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PARVOVIRUS B19 AND ANAEMIA IN NORTHWESTERN TANZANIA
Severe anaemia is a common problem among children in low-income countries and a major cause of hospital admission and deaths among children <5 years old in sub-Saharan Africa. Parvovirus B19 has been found to cause a wide spectrum of haematological manifestations, including transient aplastic crisis and congenital red cell aplasia, but little is known regarding the effect of this particular virus in relation to severe anaemia.

Recognizing the importance of a better understanding of the aetiology of severe anaemia in low- and middle-income countries, Yustina A. Tizeba and colleagues, from the Department of Pediatrics and Child Health, Weill Bugando School of Medicine, Mwanza, Tanzania, investigated the relationship between B19 and anaemia among children <5 years old in the city of Mwanza, Tanzania, and its potential precipitating role of acute anaemic episodes.

Authors concluded that a significant proportion of children <5 years old with anaemia were acutely infected with B19 and that higher B19 IgM seropositivity rates were observed among children <5 years old with severe anaemia compared with those with mild and moderate anaemia. In rural areas of malaria-endemic countries, acute B19 infections should be considered in the differential diagnosis of paediatric severe anaemia.

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INDUCED SPUTUM AS A DIAGNOSTIC TOOL IN PAEDIATRIC PNEUMONIA
India contributes to nearly 44% of all paediatric pneumonia cases and deaths globally. Aetiological diagnosis of childhood pneumonia is challenging because of the difficulty in obtaining specimens from the site of infection and the lack of a practical gold standard for the diagnosis of this disease. Though pulmonary aspiration and bronchoalveolar lavage are considered ideal in determining the aetiology of pneumonia, they have many limitations and are seldom feasible in most resource-constrained settings. In this issue of the Journal of Tropical Pediatrics, Aditya Kurade et al., from the Bharati Vidyapeeth Deemed University Medical College and Hospital, Sangli, Maharashtra, India, aimed to characterize the performance of induced sputum, using hypertonic (3%) saline) as an alternative approach to more invasive methods, for pneumonia aetiological investigation.

Authors concluded that sputum induction in young children is safe and feasible in Indian settings. Although the success was limited (~53%), bacterial yield was high.

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ANTENATAL STEROIDS ON RESPIRATORY MORBIDITY OF LATE PRETERM NEWBORNS
Late preterm infants (those between 34 and <37 weeks of gestation) face a significantly greater risk of adverse respiratory outcomes compared with term infants. Antenatal corticosteroid (ACS) therapy has been one of the major breakthroughs in improving perinatal outcome for preterm infants. The benefit of ACS before 34 weeks to mitigate the morbidity of prematurity is well established, but much less evidence exists supporting their effectiveness in late preterm newborns.

In this issue, Vijaya Ontela and colleagues, from the Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education & Research, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu, India, conducted a randomized controlled trial to
study the effect of antenatal dexamethasone on the respiratory morbidity of late preterm newborns.

Authors found that the composite respiratory morbidity (defined as respiratory distress syndrome and/or transient tachypnoea of newborn) was observed in 41.6% of infants treated with corticosteroids and in 36.2% of infants in the control group. On multivariate-adjusted analysis, use of steroids was not found to be associated with decrease in composite respiratory morbidity [adjusted relative risk = 0.91 (95% confidence interval: 0.7–1.2)].

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