Epidemiology of ophthalmia neonatorum in Kenya

Laga, M; Plummer, FA; Nzanze, H; Namaara, W; Brunham, RC; Ndinya-Achola, JO; Maitha, G; Ronald, AR; D'Costa, LJ; Bhullar, VB

Abstract:

In a Nairobi hospital where ocular prophylaxis against ophthalmia neonatorum has been discontinued, 1,019 women were screened for Neisseria gonorrhoeae and Chlamydia trachomatis during labour and 7 and 28 days postpartum. The prevalence of gonococcal infection was 7% and that of chlamydial was 29%. 52.4% of gonococcal isolates produced penicillinase. The incidence of ophthalmia neonatorum was 23.2 per 100 live births, and incidences of gonococcal and chlamydial ophthalmia were 3.6 and 8.1 per 100 live births, respectively. Of 181 cases of neonatal conjunctivitis, 31% were caused by C trachomatis, 12% by N gonorrhoeae, and 3% by both. In 67 babies exposed to maternal gonococcal infection and 201 exposed to maternal chlamydial infection, rates of transmission to the eye were 42% and 31%, respectively, and to the throat were 7% and 2%. Gonococcal transmission rate was higher in mothers with concomitant chlamydial infection (68%; p = 0.01). Postpartum endometritis was associated with ophthalmia neonatorum (p less than 0.001). Ocular prophylaxis at birth for gonococcal ophthalmia should be reintroduced.