

Virtual Relief: Intrapartum Pain Management through Immersive Technology

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Background

Virtual Reality (VR) has proven to be effective in reducing pain in a number of different health care settings (1–3). VR has found its way to the labour ward to help women cope with childbirth. Current studies on VR during labour focus on the clinical efficacy and differ in terms of dosage, VR applications and hardware (4–8). In order to develop and implement a VR intervention that meets women’s needs, this study aimed to explore current **knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, preferences, and expectations of (expecting) mothers and maternity care providers.**

Methods



Included a **30 minute virtual reality demo** using Oculus Quest® :

- ⇒An active app ('First Steps')
- ⇒A relaxing meditation app ('Tripp')

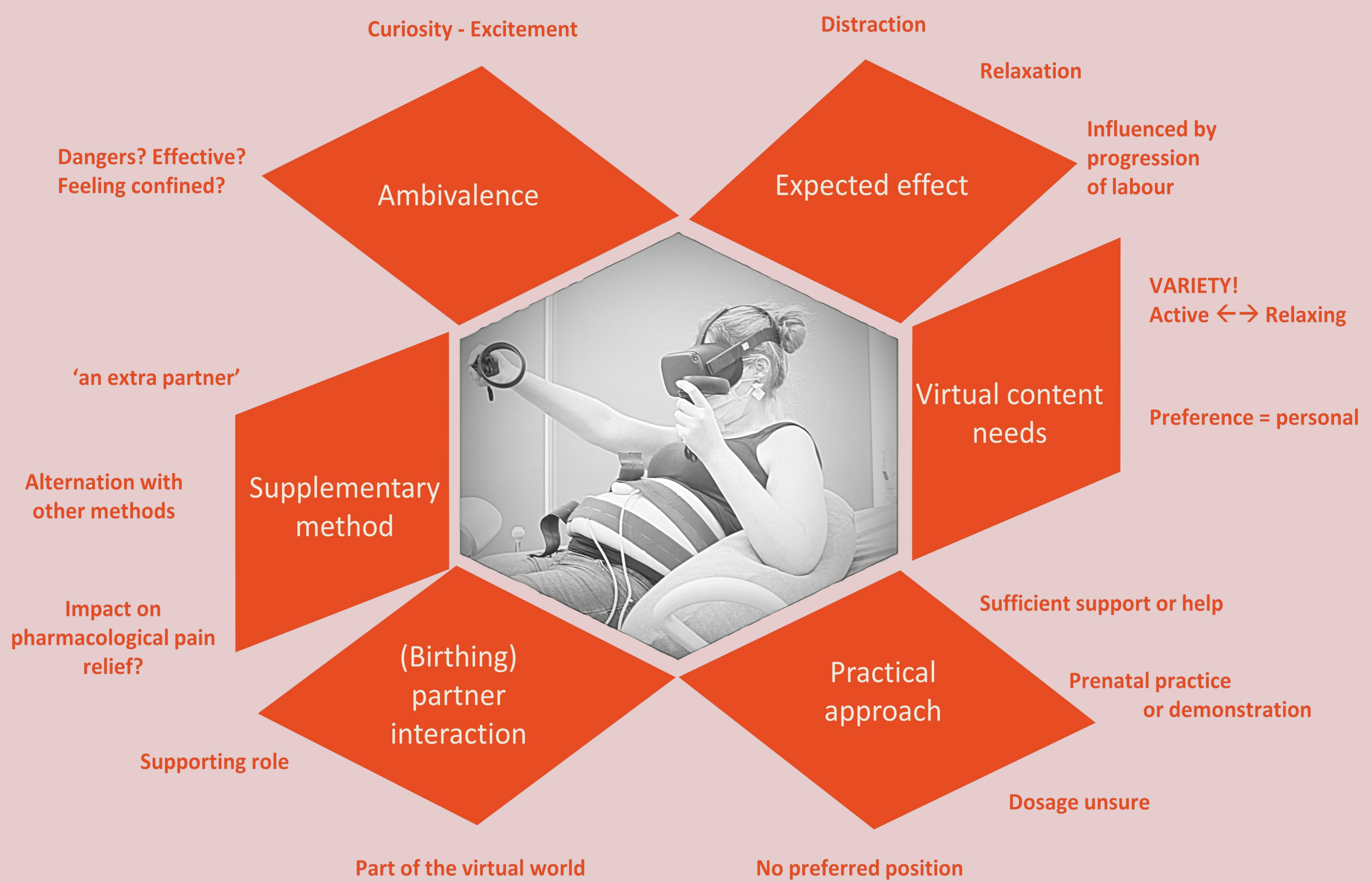
Different positions and seating options offered



Findings

Six main themes emerged:

- “Expected effect of VR during labour”
- “Virtual content experience and preference”
- “Ambivalence towards use of VR during labour”
- “Partner interaction”
- “VR as a supplementary pain management method during labour”
- “Practical approach”



Conclusions

- **Open attitude** towards VR as an intrapartum pain management method both by (expecting) mothers and maternity care providers
- Positive but cautious — Considered **supplementary** NOT a replacement for other methods
- Include in **prenatal education (classes)** and (perhaps) **birth plan**
- **Development** of birth specific VR applications:
 - ⇒A **variety** of virtual experiences
 - ⇒Preferred **duration still unknown**
 - ⇒**Partner interaction** should be considered
 - ⇒VR applications that **encourage mobility** to promote progression of labour



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