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SCIENTIFIC LETTER

Usefulness of chest ultrasound in a neonatal infection due to SARS-CoV-2

Utilidad de la ecografía torácica en infección neonatal por SARS-CoV-2

Dear Editor:

In December 2019, an outbreak of a novel coronavirus (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 [SARS-CoV-2]) was reported, having originated in Wuhan, Hubei province, China.

Most studies on the subject performed to date have focused on adult patients, and the current evidence on the pediatric population is scarce, especially when it comes to newborns.

In Spain, one of the epicenters of the pandemic, as many as 146,690 cases have been reported.

We present a case of horizontal transmission of infection by SARS-CoV-2 in a male neonate aged 10 days confirmed by a positive real-time reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) test for SARS-CoV-2, describing the clinical presentation, diagnosis, treatment and outcome of the patient.

Clinical case: male neonate aged 10 days brought to the primary care center with fever, with a rectal temperature of 38.5 °C and no other symptoms, with good tolerance of formula feeding. The neonate was referred to the emergency department and admitted to hospital to evaluate the fever without a source. The mother, aged 26 years, had received prenatal care, with normal antenatal ultrasounds and a spontaneous vaginal delivery at 39+2 weeks of gestation, in the absence of perinatal risk factors for infection (negative for β-haemolytic streptococcus and a total duration of ruptured of membranes of 4 h), a birth weight of 3220 g and Apgar scores of 10/10.

The relevant history consisted of a household environment with the father, mother and paternal grandfather experiencing cold symptoms, cough and nasal discharge in the absence of fever.

The evaluation included blood tests, blood culture, urinalysis, lumbar puncture, collection of nasopharyngeal aspirate to test for the presence of adenovirus, influenza A and B, respiratory syncytial virus and SARS-CoV-2 with the RT-PCR test. Empiric antibiotherapy was initiated while awaiting the results of culture and viral testing.

The results of the tests performed at admission were as follows: complete blood count with normal red blood cell indices, a white blood cell count of 7.4 × 10⁹/L with 40.5% lymphocytes and 21.6% monocytes; procalcitonin, 0.20 ng/mL; C-reactive protein <5 mg/L; normal findings of examination of cerebrospinal fluid and normal findings of urinalysis. The RT-PCR test was positive for SARS-CoV-2 and negative for all other viruses. Given this result, both parents underwent the RT-PCR test for SARS-CoV-2, which turned out positive.

At admission, the infant presented with a temperature of 36.9 °C, a heart rate (HR) of 144 bpm, a respiratory rate (RR) of 42 bpm and an oxygen saturation of 100% in room air, well-appearing, with good peripheral perfusion and good bilateral inspiration without no abnormal breath sounds.

At 24 h from admission, the RR increased to 60 bpm and the HR in the 160–180 bpm range, which prompted performance of a chest X-ray and echocardiography, both with normal findings, and a chest ultrasound that revealed pleural thickening, converging B-lines in the posterior chest and subpleural consolidation at the lung base level of the right hemithorax (Figs. 1 and 2). Subsequently, the patient developed apnoea, and capillary blood gas analysis detected mild carbon dioxide retention (pH, 7.38; pCO₂, 48.4; bicarbonate, 26.4; lactate, 1.2), leading to initiation of treatment with caffeine and administration of supplemental oxygen in the incubator with a peak FiO₂ of 0.3. On day 3 from admission, antibiotherapy was discontinued on account of the negative culture results, and the patient showed clinical improvement with a gradual decrease in oxygen requirements and resolution of apnoea, and he was discharged at 9 days from admission. Serological tests conducted at admission were IgM⁺ and IgG⁺, with evidence of seroconversion at day 16 from onset (IgM⁺, IgG⁺).

Figure 1 Converging B-lines (solid arrow) and pleural thickening (dotted arrow).

Please cite this article as: Pineda Capllure A, Porcar Almela M, Navarro Albert A, Muñoz Vicente E, Mansilla Roig B. Utilidad de la ecografía torácica en infección neonatal por SARS-CoV-2. An Pediatr (Barc). 2021;94:412–413.
We found a significant number of episodes tested in a household an area in the course of the disease in the neonatal population, and any household members with mild cold symptoms should be tested to prevent transmission in this age group. In the context of the current pandemic, it is important to include the RT-PCR test for detection of SARS-CoV-2 infection in the assessment of the febrile neonate, as indicated by current protocols, taking into account the role of the viral load in this age group as it is done in adults.

Further research is required to establish the lung ultrasound features found in patients with COVID-19 and the course of the disease in the neonatal population, and any household members with mild cold symptoms should be tested to prevent transmission in this age group. In the context of the current pandemic, it is important to include the RT-PCR test for detection of SARS-CoV-2 infection in the assessment of the febrile neonate, as indicated by current protocols, taking into account the role of the viral load in this age group as it is done in adults.

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.anpede.2021.04.001 2341-2879 / © 2021 Published by Elsevier España, S.L.U. on behalf of Asociación Española de Pediatría. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Description and assessment of medical student rotation in Primary Care Paediatrics

Descripción y evaluación de la rotación de estudiantes de Medicina por Pediatría de Atención Primaria

Dear Editor:

The pediatrics curriculum of medicine students must include knowledge and management of the problems most commonly found in children (95% of childhood diseases, which are managed in the primary care [PC] setting) in addition to complex diseases (5%–10% of child diseases, which require hospital-based care). However, in most schools of medicine in Spain, the pediatrics curriculum focuses on hospital-based care. In 2014, the Department of Paediatrics of the Universidad Complutense of Madrid hired PC paediatricians as associate professors to lecture and serve as tutors for students in the PC rotations.

We conducted a retrospective descriptive study to analyse the characteristics and outcomes of practical training in PC paediatrics and assess the perceptions of students training in the Hospital General Universitario Gregorio Marañón of Madrid by means of an anonymous questionnaire.

Medical students do the 6- to 8-week pediatrics rotation in year 5 or 6 of their training after choosing 2 fields among the different hospital-based paediatric specialities and PC. At the end of the rotation, they submit a portfolio including a written review of the rotation and a self-evaluation, and are asked to fill out a questionnaire on a voluntary basis asking about organizational and teaching aspects and offering room to write any comments and suggestions on areas that could be improved.

To cite this article as: Aparicio Rodrigo M, Martínez González C, García-Onieva Artazo M, Hernández Cobeño A, López-Herce Cid J. Descripción y evaluación de la rotación de estudiantes de Medicina por Pediatría de Atención Primaria. An Pediatr (Barc). 2021;94:413–415.

Figure 2 Subpleural consolidation at the level of the posterior basal region of the right lung (arrow).