Determining the Natural Distribution of 24 Hour Bilirubin Levels in Term, Exclusively Breastfed Newborns

Lauren Greenawald DO
Lehigh Valley Health Network, lauren.greenawald@lvhn.org

Alexis M. Newton MD
Lehigh Valley Health Network, alexis.newton@lvhn.org

Michael D. Schwartz MD
Lehigh Valley Health Network, Michael.Schwartz@lvhn.org

Gwendolyn Chung MD
Lehigh Valley Health Network, gwendolyn.chung@lvhn.org

Greg Floyd MBA
Lehigh Valley Health Network, Gregory.floyd@lvhn.org

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Determining the Natural Distribution of 24 Hour Bilirubin Levels in Term, Exclusively Breastfed Newborns

Lauren Greenawald, DO, Alexis Newton, MD, Michael D. Schwartz, MD, Gwendolyn Chung, MD, Greg Floyd, MBA
Lehigh Valley Health Network, Allentown, Pennsylvania

BACKGROUND

Newborn bilirubin levels are routinely measured as hyperbilirubinemia can be neurologically devastating, causing kernicterus in infants. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommended clinical evaluation of jaundice in all term infants at 24 hours of life and consideration of a routine serum bilirubin prior to discharge. Bhutani et. al. in 1999 developed a nomogram to categorize full-term infant bilirubin levels based on hours of life and total serum level. These values were stratified into high, high-intermediate, low-intermediate and low risk levels to determine the need of follow up evaluation or treatment. The AAP acknowledges breastfed infants might require closer monitoring, as they can be at higher risk for hyperbilirubinemia. The Bhutani-AAP nomogram was developed using a population of only 49.5% exclusively breast fed infants and 59.2% with any breast feeding.

HYPOTHESIS

Exclusively breastfed infants will have higher bilirubin levels within the first 24 hours of life compared with the current standard reference values.

METHODS

A retrospective electronic chart review of full term infants born at Lehigh Valley Hospital from July 2013 to December 2013 under the service of ABC Pediatrics of Lehigh Valley Physician Group.

Inclusion Criteria:
1. Gestational age at least 35 weeks weighing at least 2500 grams OR gestational age 36 weeks weighing at least > 2000 grams.
2. The use of phototherapy in the first 24 hours of life
3. 24 hour bilirubin level, feeding type, and need for phototherapy during newborn admission were recorded for the 1026 eligible infants. These infants were stratified based on feeding types: breastfed, formula 30 mls and formula fed infants.
4. A total of 770 full term infants had outpatient follow up care performed by ABC-LVPG-Pediatrics and were evaluated for the development of any subsequent hyperbilirubinemia.

Each bilirubin was stratified to risk per the classification of the AAP-Bhutani nomogram. All subsequent assessed bilirubin values were then assessed based on the hours of life at which they were obtained, and need for phototherapy. Positive Predictive Value was calculated, as defined by Bhutani et al, as predicting the risk of any subsequent high risk bilirubin.

RESULTS

Table 1: Demographics Based on Feeding Patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subgroup</th>
<th>Maternal Feeding</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage of Population</th>
<th>Subsequent High Risk Bilirubin</th>
<th>Positive Predictive Value (PPV)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subset BF: exclusively breastfed</td>
<td>BF</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subset FP: exclusively formula fed</td>
<td>FP</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subset FT-30: &lt;30 mL Formula in 1st 24 hrs</td>
<td>FT-30</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subset FT-&lt;30:&lt;30mLCR Formula in 1st 24 hrs</td>
<td>FT&lt;30</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exclusively breastfed infants will have higher bilirubin levels within the first 24 hours of life compared with the current standard reference values.

Table 2: Exclusively Breastfed Infant Risk Stratification and PPV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Level at 24 Hours</th>
<th>Number of Infants</th>
<th>Percentage of Population</th>
<th>Subsequent High Risk Bilirubin</th>
<th>Positive Predictive Value (PPV)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Intermediate</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Intermediate</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

55.3% of infants analyzed were exclusively breast fed, and 81% had any breastfeeding.

Table 2: Exclusively Breastfed infant Risk Stratification and PPV

48% of exclusively breastfed infants had high or high intermediate risk stratification at 24 hours of life. The Positive Predictive Value for high risk exclusively breast fed infants, for the development of a subsequent high risk bilirubin phototherapy of 39.25% is very close to Bhutani et al. of 39.5%. However, the PPV of 2.4% for the high intermediate risk strata is much lower than Bhutani et al. report of 12.9%.

CONCLUSIONS

The data supports the hypothesis that breastfed infants have higher bilirubin levels in the first 24 hours of life than predicted by the Bhutani-AAP nomogram. Furthermore, though the PPV of a high risk bilirubin was substantial, only 2.4% of high intermediate risk values developed subsequent significant hyperbilirubinemia. These results are significant, as more accurate classification of risk would decrease the need and cost of subsequent laboratory evaluation. Further studies are recommended to create a specific nomogram and risk stratification for breastfed infants. The current Bhutan –AAP system does not accurately reflect or predict the natural history of bilirubin rise in breast fed infants.

REFERENCES