

MEDIA MOUNTAINS FROM MEDICAL MOLEHILLS; INTERNET FORUM INFORMATION COMPARED TO SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF ANKYLOGLOSSIA OUTCOMES.

Oliver Burdall, Ashish Minocha
Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, Norwich, UK

Aims of Study: Lay opinions and beliefs are more easily accessible to the public than medical research and the two may often be contradictory. We aimed to review both the lay evidence and medical evidence of the effects of ankyloglossia in order to examine the possible breadth of this disparity.

Methods: The information and comments, focusing on outcomes of untreated ankyloglossia, of commonly used internet forums for discussing tongue ties were reviewed retrospectively for period of 1 month. A systematic review of the literature was carried out on the claims made. Pubmed and NICE Healthcare Databases Advanced Search (HDAS) engines were used.

Main Results: Ankyloglossia focused online forums identified included 2 Facebook forums totalling 54017 members, 2 twitter feeds totalling 1520 followers and 3 other forums on popular parenting information sites. This also included information from 19 posted links to other sites. Claims of long term complications of untreated ankyloglossia ranged from breastfeeding issues to 22 other physical or mental ailments. Literature searches identified the same 382 and 1146 articles through pubmed and NICE HDAS respectively. 36 papers relevant to breastfeeding issues, 11 to speech difficulties, 6 to anatomical changes to oropharynx and 3 to dental decay were included. Only breastfeeding is shown to likely be effected by ankyloglossia, though all randomised control trials were hindered by methodical flaws. There is insufficient evidence in the literature to support any other lay claims on ankyloglossia outcomes.

Conclusion: There is a large disparity between lay beliefs and research findings. The proposed mechanisms for these outcomes are also not based within the realms of scientific logic. However, members of these forums were consistently disillusioned with doctors for lack of awareness rather than reassured. An awareness of lay information may be required by doctors to stop an increasing distrust of the medical profession.