

SEPTIC ARTHRITIS OF ELBOW IN A NEONATE: A CASE REPORT

Izzul Faiz Razali¹, Fabian Chong Tien Fook²

¹Hospital Melaka, ²Pantai Hospital Ayer Keroh

Introduction: Septic arthritis in neonate is rare and causes dilemma for early diagnosis. Early diagnosis is difficult as physical sign may be minimal, laboratory and radiographic findings may be normal¹. However, if the diagnosis is missed, it will have a lifelong devastating effect on the affected joint.

Discussion: A 30 days old premature baby was referred to orthopaedic team for swelling and erythema over right elbow, which is also a previous catheter site. Upon examination, there is a fluctuant area over medial and posterolateral part of the elbow, and child shows resistance upon movement of the elbow. Blood tests shows elevated total white cell count of 21 and CRP of 230. Imaging-wise, plain radiograph was normal but ultrasound is suggestive of right elbow septic arthritis. The diagnosis of septic arthritis of left elbow was made. Arthrotomy washout was done and the culture came back as MRSA. Patient completed IV Vancomycin and Rifampicin for a total of 6 week. Repeated blood parameters show improvement as white cell count coming down to 9.8 and CRP decreased to 2. Clinical examination also shows full range of motion of the elbow.

Conclusion: Septic arthritis in neonate, albeit rare, is an orthopaedic emergency which requires early diagnosis and treatment in order to avoid complications such as cartilage destruction, osteomyelitis, ankylosis, growth aberration due to physical damage, joint instability and restriction of movement²⁻³. Treatment includes arthrotomy washout of the affected joint and prolonged course of targeted antibiotic.