Reviewer’s report

Title: Fear for external cephalic version and depression: predictors of successful external cephalic version for breech presentation at term?

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Reviewer: Peng Chiong Tan

Reviewer’s report:

This is an original report but there are a number of basic weaknesses in the enterprise leading to an unsurprising negative finding.

1. The premise that a measure of depression caseness using the EDS may influence a technical issue like the immediate success rate at ECV is verging on the implausible as a hypothesis. The authors justified this with a rather vague “antepartum depression may have deleterious effects on peripartum maternal and neonatal outcomes”. It is illuminating in the discussion that the authors mentioned “intervention strategies to reduce anxiety, such as hypnosis or pain relief…” It would be somewhat more plausible amongst psychological parameters to suggest anxiety rather than depression as a potential factor affecting ECV success

2. Fear of pain resulting in tensing of abdominal muscles hence affecting ECV is plausible. However, it is not at all clear that the VAS for fear of the procedure actually deals with fear of pain rather than a generalized concern of ECV including that of safety. So the VAS used is possibly flawed for testing this hypothesis. In any case, study women by committing themselves to ECV had already effectively overcome “fear” and invested in ECV success.

3. Immediate ECV success is dictated in the main by technical issues like accessibility to the fetal head, mobility afforded by a lax uterus and the non-engaged breech (Lau TK et al Br J Obstet Gynaecol. 1997 Jul;104(7):798-802). Tocolysis and regional anaesthesia are proven effective and safe aids in ECV. The issue of intolerable pain hindering ECV is easily surmounted in current practice, making the issue somewhat peripheral.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests