

The nature of labour pain

An updated review of the literature

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Labour pain: unique and complex



Why is labour painful?

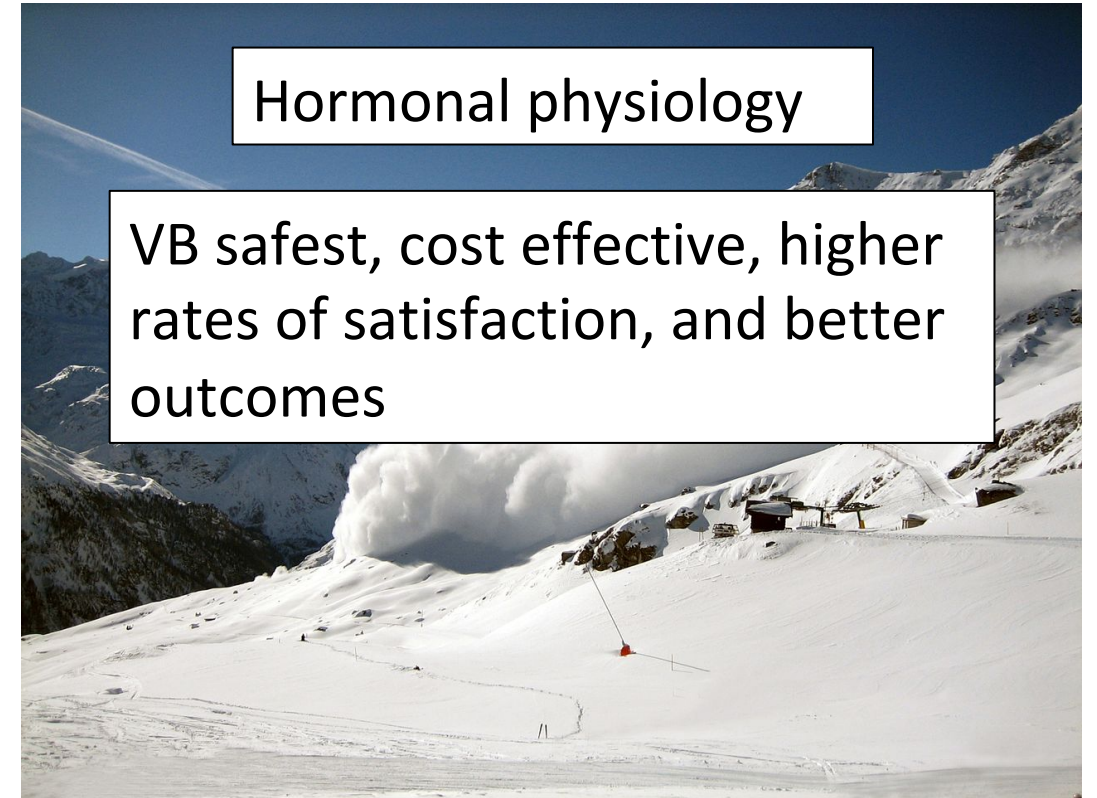
Why is the experience so varied?

An urgent need to better understanding labour pain

A pain relief epidemic



But.. normal birth is important



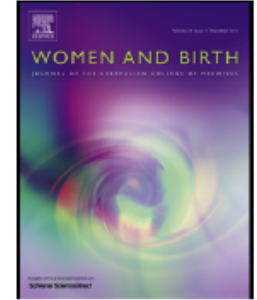


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Review article

The nature of labour pain: An updated review of the literature

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ABSTRACT

Background: The pain experience associated with labour is complex. Literature indicates psychosocial and environmental determinants of labour pain, and yet methods to support women usually target physiological attributes via pharmacological interventions.

Current conceptualisations of pain



Bio-
psycho-
social-
spiritual

Response
to
perceived
threat

Drives
behaviour

Searches: Medline,
CINAHL & PsycINFO

'labo?r', 'childbirth', 'pain'

'experience' OR 'perception'

English language

2001-present

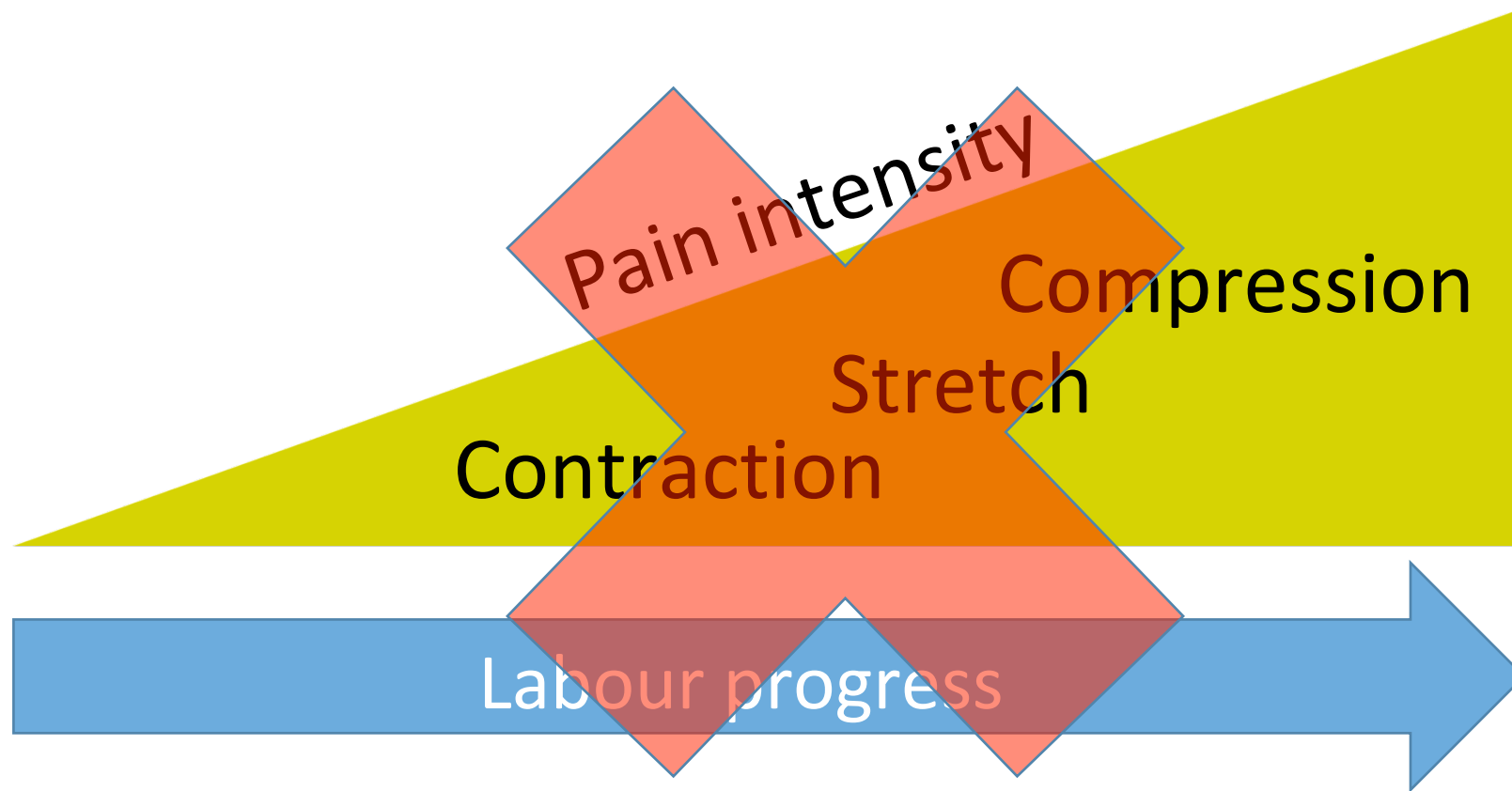
Peer reviewed

31 studies included

Characteristics:

- Qualitative (n=19) & quantitative (n=12) studies
- Various cultural and birthing settings
- Mainly from developed, well-resourced countries with western philosophy of health and wellbeing

Pain attributed to **normal** tissue-based changes of physiological labour



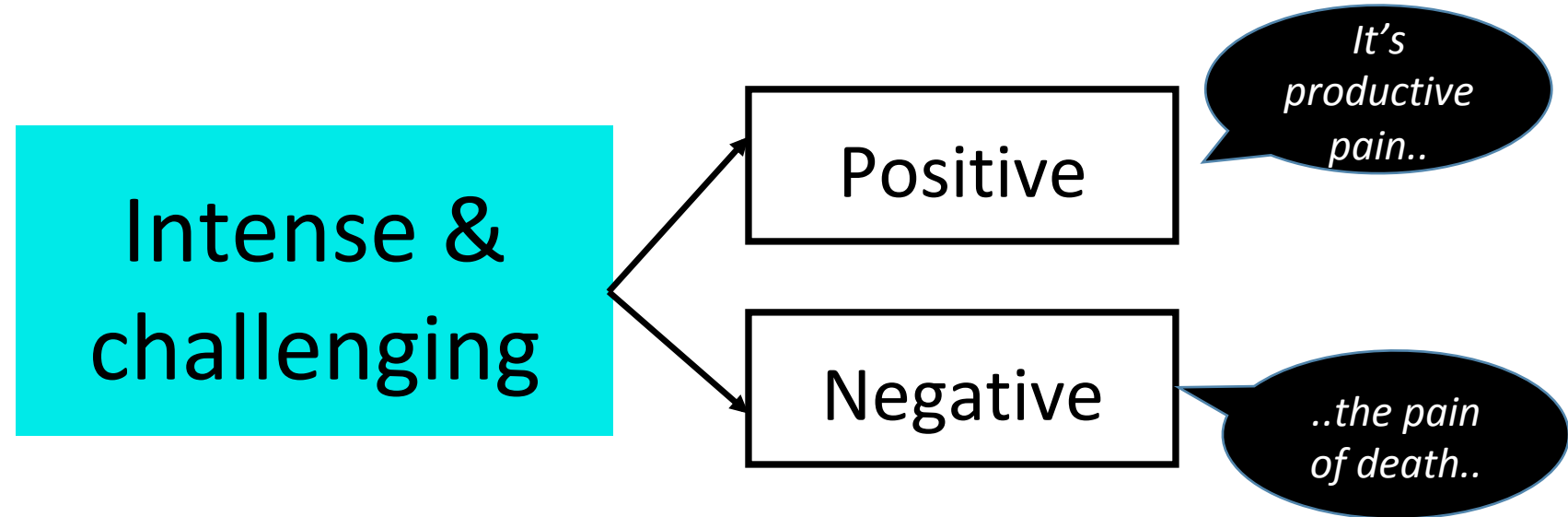
Findings

Intense &
challenging

Unique

Meaningful

Findings

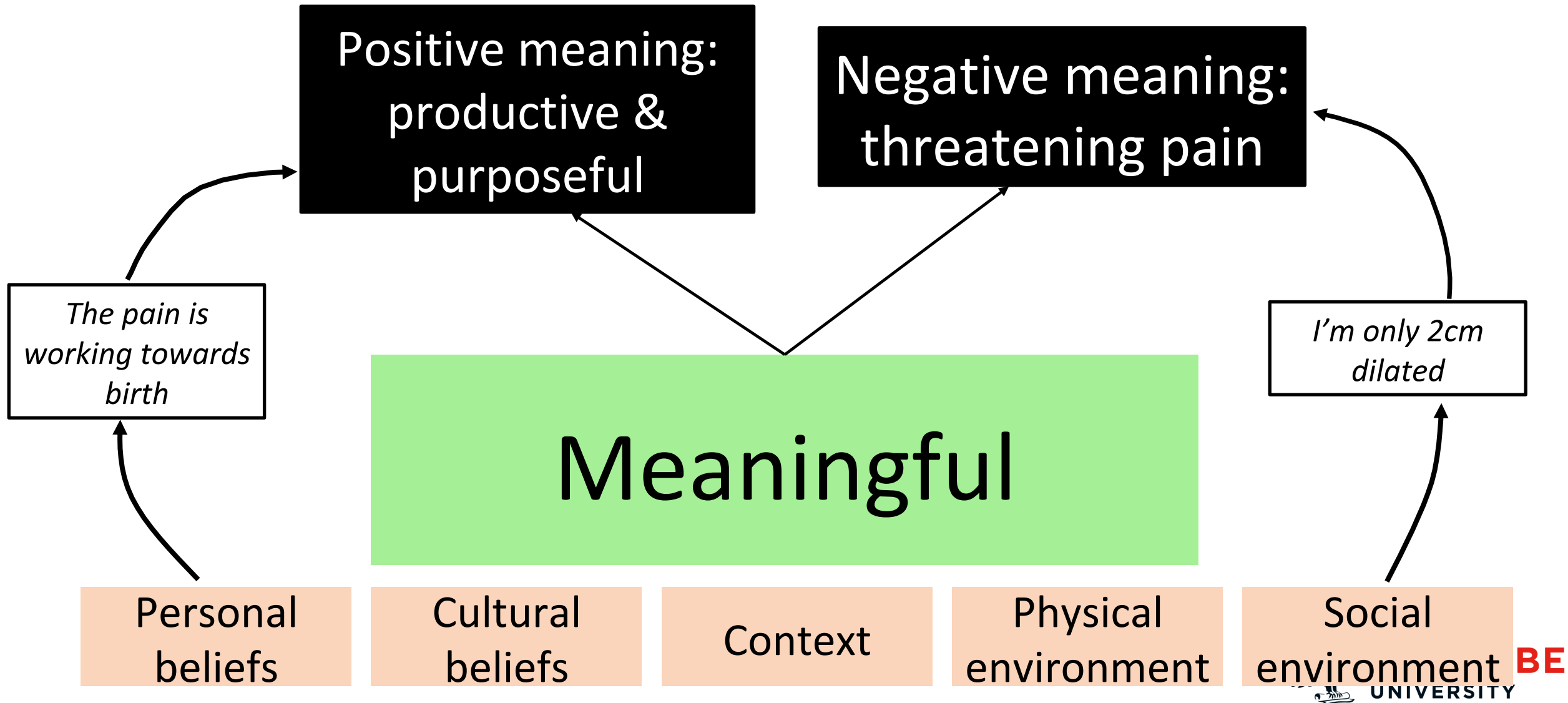


Findings

*I think of pain as something unnatural..
whereas labour is something my body is meant to be doing..*

Unique

Findings



Findings



Who is with her

What they do & say

I was asked eleven times if I wanted drugs...it tears away at your self-confidence

Attachment pattern

Self-efficacy for labour

Anxiety sensitivity

Attitudes & beliefs

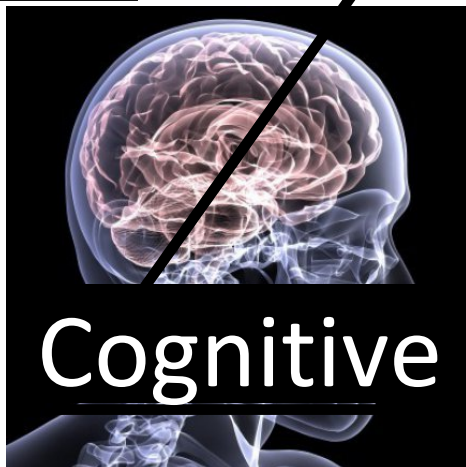
Intense & challenging

Unique

Culture & philosophy of labour care of place of birth

Physical space

Meaningful



Cognitive



Environmenta

What does this mean?



Labour pain is a highly **individual** experience

- Challenging, emotional and meaningful pain
- Shaped by cognitive, social and environmental factors

Woman-centred care

Labour pain is **different** to other types of pain

- Productive and purposeful pain
- Important role in hormonal physiology

Normalise labour pain

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