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Cultural Practices and Neonatal Septicemia

Neonatal septicemia continues to be a major cause of mortality and morbidity among neonates around the world(1). Late onset septicemia in the community is often associated with locally prevalent cultural practices.

We evaluated the association of cultural practices in fifty consecutively admitted newborns with onset of sepsis after 7 days and weight >1500 g.

In 70% of these newborns some form of the cultural practices was present. Prelacteal feeds (honey, ajwain water, etc.) were noted in 40%, head shaving in 34%, not washing neonatal clothes in 11.42%, providing non-human milk in 5.7%. Other cultural practices included nose-piercing, application of cow-dung on umbilicus and kajal application in

eyes (1 each). In most cases of head shaving, the instrument used was not sterile. While some of these have definite association with sepsis, the others are innocuous. We believe that efforts must continue to educate communities to give up potentially dangerous cultural practices in newborn care.

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Radio Advertising of Varicella Vaccine

Recently a prominent radio channel (91 FM) has been airing advertisements by a vaccine manufacturing company (GlaxoSmith

Kline) with reference to the Varicella vaccine. The content of the advertisement implies that non administration of the vaccine leads to significant school absenteeism and hence academic underperformance. It has a serious connotation to parents, suggesting negligence on their part in case of failure to vaccinate.