Continuous support for women during childbirth

Methods: A total of 27 RCTs involving 15,858 women from 17 different countries were included for meta-analysis.

Results: Women allocated to continuous support during labour had:

- More spontaneous vaginal birth (RR 1.08, 95% CI 1.04 to 1.12);
- Less negative feelings about childbirth experience (RR 0.69, 95% CI 0.59 to 0.79);
- Less any intrapartum analgesia (RR 0.90, 95% CI 0.84 to 0.96);
- Shorter labours (MD -0.69 hours, 95% CI -1.04 to -0.34);
- Less caesarean birth (RR 0.75, 95% CI 0.64 to 0.88; 24 trials);
- Less instrumental vaginal birth (RR 0.90, 95% CI 0.85 to 0.96);
- Less regional analgesia (RR 0.93, 95% CI 0.88 to 0.99); or
- Less low five-minute Apgar score (RR 0.62, 95% CI 0.46 to 0.85)

Conclusion: Continuous support during labour may improve various outcomes for women and infants, with no evidence of side effects.


Photo: “DOULAI: the ultimate birth companion” filmed by Toni Harman