

yet known. The Committee prohibits the use of DM is suspected or proved aseptic or nonbacterial or partially treated meningitis. DM is also not recommended for those younger than 2 months and those with congenital or acquired anomalies of the central nervous system, with or without placement of a prosthetic device. The report further states that if DM is used it should be given along with the first dose of antibacterials, in mild cases as well as severely ill patients and only in proven/strongly suspected cases of bacterial etiology. Measurement of hemoglobin concentration and examination of stools should be performed regularly. If melaena or gross blood is observed, DM should be stopped and patient observed closely for possible transfusion therapy.

Our conclusion after a more thorough review of all the available published literature is that some children with bacterial meningitis appear to be benefitted to a limited extent by dexamethasone treatment. However, the currently available data does not help us in identifying all such patients who are likely to benefit so that only they may be exposed to DM.

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Do Not Clamp the Umbilical Cord Too Close

We report a case of gangrene of the intestine due to tying of the umbilical cord very close to the abdomen in a newborn with hernia of the umbilical cord.

A 2.2 kg first born male infant born of a full term normal vaginal delivery was noticed to have a small umbilical swelling at birth. The delivery was conducted under medical supervision. The neonate passed meconium at birth. The baby was brought on the ninth day of life with history of bilious vomitings and abdominal distension of 5 days duration. Careful examination of the umbilicus revealed that it was black and about 3 cm in diameter. The base of the umbilicus was having a ligature. The abdomen was grossly distended and visible intestinal loops were seen. An erect X-ray of abdomen showed dilated small bowel loops. The baby was explored after adequate resuscitation by a right upper transverse incision. The ileocecal region and 4 cm of the distal ileum were strangulated by the ligature around the umbilicus and were

gangrenous. The gangrenous part of the gut was excised and an end to end anastomosis performed. Post-operative recovery was uneventful.

Close tying of the umbilical cord in the neonates with umbilical defects especially umbilical hernias and examphalos can be dangerous. This does not find a mention in the standard books in preventive medicine and obstetrics(1,2). The precautions mentioned while clamping and cutting the cord are: (i) Distance for cutting varies from 2.5 to 4.5 cm in different books; (ii) Attention to maintain sterility and to look for postoperative hemorrhage from the umbilicus; (iii) A delay of about 30 sec in tying to allow cord blood to flow back to the newborn; (iv) The umbilical cord should be cut and tied when it has stopped pulsating (1-4). The World Health Organization manual for the Primary Health Workers has not mentioned anything regarding the distance at which the umbilical cord must be tied(3).

In India, domiciliary outreach is a major component of perinatal care. Most of the deliveries will have to be conducted in the home with the aid of female health worker or trained dais. Hence it is important to emphasize that umbilical cord must be tied far away, *i.e.*, about 5 to 6 cm away from the visible margin of umbilical swelling in the umbilicus. This precaution can avoid a lot of unnecessary morbidity.

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Pediatrician* : The Custodian of the Child Consumer

“Primum Non Nocere” is the guiding principle for all doctors while taking care of their patients. This is more true for pediatricians, whose patients are too small to complain regarding any wrong being done to them. The pediatrician is not only the healer but also the custodian of the child consumer. It is his/her duty to see that his/her patient does not fall prey to irrational therapy. Medicines have been the mainstay of therapy for all disorders and act as a double edged sword. If they are used with discretion, they save lives but if abused, may lead to drastic consequences.

In recent years there has been a revolution in the therapeutic armamentarium. Innumerable drugs with various trade names are flooding the market. It is not