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THE RESPONSE TO PHOTOTHERAPY FOR JAUNDICE IN BREAST-FED INFANTS

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Background :Phototherapy has been found to be effective and safe in the treatment of neonatal hyperbilirubinemia. Methods:A total of 78 full-term healthy infants with nonhemolytic hyperbilirubinemia were studied. 38 infants were breast fed (group 1); 20 were formula fed(group 2); and 20 were fed both formula and breast milk(group 3).All feeding patterns were begun at birth.Conventional phototherapy with daylight fluorescent lamps was administered to all infants. Results: Duration of phototherapy exposure was 50,8 hours in group 1; 31,5 hours in group 2; and 38,6 hours in group 3.The overall reduction in bilirubin for the duration of phototherapy exposure was 22,2% , 34,6% and 28,4% respectively. The postexposure rebound bilirubin levels in the first day were increased by 4,9%, 3,4% and 4,5% respectively.The duration of exposure to phototherapy was significantly longer in group 2 than in groups 1 or 3. The overall reduction in the bilirubin le vel during the phototherapy exposure was greater in group 2. The postexposure rebound bilirubin concentrations were comparable in all groups. Conclusion:Exclusive breast fed infants with hyperbilirubinemia responded significantly more slowly to phototherapy than infants fed formula or a combination of formula and breast milk. Intensive support and advice must be provided to the lactating mother. Adding formula to the diets of breast fed infants with hyperbilirubinemia should be reserved for those neonates whose bilirubin concentrations approach levels considered dangerous for development of kernicterus.