

Reference Number: FOI202223/267
From: Other
Date: 30 August 2022
Subject: Neonatal sepsis guidance

Q1 Is your trust involved in the medical care of infants in the first 72 hours of life?

A1 Yes

Q2 Do you have a guideline for the investigation and treatment of early onset infection/sepsis in neonates (names will vary)?

A2 Yes, we have an agreed guideline between Alder Hey (AH) and the Liverpool Women's Hospital (LWH), which is based on the NICE 2021 guideline.

Q3 Does your guideline use NICE or Kaiser Permanente criteria for assessment of infants at risk of early onset neonatal sepsis?

A3 The new revised guideline agreed between AH and LWH is based on the NICE 2021 guideline

Q4 Within your early onset neonatal sepsis guideline what are the indications for lumbar puncture?

A4 These are augmented statements from the NICE guideline.

If it is safe to do so, ie Baby does not have respiratory instability, is not clinically unstable on handling and does not have thrombocytopenia), consider a lumbar puncture to obtain a cerebrospinal fluid sample when:

- *there is a strong clinical suspicion of early-onset neonatal infection or*
- *there are clinical symptoms or signs suggesting meningitis or encephalitis.*
- *Suspected Herpes Simplex Virus (HSV) infection*
- *Congenital Syphilis*
- *Seizures of unknown aetiology*

Please discuss with a more senior colleague if, following thorough clinical evaluation, there is uncertainty.

Consider performing a lumbar puncture to obtain a cerebrospinal fluid sample in a baby who did not have a lumbar puncture at presentation who is receiving antibiotics, if it is thought safe to do so and if:

- *the baby has a positive blood culture (other than coagulase negative staphylococcus) or*
- *the baby does not respond satisfactorily to antibiotic treatment, or*
- *there is a strong clinical suspicion of infection or*
- *there are clinical symptoms or signs suggesting meningitis.*

Q5 How many lumbar punctures has your trust carried out in infants under 72 hours of age in

the last 12 months?

A5 89 from August 2021 – August 2022

Q6 How many of these had positive CSF cultures (not including bacterial PCR)?

A6 Information not held – the Trust does not routinely collate or hold this information centrally as part of its management or performance data.

Q7 How many infants under 72 hours of age were diagnosed with meningitis in the last 12 months in your trust?

A7 Information exempted under Section 40: Personal data. Providing this information would likely identify individuals involved.

Q8 How many infants between 72 hours of age and 7 days of age were diagnosed with meningitis in your trust?

A8 Information exempted under Section 40: Personal data. Providing this information would likely identify individuals involved.

The Trust is unable to respond to all or specific elements of your request where the response would indicate five or less individuals. The Trust is withholding this information under Section 40 (Personal Information) of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000 to reduce the risk of any individuals being identified. The Trust is of the view that disclosure of such information would significantly increase the risk of individuals being identified and as such would constitute a breach of their personal data.

The Trust has applied exemption Section 40(2) of the FOIA and is therefore withholding the information as disclosure which may identify an individual would breach their rights under the Data Protection Act 2018. The grounds for application of this exemption include:

- Any data relating to patients or staff is third party data, furthermore health data is classified as sensitive personal data within the Data Protection Act 2018. As such, Section 40 (2) of the FOIA applies along with the Trusts duty of confidentiality. Therefore under s.2 (3) (f) (ii) of the FOIA, there is an absolute exemption from disclosure on the grounds that it would contravene the First Data Protection Principle.
- The Trust has a duty under the Data Protection Act 2018 and specifically the First Data Protection Principle to ensure personal data regarding staff and patients is processed fairly and lawfully. Disclosure of such data which may identify an individual, either through the data alone or other data in conjunction with that data which may identify an individual would therefore breach this principle.
- The Data Protection Act 2018 defines sensitive personal data to include data relating to the “physical or mental health or condition” of a person. Any such information about specific individuals falls within this category and disclosure of such data including statistical data, with any potential likelihood of identification would breach the Data Protection Act 2018.