

Effect of Massage Balls on Breast Engorgement for Taiwanese Postpartum Women: A Randomized Clinical Trial

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BACKGROUND

The multitude of benefits that come from breastfeeding has been very well established and recognized. Breast engorgement, however, is a common problem of early postpartum breastfeeding, one that contributes to lower willingness to breastfeed. The development of effective strategies aimed at increasing milk secretion is, therefore, highly important, for it helps to prolong the duration of breastfeeding. It is incumbent upon health-care providers to find the best strategies in assisting women to both manage the discomfort of breast engorgement and increase milk secretion.

METHODS

A quasi-experimental design was used. Participants were recruited from the postpartum ward of a regional hospital in northern Taiwan. They were all within seven days postpartum and gave informed consent. Participants were randomly assigned into two groups of 30 participants each. Participants in experimental group used the massage balls 30 mins per day. Standard postpartum nursing was provided for the control group. Symptoms of breast engorgement were assessed via a self-report scale before and after the intervention. Data was documented and analyzed using SPSS version 22.0. Differences between two groups were evaluated by use of generalized estimating equations.

RESULTS

The results showed that symptoms of breast engorgement (pain, swelling, heat sensation and discomfort) lessened in both groups, with more significant lessening in the experimental group. Differences between two groups reached statistical significance ($B = -13.46^{***}$)

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrated that the use of massage balls may be a more effective method in mitigating the symptoms of breast engorgement. This form of treatment helps mothers and health-care providers handle breast engorgement symptoms more effectively in primary care, which in turn promotes the length and quality of breastfeeding. This method provides an alternative for nurses to manage breast engorgement more effectively and thus increases the quality of care in early postpartum mothers and infants.

KEYWORDS

Breast engorgement, breast nursing, massage balls, postpartum women

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