Complementary Therapies in Midwifery:
enthusiasm and advocacy versus accountability and risk

Denise Tiran

Educational Director, Expectancy

Visiting Lecturer, University of Greenwich

www.expectancy.co.uk

Enthusiasm & advocacy

- 55-70% pregnant women use CTs, natural remedies
- at least 30% midwives use some CTs strategies
- midwife-led birthing centres – facilitate normal birth

Strategic support

- *High Impact Actions for Nursing and Midwifery* 2009
- Royal College of Midwives *Intrapartum Guidelines* 2008
- *Maternity Matters* 2007
- Maternity services working party 2007
- *NSF* for maternity care 2004

Benefits

- facilitate normal birth
- relieve stress, anxiety
- ease pregnancy discomforts
- aid onset and progress of labour, ease pain
- help with adaptation to motherhood, breastfeeding
- offer additional choices for mothers
- provide extra tools for midwives
- improve maternal and midwifery satisfaction

insurance

(e)

Risk

- mothers often do not inform midwives / doctor
- “natural” does not necessarily = “safe”
- “*complementary therapies*” is not a *single* entity
- need to balance benefits versus risks
- evidence-based practice

Strategic dissent

National Institute for Clinical Excellence

- "inadequate" – discourage pregnant women from using CTs
- (NICE, *Routine care of healthy pregnant woman* 2008)
- Cochrane database – reliance on RCTs
- RCOG – cautious

Accountability

- NMC regulations
- fitness for purpose – adequate and appropriate training
- insurance issues

supervision

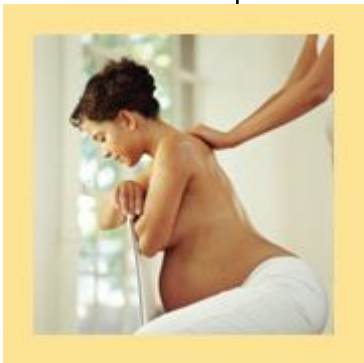
for each therapy,
midwives must understand:

- mechanism of action
- indications
- contraindications
- precautions
- side effects
- interactions
- complications

(e)

Fitness to Practice Tool

Accountability	Safety and Effectiveness	Evidence-based Practice
Training; CPD Fitness for purpose Consent; record keeping NMC criteria Supervision Indemnity insurance	Benefits and risks Health and Safety Knowledge – mechanism of action, precautions Interaction with m/w care Priorities of care	Hierarchy of evidence Empirical evidence Audit and evaluation *All* midwives – accurate, comprehensive, evidence-based, contemporary information



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Accredited courses for midwives

- Diploma in Integrated Therapies for Childbirth, leading to BSc(Hons) Professional Practice
- In-house courses for NHS Trusts wishing to implement complementary therapies
- Courses accredited by University of Greenwich (academic), Federation of Antenatal Educators (insurance); approval pending from Royal College of Midwives (professional)