

A SIX YEAR REVIEW OF CHILDREN HOSPITALIZED FOR VARICELLA

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Complications of varicella are not common; uneventful recovery is the rule except in immunocompromised persons.

We retrospectively evaluated previously healthy children who were hospitalized during the last six years (1996-2002) because of varicella zoster virus infection (VZV) complications. Through these years 274 children with VZV infection were followed at our outpatient department and 8 % (22 patients, 15 male, 7 female; aged 1 to 12 years) were hospitalized due to coexisting complications. 63% of them showed neurologic involvement. Eleven patients had cerebellar disease, 2 patients had meningoencephalitis, 1 patient had transverse myelitis. Ocular complications were present in two children. Optic neuritis was associated with meningoencephalitis in 1 patient and keratouveitis was observed in 1 patient with cellulitis and septicemia.

One patient had pneumonia and 3 patients had empyema. Culture of the pleural effusion yielded group A beta-hemolytic streptococci in two patients and streptococcus pneumoniae in one patient.

Secondary bacterial infection of the skin constituted 13% of the children. 1 patient had cellulitis, septicemia accompanied to cellulitis in an other patient and 1 patient had necrotizing fasciitis. Septic arthritis had been observed in one patient.

These patients neither had an underlying illness nor were immunocompromised and none of them had been vaccinated against varicella. Recently, increasing number of serious complications in otherwise healthy children have been reported. Keeping this in mind, careful management of varicella infections and widespread use of varicella vaccine may decrease such cases in the future.

