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**Disclaimer:**

Technology review is a brief report, prepared on an urgent basis, which draws on restricted reviews from analysis of pertinent literature, on expert opinion and / or regulatory status where appropriate. It has been subjected to an external review process. While effort has been made to do so, this document may not fully reflect all scientific research available. Additionally, other relevant scientific findings may have been reported since completion of this review.

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**Introduction**

Childbirth and the subsequent postnatal (or postpartum) period is a special phase in women's life during which major physical and emotional changes as well as adjustment to a new role occurs. It begins immediately after the birth of the baby and extends for about six weeks during which, the mother's body return to the non-pregnant state. Traditional postpartum or confinement beliefs and practices are common in many cultures including the three major ethnic groups in Malaysia. In spite of the long standing history of traditional rituals being practiced in postpartum women, its effect and safety profile are still not fully understood.

This technology review was conducted following a request from the Director of Traditional and Complementary Medicine Division, Ministry of Health Malaysia.

**Objective/Aim**

The objective of this technology review was to evaluate the evidence on effectiveness, safety and cost-effectiveness of traditional postnatal care which include postnatal deep tissue massage, breast massage, hot compression and body wrapping, in restoring women's physical and mental health.

**Results and Conclusions**

A total of 468 titles were identified through the Ovid interface and PubMed. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, seven articles were finally selected. There were two randomised controlled trials, three quasi-experimental studies, one cross-sectional, and one case report. No economic analysis was retrieved.

**Effectiveness**

*Postnatal massage*

There was low to fair level of retrievable evidence that examined the effectiveness of Malay traditional postnatal massage. A cross sectional study found that having Malay traditional postpartum massage was shown to have protective effect against postpartum (postnatal) depression (PND). In a case report of a Malay woman who developed postpartum stroke and received series of Malay massage, the patient was found to have improvement in her speech and fine motor skills. On the other hand, there were fair level of retrievable articles on other traditional postnatal massage that utilized similar techniques to the aforementioned Malay postnatal massage. The studies found that this postnatal massage seemed to have potential effect in reducing anxiety and stress level, improving quality of sleep and mental status among postnatal mothers.

*Postnatal breast massage*

There was no retrievable evidence on the effectiveness of Malay postnatal breast massage. However, there was fair level of retrievable evidence regarding the effectiveness of other traditional postnatal breast massage that utilized similar techniques to the above mentioned Malay breast massage. Two pre and post studies done among postnatal mothers in Korea found that breast massage may have effects on relieving breast pain.

*Postnatal hot compression and body wrapping*

There was low level of retrievable evidence on the effect of Malay hot compression and body wrapping among postnatal mothers. The study found no statistically significant relationship between these practices and PND. However, there was no retrievable evidence regarding the effect of other traditional hot compression and body wrapping among postnatal mothers.

### **Safety /Cost effectiveness/Cost**

There was no retrievable evidence on the adverse events and cost-effectiveness of Malay and other traditional postnatal practices; postnatal massage, breast massage, hot compression and body wrapping in restoring postnatal women's physical and mental health.

Malay postnatal care packages consisting of massage, hot compression (*tungku*) and abdominal wrapping (*barut*) as well as postnatal breast massage are provided free of charge in the Traditional and Complementary Unit, in several dedicated governmental hospitals.

In conclusion, there was limited fair level of retrievable evidence that suggest the effectiveness of traditional postnatal care in restoring women's physical (breast pain) and mental health (postnatal depression, anxiety, stress levels and quality of sleep).

### **Methods**

Electronic databases were searched through the Ovid interface; MEDLINE(R) In-Process and Other Non-Indexed Citations and Ovid MEDLINE (R) 1946 to present, EBM Reviews – Cochrane Central Registered of Controlled Trials – February 2015, EBM Reviews – Database of Abstracts of Review of Effects – 1st Quarter 2015, EBM Reviews – Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews – 2005 to February 2015, EBM Reviews – Health Technology Assessment – 1st Quarter 2015, EBM Reviews - NHS Economic Evaluation Database – 1st Quarter 2015. Other databases used include PubMed and Embase. Search was also conducted through some official websites such as World Health Organisation (WHO), Traditional and Complementary Medicine Malaysia and INAHTA. General database such as Google was used to search for additional web-based materials and information. Additional articles were retrieved from reviewing the bibliographies of retrieved articles. Studies were selected based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria included systematic review studies, randomised controlled trials (RCT), diagnostic accuracy studies, observational studies, case report and economic evaluation studies on traditional postnatal deep tissue massage, breast massage, hot compression and body wrapping. The sole use of herbs was not covered in this review. However, when an article reported its used together with the aforementioned traditional postnatal interventions, the article was selected. The search was limited to articles on human and English - written articles. All relevant literature was appraised using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) tool and were graded based on the guidelines from the U.S./Canadian Preventive Services Task Force. Last search was conducted on 20 March 2015.