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Study Reveals Virtual Reality Reduces Pain During Childbirth

GRAPEVINE, Texas — Virtual reality (VR) is not just all about fun and games. In [a study to be presented today](#) at the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine’s (SMFM) annual meeting, The Pregnancy Meeting™, researchers will unveil findings that show VR is effective in reducing labor pain.

Researchers looked at 40 women from March 2018 to February 2019 whose contractions were at least every five minutes and who were experiencing moderate pain, defined as having a self-reported pain score between 4 and 7 on a 10-point scale, with zero representing no pain and 10 representing the most pain. Women who had received any medication to relieve pain, including an epidural, and women who did not want to use VR or whose medical situation did not warrant the use of the technology were excluded from the study.

Women were divided into two groups: 21 used VR while in labor, the remaining 19 — the control group — did not. Results showed that women who used VR during labor had a statistically significant reduction in pain (-0.52), while those who did not use VR had a statistically significant increase in pain (+0.58). Researchers also found that women who did not use VR had a higher heart rate than those who used VR.

“VR is already being used effectively by the medical community in a variety of applications, such as helping to rehabilitate people who have had a stroke or other brain injury, and for overall pain management. However, using VR to help ease labor pain is one of the least looked at applications,” said the study’s lead author Melissa Wong, MD, MHDS, a maternal-fetal medicine subspecialist at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles. “I think there is a tremendous opportunity to offer VR as another safe and effective option — and one that is medication-free — to help ease a woman’s pain during childbirth.”

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About SMFM

The Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine (SMFM) is a non-profit, membership organization based in Washington, DC. With more than 4,000 physicians, scientists and women’s health professionals around the world, the Society supports the clinical practice of maternal-fetal medicine by providing education, promoting research and engaging in advocacy to optimize the health of high-risk pregnant women and their babies. SMFM hosts an annual scientific meeting in which new ideas and research related to high risk pregnancies are unveiled and discussed. For more information, visit SMFM.org and connect with organization on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#). For the latest 2020 Annual Meeting news and updates, follow the hashtag #smfm20.

