

## INTRODUCTION

During pregnancy all systems of woman's body change. Although these changes are temporary and essential for fetal growth and development, they often cause nuisance and physical, psychological and social discomfort in the life of the future mother. So many pregnant women choose to attend aquatic physical therapy sessions to minimize those discomforts (Stephenson & O'Connor, 2004; Henschler, 2007). The approach of physical therapy in this type of population should be holistic, flexible, individual and always based on evidence (ACOG, 2002).

The purpose of the study was to understand what motivated pregnant women to practice physical therapy in the aquatic environment and to identify which effects they considered most important.

## METHOD

### PARTICIPANTS:

Subjects are 21 pregnant women with a mean age of 33.0 years (SD = 3.9) and pregnancy time of 28.0 weeks (SD = 5.4). 91% of pregnant women were primiparous. Concerning their level of education, 66.7% of pregnant women had a bachelor degree, 19.0% an MsC and 14.3% the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. 14.3% practiced ground based physical therapy sessions plus aquatic sessions. The sample was recruited from two institutions that authorized the collection of data and all pregnant women signed the informed consent form.

### INSTRUMENTS:

A questionnaire was constructed for the study since we couldn't find any instrument to assess the items to be studied. This was evaluated by a group of Experts in order to verify if it included the essential questions about the theme and also to ensure the validation of content. The questionnaire was filled in by the participants themselves anonymously, short-lived, most questions being closed-answer.

### PROCEDURES:

Institutions offering aquatic physical therapy sessions were invited to participate in the study and the authorization request was made. Pregnant women were contacted and invited to participate in the study during aquatic pre-natal sessions. Women who agreed to participate in the study were informed about the procedures, the moments of data collection and instructions for filling out the questionnaire. They were asked to fill out the informed consent form. The questionnaire was given once to every pregnant that fit within the established criteria of inclusion and exclusion. The data were analyzed using the PASW® statistics program, version 19.0.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study suggests that the practice of aquatic physical therapy minimizes the symptoms related to pregnancy which is aligned with the recommendations of Artal and O'Toole (2003). Also the motivational factors pointed out by pregnant women are identified according to literature. Pregnant women who participated in the study were aware of the effects of the practice of this therapeutic modality. The psychological aspects presented higher percentages on the score "extremely important". It seems that aquatic physical therapy sessions during pregnancy should focus not only on controlling or decreasing symptoms perceived by pregnant but also have to direct the PT intervention onto the psychological aspects.

The study, although not representative of the general population allows to understand the reasons that lead pregnant women to seek and join PT aquatic sessions.

Although this is an area of physical therapy intervention in development, assessing the results of this PT intervention seems to be an indispensable element for those who work with pregnant women.

## RESULTS

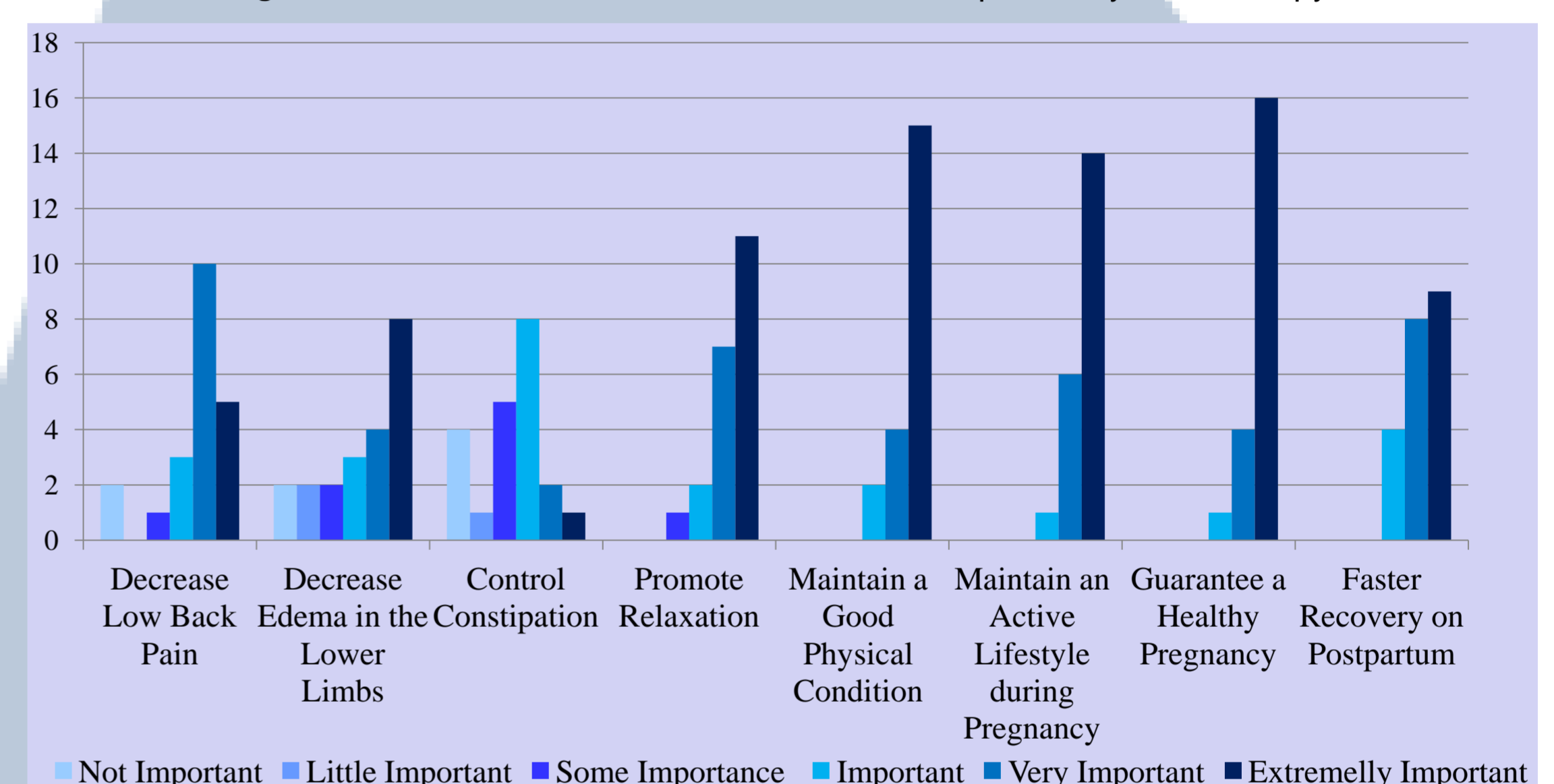
### Symptoms Identified

Among all symptoms that were mentioned, pain in the lumbar spine (71.4%), constipation (47.6%) and edema of the lower limbs (33.3%) were the ones that affected more the participants.

### Motivational Factors

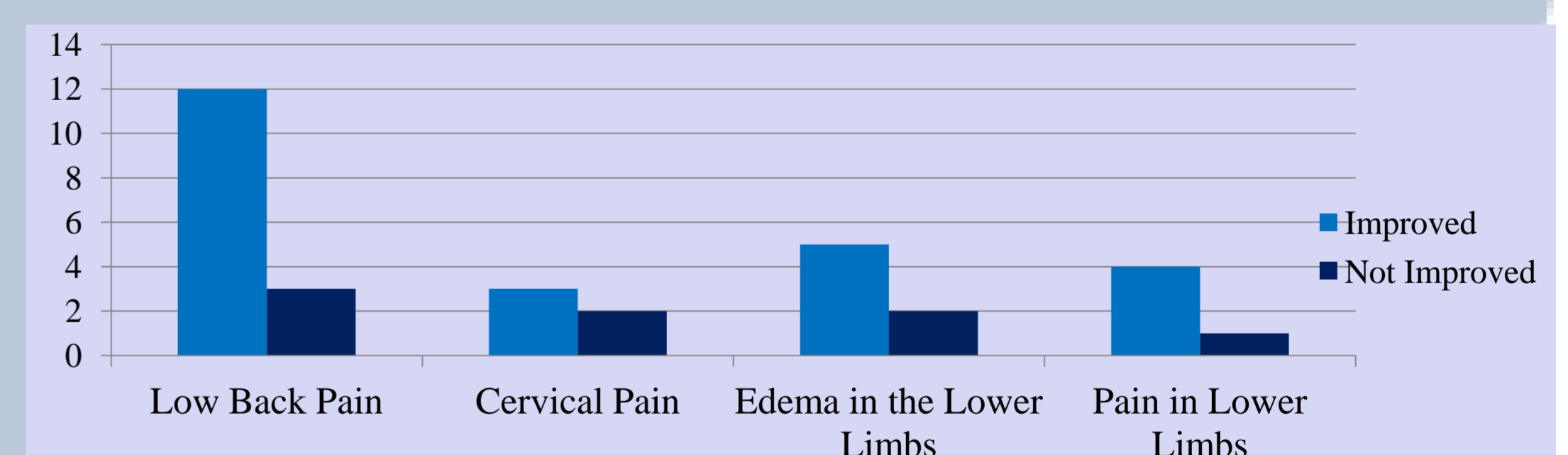
When asked what motivated their practice of aquatic physical therapy, pregnant women answered that wanted to minimize pregnant symptoms and to ensure psychological well-being. They scored these factors with very high percentages in the category "extremely important" as shown in Figure 1. Among these factors are: ensure a healthy pregnancy, maintain a good physical condition and an active lifestyle during pregnancy, promote relaxation and recover quickly in the postpartum period.

Figure 1. Motivational Factors to the Practice of Aquatic Physical Therapy



### Effects of Aquatic Physical Therapy on Pregnant

Most pregnant women who had symptoms considered they improved over the sessions of aquatic physical therapy. 80.0% improved back pain, 71.4% decreased edema in the lower limbs, neck pain 60.0% and 23.8% reported improvements in pain in the lower limbs.



## Bibliography

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