Perception of pain during misoprostol-induced medical abortion

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Background

- medical abortion available in Finland since May 2000
- usually up to 9 weeks
- woman decides the method after information
- in 2007, 63% of all abortions were medical
- paracetamol 1000 mg + codeine 30 mg mostly used pain prophylaxis
Study design

Family Planning Clinic, Helsinki University Central Hospital & Health Centre of City of Vantaa

- misoprostol 200 mg + misoprostol 400 µg 1-3 days at the hospital
- paracetamol 1 g + codeine 30 mg prior to misoprostol
- check-up at the local nurse after 2-3 weeks
Study design

- 56 women choosing medical abortion
- Mean age 26.2 years (15-43)
- Length of pregnancy in US 47 days (32-63)
- 29 (51.7%) nulliparous
Components of pain

**sensory-discriminative**  
- how intense is pain?  
- where is pain felt?  
- processed in lateral thalamus and primary somatosensory cortex

**affective-motivational**  
- how unpleasant emotion pain evokes?  
- processed in medial thalamus, anterior cingular, insular, parietal and prefrontal cortex
Pain perception

- menstrual pain
  - intensity VAS
  - unpleasantness VAS
  - pain drawing

- pain during abortion
  - intensity VAS
  - unpleasantness VAS
  - pain drawing
Pain perception

- at the hospital:
  - evaluation of pain intensity by nurses (VAS)

- “pain diary”
  - how long pain was felt at home
  - need for painkillers

- at the check-up:
  - collection of pain diary
  - could you have been at home?
Affective-motivational component of pain during menstruation and abortion

Unpleasantness of pain (VAS/mm)

Sensory-discriminative component of pain during menstruation and abortion

Magnitude of pain (VAS/mm)

Pain during abortion similar to menstrual pain (paired t-test)
Pain perception

- Parous women reported less pain.

- Staff’s evaluation of severity of pain correlated well with subject’s VAS.

- Pain intensity did not correlate better with parity (-0.59) than with the length of pregnancy (r = 0.35) or with the woman’s age (-0.35).

- The unpleasantness of pain correlated better with parity (r=-0.63) than with duration of pregnancy (0.36) or with the woman’s age (-0.33).
Willingness to stay at home

Perceived pain and self-estimated ability to stay at home during abortion

* p< 0.05, Mann-Whitney U-test

- 55%
- age n.s.
- parity n.s.
- length of pregnancy n.s.
Duration of pregnancy and self-estimated ability to stay at home during abortion

Duration of pregnancy (days)

Age of the patient and self-estimated ability to stay at home during abortion

Age (years)
Conclusions

· counseling
  “pain during abortion is like your menstrual pain”

· selection of women for home abortion
  age, parity, length of pregnancy not that important

· sufficient pain relief
· Marja Tikka, RN, Family Planning Clinic, HUCS

· Timo Kauppila, ass. prof., University of Helsinki, Health Centre of City of Vantaa

· Seppo Kivinen, professor, HUCS

· staffs of HUCS and Health Centre of City of Vantaa

· active women
... talking about medical abortion

Thank you!