Hospital admissions for bronchiolitis in preterm infants in the absence of respiratory syncytial virus prophylaxis

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is the causative agent in more than 50% of cases of bronchiolitis, with mycoplasma pneumonia, Para influenza 3, adenovirus, and some other viruses accounting for most of the remaining cases. Mortality from bronchiolitis ranges from 1% to 3%. Although as yet there is no safe and effective vaccine, passive immunity with Palivizumab has been shown to reduce hospital admissions of preterm babies, but no reduction in mortality, intensive care admissions, or ventilation days was observed.1 Critical appraisal of this study reveals that the number of infants to be treated to prevent one hospital admission is between 17 and 22.

The objectives of our study were to document local admission rates of premature infants from clinical bronchiolitis, assess local mortality and morbidity secondary to bronchiolitis, and examine seasonal and annual variation of bronchiolitis admissions. By examining hospital admission databases in Cork University Hospital, all admissions between 1997 and 2001 for clinical bronchiolitis, including intensive care admissions, were identified. Parents of premature infants (32 weeks) born in the Maternity Services in Cork in 1997–2001 were contacted by telephone and postal questionnaire, with a response rate 82%.

Thirty five of 174 babies (20%) were admitted for bronchiolitis over this five year period. Total hospital inpatient stay was 175 days. Average length of stay was five days per infant. Peak incidence of bronchiolitis, and examine seasonal and annual variation of bronchiolitis admissions. By examining hospital admission databases in Cork University Hospital, all admissions between 1997 and 2001 for clinical bronchiolitis, including intensive care admissions, were identified. Parents of premature infants (32 weeks) born in the Maternity Services in Cork in 1997–2001 were contacted by telephone and postal questionnaire, with a response rate 82%.

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The wide variation in local practice undoubtedly reflects the lack of published trials. Formal comparisons of weaning regimens are necessary to minimise morbidity resulting from undertreatment and overtreatment with NCPAP.

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We thank all the neonatal units that contributed to this survey.

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References

Consensus on neonatal infusion pumps and pressure monitoring
Wilkins and Emmerson highlighted the lack of consensus on the management of extravasation injuries in neonates. Modern neonatal infusion pumps can measure intravenous pressure and could theoretically detect early infiltration and subsequent extravasation injuries. Clinically, however, extravasation injuries appear to occur even when inline pressures are monitored and cannulae sites are inspected hourly. However, it is a common misconception that occlusion alarms on infusion pumps will signal infiltration. In fact, pumps will alarm only when downstream pressure reaches a specified value, and elevated pressures resulting from infiltration are typically far lower than occlusion triggering levels. In infants, monitoring of inline intravenous pressure is not useful for predicting or detecting infiltration of peripheral catheter sites. Resistance measurements may be useful in detecting infiltration injuries, but are not widely available and at present there are no commercially available infusion pumps that can reliably detect infiltration. We undertook a telephone survey of 14 tertiary neonatal centres to determine whether there was consensus on monitoring infusion pumps and pressures, cannulae sites, and the management of any resulting tissue burns. A variety of volumetric (45% Ivac) and syringe (30% Alaris) pumps were used. Monitoring of infusion pressures were by either actual inline pressure readings or a standardised “bar” system displaying pressure readings, or by both methods. Pressure alarms were calibrated for individual babies, set to 10 to 150 “units” above the baseline reading, or preset by the manufacturer to arbitrary settings. Pressure readings were recorded hourly on either the fluid or intensive care charts (78%), and the remainder only observed the pressure readings. Some units used cannulae for total per- enteral nutrition (four), 15% dextrose or higher (six), and isotropes (one). A selection of cannulae were used, although none of the units had written guidelines on the removal of presumed tunnelled cannulae. All units used clinical judgment for deciding on the removal of presumed tunnelled cannula regardless of the pressure reading. A variety of procedures were undertaken including flushing the cannula and checking the cannula site more frequently. Cannulae removal was recorded on either fluid charts or intensive charts, nursing or medical notes, or care plans.

This study has highlighted the lack of consensus on how tertiary neonatal centres monitor and manage infusion pumps and pressure readings and cannulae and the lack of written guidelines. The lack of consensus on the use of new generation pumps and their pressure readings probably stems from the lack of evidence that at present monitoring infusion pump pressures reduces the incidence of extravasation injuries. Nevertheless, this study has further consolidated the need for standardisation in the overall management of extravasation injuries, and calls for further research in this neglected field of neonatology.

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References

Cytokine polymorphisms and chronic lung disease in small preterm infants
There is increasing evidence that pulmonary inflammation contributes to the pathogenesis of chronic lung disease (CLD). Cytokines are key factors in the inflammatory response. The response of various cytokines to stressful stimuli have been shown to be partly due to interindividual variation at a genetic level. The possibility that genetic factors play a role in susceptibility to CLD has been reported. We decided to investigate whether gene polymorphisms for tumour necrosis factor α (TNF-α) and interleukin 1 (IL-1) influence the risk of developing CLD in small preterm (<30 weeks gestation) infants. A total of 224 ventilated small preterm infants were enrolled into a case-control study to investigate the association between TNF-α-308 G/A and IL-1 polymorphisms with ventilator polysomnography, polymerase chain reaction and restriction analysis. Genotype distribution and allelic frequencies were compared between infants with CLD and those without CLD. According to the definition of CLD, 112 infants developed CLD, and 112 infants did not. The following clinical risk factors for CLD did not differ between the groups: prenatatal steroid use, premature rupture of the membranes, presence of amionitis, Apgar score, sex, gestational age, birth weight, surfactant therapy, patent ductus arteriosus, and sepsis.

There was no significant association between the genotype or the allelic frequency of the TNF-α or IL-1β -308 polymorphism with CLD and the duration of intermittent mandatory ventilation. The most common genotypes for TNF-α-308 polymorphism for CLD and their healthy control infants were the G homozygote. The proportions of A homozygote/G heterozygote for the TNF-α-308 polymorphism for CLD and their healthy control infants were 5.4/21.4/73.2% and 5.4/32.1/62.5% respectively. The most common genotypes for IL-1β for CLD and their healthy controls were the G homozygote. The proportions of T homozygote/G heterozygote for IL-1β for CLD and their healthy control infants were 87.5/12.5% and 85.7/14.3% respectively. The most common genotypes for IL-1β exon 5 for CLD and their healthy controls were the G homozygote. The proportions of T homozygote/G heterozygote for IL-1β exon 5 for CLD and their healthy control infants were 92.9/7.1% and 94.6/5.4% respectively. We conclude that TNF-α-308, IL-1β, and IL-1β exon 5 polymorphisms are not useful predictors for predicting the susceptibility of the Chinese population in Taiwan to CLD.
Lower placental weight is associated with raised cord serum insulin concentrations at birth

A growing body of evidence suggests that the malnourished fetus may develop peripheral insulin resistance1 and that low birth weight is a risk factor for metabolic and cardiovascular disease in adulthood.2 As intrauterine nutrition and fetal growth depends on the placenta, we hypothesise that low weight placenta may be linked to the increase in serum insulin concentration in small for gestational age (SGA) term newborn infants.

We compared 20 SGA babies with 40 of appropriate size for gestational age (AGA) in a cross-sectional study matched by mother’s age, weight before pregnancy, weight increase throughout pregnancy, and duration of gestation. Risk factors related to retardation of fetal growth and conditions that affect glucose metabolism during labour were exclusion criteria. Gestational age >38 and <41 weeks, birth weight <10th centile, serum insulin concentration >30 pmol/l, and weight of placenta <400 g defined term babies, SGA, high serum insulin concentration, and low weight placenta.

Babies born SGA with low weight placenta (346 (19) g) had the lowest birth weight (2056 (269) g) and the highest serum insulin concentration (51.9 (10.8) pmol/l), whereas babies born SGA with placental weight >400 g (466 (65) g) had the lowest serum insulin concentration (15.9 (3.3) pmol/l) (values are mean (SD)). On the other hand, babies born AGA exhibited the highest birth weight (3362 (234) g) and placental weight (549 (82) g), with mean serum insulin concentration of 30.9 (8.6) pmol/l. Glucose concentrations were similar between the groups, and there were no hypoglycaemic events. Placental weight and serum insulin concentration showed a significant inverse correlation (fig 1).

Multivariate regression analysis of the relation between low weight placenta and high serum insulin concentration found an odds ratio of 2.1, 95% confidence interval 1.3 to 14.3, p = 0.01.

Although serum insulin concentrations are lower in lower birth weight babies,1 in this study SGA infants with low weight placenta had the lowest birth weight but the highest serum insulin concentration, which suggests that these babies may have developed insulin resistance in utero, a phenomenon that seems to be linked to the low weight placenta. Whether the low weight placenta causes immaturity of the placenta and/or placental dysfunction and this affects the somatotropic axis in SGA children remains to be established.

Acknowledgements

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Current use of nasal continuous positive airways pressure in neonates

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