

Abstract:

Objective. This study aimed to examine hearing function in children admitted with bacterial meningitis to determine the risk factors for sensorineural hearing loss. **Setting.** The study was conducted in the audiology unit and paediatric wards of Kenyatta National Hospital. **Subjects and Methods.** The study involved 83 children between the ages of six months and twelve years admitted with bacterial meningitis. The median age for the children examined was 14. On discharge they underwent hearing testing to evaluate for presence and degree of hearing loss. **Results.** Thirty six of the 83 children (44.4%) were found to have at least a unilateral mild sensorineural hearing loss during initial audiologic testing. Of the children with hearing loss, 22 (26.5%) had mild or moderate sensorineural hearing loss and 14 (16.9%) had severe or profound sensorineural hearing loss. Significant determinants identified for hearing loss included coma score below eight, seizures, cranial nerve neuropathy, positive CSF culture, and fever above 38.7 degrees Celsius. **Conclusions.** Sensorineural hearing loss was found to be highly prevalent in children treated for bacterial meningitis. There is need to educate healthcare providers on aggressive management of coma, fever, and seizures due to their poor prognostic value on hearing.