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RESEARCH PAPER**

Title: SALTING NEWBORNS: A DANGEROUS TRADITIONAL PRACTICE
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BACKGROUND: Some harmful traditional practices related to newborn care are still performed in many developing countries . Among these practices is Salting. Several methods of salting is used either alone or a combination of all: small amount of salt is dissolved in the water used for the baby's bath, rubbing the skin with a mixture of olive oil and salt, or rubbing the skin especially the axillae, groin and the inside of the mouth with salt. This practice still performed in the Middle East, Turkey, India, China, and some other countries.

CASE REPORTS: During last year we admitted at Jordan Hospital five newborns who were subjected to salting and suffered from complications. (1) Three days old boy admitted with severe hypernatremia, serum sodium 194 mmol/L and intracranial hemorrhage who died. (2) Eight days old girl with hypernatremia, serum sodium 164 mmol/L, severe hyperbilirubinemia, serum bilirubin 30 mg/dl, and intracranial bleeding. (3) Fourteen days old boy with generalized healing skin lesions, had normal head circumference at birth but developed severe microcephaly subsequently. (4) Six days old girl admitted with fever, meningitis and UTI, serum sodium 142 mmol/L. (5) Seven days old boy with hyperbilirubinemia, serum bilirubin 21.5 mg/dl, and serum sodium 155 mmol/L.

PARENTS QUESTIONER: Before admitting the index case we were not aware of the extent of this problem, its prevalence and complications. To know more about salting we developed a questioner discussing it. An interview with 200 consecutive mothers delivered at Jordan Hospital were interviewed by one of the physicians. An educational pamphlet was then given to the family followed by discussion of the dangers of salting babies.

Preliminary results showed that the majority of those who knew about this practice from relatives and friends thought that salting will strengthens the skin, prevents infection, decreases sweating in the future, prevents bad odor, and decrease allergy. Usually the grandmother rub the skin with salt alone or with olive oil, bathe the baby with salted water once or more, and rub the gums and the inside of the mouth, axilla and groin with salt. Families from various sectors of the society, regardless of their level of education and socio-economic status practiced salting.

RECOMMENDATIONS: A wide effective public education campaign to stop salting babies should be executed using the public media, newspapers, posters and schools. Salting practices dangers and complications should be part of postnatal education in every hospital before the mother is discharged.