

## Letters to the Editor

### Urine Culture in Young Febrile Children

In a recent Editorial on 'Urinary Tract Infection' (UTI), Dr. Mehta has stated: "In infants, fever is the most definite clue especially without any focus of infection. Urine culture is mandatory in every febrile child with acute illness. Urinary complaints are rare and only after 5 years of age the typical triad of abdominal pain, vomiting and fever with chills or suprapubic pain are common presentations of upper and lower UTI. Hence a high index of suspicion should be maintained by practicing pediatricians during the first 5 years and Urine culture ordered whenever required."(1).

In another related article(2), Dr. Srivaths *et al.* have stated: "The prevalence rate of 2.48% of UTI in infants in the present study is the lowest reported from a developing country and is similar to the prevalence reported from developed countries. Since this prevalence rate is not significantly different from the controls we do not recommend routine urine culture of all febrile infants."(2). They further state: "We conclude that screening all febrile children for identification of UTI may not be cost effective. Limiting the screening to febrile infants with diarrhea or septicemia may be cost effective as the pick up rate will be higher. Urine microscopy and Gram stain smear examination should be mandatory in these high risk children. Significant pyuria and bacteriuria in urine will guide to the presence of UTI and warrant a urine culture and further evaluation of genitourinary tract."(2).

Dr. Mehta has cited 14 references and Dr. Srivaths *et al.* have cited 9 references in their articles. On perusal, it was observed that not even one reference was common to both the lists. This perhaps reflects the fact that authors of both articles belong to two different schools of thought. I seek a clarification whether urine culture is mandatory or not in every febrile child with acute illness.

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#### REFERENCES

1. Mehta KP. Urinary tract infection. *Indian Pediatr* 1996, 33:173-176.
2. Srivaths PR, Rath B, Krishan Prakash S, Talukdar B. Usefulness of screening febrile infants for urinary tract infection. *Indian Pediatr* 1996, 33: 218-220.

#### Reply

Dr. Yash Paul has raised an important question whether every febrile infant should have a urine culture. As I pointed out in the editorial there are a number of controversies in the diagnosis of UTI and a practicing pediatrician has to develop her or his own clinical judgement with reference to ordering urine culture in the same fashion as blood count or blood cultures. In our institution, urine culture is not asked for if the febrile illness is during an epidemic of viral fever or if other family members have similar fever or if child otherwise looks "well" or has a focus of infection in the ear, throat, lungs, etc. Urine culture is mandatory if fever is