

Tuberculosis in Children with Reference to their Immunization Status: A Hospital Based Study

With reference to this manuscript(1) we would like to offer the following comments. Of the 530 cases of tuberculosis included in the study, only 86 children were immunized with BCG. However, it needs to be clarified what was the nature of selection of these cases, *i.e.*, the total number of children immunized with BCG during the period under study and the resultant percentage of failure of vaccination. There is no doubt that BCG gives only partial protection and is particularly recommended for protection against severer forms of tubercular infection. Among the complications associated with BCG vaccination, clinical manifestations of dissemination are uncommon and those recorded have nearly followed vaccination soon after birth, during incubation period of another infection particularly measles, in children later shown to have or suspected of having immunodeficiency states(2).

The mortality in tuberculosis is determined by several factors, like extent of disease, early initiation of therapy, associated complications, and immunologic status of the child. Without clearly delineating the factors which lead to higher percentage of mortality in immunized cases, it will not be scientific to conclude that BCG vaccine is responsible.

Therapeutic failure in tuberculosis is independent of immunization status. To

infer that less number of immunized children were relieved of their disease is statistical rather than based on hard scientific evidence.

It is our submission that unless more evidence is accumulated based on large, multicentric trials on the efficacy and complications of BCG, it is rather premature to attribute these statistical data to the vaccine.

REFERENCES

1. Mathur GP, Mathur S, Gupta V, *et al.* Tuberculosis in children with reference to their immunization status: A hospital based study. *Indian Pediatr* 1991, 28: 569-570.
2. Miller FJW. BCG Vaccination. *In: Tuberculosis in children.* New York Churchill Livingstone, 1982, pp 55-72.

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Reply

Of the 530 cases suffering from tuberculosis admitted during 1986-1987, BCG mark was noted only in 86 children. Factors responsible for morbidity and mortality in immunized versus unimmunized children were almost the same. BCG was not effective in preventing even one of the severe forms of tuberculosis, *i.e.*, tuberculous meningitis(1). Tidjani *et al.*, have