

Cholera in a neonate: The curse continues

Sir,

Cholera, although common in India, is rarely seen in children under 2 years of age [1,2]. A 6-day-old term male born by elective caesarean section to a primigravida mother was referred to our unit for the management of severe dehydration and shock. He had been given formula feeds with palladai for the first 24 h and on day 4 of life developed vomiting and large watery stools in quick succession. At the time of admission, he was found to be in shock and dehydrated. The baby had prerenal failure, metabolic acidosis, hypokalemia, and right focal seizures.

His computed tomography scan brain was normal. Stool culture showed *Vibrio cholera* O1 Ogawa. Family history revealed that the baby's father and maternal grandmother had loose watery stools around the time of the baby's birth. Maternal grandmother had mixed all his formula feeds with her forefinger. The baby was discharged well, on breast feeds, on day 12 of life.

There have been occasional reports of cholera infection in the neonatal period with *V. cholerae* O139 Bengal [3,4]. Mother's milk has never been known to transmit cholera even though herself may be suffering from the disease [4]. There is no maternally transmitted immunity for cholera infection. In neonates, contamination of feeds or of prelacteal feeds such as holy water, honey, etc. plays a major role in acquiring infection [4]. In our case delayed initiation of breastfeeding in a mother who underwent cesarean section resulted in the baby being given contaminated formula. Use of prelacteal feeds continues to be a menace to newborns. Continued education

on timely initiation of breastfeeds, exclusive breastfeeding and thorough hand washing remains the cornerstone in the prevention of such incidents.

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