

## Reviewer's report

**Title:** Maternal position during labor: a systematic review

**Version:** 1 **Date:** 26 September 2006

**Reviewer:** Metin Gulmezoglu

### Reviewer's report:

General

Report on the manuscript: Maternal position during labor: a systematic review

This is a well-conducted systematic review. I made some suggestions below for authors consideration. I think the manuscript can be improved by giving more details on the methods and analysis.

**Abstract:** the outcome duration of labour is presented in 'hours' I think but this is not mentioned anywhere. With an i2 of 88.4% I am not sure if presenting a summary estimate is meaningful. The conclusion gives the impression that the results on labour duration is consistent but in fact they are not.

**Background:** the second sentence: is the reference to horizontal position related to 1st or 2nd stage of labour? I ask this because procedures are mostly used in 2nd stage. If the reference is to procedures such as amniotomy then perhaps it should be mentioned?

In the background the authors should state what is the main objective of upright position? These could be comfort, less pain, less pain relief and duration of labour. Is there a plausible hypothesis for upright position to accelerate labour? Does it lead to more efficient contractions? Is there a presumed gravity effect?

**Methods:** the results are presented as subgroup analysis in figure 2 but the methods do not mention the subgroup analyses (parity, induced etc.).

It would be useful to search the CENTRAL and the CDSR also to see if there are earlier systematic reviews on this topic.

The authors need to define what they mean with 'upright position' and how this intervention was applied across trials. I suspect the dose may be different?

**Results:**

It would be useful to mention where the trials were conducted (countries, types of hospitals, caregivers).

It looks as if the authors excluded ref 23 because it was a trial comparing two upright positions. It would be good to include this trial (if it is otherwise OK) and discuss the findings briefly. Were all exclusions due to trials being nonRCTs? Did they specify excluding alternate allocation trials?

In general it would be preferable to use first person plural and direct rather than passive sentences and referring to themselves as investigators. It gets confusing in some parts.

**Maternal comfort (page 6):** inappropriate rather than inadequate and state the reason.

**Discussion:** 1st sentence change 'meta-analysis' to systematic review to be consistent with the title.

Perhaps the authors should also discuss the fact that it is not easy to use upright position in isolation. Other interventions such as amniotomy, analgesia, monitoring during labour all are affected and perhaps it also reflects a more liberal attitude to labour monitoring overall. That is the reason why those outcomes are affected?

**Discussion last para:** ....suggests that the [upright] maternal position...

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

**What next?:** Accept after minor essential revisions

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.