

Tuberculosis: The Disease, The TB Test and the BCG Vaccine - a fact sheet from UK's Vaccination Awareness Network

THE DISEASE

TB is a disease which affects the lungs and can cause people to cough up blood. Other symptoms are: chest infection, fever, swollen glands, weight loss, night sweats, constant tiredness, loss of appetite. Rarely, it can affect the bones and brain.

The disease is linked to poor living standards and is more common in inner city areas where living conditions are cramped. TB can be spread by coughing and sneezing. In 1996 there was a 13% rise in TB incidence worldwide. (1, 2 and 3)

THE VACCINE

The BCG vaccine is given to children aged 10-13 years. It is also given to newborn babies of ethnic minority and to babies who live in inner city areas (1 and 2) In the case of older children, a test is normally done to see whether or not a child is already immune to TB. This is called the Heaf test.

The Heaf test...

The Heaf test is used by 95% of school districts. It is done by puncturing the skin with 6 tiny needles that inject a trace amount of TB infection into the body with the purpose of seeing whether the person has a reaction. If the person doesn't have a reaction, the result is negative and they will be given TB vaccine.

The test, however, is not known for its efficacy. The American Academy of Pediatrics tells its members that the test could give false negative and false positive results. The Lancet reported that a lot of medical professionals aren't even sure what a positive test means. It could mean that someone is immune to TB, or it could mean that they are simply allergic to the test. (4)

Composition

Freeze dried attenuated live bacteria, dextran, glucose, Triton WR 1339, water, sodium chloride. (7)

Efficacy

In the world's largest and only double-blind vaccine trial of BCG vaccine in India, the incidence of TB was higher in the vaccinated group than in the control group.

The New Scientist wrote: ***"the world's biggest trial to assess the value of BCG tuberculosis vaccine has made startling revelation that the vaccine does not give any protection against bacillary forms of tuberculosis."*** (5)

The Lancet (14 March 1992) also carried out a study of 83,000 people who had been vaccinated against TB and concluded that they could find no statistically significant protection by the BCG vaccine against tuberculosis. (6) **Holland does not have a BCG programme, and they have the lowest TB death rate in Europe.** (5)

They don't know how or if it works

In the book 'Vaccines' by Plotkin and Mortimer, under the heading 'Efficacy of Bacille Calmette-Guerin' it states:

"The true effectiveness of BCG vaccine has been debated for decades. Large clinical trials from the 1930's and through the 1970's yielded wide ranging and conflicting results, demonstrating efficacy from 0 to 80%. The most recent trial in India only served to continue the argument".even after years of study and debate, the question 'does BCG work?' cannot be answered definitely."

Also:

"The exact immune response elicited by BCG vaccination and its mechanism of action within the host are not well understood"..Studies of the immunological events that occur within the human host after BCG vaccination are almost totally lacking "both animal data

and human clinical studies have provided information about the immune response to BCG, yet no vaccine so widely used is so little known about its mechanisms of action. The immunology is complicated and development of an assay has been hampered by the lack of understanding".given our incomplete understanding of tuberculosis immunology, we are left with imperfect indicators of immunity." (12)

Side effects

Rash, fever, local induration, pain and lymphadenopathy, discharging ulcer, abscess formation, anaphylactic shock, lymphadenitis, difficulty in breathing, nausea, vomiting, phlyctenular conjunctivitis, draining sinuses, death.

In 1930, 73 children were killed by BCG vaccine in a few months. A book by Dr. Neville Irvine, "BCG Vaccination in Theory and Practice" reports of this disaster.

There had been a similar number of deaths in Spain when the Association of Spanish Pediatricians told their members not to use the vaccine. (7, 8, 9 and 10) A report in the Medical Monitor (June 1992) also stated that the vaccine can give you TB!

"It can cause disseminated TB in immuno-suppressed individuals, including children, and local ulceration and osteitis (wasting away of the bone) appears to be more common in babies."

Complication rates for serious side effects (from the vaccine) were recorded at 3-6 children per 200 (1.5% - 3%). (4)

Contraindications

The vaccine should not be administered if the recipient:

- Is taking steroids or any other immuno-suppressive therapy such as radiotherapy or chemotherapy.
- Has cancer or is HIV positive.
- Has pyrexia or other infected skin conditions.
- Has had a previous reaction to a vaccination.
- Is allergic to any of the vaccine ingredients.
- Has had a vaccine in the last 3 weeks.
- Is pregnant. (7 and 11)

Sources

1. Birth to Five Years - Health Education Authority.
2. Immunising Your Baby (from "Our Baby" magazine, June 1998).
3. What You Need to Know about Tuberculosis – New York City Department of Health Clinics.
4. WDDTY Vaccination Handbook.
5. Vaccine Legacy – Pat Rattigan, ND.
6. Lancet, 14 March 1992.
7. Manufacturers insert for TB vaccine.
8. Brisbane Telegraph (30/10/81).
9. Vaccination and immunisation: dangers, delusions and alternatives.
10. The Blood Poisoners, Lionel Dole [<http://www.alternative-doctor.com/vaccination/dole.htm>]
11. A guide to childhood immunisation – Health Education Authority.
12. 'Vaccines' by Plotkin and Mortimer, and also the London Evening Standard, 19/7/00. "Schools bring back vaccine as number of TB cases soars."

**TB / BCG factsheet (c) 1997-2001 VAN UK.
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