Joint Trust Guideline for the Management of Invasive Candida Infection in Neonates

A Clinical Guideline

For use in: NICU
By: Medical and Nursing staff
For: All neonates with invasive candida infection
Division responsible for document: Women and Children
Key words: Neonate, Candida, Sepsis
Name and job title of document author: Dr M P Dyke, Consultant Neonatologist.
Name and job title of document author’s Line Manager: Dr Mary-Anne Morris, Chief of Service

Supported by: Drs Paul Clarke, David Booth, Rahul Roy, Priya Muthukumar, Helen O’Reilly, Florence Walston, Supriyah Bhoomaiah – Consultant Neonatologists
Dr Catherine Tremlett Consultant Microbiologist
Dr P Ambadkar Consultant Neonatologist (JPUH)

Assessed and approved by the: Clinical Guidelines Assessment Panel (CGAP). Accepted by James Paget University Hospital under the Tri-Hospital Clinical Guidelines Assessment Panel (THCGAP)

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Ratified by or reported as approved to (if applicable): Clinical Standards Group and Clinical Safety and Effectiveness Sub-Board

To be reviewed before: This document remains current after this date but will be under review 02 October 2021
To be reviewed by: Dr M P Dyke

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Version No: 3


Compliance links: (is there any NICE related to guidance) None

If Yes - does the strategy/policy deviate from the recommendations of NICE? If so why? N/A

This guideline has been approved by the Trust's Clinical Guidelines Assessment Panel as an aid to the diagnosis and management of relevant patients and clinical circumstances. Not every patient or situation fits neatly into a standard guideline scenario and the guideline must be interpreted and applied in practice in the light of prevailing clinical circumstances, the diagnostic and treatment options available and the professional judgement, knowledge and expertise of relevant clinicians. It is advised that the rationale for any departure from relevant guidance should be documented in the patient's case notes.

The Trust's guidelines are made publicly available as part of the collective endeavour to continuously improve the quality of healthcare through sharing medical experience and knowledge. The Trust accepts no responsibility for any misunderstanding or misapplication of this document.
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### Quick reference guideline/s

**Neonate with clinical features of sepsis**  Box 1a

- Perform septic screen Box 1b
- Commence broad-spectrum antibiotics

- **Are there risk factors for fungal sepsis?**  Box 1c

- **Yes**
  - Very sick infant or
  - Further deterioration while awaiting culture results or
  - No clinical improvement at 48-72 hours

  - **Yes**
    - Proven fungal infection  Box 2a
    - Remove central line if feasible and send tip for culture
    - D/W Consultant Neonatologist
    - and Microbiologist
    - Consider need for treatment
    - C. Krusei
    - C. Glabrata
    - C. Albicans or
    - Species unknown
    - Treat with AmBisome

    - **No**
      - C. Krusei
      - C. Glabrata
      - C. Albicans or
      - Species unknown
      - Treat with Fluconazole

- **No**
  - Await results of septic screen

  - **Proven fungal infection**  Box 2a
  - Remove central line if feasible and send tip for culture
  - D/W Consultant Neonatologist
  - and Microbiologist
  - Consider need for treatment
  - C. Krusei
  - C. Glabrata
  - C. Albicans or
  - Species unknown
  - Treat with AmBisome

- **Possible fungal infection**  Box 2b

  - D/W Consultant Neonatologist
  - and Microbiologist
  - Consider need for treatment
  - C. Krusei
  - C. Glabrata
  - C. Albicans or
  - Species unknown
  - Treat with Fluconazole

- **No fungal infection**
  - No further action

**1a Features of sepsis**
- Recurrent apnoea
- Cardiovascular instability
- Vent requirements
- Lethargy/irritability
- Abdominal distension
- Hyper/hypoglycaemia
- Thrombocytopenia

**1b Septic screen**
- FBC, CRP,
- LFT, clotting
- Blood culture
- Urine culture
- CSF if indicated
- Respiratory swabs

**1c Risk factors for fungal sepsis**
- <750gm, <27 weeks gestation
- Abdominal surgery
- Presence of central line infusing TPN
- Necrotising enterocolitis
- Prolonged antibiotics >2 courses for>5days
- Candida colonisation
- Mechanical ventilation >1week

**2a Proven infection**
- Positive culture from
  - Blood
  - CSF
  - Urine (SPA/Catheter)

**2b Possible infection**
- Positive culture from
  - Endotracheal secretion
  - Skin swab
  - Vascular line tip
  - Urine (bag sample)

**End organ assessment**
- Renal scan
- Echocardiography
- Fundoscopy
- Cranial ultrasound
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1. Objective/s

To provide guidance on the treatment of invasive candida infection in neonates.

2. Rationale

Invasive candida infections have become the third most common late onset infection in most neonatal units. The published incidence is around 4-8% among extremely low birth weight infants [ELBW <1000g] with a crude mortality rate around 30%. Persistent infection and significant focal sequelae, such as renal fungal bezoars, endocarditis and meningitis are short term complications, and long term neurodevelopmental disability rates of >60% have been reported.

Meticulous attention to avoidable risk factors [such as prolonged presence of central venous lines and the use of broad-spectrum antibiotics eg 3rd generation cephalosporins], combined with the judicious use of anti-fungal prophylaxis has reduced invasive infection and consequent mortality and long-term sequelae in recent years. Antifungal prophylaxis is now routinely given to selected patients in the NICU (see Trust Guideline Antifungal Prophylaxis in Neonates id=1278).

3. Broad recommendations

3.1 Signs and symptoms of candida sepsis should be actively sought in newborns who are at high risk [see section 4.1 and 4.2]

3.2 Appropriate investigations and treatment should be promptly instituted where there is a high index of suspicion of candida sepsis [see section 4.3 and 5]

4. Guide to diagnosing Candida sepsis

4.1 Be aware of risk factors

Several studies have identified major risk factors for candidemia:

- extremely low birth weight [<1000g and especially <750g]
- abdominal surgery
- exposure to ≥ 2 antibiotics, particularly cephalosporins and carbapenems

Additional contributory risk factors include:

- prematurity [gestational age <32 weeks]
- parenteral nutrition for >5 days
- presence of a central venous catheter [CVC]
- known fungal dermatitis or fungal colonisation
- prolonged intubation
- apgar score <5 @ 5 minutes
- topical petrolatum care
- use of H₂-antagonists
4.2 Consider signs and symptoms

Candida infections occur primarily in VLBW infants typically between the second and sixth weeks of life. The most common clinical signs are similar to those of bacterial infection and include:

- apnoea
- increased requirements for respiratory support
- hyperglycaemia
- temperature instability
- abdominal distension
- lethargy
- hypotension
- leukopenia, leukocytosis and particularly thrombocytopenia.

Features of sepsis that are particularly severe and/or persist after 48 hours’ treatment with antibiotics (particularly if blood cultures are negative) should raise the suspicion of an invasive candida infection.

4.3 Perform appropriate investigations

In a neonate with clinical features suggestive of sepsis, a sepsis screen should be performed [see Trust Guideline for the Management of Newborn babies at increased risk of developing neonatal infection Trustdocs ID No: 9998]:

- Full blood count, CRP, LFTs and Clotting studies
- Blood culture [peripheral and from CVC if high index of suspicion]
- Urine [preferably SPA or catheter specimen]
- Lumbar puncture if CNS symptoms present
- Respiratory swabs [if indicated]

5. Empirical treatment may be required:

5.1 After performing the sepsis screen, all neonates should be commenced on empirical broad spectrum antibiotics.

5.2 Empirical anti-fungal treatment with AmBisome should be commenced in neonates with risk factors for fungal sepsis who fulfil either of the following criteria:

- very unwell at presentation
- suffer further deterioration or not showing any signs of improvement within 48 hours of antibiotic treatment

If these criteria are not met, the need for treatment will be determined by the following considerations.
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6. Interpretation of investigations

6.1 Possible infection is defined as:

- a positive culture from a vascular line tip or
- 2 or more culture positive specimens of urine (bag specimen), respiratory and skin swabs

6.2 Proven infection is defined as a positive culture from:

- blood or
- CSF or
- urine [SPA or catheter specimen]

In the presence of possible infection, a Microbiologist should be consulted regarding commencement of antifungal agents.

In the presence of proven infection, definitive anti-fungal treatment should be commenced [see 7.1]. The continued presence of a central vascular catheter [CVC] substantially increases risk of mortality so should, if feasible, be removed and only replaced, if still required, after a minimum of 36 hours.

7. Definitive anti-fungal treatment

7.1 All neonates on Fluconazole prophylaxis who have proven infection should be commenced on AmBisome.

7.2 For neonates not on Fluconazole prophylaxis, treatment will be determined by species:

- if the species is Candida Albicans [or unknown] then Fluconazole should be commenced
- if the species is known to be Candida Krusei or Candida Glabrata, AmBisome should be commenced

7.3 Dosage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FLUCONAZOLE</th>
<th>AMBISOME</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neonate &lt; 2 weeks</td>
<td>6-12mg/kg every 72 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neonate &gt; 2 weeks</td>
<td>6-12mg/kg every 48 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Test dose 100mcg/kg, then 1mg/kg once daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased to 3mg/kg once daily (empirical) or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5mg/kg once daily (for proven infection)</td>
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</tbody>
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8. Further management

8.1 Assessing response to treatment

After 72 hours of treatment:

- a repeat blood culture should be performed [along with CRP and Fbc as well as LFTs, renal function and clotting where appropriate]
- in cases of CNS disease, a repeat lumbar puncture should be performed

8.2 Duration of treatment should be discussed with a Consultant Microbiologist, especially in the case of candida meningitis or any focal infection.

8.3 Investigations for end organ damage

Candida species are capable of invading all vital organs after candidaemia. A critical review of the literature using meta-analytic techniques for neonatal candidaemia and end organ damage has not been able to provide strong evidence-based conclusions for end organ evaluation. The data reviewed was largely retrospective case series and there was evidence of heterogeneity.

The reported median prevalence for end organ damage are:

- Endophthalmitis 3%
- Meningitis 15%
- Brain abscess or ventriculitis 4%
- Endocarditis 5%
- Positive renal ultrasound 5%

It is recommended that all neonates with proven candida sepsis should have

- Echocardiogram
- Renal ultrasound scan
- Cranial ultrasound scan
- Fundoscopy

Clinical audit standards

1. Neonates with invasive candidal infection should receive antifungal treatment determined by clinical status +/- candida species
2. Vascular lines should be removed in all newborns with invasive candida infection (or if not removed reason for decision documented)
3. Neonates with invasive candidal infection should have fundoscopy, echocardiogram, renal ultrasound scan and cranial ultrasound scan.
Glossary

1. CNS central nervous system
2. CRP C-reactive protein
3. CSF cerebrospinal fluid
4. ELBW extremely low birth weight
5. SPA supra pubic aspirate
6. VLBW very low birth weight

Summary of development and consultation process undertaken before registration and dissemination

This guideline was originally drafted by Drs Bose and Dyke on behalf of the Neonatal Department and Paediatric Directorate in 2007. It was circulated for comments to Neonatal Consultants, junior doctors and ANNPs. It was discussed at the Departmental Guidelines Meeting and amendments made to incorporate further suggestions and comments. Consultants in medical microbiology were actively involved in authoring the guideline and the neonatal unit pharmacist reviewed it. Suggestions for improvements were incorporated in subsequent drafts and the published version represented a final draft upon which agreement by all parties had been reached. The 2015 and 2018 revisions followed further reviews of recently published papers which required only minor revision of the guideline. Consultants in Neonatology and Microbiology approved revised drafts.

Distribution list / dissemination method

a. Hospital intranet
b. Neonatal Unit.

References / source documents


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