Exercise during pregnancy reduces the rate of cesarean and instrumental deliveries: results of a randomized controlled trial

Authors:

Ruben BARAKAT (Corresponding author). Faculty of Physical Activity and Sports Sciences. Technical University of Madrid (UPM). +34 91 336 40 20 / barakatruben@gmail.com

Mireia PELAEZ. Faculty of Physical Activity and Sports Sciences. Technical University of Madrid (UPM).

Carmina LOPEZ. Faculty of Physical Activity and Sports Sciences. Technical University of Madrid (UPM).

Rocío MONTEJO. Hospital Universitario de Fuenlabrada.

Javier COTERON. Faculty of Physical Activity and Sports Sciences. Technical University of Madrid (UPM).

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ABSTRACT

Objective:

In this study, the authors assessed the effects of a structured, moderate-intensity exercise program during the entire length of pregnancy on a woman's method of delivery.

Methods:

A randomized controlled trial was conducted with 290 healthy pregnant Caucasian (Spanish) women with a singleton gestation who were randomly assigned to either an exercise (n=138) or a control (n=152) group. Pregnancy outcomes, including the type of delivery, were measured at the end of the pregnancy.

Results:

The percentage of cesarean and instrumental deliveries in the exercise group were lower than in the control group (15.9%, n=22; 11.6%, n=16 vs. 23%, n=35; 19.1%, n=29, respectively; \( p=0.03 \)). The overall health status of the newborn as well as other pregnancy outcomes were unaffected.

Conclusions:

Based on these results, a supervised program of moderate-intensity exercise performed throughout pregnancy was associated with a reduction in the rate of cesarean, instrumental deliveries and can be recommended for healthy women in pregnancy.