SYMPOSIUM

Oxygen therapy for infants with chronic lung disease

S Kotecha, J Allen

Supplemental oxygen is a safe and effective treatment for infants with established chronic lung disease who are not at risk of further progression of retinopathy of prematurity (ROP). Oxygen saturations of < 92% should be avoided and a target range of at least 94–96% aimed for. The saturation target range for very preterm infants at risk of developing ROP is more controversial, but the therapeutic index is probably considerably narrower.

Infants with chronic lung disease of infancy (CLD) and hypoxaemia requiring supplemental oxygen are likely to be a problem as long as preterm deliveries continue to occur. Antenatal and postnatal corticosteroids have decreased the prevalence of respiratory distress syndrome, and the use of lower inspired oxygen tensions and reduced positive inspiratory pressures during mechanical ventilation has contributed to a lower prevalence of CLD. In infants surviving increasingly premature delivery, antenatal and postnatal infection and patent ductus arteriosus both contribute to the development of CLD. Discussed below is the rationale and aims of oxygen therapy in infants with CLD. The following article by Professor Abman focuses on cardiovascular aspects in children with CLD.

RATIONALE AND PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF SUPPLEMENTAL OXYGEN

Although the potentially damaging effects of oxygen toxicity must be recognised and avoided, there are clear reasons why the administration of supplemental oxygen to hypoxaemic infants with CLD is beneficial. Alveolar hypoxia is a well described cause of pulmonary artery hypertension resulting from hypoxic pulmonary vasoconstriction. Supplemental oxygen reverses hypoxic pulmonary vasoconstriction, improving oxygen saturation, decreasing pulmonary vascular resistance, and improving right ventricular performance and peripheral oxygen delivery. Abman reported cardiac catheterisation findings of significant decreases in pulmonary artery pressure, from 48 to 25 mm Hg, in infants with CLD given 80% oxygen, and found that most of the benefit occurred at much lower oxygen concentrations which could be administered by nasal cannula at home. Some infants who do not respond fully to oxygen may have further decreases in pulmonary artery hypertension with the administration of hydralazine, although this appears to be contraindicated in infants with large systemic to pulmonary collateral vessels.

Infants with CLD who are oxygen dependent can have a difficult first few years, often not growing well and requiring frequent readmission to hospital for respiratory exacerbations. Right ventricular hypertrophy resolves, but only gradually. Groothuis and Rosenberg found, however, that supplementation with oxygen at home enabled oxygen dependent infants to grow as well as healthy full term infants. Inappropriately early discontinuation of oxygen caused a significant deceleration in weight gain, which again improved when oxygen supplementation was restarted.

The effects of chronic hypoxaemia on growth of the central nervous system and its effects on developmental status have been studied. It is difficult to separate the long term consequences of adverse neurological events associated with premature delivery from those of chronic postnatal hypoxaemia. Lifschitz described a two year follow up of infants with CLD with birth weights of less than 1500 g: 20% had hearing impairment or were registered blind, 30% had cerebral palsy, and 46% had abnormal developmental scores. Whereas the requirement for oxygen at hospital discharge did not predict developmental score, a history of intraventricular haemorrhage and pulmonary air leak and the length of hospital stay did. Doyle et al performed an eight year follow up of infants with birth weights less than 1000 g. Contrary to the authors’ expectations, children who had received less oxygen and ventilation had poorer growth and more severe cerebral palsy. Although this may have been surprising in that children who required more oxygen may have been expected to have more severe disease and therefore more adverse outcomes, it may indicate that programmes aimed at aggressively normalising oxygen saturations may help to avert adverse neurological outcomes.

IDEAL OXYGEN SATURATION TARGETS: RISKS AND BENEFITS OF OXYGEN

Within days of normal full term birth, arterial oxygen partial pressure approximates that seen in the normal adult. It is therefore logical to aim for saturations of 95–99% in the full term (or equivalent postconceptional age) and older infant. However, in premature infants with immature retinae, high inspired oxygen concentrations were clearly linked to the development of retinopathy of prematurity (ROP) in the 1940s and 1950s. (Oxidant injury may also play a role in the pathogenesis of CLD.) Most of the controversy about
the saturation targets of oxygen therapy clearly surrounds the preterm infant who has not yet reached term postconceptional age. In reaction to the threat of ROP associated with unrestricted supplemental oxygen, many took the opposite approach, severely restricting supplemental oxygen. It has been estimated that, as a result, 16 children died or survived with severe disability for every child whose sight was saved.\textsuperscript{11} More recent approaches with cautious oxygen restriction found reduced incidence and severity of ROP without unduly increased death rates.\textsuperscript{12} Although until recently, oxygen saturations of 96–99% were considered unsafe for the retinal vessels of the premature infant, and values of 90–95% were targeted instead, new evidence on the safety of higher saturation targets has recently appeared. In the United States, a multicentre trial of 649 oxygen dependent premature infants with moderately severe ROP (“STOP-ROP” study) determined the effect on progression from prethreshold to threshold ROP of two different oxygen saturation targets: 89–94% and 96–99%.\textsuperscript{13} “Threshold ROP” is defined as ROP severe enough to warrant laser therapy or cryotherapy. This study found no adverse effect with the higher saturation targets, and in some cases risk of progression was even decreased (48% to 41%). Using similar number needed to treat analysis as above, it has been estimated that about 13 infants with prethreshold ROP need to be treated with supplemental oxygen to prevent one child needing retinal surgery. Of some concern, however, was the finding of a marginally higher incidence of pulmonary complications in the infants treated with the higher saturation targets.

In contrast, Tin et al\textsuperscript{14} retrospectively studied the records of 295 infants born before 28 weeks gestation and found that saturation targets as low as 70–90% were associated with significantly less threshold disease (4% incidence) than saturation targets of 88–98% (18% incidence). The STOP-ROP and Tin studies are difficult to compare because the STOP-ROP trial prospectively studied only infants with prethreshold ROP, in whom the risk for progression to threshold is understandably higher, whereas the retrospective study of Tin et al examined all preterm births. Both studies seem to agree that the risk of progression to threshold ROP is much reduced after 30–32 weeks postconceptional age.\textsuperscript{15} Tin et al have readily admitted that their paper generates a hypothesis that lower oxygen saturations may be acceptable. There is obvious concern about accepting lower oxygen saturations in view of the risk of progression to threshold ROP (“STOP-ROP” study) determined the effect on progression from prethreshold to threshold ROP of two different oxygen saturation targets: 89–94% and 96–99%. “Threshold ROP” is defined as ROP severe enough to warrant laser therapy or cryotherapy. This study found no adverse effect with the higher saturation targets, and in some cases risk of progression was even decreased (48% to 41%). Using similar number needed to treat analysis as above, it has been estimated that about 13 infants with prethreshold ROP need to be treated with supplemental oxygen to prevent one child needing retinal surgery. Of some concern, however, was the finding of a marginally higher incidence of pulmonary complications in the infants treated with the higher saturation targets.

One understudied risk factor is wide swings of oxygen saturation, irrespective of the absolute percentage saturation. There is some speculation that the vascular damage related to hypoxia or hyperoxia may be more a consequence of sudden decreases and increases in oxygen level, which are associated with episodic oxidant damage, rather than hypoxia or hyperoxia per se. Evidence for this exists for ROP but not for the lung.\textsuperscript{16} If this were true, it would argue for closer continuous saturation monitoring.

No matter what oxygen saturations are targeted for infants with CLD at home, it must be recognised that significant oxyhaemoglobin desaturation can occur during periods of feeding or sleep, and appropriate adjustments in supplemental oxygen levels should be made during these periods. Clinically unexpected hypoxaemia often occurs in infants with CLD, and to a lesser extent with prematurity alone than in control full term infants.\textsuperscript{17} Desaturation seems more severe during feeding than during wakfulness, active, and quiet sleep. Singler et al\textsuperscript{18} described similar problems in infants with CLD but found that hypoxaemia was more severe after feeding than during. It has been speculated that such desaturation puts these infants at higher risk of sudden unexplained death.\textsuperscript{19} Sleep related changes in control of breathing could also affect sleeping oxygen saturation levels. Sekar and Duke\textsuperscript{20} described more central apnoea and desaturation in sleeping infants with CLD than in preterm controls; oxygen saturation, central apnoea, and periodic breathing all improved with supplemental oxygen therapy, which may have improved central respiratory stability. Such sleep related decreases in oxygen saturation are worsened by certain positions—for example, sleeping in a “containing posture” or hammock, which has been proposed to have advantageous neurodevelopmental effects in preterm infants.\textsuperscript{21} Abnormal sleep architecture in infants with CLD helps to maintain oxygen saturation by increasing arousals. This sleep fragmentation and decreased REM sleep can be improved with supplemental oxygen. A targeted saturation of at least 93% optimises sleep architecture in these infants.\textsuperscript{22} In summary, oxygen saturations of < 92% should be avoided and a target range of 94–96% aimed for. Such a range will provide a buffer zone against desaturations during feeding and sleep.

**EQUIPMENT FOR MONITORING OXYGEN SATURATION**

Non-invasive monitoring of transcutaneous PO\textsubscript{2} (P\textsubscript{TCO\textsubscript{2}}) and percentage oxyhaemoglobin saturation has revolutionised our ability to accurately track oxygenation status. Pulse oximetry can accurately track changes in arterial blood gas saturation in the 80–100% range measured over a wide range of heart rate, blood pressure, packed cell volume, P\textsubscript{CO\textsubscript{2}}, and pH values in infants with CLD, and seems to be more accurate than P\textsubscript{TCO\textsubscript{2}}.\textsuperscript{23} This is also true in very low birthweight infants.\textsuperscript{24} Other advantages of pulse oximeters over P\textsubscript{TCO\textsubscript{2}}, monitors are that the instruments do not require calibration or cause skin burns. Accuracy of pulse oximetry does diminish in the lower range of oxygen saturation.\textsuperscript{25} More sophisticated use of pulse oximetry has enabled it to be used as more than simply a monitoring device. Bhutani et al\textsuperscript{26} described a system whereby feedback from a pulse oximeter provided online adjustment of F\textsubscript{IO\textsubscript{2}} according to an adaptive programme. Such adaptive F\textsubscript{IO\textsubscript{2}} control achieved a steady oxygen saturation of 94–96% for 81% of the time, compared with 54% of the time using a standard neonatal intensive care protocol. Such adaptive programmes may be particularly useful in not only achieving oxygen saturation target ranges, but also preventing wide swings in oxygen saturation.

**DISCHARGE PLANNING**

Oxygen therapy does not require a hospital environment, and major benefits accrue from discharging stable infants with CLD while they are still receiving supplemental oxygen. The major benefit is promotion of normal development and parent-infant bonding, which is best achieved in the environment of the home. Considerable financial benefits are achieved for the health care system (not necessarily for the family), and the risk of nosocomial infection is eliminated, although counselling against exposure to viruses from ill relatives and friends at home must be given. Sending premature infants home while they are receiving oxygen therapy requires careful planning to ensure success, taking into account a number of patient, family, financial, home, and community factors. This is best done in the context of an organised programme of discharge planning and parent education.\textsuperscript{27} These have recently been discussed (ATS BPD statement; in review). The infant needs to be first and foremost medically stable, showing good growth and without frequent events leading to desaturation and CO\textsubscript{2} retention.\textsuperscript{28} If chronic CO\textsubscript{2} retention is present, it is preferably controlled at less than 50 torr or so, although higher levels may be acceptable if stable; some form of intermittent non-invasive or invasive, or
Continuous invasive ventilatory assistance aimed at resting the respiratory muscles may be occasionally required to achieve these goals.

The duration of home oxygen therapy has varied widely. Beca et al. reported a mean duration of 71 days (range 7–339). The mean age of discontinuation of home oxygen therapy has been reported to be 13.4 months, but again varies widely. Baraldi et al. reported that, in a prospective home oxygen therapy programme, infants with CLD were discharged at a mean age of 3.7 months, mean duration of oxygen therapy was 97 days (range 15–320), and the mean age of discontinuation of oxygen was 6.9 months (range 3–14.7). Infants improved at home; right ventricular hypertrophy resolved in most, and there was no further progression of ROP, but weight gain remained sluggish at the third centile.

EQUIPMENT FOR DELIVERING OXYGEN
A number of methods are available for delivering oxygen. Oxygen concentrators are best suited for infants with CLD who require low flows of between 0.06 and 0.8 litres/min. They work by filtering air through a series of filters to remove particulate matter (including bacteria) and nitrogen with the resultant oxygen stored in a reservoir before use. Usually two outlets are sufficient: one in the main living room area and another in the child’s bedroom. Oxygen cylinders (PD size) are essential for mobility, and the newer cylinders made of aluminium are much lighter than the traditional steel ones. Liquid oxygen, which is stored at −183°C, is more suitable when the oxygen requirements are high. As most infants require less than 1 litre of oxygen per minute, this is only occasionally used in infants with CLD. The general practitioner currently prescribes these items, and the local oxygen company will provide both training and a 24 hour back up service. Low flow oxygen is delivered in most cases through a nasal cannula. In addition to back up provided for the equipment, access to 24 hour medical care is also essential especially at times of intercurrent viral illness.

CARE IN THE COMMUNITY
Many centres in the United Kingdom have developed the use of specialist respiratory nurses for monitoring children at home on oxygen, although a number of other people are essential for the service. These include dieticians, health visitors, general practitioners, hospital and community paediatricians, social workers as well as other professionals such as physiotherapists and speech therapists. Initially, after discharge, the infant is seen frequently especially as parental anxiety is likely to be high. At each visit, the child’s progress is monitored with particular attention to the respiratory, cardiovascular, and neurological systems, and to the growth of the child. Any parental anxiety is addressed, and the children are also seen within the hospital setting on a regular basis. “Spot” checks of oxygen saturations are insufficient to guide oxygen therapy, and prolonged monitoring of oxygen saturation by pulse oximetry while the child is awake, feeding, and asleep is likely to provide a more accurate picture of the child’s respiratory status. Modern software will rapidly analyse the data stored in pulse oximeters, and, according to preset parameters, identify episodes of hypoxaemia as well as the average oxygen saturation (fig 1). Arterial or indeed capillary blood gases are rarely performed in the stable situation, and transcutaneous monitors are rarely used. Management of the cardiovascular system is discussed in more detail in the following article.

WEANING FROM HOME OXYGEN
No uniform standards are used in weaning infants from home oxygen. Most commonly, prolonged pulse oximetry (fig 1) is used to determine when it is appropriate to wean infants from supplemental oxygen, using target saturation values similar to those used during oxygen supplementation. Weaning is also likely to be influenced by other factors, including associated medical problems (for example, pulmonary hypertension), somatic growth, and sometimes the weather. It should also be remembered that saturation measurement when the infant is awake may not reflect sleeping saturations. Moyer-Mileur et al. compared saturations during short term (20–30 minute) awake studies with prolonged sleeping studies in infants with CLD, and found no correlation. Furthermore, they compared infants whose supplemental oxygen was discontinued on the basis of normal short term studies, but who had saturations of 88–91% during prolonged sleep studies, with infants who had saturations of greater than 92% during prolonged sleep studies. The infants with lower saturations had a significant decrease in weight gain (from 17.3 to 3.7 g/kg/day), z scores for weight gain, and weight for height compared with the infants with higher saturations.

Longer awake studies using higher saturations as targets may allow more accurate prediction of which infants will tolerate discontinuation of oxygen at home. Vermeulen et al. showed that infants who could be weaned from oxygen had awake median saturations of 97% during one hour awake studies, spent only 14% of time with saturation ≥95% and 2% of time ≥ 92%. Two hour room air challenges were used by Simoes et al. to determine suitability for weaning from room air. They found that in most infants, the lowest saturation levels were reached by 40 minutes after the discontinuation of oxygen and that all infants receiving oxygen flow rates

![Figure 1](http://fn.bmj.com/Arch Dis Child Fetal Neonatal Ed)
the duration of oxygen therapy. Gradual weaning does seem preferable to abrupt weaning in terms of ROP risk, independent of the duration of oxygen therapy.

CONCLUSIONS
Supplemental oxygen is a safe and effective treatment with a wide therapeutic index in the infant with established CLD who is not at risk of further progression of ROP. In such infants, oxygen saturations of < 92% should be avoided and a target range of at least 94–96% aimed for. Recent studies have shown the safety of higher oxygen saturation targets (95–99%) in appropriate infants. Such a range will provide a buffer zone against desaturations during feeding and sleep. This target is consistent with current recommendations. Maintenance of oxygen saturations in this range reduces complications from pulmonary artery hypertension and promotes growth. The saturation target range for very preterm infants at risk of developing ROP is more controversial, but it seems clear that the therapeutic index is considerably narrower. Pulse oximetry monitoring can be an accurate and effective way to maintain oxygen saturations within target ranges, especially during sleep, when oxygen saturation is likely to fall to suboptimal levels.

REFERENCES


Aspiration pneumonia in association with oral vitamin K

Most infants born in the British Isles now receive vitamin K prophylaxis, and the trend towards oral administration continues.1 With the awareness that vitamin K is well absorbed from the gut2 and following publication of the report linking intramuscular vitamin K and childhood cancer,3 oral vitamin K prophylaxis has become more widespread. However, because of lack of uniform national policy, the practice of vitamin K administration varies from region to region. Cases of aspiration or anaphylaxis following oral vitamin K administration in neonates have not been previously reported.

We report three cases of aspiration associated with oral vitamin K. Orakay, the preparation uniformly used in Northeast England. Acute respiratory distress developed in previously well, breast fed neonates following administration of Orakay at home. All required hospital admission, and two of them had radiological evidence of aspiration.

Case 1: a 14 day old term boy was well until the community midwife gave a second dose of Orakay at home. All required hospital admission and remained very unsettled. Within an hour, he immediately developed a cough, tachypnoeic, and refused feeds. On examination, she had features of respiratory distress. A septic screen was negative. A chest radiograph was normal. After discharge, he was given a fourth dose of Orakay under hospital supervision and remained well.

Case 2: a 14 day old girl was well until the community midwife gave a second dose of Orakay at home. All required hospital admission and remained well. She was grunting, tachypnoeic, and refusing feeds. On admission, she had features of respiratory distress. A septic screen was negative. She was discharged home on formula milk, and therefore did not need further Orakay.

Case 3: a 28 day old term girl was thriving and had tolerated two doses of Orakay. When her father administered a third dose, she started to cough, became pale, unsettled, and tachypnoeic, and refused feeds. On examination, she had features of respiratory distress. A septic screen was negative. A chest radiograph was normal. After discharge, she was given a fourth dose of Orakay under hospital supervision and remained well.

Hypothesis waiting for proof: unwrapping neonates for transfer

During transfer from the delivery suite to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), infants are traditionally wrapped in pre-warmed towels. Whether this is optimal remains unknown. We compared the effects on core temperature of wrapping or not wrapping neonates during their transfer from the delivery suite to the NICU.

After resuscitation, infants in both groups were transferred to a Vickers 77-transport incubator and left wrapped or unwrapped. Rectal temperature was recorded using a mercury thermometer before leaving the delivery suite and again, immediately after transfer into a NICU incubator. The study was granted ethical approval.

Our findings are summarised in the table. There were no significant demographic differences between the two groups. While the mean transfer time was longer in the unwrapped group, the mean temperature change during transit was lower although neither difference reached statistical significance. No hypothermia (rectal temperature <36°C) occurred in either group.

Table 1

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diuretics in CLD

This symposium on chronic lung disease of prematurity (CLD) by Kotecha et al covered important aspects and controversies in the management of CLD. We accept the authors’ inability to cover all aspects of management. We feel that some space could have been devoted to diuretics in management of CLD. Nearly all patients with CLD of some stage of their disease will receive diuretics and most of them will be on them for a long time. We came across only one systemic review by Brion et al in the Cochrane database. Conclusion of the authors was that there was no beneficial effect of using distal tubular diuretics for more than 4 weeks after initial stage. There was also no benefit in adding potassium sparing diuretics or newer diuretics like metalozone. Inspite of very little evidence base for diuretics in CLD, one finds nearly all CLD patients on a diuretic cocktail. In addition to their effect on electrolytes, they affect Ca/PQ metabolism. This may exacerbate osteopenia of prematurity and may have adverse effect on lung compliance. There is a need for more discussion or clear guidelines on this issue.

References

LETTERS

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References
Positioning long lines: response to Reece et al

Percutaneously inserted central venous lines are widely used in neonatal intensive care to administer parenteral nutrition and medicines. It is important to ascertain the position of the line tip before use as incorrectly positioned long lines can lead to life-threatening complications like cardiac tamponade and pulmonary oedema. 

Reece et al suggested that it is prudent to use a routine contrast radiograph to localise the line tip in newborn infants. We would like to comment on their suggestion and report a relevant study carried out on our neonatal unit.

Intravenous soluble contrast is not commonly used in neonates and very little is known about its potential side effects in premature infants. Studies have shown that renal clearance is prolonged in premature infants because of renal immaturity. Data in children have shown a number of possible side effects, including hypotension and cardiac arrhythmia. Moreover, obtaining an intravenous contrast radiograph of a long line would require additional medical and nursing time as a doctor would have to “gown up” for the procedure. This may not be logistically feasible in some busy neonatal units, especially out of hours.

Reece et al were unable see the line tip clearly in 25 out of 27 cases, even after a contrast study. This was due to delay between the injection of contrast and the radiographer exposing the film. This shows that fine coordination is required between the radiographer and the person injecting the contrast. Specific training may be necessary.

We performed a retrospective study of the reliability of plain radiographs in identifying the position of the long line tip in our tertiary neonatal intensive care unit. Over a 10 month period all 27 babies who had long lines inserted were included. In all cases an Epicutaneo-Cava-Katheter (Vygon, UK) was inserted. This is the same catheter as that used by Reece et al. Our placement aim was also similar to that in their study.

The position of the line tip on the postinertional X-ray was independently reviewed by an experienced junior doctor (IB) and a consultant neonatologist (SB). There was agreement between the two investigators in 25/27 (92.6%) cases. No complications due to line placement were observed during the study period.

We therefore feel that a plain radiograph is the safest, quickest, and cheapest way to ensure the safety of the line.

References

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Neonatal sepsis in Peshawar

We wish to raise a few concerns regarding the study reported by Rahman and colleagues.

1. We found it surprising that only five species of microorganisms were isolated in this series of over 1000 blood cultures obtained from neonates with sepsis. Similar studies done in other major cities of Pakistan, with much smaller sample sizes, have shown a wider spectrum of pathogens. Anwer et al showed 11 species types in 109 blood cultures, Bhutta and Usal showed 13 species types in 38 cultures, Khan and Akram showed more than eight different species types from 89 cultures, and Bhutta reported 11 species types in a series of 276 positive blood cultures. In addition to the five species causing neonatal sepsis reported by Rahman et al (Escherichia coli 36.6%, Staphylococcus aureus 29.5%, Pseudomonas 22.4%, Klebsiella 7.6%, and Proteus 3.8%), all the other investigators have also reported Serratia spp and Enterococcus, and most reported Streptococcus pneumoniae, Salmonella spp, and group B Streptococcus. Although the authors do not clearly state whether they excluded hospital acquired infection from their series, the studies reported by Bhutta did exclude nosocomial infections. The antimicrobial susceptibility data reported by Rahman et al are not interpretable as the number of microorganisms on which antimicrobial susceptibility testing was performed is not presented. In addition, the susceptibility results are not internally consistent: 60% of the Staphylococcus aureus tested are reported to be ampicillin sensitive but only 27% were Amoxicillin + Clavulanate (Augmentin); 60% of the Proteus tested are susceptible; 73% of the E. coli Susceptible; 36.6% of the Klebsiella reclassified as Susceptible; 36.6% of the Klebsiella Susceptible; and in the 45° head up tilt supine position, the weight of the abdominal contents is reduced, the diaphragm is elevated, and the functional residual capacity is increased, thus facilitating diaphragmatic activity. However, we propose that the improvement in oxygenation seen in the head up tilt position was more likely to be due to a change in lung volume. In the head up tilt position, the weight of the abdominal contents on the diaphragm is reduced, tending to increase functional residual capacity. In contrast, ultrasonicographic examination has demonstrated that the diaphragm is less active in the head down position, which is likely to result in reduced diaphragm activity.

References


Effect of head up tilting on oxygenation

We read with interest the paper by Dimitriou et al in which we confirmed again that head up tilting to 45 degrees results in better oxygenation in stable preterm neonates. However compared with our study, we observed a (probably) significant difference. Their infants were studied in the horizontal prone, in the horizontal supine and in the 45° head up tilt supine position whereas in our study all infants were studied in the prone position including the 45° head up tilt. We had then hypothesised that the combination of the prone position and the 45° head up tilt could facilitate diaphragmatic activity.

I do not think that this hypothesis can be totally dismissed by the results of Dimitriou et al as suggested by the authors, since their infants were studied in different postures that is, supine in their study and prone in our study.

References


Authors’ reply

We thank Professor Dellagrammaticas for his comments on our study. 1 Dellagrammaticas et al hypothesised that the combination of the prone posture and the 45 degree head up tilt position could facilitate diaphragmatic activity. We however, propose that the improvement in oxygenation seen in the head up tilt position was more likely to be due to a change in lung volume. In the head up tilt position, the weight of the abdominal contents on the diaphragm is reduced, tending to increase functional residual capacity. 2 In contrast, ultrasonicographic examination 3 demonstrated that the diaphragm is less active in the head down position, which is likely to result in reduced diaphragm activity. Indeed, we demonstrated 4 that the combination of the prone position and the 45° head up tilt position was more likely to be due to a change in lung volume. In the head up tilt position, the weight of the abdominal contents on the diaphragm is reduced, tending to increase functional residual capacity.

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sodium deprivation, and hyponatraemia, ignored; for example, renal salt wasting, homoeostasis in premature infants has been revealing some major features of sodium in a dose of 3–5 mmol/kg/day to prevent sodium deprivation, to improve somatic stability, and to avoid untoward clinical consequences.  

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References

Effect of salt supplementation of newborn premature infants on neurodevelopmental outcome at 10–13 years of age

I read with interest the report by Al-Dahhan and colleagues’ on the beneficial effect of NaCl supplementation of preterm infants during the neonatal period on their later neurodevelopmental outcome. They found better memory, learning, language, and educational performances at the age of 10–13 years in premature infants who were given 4–5 mmol/day NaCl compared with those not receiving NaCl supplement. In this regard it is relevant to mention our most recent findings describing a new aspect of the relation of neonatal sodium homeostasis to central nervous system function. Namely, we showed that hyponatraemia is one of the most significant risk factors for development of sensorineural hearing impairment detected by transient evoked otoacoustic emission and confirmed by auditory brainstem response.

In addition, I consider their report raises an important ethical issue, in that I regard their selection of references as subjective and arbitrary. In particular, the work of our group in revealing some major features of sodium homeostasis in premature infants has been ignored; for example, renal salt wasting, sodium depletion, and hyponatraemia, and the first introduction of NaCl supplementation in a dose of 3–5 mmol/kg/day to prevent specifically designed to examine neurodevelopmental outcome in two particular groups of infants previously studied by ourselves. His recent study of hyponatraemia and sensorineural deafness in preterm infants had not been published when our paper was submitted to the Archives, although we would certainly have referred to it if it had been.

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References

Author’s reply

We would like to apologise for an error that occurred in the paper Oxygen therapy for infants with chronic lung disease by S Kotecha and J Allen (Arch Dis Child Fetal Neonatal Ed 2002;87:F11–F14). The following sentence, under the heading Weaning from home oxygen, should have read: ‘Vermeulen et al showed that infants who could be weaned from oxygen had awake median saturations of 97% during one hour awake studies, spent only 14% of time with saturation ≤ 95% and 2% of time ≤ 92%.

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