THE USE OF HERBAL REMEDIES BY CANADIAN PARTURIENTS

Isabella Devito MD FRCPC, Kimberley Kent BSc and Lynn Haslam BScN
Department of Anesthesia and Pain Management, Mount Sinai Hospital, 600 University Ave., Toronto, Ontario, M5G 1X5

INTRODUCTION

The use of herbal remedies has increased significantly. One population that has not been investigated for their use of herbal remedies is the Canadian parturient. This is especially significant as there are a number of products that have been associated with increased bleeding. The purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence and type of herbal remedies used by parturients as well as any associated post partum bleeding.

METHODS

After admission to the postpartum floor, 706 postpartum patients were approached to participate in this cross-sectional study. Participants completed an 11-item self-administered questionnaire. A chart review was completed for each participant to document any excessive postpartum bleeding as defined by the use of additional uterotonics [Ergonovine maleate, Hemabate (Carbopost) or larger doses of oxytocin]. Descriptive statistics focused on 3 areas: use of herbal remedies, physician knowledge of herbal use and the incidence of postpartum complications. This study was approved by the local Human Research Ethics Board.

RESULTS

The questionnaire was completed by 535 patients (75.8 %). Of the respondents, 108 (20.2%) reported herbal remedy use. The most commonly used herbal remedies were Red Raspberry Leaf Tea (26.8%), Chamomile Tea (24.1%), Peppermint Tea (23.1%), Herbal Tea (11.1%), Ginger (7.4%), Evening Primrose Oil (6.5%), Echinacea (1.9%) and Garlic (1.9%). The incidence of requiring additional uterotonics was 3.7% in the non-herbal users and 8.3% in the herbal users. Among the 29 patients taking Red Raspberry Leaf Tea the incidence was 10.3%. Of all respondents, 90% indicated that their primary care provider did not ask about their use of herbal remedies. Of those who reported herbal remedy use, 74.8% reported that they had not informed their primary care provider of this use.

DISCUSSION

Canadian parturients are using herbal remedies. Their primary care physicians rarely ask their patients about herbal remedy use. Patients do not regularly inform their physicians about their use of herbal remedies. There may be an association between herbal remedy use and the use of additional uterotonics. Patients using Red Raspberry Tea may have higher requirements for these medications. Further research using a larger sample is needed.