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FACTORS INFLUENCING NEUROLOGICAL OUTCOME OF CHILDREN WITH BACTERIAL MENINGITIS

I. D'Agostino, P. Mariani-Kurkdjian, F. Bargui, C. Doit, N. Bellier, L. Morin, G. Galli Gibertini, A. Smail, M. Lorrot, S. Dauger, A. Faye, C. Alberti, A. Bourrillon, E. Bingen, J.-C. Mercier, L. Titomanlio

APHP-University Hospital R. Debré, Paris, France, Paris, France

Background and aims: Acute bacterial meningitis is a life-threatening illness with possible long-term neurocognitive sequelae. Aim of the study was to identify clinical and biological factors associated with death or neurological sequelae in a retrospective cohort of children with bacterial meningitis.

Methods: Retrospective cohort study. Inclusion criteria were bacterial meningitis beyond 1 month of age; and death or long-term (>10 yrs) follow-up. Clinical and biological data at admission were retrieved from medical charts.

Results: Eighty-nine patients (age at diagnosis 1 month - 15 years) were enrolled between 1990 and 1999. Nineteen (21%) died, two of them suffered from chronic diseases. At diagnosis, the following variables were associated with survival: absence of seizures ($p < 0.05$), absence of respiratory distress ($p < 0.001$), GCS>12 ($p < 0.001$), platelets> 150,000/mm3 ($p < 0.001$), WBC > 5,000 ($p< 0.01$) and blood neutrophils >1,500 ($p< 0.01$), no need for mechanical ventilation ($p < 0.001$). Among children who survived: 42 (60%) did not show any neurocognitive problems; 15 (21.4%) developed hearing loss, 10 (14.2%) mild mental retardation, 8 (11.4%) motor problems, 6 (8.5%) epilepsy, 2 (2.8 %) sleep disorders. None developed psychiatric disorders.

Conclusion: Some factors were significantly associated with survival in children with bacterial meningitis. The overall prognosis was good in more than half of the long-term survivors. The main limit of our study is its retrospective nature. However, since the routine use of vaccines, the incidence of bacterial meningitis has decreased so that prospective studies are difficult to conduct in developed countries.

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TNF-A INDUCTION OF INFANT MURINE BRAIN INFLAMMATION VIA IKK/NF KAPPA B SIGNALLING: A POTENTIAL MODEL FOR PAEDIATRIC NEUROINFLAMMATION

S.J. Neilson[1], C. de Souza[1], E. Campbell[2], S. Lynch[2], G. Doherty[2], M. Dunn[3], S. Powis[2], A. Young[4]

[1]School of Medicine, University of Manchester, Manchester, [2]Bute Medical School, University of St Andrews, St Andrews, [3]Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of St Andrews, St. Andrews, [4]School of Clinical Medicine, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK

Introduction: Many paediatric neurological conditions have a significant inflammatory component. Post-mortem brain samples of those affected often display neuroglial irritation and the presence of inflammatory markers within the cerebrospinal fluid. The underlying molecular mechanisms behind these breakdown products are largely unknown, and further knowledge in this area would enhance treatment options and prognosis.

Methods: Using our novel pressure chamber we stimulated murine neural tissue with the inflammatory cytokines IL-1α, IL-1β, IL-6 and TNF-α to represent an inflammatory process. Subsequently we quantified the change in volume of brain samples. Inflammation was compared using established histochemical techniques and statistics were performed with ANOVA (Tukey-Kramer multiple comparisons test), using Sigma Plot 5.

Results: We demonstrated significant variation in expansion of different brain regions. Whole brain preparations demonstrated a 30% increase. The frontal (17±1.2%) and temporal (15±0.8%) lobes demonstrated the greatest susceptibility to inflammation showing significant volumetric increases over 24 hours. This can be compared to the cerebellum (7±0.6%) and brain stem (5±0.7%) volume increases. Furthermore, this inflammation was noted to be a result of aberrant signalling of the NF-κB/IKK pathway. Using standard inhibitors this inflammation could be both inhibited and reversed.

Conclusions: These results suggest that NF-κB represents a potential therapeutic target for improvement of many paediatric neurological conditions. They illustrate the varying susceptibility of different lobes of the brain and promote further research into the role of inflammation in paediatric