparable to rates seen among similarly aged non-pregnant women and among women during the postpartum period, but there are far fewer treatment studies of depression during pregnancy than during the postpartum period.

Dealing with depression is difficult for pregnant women because the use of anti-depressants poses concerns to the developing fetus and women are reluctant to take medications during pregnancy.

In the study, an evaluator-blinded randomized trial, 150 participants who met the Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th edition (DSM-IV) criteria for Major Depressive Disorder were randomized to receive either [acupuncture](#) specific for depression (SPEC, n=52) or one of two active controls: control acupuncture (CTRL, n=49) or massage (MSSG, n=49). Treatments lasted eight weeks (12 sessions). Junior

acupuncturists masked to treatment assignment needed participants at points prescribed by senior acupuncturists. Massage therapists and patients were not blinded. The primary outcome was the Hamilton Rating Scale for Depression, administered by blinded raters at baseline and after four and eight weeks of treatment. Data were analyzed using mixed effects models and by intent-to-treat.

The results showed that the women who received SPEC experienced a significantly greater decrease in depression severity (p

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