

The objective was to evaluate whether acupuncture at term can influence cervical ripening and thus reduce the need for postdates induction.

On their due dates 45 women were randomised into either an acupuncture group (25) or a control group (20). The acupuncture group received acupuncture every two days at the acupuncture points Hegu L.I.-4 and Sanyinjiao SP-6.

The women in both groups were examined every other day for cervical length (measured by vaginal trasonography, cervical mucus and cervical stasis according to Bishop's score).

If women had not delivered after 10 days labour was induced by administering vaginal prostaglandin tablets.

The time from the woman's due date to delivery was an average of 5 days in the acupuncture group compared to 7.9 days in the control group, and labour was medically induced in 20% of women in the acupuncture group compared to 35% in the control group.

There were no differences between overall duration of labour or of the first and second stages of labour.

Conclusion

Acupuncture at the points Hegu L.I.-4 and Sanyinjiao SP-6 supports cervical ripening and can shorten the time interval between the woman's expected date of delivery and the actual time of delivery.

A randomised controlled trial into the effects of acupuncture on cervical ripening was published by Rabl in 2001.[8]