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Study of the use of vitamin K in neonates in France

A. P. Jonville-Bera and E. Au

Abstract

Objective: Because of the risk of haemorrhagic disease of the newborn as a result of a deficit in vitamin K, it is generally agreed that newborns should receive vitamin K. However, there is no consensus concerning the route of administration, dose, number of doses, or dose frequency.

Methods: We studied patterns of vitamin K administration in all maternity hospitals in France in order to establish the range of practices and policies. Six hundred and forty questionnaires were analysed. Vitamin K was given systematically to all neonates in 619 maternity hospitals (96.7%), not given to any neonates in 2 (0.3%), and only to certain newborns in 19 (3%). A similar protocol was used for all newborns in 299 (47%) of the maternity hospitals, and the treatment protocol differed according to the neonatal clinical picture in 336 maternity hospitals (53%).

Results: The route of administration agreed with the recommendation that healthy newborns receive formula milk. In contrast, infants receiving breast milk were given IM vitamin K in only 19% of the maternity hospitals studied and regular weekly doses were prescribed in only 56%. In premature infants, IM doses were prescribed in only 46% of cases and repeat weekly doses in 34%. The dose generally prescribed (5mg p.o. or IM) was not the recommended dose.

Key words Vitamin K - Newborn; haemorrhagic disease - intramuscular route - oral route - descriptive study

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