
Rise In Antibiotic Resistant Pediatric Head And Neck Infections

The increase in antibiotic-resistant infections has become a big concern for researchers and clinicians over the years. MRSA was once a condition that was only found in hospital settings; however, over the last decade MRSA outbreaks have increasingly been found in patients without risk factors.

In an attempt to identify trends in the susceptibility of antibiotic-resistant infections, researchers from Emory University School of Medicine and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta studied data on pediatric patients from nationwide hospitals.

"The growing concern about the recent worldwide MRSA epidemic has fueled the curiosity of the scientific community to gain insight into the clinical and epidemiologic manifestations of this microbe," says Steven E. Sobol, MD, MSc, primary investigator of the study and director of Pediatric Otolaryngology in the Department of Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery at Emory.

"Previous studies have established that skin and soft tissue infections in some communities are due to MRSA," he says. "However, it has been observed in several institutions that there is a significant rise in pediatric head and neck infections as well."

The researchers reviewed a total of 21,009 pediatric head and neck *S. aureus* infections from 300 hospitals nationwide that occurred between Jan. 1, 2001 and Dec. 31, 2006. Patients ranged in ages from birth to 18.

In 2001, approximately 12 percent of all isolated *S. aureus* in the study was methicillin resistant. During the following five years, the number steadily rose to more than 28 percent. Overall during those six years there was a 16.3 percent increase in the percentage of resistance for all pediatric head and neck *S. aureus* infections.

"There is a nationwide increase in the prevalence of MRSA in children with head and neck infections that is alarming," says Sobol. "Clinicians must use antibiotic agents judiciously in order to reduce further antimicrobial drug resistance."

Sobol suggests that there be careful testing of suspected head and neck infections, leading to more appropriate antimicrobial drug selection. He also recommends further studies to gain additional insight into this organism.

Additional study investigators include Iman Naseri, MD, formerly of Emory's Department of Otolaryngology

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