



## SPECIAL ARTICLE

# Comparison of two World Health Organization partographs

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Partograph;  
Latent phase;  
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### Abstract

**Objective:** To compare two World Health Organization (WHO) partographs — a composite partograph including latent phase with a simplified one without the latent phase. **Method:** Comparison of the two partographs in a crossover trial. **Result:** Eighteen physicians participated in this trial. One or the other partograph was used in 658 parturients. The mean (S.D.) user-friendliness score was lower for the composite partograph (6.2 (0.9) vs. 8.6 (1.0);  $P=0.002$ ). Most participants (84%) experienced difficulty “sometimes” with the composite partograph, but no participant reported difficulty with the simplified partograph. While most maternal and perinatal outcomes were similar, labor values crossed the action line significantly more often when the composite partograph was used, and the women were more likely to undergo cesarean deliveries. **Conclusion:** The simplified WHO partograph was more user-friendly, was more to be completed than the composite partograph, and was associated with better labor outcomes.

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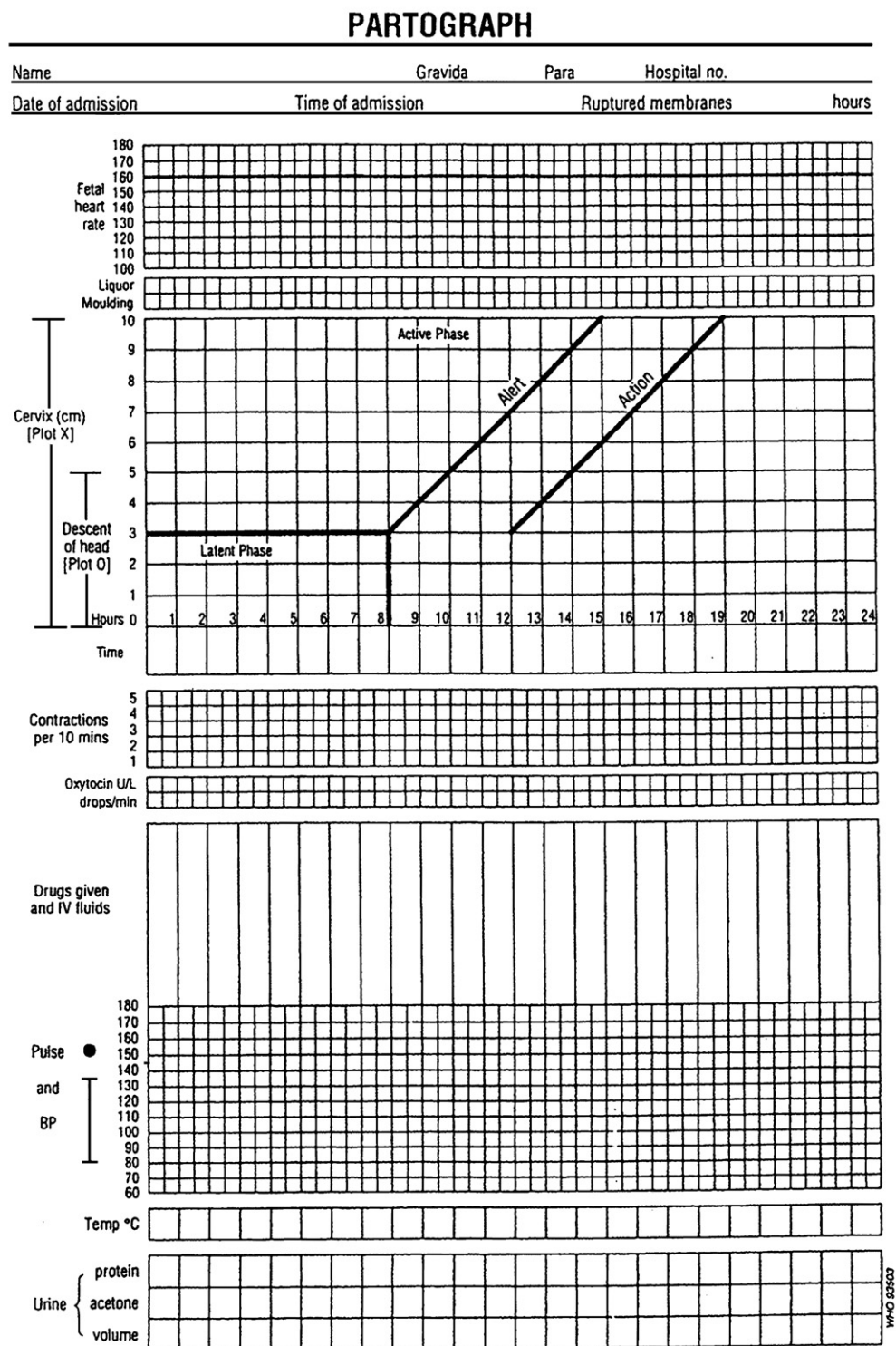
The first World Health Organization (WHO) partograph [1], or composite partograph, covers a latent phase of labor of up to 8 h and an active phase beginning when cervical dilatation reaches 3 cm. The active phase is provided with an alert and an action line, drawn 4 h apart on the partograph, as aids to monitoring labor. This partograph

enables staff attending women in labor to record the changes in maternal and perinatal variables, and the alert and action lines are meant to help the staff recognize alerts or initiate action (Fig. 1).

However, since the composite partograph covers the latent as well as the active phase, when a woman admitted during the latent phase enters the active phase, an attendant must “transfer” her *cervical dilatation* value to the appropriate place by means of a broken line. This “transfer” has been difficult for some staff to understand, leading to mistakes when filling out partographs [2]. And since a prolonged latent phase is relatively

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THE PARTOGRAPH:

Figure 1 The "composite" WHO partograph.

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