Original Research Article

Safety evaluation following immunization of pentavalent vaccine (multi-dose vial): experiences and comparative study

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Received: 20 October 2020
Revised: 28 December 2020
Accepted: 06 January 2021

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ABSTRACT

Background: Combination vaccines have many benefits but sometimes may result in unexpected side effects which may make the vaccine unfit for administration particularly with multidose vials.
Methods: Healthy infants aged 6-8 weeks who came for routine immunization of liquid pentavalent vaccine were included in the study. All infants were observed for 30 minutes, post vaccination. Telephonic interview was conducted to detect AEFIs at 1 week and 1 month post vaccination.
Results: The common AEFIs were found to be fever and pain at injection site. A comparison of the incidence (per 100 doses) of AEFIs after 1st, 2nd and 3rd dose of pentavalent vaccine showed that AEFIs goes on reducing with dose. Incidence (per 100 doses) of fever and local AEFIs was more (statistically significant) with multi-dose vial pentavalent vaccine.
Conclusions: The multi-dose vial liquid pentavalent vaccine was found to be equally tolerable compared to single-dose vial liquid pentavalent vaccine.

Keywords: Multi-dose vial, Liquid pentavalent vaccine, Clinical trial, AEFI, Comparison, Safety

INTRODUCTION

National immunization programme has achieved remarkable outcome in controlling and eliminating several vaccine-preventable diseases.1 Over time, the number of immunizations recommended for pediatrics in the first 2 years of life has dramatically increased. Indeed, the increased number of injections a child receives per visit has raised concerns among health workers and parents. Out of this concern arose the concept of combination vaccines.2 Combination vaccines are beneficial in eliminating the associated pain and trauma, reducing the cost involved and increasing compliance with immunization schedule.

A liquid pentavalent vaccine containing DTwP-HepB-Hib was incorporated in the Universal Immunization Program of India with the funding from Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI).3 Currently, this combination vaccine is being used instead of the trivalent vaccine (DPT). Safety profile of combined pentavalent vaccine is not well known and documented. Therefore, some trials and subsequent studies were performed for the vaccine to be added to routine immunization programs.4-8 However, there were concerns raised regarding safety of pentavalent vaccine administration in other countries9,10 Moreover, prior to vaccine licensure, size of the clinical trials is not sufficient to identify rare or deferred AEFIs.11 Therefore, more attention is being given to the adverse
events that may follow immunization to establish public and healthcare stakeholder confidence and maintain the gains made by such national programs.

Studies have reported that single-dose vial improve vaccine safety. However, in developing countries, multi-dose vial prove to be economical but has challenges like contamination due to frequent transportation and unsafe injection practices.13

The aim of this study was to examine the safety of liquid pentavalent vaccine (multi-dose vial) introduced to immunization program compared to single-dose vial.

METHODS

Study design

This was an open label, active surveillance prospective cohort study that evaluated the safety of a multi-dose vial liquid pentavalent vaccine (DTwP-HepB-Hib) in Bharati Vidyapeeth University Medical College and Hospital, a tertiary care teaching hospital, Pune, Maharashtra, India.

The study was undertaken from August 2017 July 2018. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Institutional Ethics Committee. Infants receiving the multi-dose pentavalent vaccine were enrolled after the parents/guardians consent.

Sample size

The planned sample size was 636 evaluable infants. This sample size yields 90% power with \( \alpha=0.05 \) for a 20% increase in incidence of adverse events in a population.5 This was calculated with the help of online statistics ClinCalc.com calculator.

Vaccines, vaccines and vaccination

Healthy infants aged 6-8 weeks were enrolled in the study, unless possibly allergic to any component of vaccines, or immunized previously with DTP.

Infants with an acute illness, chronic illnesses at the time of enrolment, congenital disorders, allergic reactions, convulsions and known or suspected to have impaired immune function were excluded.

The infants were included on the basis of their visit to the pediatric OPD according to the immunization schedule provided. All enrolled infants received the government supplied liquid pentavalent vaccine (manufactured by Biological E Pvt. Ltd) for all the three doses administered at age 6, 10 and 14 weeks intramuscularly in the upper thigh, the volume 0.5 ml.

Follow up

All infants were observed for 30 minutes post vaccination.

Potential delayed events were captured via a telephonic interview through a structured questionnaire. Solicited adverse events following immunization (AEFI) occurring within 24-48 hours included local reactions of pain, redness, swelling and nodule at injection site (examined by pediatrician on next day of telephonic interview) and systemic reactions like fever, febrile seizure, irritability, persistent crying, drowsiness, restlessness, vomiting and diarrhea. Fever, redness and swelling were analysed according to standard definitions from Brighton collaboration guidelines.14–16 In addition, parents were also advised to record any other abnormal event following vaccination.

Incidence (per 100 vaccine doses) of the outcomes studied (i.e. the adverse events after pentavalent immunization) was calculated as number of reported AEFIs divided by the total number of administered vaccine doses.

Risk ratio (RR) and chi-square test was used to explore gender differences. Incidence of adverse events after each dose of Pentavac® and Easyfive® reported in a clinical trial5 were summed up and compared with AEFIs reported with multi-dose vial liquid pentavalent vaccine using Chi square test. All statistical analyses were conducted at a significance level of 0.05.

RESULTS

This study included 726 infants who had received 2178 doses of liquid pentavalent vaccine (multi-dose vials).

The mean age of infants in the study group was found to be 52±2.8 days where, 54.1% (n=393) were males. There was no difference in baseline characteristics (age, male to female ratio and birth weight) compared to clinical trial of single-dose vaccine formulation.5

Fever was the most common reported AEFI followed by pain, swelling and redness at injection site as shown in Table 1.

Analyses for AEFIs between the doses of liquid pentavalent vaccine (multi-dose vial) revealed that the incidence (per 100 doses) of pain (p=0.03) and fever (p<0.01) were significantly higher after the first dose compared to the second dose.

Similarly, incidence (per 100 doses) of AEFIs like pain (p=0.0001) and redness (p=0.002) were found to be significantly higher in the second dose compared to the third dose.

Significant gender differences were found with regard to swelling at site of injection where the incidence (per 100 doses) was higher in females (p=0.001) as shown in Table 2. There was no association of any other AEFI with gender.
As shown in Table 3, local AEFIs like pain, swelling and redness at the site of injection and systemic AEFIs like fever was found to be higher with multi-dose vial compared to single-dose vial liquid pentavalent vaccine.

Table 1: Comparison of incidence (per 100 doses) of AEFI after 1st, 2nd and 3rd doses of multi-dose vial liquid pentavalent vaccine.

| Variables    | Incidence (per 100 doses) of AEFIs | After 1st dose (n=726) | After 2nd dose (n=726) | After 3rd dose (n=726) | P value (1st and 2nd dose comparison) | P value (1st and 2nd dose comparison) |
|--------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Swelling     |                                    | 270 (37.1)             | 243 (33.5)             | 23 (32.3)              | 0.153                                 | 0.6549                                |
| Pain         |                                    | 338 (46.5)             | 298 (41.1)             | 221 (30.5)             | 0.03                                  | 0.0001                                |
| Redness      |                                    | 148 (20.4)             | 124 (17.1)             | 83 (11.4)              | 0.121                                 | 0.0026                                |
| Nodule       |                                    | 2 (0.3)                | 1 (0.13)               | 0                      | 1                                     | 1                                     |
| Abscess      |                                    | 1 (0.1)                | 1 (0.13)               | 0                      | 1                                     | 1                                     |
| Fever        |                                    | 440 (60.6)             | 392 (54.0)             | 364 (50.1)             | 0.0126                                | 0.1561                                |
| Vomiting     |                                    | 4 (0.5)                | 1 (0.1)                | 1 (0.1)                | 0.3741                                | 1                                     |
| Persistent crying |                      | 22 (3)                | 18 (2.5)               | 15 (2.1)               | 0.63                                  | 0.72                                  |
| Irritability |                                    | 71 (9.8)               | 64 (8.8)               | 54 (7.4)               | 0.58                                  | 0.3875                                |
| Diarrhoea    |                                    | 4 (0.5)                | 2 (0.3)                | 1 (0.1)                | 0.45                                  | 1                                     |

n= Number of infants.

Table 2: The incidence (per 100 doses) of adverse events following immunization with liquid multi-dose vial pentavalent vaccine in male and female infants.

| Adverse events          | Incidence (per 100 doses) | P value | Risk ratio (95% CI) |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|--------|---------------------|
|                         | Male                      | Female |                   |
| Swelling                | Yes                       | 368 (31.2) | 379 (37.9) | 0.001 | 0.82 (0.73-0.92) |
|                         | No                        | 811 (68.8) | 620 (62.1) |       |                 |
| Pain                    | Yes                       | 458 (38.8) | 399 (39.9) | 0.62  | 0.97 (0.88-1.08) |
|                         | No                        | 721 (61.2) | 600 (60.1) |       |                 |
| Redness                 | Yes                       | 182 (15.4) | 173 (17.3) | 0.24  | 0.89 (0.74-1.08) |
|                         | No                        | 997 (84.6) | 826 (82.7) |       |                 |
| Nodule                  | Yes                       | 2 (0.2)    | 1 (0.1)    | 1     | 1.69 (0.15-18.6) |
|                         | No                        | 1177 (99.8) | 998 (99.9) |       |                 |
| Abscess                 | Yes                       | 1 (0.1)    | 1 (0.1)    | 1     | 0.85 (0.05-13.5) |
|                         | No                        | 1178 (99.9) | 998 (99.9) |       |                 |
| Fever                   | Yes                       | 635 (53.8) | 561 (56.2) | 0.29  | 0.96 (0.89 - 1.03) |
|                         | No                        | 544 (46.2) | 438 (43.8) |       |                 |
| Vomiting                | Yes                       | 3 (0.3)    | 3 (0.3)    | 1     | 0.85 (0.17 - 4.19) |
|                         | No                        | 1176 (99.7) | 996 (99.7) |       |                 |
| Persistent crying       | Yes                       | 26 (2.2)   | 29 (2.9)   | 0.33  | 0.76 (0.45 - 1.28) |
|                         | No                        | 1153 (97.8) | 970 (97.1) |       |                 |
| Irritability            | Yes                       | 95 (8.1)   | 94 (9.4)   | 0.28  | 0.86 (0.65 - 1.12) |
|                         | No                        | 1084 (91.9) | 905 (90.6) |       |                 |
| Diarrhoea               | Yes                       | 3 (0.3)    | 4 (0.4)    | 0.70  | 0.64 (0.14 - 2.88) |
|                         | No                        | 1176 (99.7) | 995 (99.6) |       |                 |

Number of male infants= 393 (1179 vaccine doses), Number of female infants= 333 (999 vaccine doses).
DISCUSSION

This is one of a rare prospective safety monitoring study of multiple dose vials of pentavalent vaccine under programmatic settings in a tertiary care teaching hospital with a large sample size compared to other studies conducted in western part of Maharashtra, India. The AEFIs reported in the present study were found to be non-serious. This finding is in line with the results obtained in a multicentre clinical trial involving single-dose vial of pentavalent vaccines.6 Contrary to the above observation, many serious adverse events and deaths were reported following pentavalent vaccine in Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Pakistan.9 The results obtained in the present study showed that the only significant gender difference was found with regard to swelling at injection site where the incidence (per 100 doses) was higher in females (p=0.001). A study in Iran found significant gender difference with regard to persistent crying, which was significantly more common among males.17 There are no reasons cited in literature for such significant differences in AEFI based on gender and remains unknown.

Table 3: Comparison of incidence of AEFIs associated with multi-dose vial liquid pentavalent vaccine with single-dose vial liquid pentavalent vaccine.5

| Adverse events | Incidence of AEFI (%) after 1st dose | Incidence of AEFI (%) after 2nd dose | Incidence of AEFI (%) after 3rd dose |
|----------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
|                | Multi-dose vial (n=726) | Single-dose vial (n=484) | p-value | Multi-dose vial (n=726) | Single-dose vial (n=484) | P value | Multi-dose vial (n=726) | Single-dose vial (n=484) | P value |
| Swelling       | 305 (42) | 216 (44.6) | 0.37 | 287 (39.5) | 182 (37.6) | 0.50 | 155 (21.4) | 144 (29.7) | 0.001 |
| Pain           | 349 (48.1) | 297 (61.4) | <0.0001 | 286 (39) | 272 (56.2) | <0.0001 | 225 (31) | 230 (47.5) | <0.0001 |
| Redness        | 137 (18.9) | 113 (23.3) | 0.07 | 124 (17.1) | 90 (18.6) | <0.0001 | 94 (12.9) | 72 (14.9) | 0.34 |
| Nodule         | 3 (0.4) | 6 (1.2) | 0.16 | 0 | 1 (0.2) | 0.4 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Fever          | 435 (59.9) | 215 (44.4) | <0.0001 | 442 (60.9) | 211 (43.6) | <0.0001 | 319 (43.9) | 148 (30.5) | <0.0001 |
| Vomiting       | 4 (0.55) | 15 (3.1) | 0.0006 | 2 (0.3) | 12 (2.5) | 0.0006 | 0 | 8 (1.6) | 0.0006 |
| Persistent crying | 30 (4.13) | 67 (13.8) | <0.0001 | 12 (1.6) | 43 (8.9) | <0.0001 | 13 (1.8) | 29 (6) | 0.0002 |
| Irritability   | 86 (11.8) | 140 (29) | <0.0001 | 60 (8.3) | 116 (24) | <0.0001 | 43 (5.9) | 96 (20) | <0.0001 |
| Diarrhoea      | 5 (0.7) | 16 (3.3) | 0.001 | 2 (0.3) | 16 (3.3) | <0.0001 | 0 | 15 (3.1) | <0.0001 |

A comparison of the incidence (per 100 doses) of AEFI after 1st, 2nd and 3rd dose of liquid pentavalent vaccine showed that incidence of AEFIs goes on reducing with subsequent booster dose. Probable reasons for such reduction in incidences may be increase in muscle mass and deeper intramuscular injections, mothers being more worried about AEFI after 1st dose and the use of acetaminophen in subsequent booster doses due to the experiences mothers gain after the first dose (as conveyed by parents via telephonic interview).

Local AEFIs like pain, swelling and redness at the site of injection and systemic AEFIs like fever were found to be higher with multi-dose vial compared to single-dose vial liquid pentavalent vaccine. Such significant increase with multi-dose vial can be partly accounted for by several factors, including the multi-dose vial leading to increased chances of contamination and challenges due to frequent transportation. The concomitant administration of other vaccines like Rotavirus vaccine, IPV, PCV along with pentavalent vaccine may further increase incidence of fever. On a contrary, systemic AEFI i.e vomiting, persistent crying, irritability, diarrhea were more frequently observed with single-dose vial. Apart from this, few cases of abscess were observed with multi-dose vial. Hindrance of limb movements, loss of appetite and refusal of feeds were also reported with single-dose vial which was not observed in our study.5

The limitation includes lack of prospective control group (single dose vials) and follow-up for short duration of period. Long duration follow-up of study cohort is warranted to document rare adverse events. Immunogenicity was not determined as this was not our objective, though it should be a future long-term study as it is said that quality of multiple dose vaccines get appropriate.
compromised due to inappropriate handling and storage conditions in programmatic settings.

CONCLUSION

The multi-dose vial liquid pentavalent vaccine was found to be equally safe and tolerable compared to single-dose liquid pentavalent vaccines. Fever and local reactions were more but resolved by proper drug therapy and ice application on injection site. No vaccine-related serious adverse event were recorded in the study cohort.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are thankful to the parents for cooperating in the study. The authors also acknowledge the contributions of the clinicians and the paramedical staff.

Funding: No funding sources
Conflict of interest: None declared
Ethical approval: The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee

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Cite this article as: Panda BK, Bajaj R, Surve D, Deshpande R. Safety evaluation following immunization of pentavalent vaccine (multi-dose vial): experiences and comparative study. Int J Contemp Pediatr 2021;8:243-7.