Maternal and neonatal outcomes in vacuum assisted births in the government tertiary care hospital in Mandya: a retrospective record-based study

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INTRODUCTION

Operative vaginal delivery is the delivery conducted by using forceps or vacuum extractor. It remains a valid option when the problems arise in second stage of labour. The maternal and fetal morbidity due to prolonged labour, maternal exertion, etc compel the doctors to expedite the process of delivery by using instruments like vacuum or forceps to save the baby.¹²

The incidence varies from country to country and even in the same country from one obstetrician to other. Approximately 10% of all deliveries in the western world are accomplished by one of the two methods of operative vaginal birth, vacuum extraction or forceps. Forceps extractions are preferred in the United States, Canada, South America and Eastern Europe while vacuum is the instrument of choice in Western Europe, Asia and middle east.³⁴ In the RCOG consultant conference, the
instrumental vaginal delivery rate of 10.5% was reported with a range of 4-20%. The choice between forceps and vacuum options has usually been based on tradition and training.

Although the use of caesarean delivery has grown considerably and is considered safe by many, but surgical vaginal delivery has a great advantage of reducing the complications associated with caesarean section, such as death, postpartum hemorrhage (PPH), wound disruption and injury to bladder, venous thromboembolism, infection, recovery time, rising costs, and subsequent repeat caesarean section.4,5

The decrease in surgical vaginal delivery is due to the risk of adverse court judgments against the doctor in the case of a problem.6,5 Vacuum extraction has recently gained in popularity because of new designs of vacuum cups with reduced risk of injury to the neonate and increased instrumental success rate.7,8 It avoids caesarean section and its associated morbidity and implications for future pregnancy.9

An important cause of maternal and perinatal morbidity and mortality is prolonged second stage of labour and its complications such as haemorrhage, sepsis, uterine rupture, obstetric fistula and birth asphyxia.6,9,10 Vacuum extraction is one of the evidence-based interventions that can prevent complications by shortening the second stage of labour.13-16

If vacuum application fails, a caesarean section is needed. There are some risks with vacuum-assisted delivery, but it rarely causes lasting problems when properly used.17 Immediate and short-term maternal complications include perineal lacerations, cervical and vaginal lacerations, urinary tract infection, pelvic floor injuries. Fetal and neonatal complications include shoulder dystocia, subdural hemorrhage, facial nerve palsy, subconjunctival hemorrhage, retinal hemorrhage, intracranial hemorrhage, scalp laceration, and cervical injury.6

With this background the present study has been carried out to evaluate the maternal and neonatal morbidity, failure and complications associated with vacuum assisted vaginal deliveries, at the Government tertiary care hospital in Mandya, Karnataka, India.

METHODS

The study was a record-based study including a total of 207 women who underwent assisted vaginal delivery in the form of vacuum assisted deliveries in a period of 6 months from January 2019 to June 2019 in a government tertiary care hospital in Mandya, Karnataka, India.

Inclusion criteria

- All women who had vacuum assisted deliveries and records of their newborn children.

Vacuum deliveries were performed by application of silastic cups. The information related to cervical lacerations, vaginal laceration, perineal tear, episiotomy extensions or paraurethral tear and other maternal outcome were noted. New-born outcome in terms of Apgar score 1 and 5 min, NICU admissions, convulsions, instrumental injuries or complications (Cephalhematomas, Caput succedaneum, Jaundice, neonatal sepsis) were noted. The institutional ethics committee approval was taken prior to the start of the study.

Statistical analysis

Data was entered in MS excel spreadsheet. Descriptive analysis like percentage, proportion, mean, standard deviation was used.

RESULTS

Total number of deliveries in six months (Jan-June 2019) in our institute was 4090, out of which vacuum assisted deliveries were 207 (5.1%). In the study mean age of subjects was 23.61±3.95 years. The minimum age was 18 years and the maximum being 35 years.

Table 1: Distribution of subjects by their age group in years.

| Age in year | Frequency (n = 207) | Percent |
|-------------|---------------------|---------|
| 18-20       | 59                  | 28.5    |
| 21-25       | 86                  | 41.5    |
| 26-30       | 52                  | 25.1    |
| 31-35       | 10                  | 4.8     |
| Total       | 207                 | 100.0   |

Table 1 depicts the distribution of the subjects by their age group in years. 41.5% women were in the age group of 21-25 years, followed by 28.5% in 18-20 years, 25.1% in 26-30 years and 4.8% in 31-35 years.

Table 2: Gravida status and period of gestation (POG) categories among the subjects.

| Gravida | Frequency (n = 207) | Percent |
|---------|---------------------|---------|
| Primi   | 154                 | 74.4    |
| Multi   | 53                  | 25.6    |
| POG     |                      |         |
| 36.00-38.00 | 28            | 13.5    |
| 38.01-40.00 | 140           | 67.6    |
| > 40.00  | 39                  | 18.8    |
| Total   | 207                 | 100.0   |

Table 2 shows, nearly 3/4th (74.4%) of the subjects were primigravida and the remaining multi-gravida. More than 2/3rd (67.6%) of the subjects were in the gestational age of 38 to 40 weeks, the remaining were in 36 to 38 weeks (13.5%) and more than 40 weeks (18.8%).
Table 3: Indications for vacuum applications among the subjects.

| Indications                  | Number (n = 207) | Percent |
|------------------------------|------------------|---------|
| Poor maternal efforts        | 42               | 20.2%   |
| Cut short 2nd stage of labour| 15               | 7.2%    |
| Fetal distress               | 38               | 18.3%   |
| Prolonged 2nd stage of labour| 112              | 54.4%   |

Table 3 depicts, more than half (54.4%) of the study subjects had to be put under vacuum assisted techniques for delivery because of the prolonged second stage of labour. 20.2% of them for poor maternal efforts, 18.3% for fetal distress and the remaining 7.2% to cut short 2nd stage of labour.

Table 4: Maternal complication rate among the subjects.

| Maternal complications          | Frequency (n = 207) | Percent |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|---------|
| Postpartum hemorrhage           | 3                   | 1.4%    |
| Vaginal wall tear               | 8                   | 3.8%    |
| Perineal tear (2nd and 3rd degree) | 3                 | 1.4%    |
| Retained placenta               | 1                   | 0.5%    |
| Cervical tear                   | 2                   | 0.96%   |
| Total                           | 17                  | 8.21%   |

The total maternal complication rate was 8.21%. Eight of the subjects had vaginal wall tear, 3 each had postpartum haemorrhage and perineal tear, 2 had cervical tear and a subject had retained placenta. The same is depicted in the Table 4.

Table 5: Apgar score.

| Apgar score | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------|-----------|---------|
| 0-3         | 17 (8.1%) |         |
| 4-6         | 2 (0.9%)  |         |

The above Table 5 shows the Apgar score in the neonates who underwent vacuum assisted delivery. Total 3 (1.4%) neonates had Apgar score of 0-3 at 1 min, 2 (0.9%) at 5 min.

Table 6: Neonates by NICU admission requirement.

| NICU admission | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------|-----------|---------|
| Yes            | 36        | 17.3%   |
| No             | 171       | 82.6%   |

A total of 36 babies (17.3%) required NICU admission. The average NICU stay was 3.06±2.3 days, median being 2 days, with a minimum of 1 day and a maximum of 11 days. There was one neonatal death due to perinatal asphyxia. One case of vacuum application failed and required delivery by caesarean section.

Table 7: Perinatal complications rate.

| Neonatal complication                  | Frequency (n = 207) | Percent |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------|---------|
| Total number of neonates with perinatal asphyxia | 31                  | 14.9%   |
| Perinatal asphyxia                      | 9                   | 4.3%    |
| Neonatal depression                     | 8                   | 3.8%    |
| ERBS palsy                              | 1                   | 0.4%    |
| Hyperbilirubinemia                      | 5                   | 2.4%    |
| Convulsions                             | 1                   | 0.4%    |
| Hypermaturmia                           | 2                   | 0.9%    |
| TTNP                                    | 1                   | 0.4%    |
| MAS                                     | 3                   | 1.4%    |
| Perinatal asphyxia+ ERBS palsy           | 1                   | 0.4%    |
| Total                                   | 31                  | 14.97%  |

A total 14.97% had perinatal complications which included perinatal asphyxia, neonatal depression, hyperbilirubinemia, hypermaturia, meconium aspiration syndrome, ERBs palsy, convulsions, and others. The most common being perinatal asphyxia (Table 7).

DISCUSSION

Total number of deliveries in 6 months (Jan 2019 to June 2019) was 4090 out of which 207 were delivered by vacuum assisted vaginal delivery. Incidence of vacuum deliveries in our institute is 5.1%.

In our study, 41.5% of the subjects were in the age group of 21-25 years, followed by 28.5% in 18-20 years, 25.1% in 26-30 years and 4.8% in 31-35 years.

Nearly 3/4th (74.4%) of the subjects were primigravida and the remaining multi-gravida. More than 2/3rd (67.6%) of the subjects were in the gestational age of 38 to 40 weeks, the remaining were in 36 to 38 weeks (13.5%) and more than 40 weeks (18.8%). In our study more than half (54.4%) of the study subjects had to be put under vacuum assisted techniques for delivery because of the prolonged second stage, 20.2% of them for poor maternal efforts, 18.3% for fetal distress and the remaining 7.2% to cut short 2nd stage of labour. In a study done by Faisal S et al, the incidence of instrumental vaginal delivery was 2.8% of all deliveries, most of the patients were between 20-30 years (88%) and maximum being primigravida (57.19%) and the most common indication was prolonged second stage (70.6%).

Our findings are similar to the study done by Faisal S et al, and Chaudhari et al.

The total maternal complication rate was 8.2%. Eight of the subjects had vaginal wall tear, 3 each had postpartum hemorrhage and perineal tear, 2 had cervical tear and one subject had retained placenta. Only 14.97% had perinatal...
complications which included perinatal asphyxia, neonatal depression, hyperbilirubinemia, hypernatremia, meconium aspiration syndrome, Erb’s palsy, convulsions, and others. The most common being perinatal asphyxia. These findings are in line with the study done by Chaudhari et al, Jason B et al. and Shresta et al except the neonatal morbidity rate which is less in our study, compared to few studies as even the experience, techniques of vacuum application and facilities at the intra-natal period make an impact in prevention of the complications.8,18,20

Chaudari P et al, in Uttarakhand found that in vacuum assisted deliveries 68% women needed episiotomy, 9% had perinal tear, 3% had vaginal / periurethral tear, 1% had post partumhemorrhage and 1% needed blood transfusion. Morbidities of the newborns were 13% had NICU admissions, 18% neonates had cephalhematoma, 13% had hyperbilirubinemia, 11% had bruising, 5% had convulsions, 5% had feeding difficulties and 1% had irritability.8

Shresta et al in Nepal found that, the most common (62.5%) indication for vacuum application was prolonged second stage of labor followed by fetal distress (19.2%), poor maternal effort (9.6%), and to shorten the second stage (8.6%). The overall rate of maternal morbidity with vacuum assisted vaginal delivery was 17.3% with no mortality. Neonatal morbidities were present in 25.0% neonates and the most common was birth asphyxia (19.2%) followed by cephalhematoma (4.8%), and brachial plexus injury (0.96%). There was one (0.96%) early neonatal death due to meconium aspiration syndrome.20

Jason B et al in USA found that maternal morbidity among nulliparous women who underwent vacuum assisted delivery was 31%, third and fourth degree perineal tear was 16%, infections were 10%, lacerations were 5%, hemorrhage was 5% and < 1% had to stay in the hospital for more than 5 days.19 Neonatal morbidity for vacuum assisted vaginal births in California between 2008 to 2012 was 13.3%. 5.7% had respiratory problems, 3.4% had to stay in the hospital for more than 5 days, 1.3% had Apgar <7, 2.7% had shoulder dystocia, 2.3% had infections, 0.8% had neurological injury and 0.7% had skeletal injury.19

In our study the average NICU stay was 3.06±2.3 days, median being 2 days, with a minimum of 1 day and a maximum of 11 days. There was one neonatal death due to perinatal asphyxia. One case of vacuum application failed and required delivery by caesarean section. The neonatal morbidity rate varies across regions and among different studies, but vacuum is generally considered as a safe alternative to forceps, concerning the neonatal morbidity.21,22

CONCLUSION
Vacuum assisted vaginal delivery is a safe alternative to caesarean delivery in rightly chosen case. Vacuum assisted delivery by a skilled person and a proper technique is found to be safer and associated with lesser maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality. Though the expertise is required in both the types of instrumental application, many obstetricians are comfortable with vacuum extraction and many studies have shown it to be safer than forceps. Improved training in instrumental delivery might help in reducing the complication rate and also the raising caesarean rate.

Funding: No funding sources
Conflict of interest: None declared
Ethical approval: The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee

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Cite this article as: Shwetha M, Shilpa MN. Maternal and neonatal outcomes in vacuum assisted births in the government tertiary care hospital in Mandya: a retrospective record-based study. Int J Reprod Contracept Obstet Gynecol 2020;9:965-9.