

Momento óptimo para repetir el tamizaje para hipotiroidismo congénito en infantes prematuros para detectar elevación demorada de la hormona tiroestimulante

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Objetivos Evaluar el momento de un aumento demorado de los niveles de hormona tiroestimulante (TSH) en infantes pretérmino con hipotiroidismo congénito, y determinar si las causas de hipotiroidismo congénito podrían perderse utilizando las guías de consenso actuales de repetir el tamizaje aproximadamente a las dos semanas de edad o 2 semanas después del primer tamizaje.

Diseño del estudio El estudio fue realizado en un período de 13 años (Enero 2004- Diciembre 2016). Muestras de sangre para TSH se recolectaron entre las 72 y las 120 horas después de nacer. Muestras repetidas se recolectaron semanalmente en los infantes pretérmino hasta que el infante estaba en edad de término (37 semanas EG). Los pacientes fueron seguidos para determinar si el hipotiroidismo congénito fue permanente o transitorio

Resultados Veintisiete (50.9%) de los infantes pretérmino nacidos <33 sem EG que fueron diagnosticados con hipotiroidismo congénito tuvieron demora en la elevación de TSH y no hubieran sido detectados en el primer tamizaje del recién nacido. Doce de estos infantes (40.7%) con elevación demorada de TSH presentaron hipotiroidismo descompensado al momento del diagnóstico ($T4 < 10\text{pmol/L}$), y 4 tuvieron hipotiroidismo congénito severo ($T4 < 5.5\text{ pmol/L}$) en el diagnóstico. Si el tamizaje se hubiera repetido sólo a las dos semanas de vida, 13 infantes (48%) con elevación demorada de TSH no hubieran sido identificados. De los 27 infantes con elevación de TSH demorada, 6 (22%) tienen hipotiroidismo congénito permanente, y otros 12 serán reevaluados a los 3 años de edad.

Conclusión El tamizaje repetido para hipotiroidismo congénito en infantes pretérmino es necesario para evitar perder casos de hipotiroidismo congénito con elevación demorada de TSH. Repetir el tamizaje una sola vez a las dos semanas de edad perderá los infantes con demora en la elevación de TSH e hipotiroidismo congénito permanente descompensado.

El hipotiroidismo congénito afecta a 1 cada 2000-4000 nacimientos (1-4) y es una causa prevenible de discapacidad del neurodesarrollo. Los programas de tamizaje de recién nacido han aumentado la tasa de detección temprana de esta condición y casi erradicado las complicaciones neurológicas. La incidencia reportada de hipotiroidismo congénito ha aumentado significativamente en las dos últimas décadas (5-7). Factores que se ha sugerido contribuyeron a este aumento son el cambio en el nivel de corte para tamizaje de la hormona tiro-estimulante (TSH) en el tiempo y el aumento de sobrevivencia de infantes prematuros (5, 8).

Se ha descrito una forma única de hipotiroidismo congénito en los infantes prematuros. Esta forma atípica de hipotiroidismo está caracterizada por una elevación tardía en la concentración de TSH, de tal forma que los infantes prematuros pasan el primer tamizaje pero son detectados al repetir la prueba (9). El momento de esta elevación, pese a ser variable, ocurre entre 2 y seis semanas en la mayoría de los casos (10). Pese a que un pequeño porcentaje de estos infantes tienen disgenesia tiroidea, la mayoría tienen una glándula tiroidea estructuralmente normal (10).

Varios estudios han recomendado repetir el tamizaje del recién nacido en infantes prematuros para identificar a aquéllos con elevación tardía de la concentración de TSH (11, 12). Este enfoque refleja la preocupación de que el hipotiroidismo congénito primario puede ser enmascarado debido a la supresión de la secreción de TSH causada por inmadurez hipotalámica-pituitaria, administración de medicación, y efectos de enfermedad neonatal severa (13). La utilidad de un segundo tamizaje, su oportunidad, y el umbral de corte óptimo de TSH a ser usado continúan siendo motivo de debate activo (10, 14, 15). Las guías de consenso europeas más recientes sobre pesquisa de hipotiroidismo congénito recomiendan una estrategia de segundo tamizaje en infantes prematuros y bajo peso de nacimiento aproximadamente a las dos semanas de edad, o dos semanas después del primer tamizaje (16). Las guías publicadas por la Academia Americana de pediatría (17) en 2006 reconocen una desproporcionada incidencia de elevación de TSH demorada e hipotiroidismo congénito en infantes MBPN (incidencia 1 en 250 nacimientos) y en infantes de BPN (incidencia 1 en 1589 nacimientos). Pese a que no brindan recomendaciones acerca de cuándo y con qué frecuencia repetir el tamizaje en estos infantes, ellos manifiestan que ciertos programas de tamizaje pesquisan rutinariamente a las 2 y 6 semanas y recomiendan iniciar reemplazo de hormona tiroidea si la hipertirotrópinemia persiste a las 6 semanas de edad.

El tamizaje neonatal de los infantes pretérmino para hipotiroidismo congénito en la República de Irlanda consiste en medición de TSH en sangre total a las 72-120 horas y luego repetir la medición semanalmente hasta las 37 semanas de EG corregida o el egreso hospitalario. Los objetivos de este estudio fueron determinar el momento de la elevación demorada de TSH en infantes con hipotiroidismo congénito, y determinar si casos de hipotiroidismo congénito podrían no ser detectados si se emplean las actuales guías de consenso Europeas de repetir el tamizaje aproximadamente a las 2 semanas de edad o 2 semanas después del primer tamizaje.

Métodos

El Comité de Ética del Hospital de Niños de la Universidad Temple St, aprobó el estudio. Se revisaron los registros poblacionales, en forma prospectiva del Republic of Ireland's National Newborn Bloodspot Screening Program para hipotiroidismo congénito, coordinado desde el Hospital de Niños de la Universidad.

El tamizaje para hipotiroidismo congénito en la República de Irlanda consiste en la recolección de muestras de sangre entera en papel de filtro luego de una punción de talón entre las 72 y 120 horas después del nacimiento. La concentración de TSH en sangre entera es medida por Inmunoensayo AutoDELFI (PerkinElmer, Waltham, Massachusetts), y este ensayo ha sido usado durante todo el período de estudio. En pacientes con una concentración de TSH en sangre entera >15 mU/L, se solicita TSH sérica y tiroxina libre (FT4), y el paciente es referido para evaluación por un endocrinólogo infantil. Si el nivel de TSH está entre 8 y 15 mU/L, una segunda muestra del RN es solicitada en un período dentro de los 7 días. Si esta segunda medición es > 8 mU/L, las concentraciones de TSH sérica y FT4 se miden y el paciente es referido para evaluación. Al contrario de otros programas de pesquisa, el programa del RN para hipotiroidismo ha utilizado el mismo ensayo y un límite consistente de TSH en sangre para infantes pretérmino de 8 mU/L desde los inicios del programa en 1979. En la población de pretérmino, aún si el nivel inicial de TSH en sangre es normal, muestras repetidas de TSH en sangre se toman semanalmente hasta que el infante tiene la edad corregida de término (37

semanas de gestación) o hasta que el infante es dado de alta a su hogar desde la unidad de cuidados intensivos neonatales.

Los infantes de término con pesquisa positiva para hipotiroidismo congénito son citados al Centro Nacional de pesquisa para escintigrafía. Debido a que los infantes pretérmino en UCIN no pueden concurrir para la escintigrafía, el ultrasonido tiroideo debe ser organizado tan pronto como sea posible. El hipotiroidismo congénito es entonces clasificado como disgenesia tiroidea (atirosis, ectopia, e hipoplasia) o glándula normal/ hiperplásica basado en la imagen. El seguimiento es provisto por un endocrinólogo pediátrico o un pediatra local, acorde a la disponibilidad local y la preferencia de la familia.

Población

Todos los infantes pretérmino (≤ 33 semanas de gestación) diagnosticados con hipotiroidismo congénito y tratados con levotiroxina en la República de Irlanda entre 2004 y 2016 fueron identificados. La EG de 33 semanas fue elegida como el corte para este estudio para asegurar el seguimiento de los datos de pesquisa de TSH por al menos 4 semanas después del nacimiento. Para todos los pacientes se registraron: edad del primer tamizaje, resultados de pruebas de función tiroidea al diagnóstico, sexo, gestación, etnia, comorbilidades, resultados de imágenes tiroideas (si realizados), presencia de exposición a yodo médico, e historia familiar de enfermedad tiroidea.

Determinación de hipotiroidismo congénito transitorio y permanente en pacientes con elevación de TSH temprana y tardía

En los casos en que se confirmó glándula normal in situ o no se hizo imagen en el período neonatal, el endocrinólogo pediatra o el pediatra local a cargo del paciente fue contactado. Si el paciente no requirió aumento de la dosis de levotiroxina en el tiempo, una prueba de suspensión de levotiroxina se realizó antes de los 3 años. Esto incluía discontinuar la levotiroxina y repetir pruebas de función tiroidea después de 2 semanas, luego 4 semanas después y 6 semanas más tarde (es decir, 3 meses después de discontinuar la levotiroxina). Si la función tiroidea permanecía normal, el paciente era clasificado como hipotiroidismo congénito transitorio. Si las concentraciones de TSH en plasma eran > 10 mU/L luego de la suspensión completa del tratamiento, se diagnosticaba con hipotiroidismo congénito permanente. Si TSH en plasma aumentaba levemente (5.5- 10 mU/L), el paciente era seguido y, si la hipertirotrofinemia persistía, se reevaluaba con prueba de hormona de liberación de tirotrófina para confirmar hipotiroidismo primario y recomenzaba con levotiroxina. Los pacientes que tenían disgenesia en imágenes o requerimientos de dosis crecientes de levotiroxina en la infancia no pasaban por la prueba de suspensión del tratamiento.

Análisis estadístico

Todos los análisis estadísticos fueron realizados con SPSS 22.0 (IBM, Armonk, New York, New York). Los datos son presentados con mediana y rango absoluto. Se empleó test U de Mann Whitney para comparar grupos de datos de distribución no-normal, y el t-test de muestras independientes para distribuciones normales. Un valor de $P < .05$ fue considerado estadísticamente significativo.

Resultados

Entre Enero 2004 y Diciembre 2016, un total de 898424 infantes fueron pesquisados para hipotiroidismo congénito en la república de Irlanda, y de estos, 586 infantes fueron tratados por hipotiroidismo congénito (incidencia, 1:1533 nacimientos). Un total de 53 infantes (11%) fueron < 33 sem EG. La EG en la cohorte pretérmino fue desde 23 a 33 sem (mediana, 29 sem), y la mediana de PN fue 1.2 kg (rango, 0.46- 3.16 kg). La mediana de concentración de TSH sérica al diagnóstico fue 78.3 mU/L (rango 13.3- 1122 mU/L) y la mediana de FT4 fue 8.9 pmol/L (rango, 1.0- 18.7 pmol/L) (Figura).

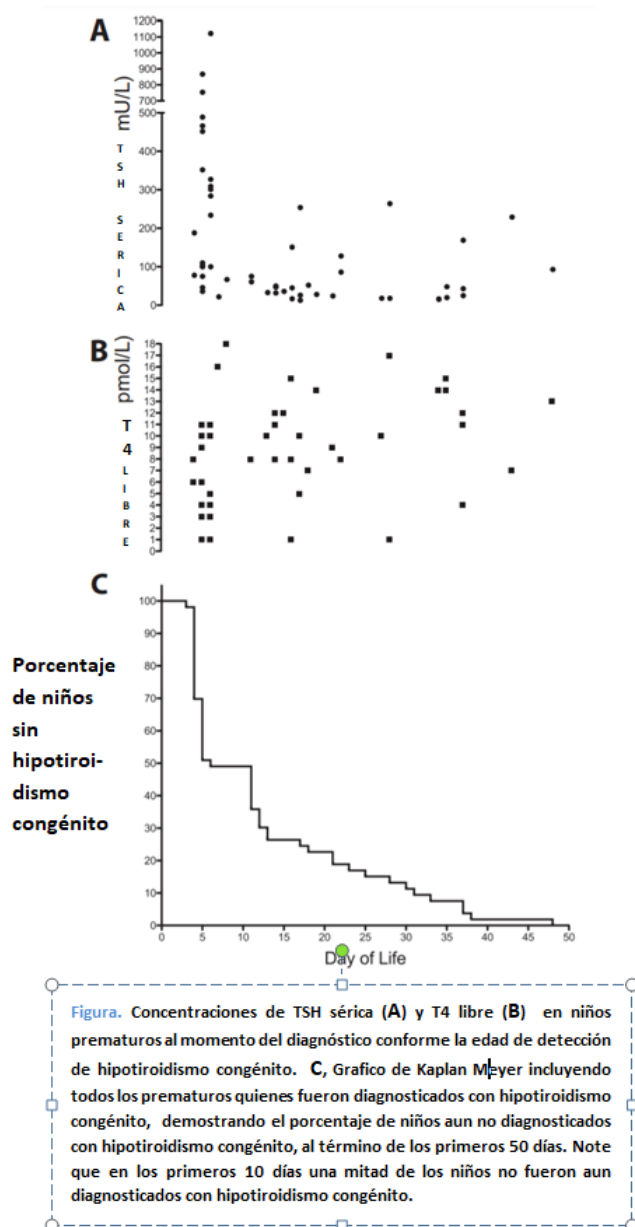


Imagen del tiroides se realizó en 37 infantes (68,5%), de los cuales 28 tuvieron glándula normal in situ, 6 tenían atireosis, 1 tenía una glándula ectópica, y 2 glándula hipoplásica. Todos los infantes con disgenesia tiroidea fueron identificados en el primer tamizaje. Siete infantes tuvieron función tiroidea anormal luego de exposición a yodo, incluyendo un infante que

presentaba trisomía 21 y 6 infantes que desarrollaron disfunción tiroidea después de la cirugía por ECN, de los cuales 3 murieron en el período neonatal por complicaciones de su ECN.

Incidencia de elevación tardía de TSH

Veintisiete (50.9%) de los infantes pretérmino nacidos <33 sem EG que tuvieron diagnóstico de hipotiroidismo congénito presentaron elevación de TSH tardía no hubieran sido diagnosticados con la primera pesquisa de RN a las 72-120 horas. Las características de los infantes con elevación tardía de TSH son presentadas en la Tabla I. De los infantes que tuvieron TSH inicial normal en sangre en la primera prueba, la elevación tardía de TSH fue detectada entre los 8 y 48 días (mediana, 13 días). Doce infantes (40.7%) con elevación tardía de TSH presentaron hipotiroidismo descompensado al diagnóstico (FT4 <10 pmol/L), y 4 tuvieron hipotiroidismo congénito severo (FT4 <5.5 mmol/L) al diagnóstico (18). Trece infantes con elevación tardía de TSH tuvieron una glándula tiroidea estructuralmente normal, 8 fueron inclasificables, y 6 tuvieron exposición a yodados, todos ellos sufrieron cirugía por ECN. Un infante tuvo trisomía 21. Si se hubieran seguido las Guías actuales de consenso Europeo (16) y se hubiera repetido el nivel de TSH sólo a las 2 semanas de edad, 13 infantes (48%) con elevación de TSH tardía no hubieran sido detectados, porque la concentración de TSH a los 14 días de edad era normal. Siete de estos infantes tuvieron hipotiroidismo descompensado con baja concentración de FT4 al ser diagnosticados con hipotiroidismo congénito a una mediana de edad de 30 días (rango, 17-48 días). Si el tamizaje final se tomaba a las 4 semanas de edad, no se hubiera detectado hipotiroidismo congénito en 7 infantes (26% de los pacientes con elevación tardía de TSH). Estos 7 infantes tuvieron niveles normales de TSH en sangre el día 28

Tabla I. Características de pacientes recién nacidos tratados para hipotiroidismo congénito con valores iniciales de TSH normales y retraso en la elevación de TSH

Edad de la primera prueba de tamiz elevada, días	Tamiz de TSH al nacimiento, mU/L	TSH sérica al diagnóstico, mU/L	T4 libre al diagnóstico, pmol/L	Diagnóstico
25	9	18.9	17.5	Glándula normal
23	9	18.3	15.9	Glándula normal
11	32	47	12.1	Glándula normal
13	12	13.3	10.7	Glándula normal
17	18	20.4	14.6	Glándula normal
11	18	61.5	8.4	Glándula normal
14	11	24	9.1	Glándula normal
22	55	86.9	8.8	Glándula normal
8	10	75	8.1	Glándula normal
37	12	25.3	12.3	Glándula normal
12	18	36.7	12.2	Glándula normal
11	26	32	11.1	Glándula normal
13	24	45.8	8.9	Glándula normal
38	59	229	7.3	Exposición a yodo
30	11	16.3	14.9	Exposición a yodo
11	8	16.3	14.9	Exposición a yodo
33	13	48	15	Exposición a yodo
37	56	169	4.9	Exposición a yodo
11	130	151	1.5	Exposición a yodo
12	13	29	14.5	No clasificable
31	18	43.5	11.5	No clasificable
11	8	26	10.9	No clasificable
12	18	52.5	7.2	No clasificable
22	240	128	8.1	No clasificable
25	58	264	1	No clasificable
10	42	254	2	No clasificable
48	70	93.6	13.5	No clasificable

que luego se volvieron elevados, y 2 de 7 (28%) presentaron hipotiroidismo descompensado al momento del diagnóstico de hipotiroidismo congénito.

Características de los bebés pretérmino diagnosticados en el primer tamizaje RN de TSH vs aquellos con elevación tardía de TSH diagnosticados al repetir pesquisa

Los infantes con elevación tardía de TSH nacieron a EG más temprana (mediana 28 sem vs 30 sem; $P=.005$) y tuvieron PN más bajo (mediana, 0.87 kg vs 1.47 kg; $P<.001$). Los infantes con elevación tardía de TSH tuvieron una mediana más baja de concentración de TSH en sangre y suero al diagnóstico ($P=.002$) (Tabla II), posiblemente reflejando el hecho de que todos los infantes con disgenesia de tiroides fueron detectados en el primer tamizaje de RN.

Tabla II. Características de pacientes diagnosticados en el tamiz al nacimiento y pacientes con retraso en la elevación de TSH diagnosticados en tamices repetidos.

Características	Total (n = 53)	Diagnosticados en primer tamiz de TSH (n = 26)	Retraso en la elevación de TSH (n = 27)	Valor P
Sexo, masculino: femenino, n	1:1	1:1.36	1.45:1	.005
Peso al nacer, kg, mediana (rango)	1.2 (0.46-2.47)	1.47 (0.51-2.47)	0.87 (0.46-2.3)	<.001
Edad gestacional, sem, mediana (rango)	29 (23-33)	30 (23-33)	28 (24-33)	.005
TSH en sangre total al diagnóstico, mU/L, mediana (rango)	26 (8-500)	140 (9-500)	17.9 (8-240)	<.001
TSH sérica al diagnóstico, mU/L, mediana, (rango) *	78 (11-1122)	149 (14.7-1122)	47 (11-229)	.002
T4 libre sérica al diagnóstico, pmol/L, mediana, (rango) **	8.9 (1.0-18.8)	6.3 (1.0-18.8)	10.9 (1.5-18.2)	.029

Valor P significativo en sangre

* Rango de referencia, 0.1 - 5.5 mU/L.

** Rango de referencia, 10 - 22 pmol/L.

Incidencia de Hipotiroidismo congénito permanente en pacientes con elevación de TSH temprana y tardía

De los 53 pacientes tratados con hipotiroidismo congénito entre 2004 y 2016, 15 tuvieron edad < 3 años al momento de este estudio y no eran elegibles para la prueba de suspensión de tratamiento para determinar si tenían hipotiroidismo transitorio o permanente. Tres bebés murieron en el período neonatal, y no pudimos contactar las familias de 6 infantes para seguimiento. De los restantes 29, 18 (62%) tuvieron hipotiroidismo congénito permanente y 11 (38%) tuvieron hipotiroidismo congénito transitorio. De aquellos con hipotiroidismo congénito permanente, 9 (50%) tuvieron disgenesia y 7 (39%) presentaron requerimientos de dosis ascendentes de levotiroxina en los primeros 3 años. Otros dos infantes (11%) fracasaron en el intento de suspender la levotiroxina. Entre los 27 infantes con concentración normal de TSH en el tamizaje inicial de RN pero subsiguiente elevación tardía de TSH, 6 (22%) tuvieron hipotiroidismo congénito permanente (4 requirieron dosis crecientes de levotiroxina en el tiempo y 2 fallaron el intento de suspender tratamiento) y 8 (29%) tuvieron hipotiroidismo congénito transitorio. Un infante falleció en el período neonatal, y los restantes 12 pacientes serán re-evaluados a los 3 años de edad.

Discusión

En este estudio, hemos encontrado que el tamizaje repetido para hipotiroidismo congénito es necesario en infantes pretérmino para evitar perder casos de hipotiroidismo permanente y descompensado. La mitad de los infantes diagnosticados con hipotiroidismo congénito no fueron diagnosticados en el tamizaje inicial de RN. Entre los infantes con aumento tardío de TSH, >40% tuvo hipotiroidismo descompensado al diagnóstico, y >20% tuvo hipotiroidismo congénito permanente. Junto con enfatizar la importancia de repetir el tamizaje de TSH en

infantes prematuros, también demostramos que repetir el tamizaje una sola vez a las dos semanas o a las 4 de edad es insuficiente para detectar todos los casos de hipotiroidismo congénito con elevación tardía de TSH. Basados en estos datos, recomendamos que los protocolos de tamizaje de hipotiroidismo congénito para infantes pretérmino incluyan mediciones en los días 3-5 y a 1 semana, 2 semanas, 4 semanas, y a la edad de término corregida.

La repetición del tamizaje en infantes pretérmino no ha sido adoptada por todos los programas de pesquisa (19). La utilidad del testeado seriado ha sido cuestionada sobre la base de bajo rendimiento (20), la posible naturaleza transitoria de la mayoría de los casos detectados (21), y datos contradictorios acerca del neurodesarrollo a largo plazo (21). Sin embargo, hemos mostrado que muchos pacientes tienen hipotiroidismo descompensado al diagnóstico y presentan hipotiroidismo congénito permanente. Nuestros datos son consistentes con estudios que muestran una alta incidencia de elevación tardía de TSH, particularmente en infantes MBPN (9, 22). Además, muchos de estos infantes tienen hipotiroidismo congénito permanente (10, 23). Se ha sugerido que la frecuencia de tamizaje se haga con mediciones a las 2 semanas (24) o 1 mes (25) para pesquisar elevación tardía de TSH. Si estos enfoques se hubieran aplicado a nuestra población, 13 infantes (48%) con aumento tardío de TSH hubieran sido perdidos en el tamizaje de sólo a las 2 semanas, 7 de los cuales tuvieron hipotiroidismo descompensado. Similarmente, un solo tamizaje a 1 mes hubiera resultado en diagnóstico demorado de hipotiroidismo congénito en muchos infantes con hipotiroidismo congénito descompensado. De los 27 infantes pretérmino con elevación tardía de TSH, 13 (48%) fueron detectados entre 8 y 13 días de vida. Casi la mitad de los infantes tuvieron elevación tardía de TSH antes de las 2 semanas de edad, así que esperar hasta las 2 semanas hubiera demorado su diagnóstico.

Un cuarto de los infantes con elevación tardía de TSH en nuestra cohorte habían estado expuestos a yodo durante la cirugía por ECN, y 4 de estos infantes tuvieron nivel elevado de TSH después de los 28 días de vida. Tres de estos infantes tuvieron hipotiroidismo severo descompensado al diagnóstico. Este hallazgo resalta la necesidad de repetir el tamizaje y monitorear de cerca a los infantes expuestos a yodo (26). En estos infantes, la elevación de TSH fue identificada entre los 3 y 26 días (mediana, 18 días) después de la exposición al yodo; entonces, los infantes expuestos pueden requerir monitoreo durante un mes luego de la exposición. Sin embargo, no puede ser aseverado si la exposición al yodo fue la causa del hipotiroidismo transitorio en estos infantes.

Las principales fortalezas de nuestro trabajo son la disponibilidad de resultados de tamizaje en sangre semanales en una cohorte de infantes pretérmino durante un período de 12 años empleando el mismo examen, con un corte de pesquisa estable de 8 mU/L y datos detallados del seguimiento en pacientes tratados. En el protocolo irlandés, el último tamizaje en infantes pretérmino fue realizado a la edad de término corregida; por tanto, no es posible determinar si hubo infantes que desarrollaron hipotiroidismo congénito después de este período. Sin embargo, no estamos al tanto de ningún infante diagnosticado con hipotiroidismo congénito después de la edad de término corregida. En nuestro centro, la tiroglobulina no es medida actualmente. Algunos estudios sugieren que un diagnóstico de atirosis debería ser validado midiendo tiroglobulina (27, 28).

En conclusión, repetir el tamizaje para hipotiroidismo congénito en infantes pretérmino es necesario para evitar casos perdidos con elevación tardía de TSH. La elevación tardía de TSH es común en esta cohorte y es observada en la mitad de los infantes pretérmino con hipotiroidismo congénito. Repetir el tamizaje una vez a las 2 semanas de vida perderá un número significativo de niños con elevación tardía de TSH e hipotiroidismo congénito descompensado permanente y repetir el tamizaje sólo a las 4 semanas demorará el diagnóstico de hipotiroidismo descompensado en las primeras 2 semanas. Recomendamos la pesquisa inicial a las 72-120 horas con repetición del estudio a 1 semana, 2 semanas, 4 semanas, y a la edad de término corregida o al alta hospitalaria. Los infantes expuestos a yodo deberían ser monitoreados hasta 1 mes después de la exposición para identificar elevación tardía luego de la exposición.

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Optimal Timing of Repeat Newborn Screening for Congenital Hypothyroidism in Preterm Infants to Detect Delayed Thyroid-Stimulating Hormone Elevation

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Objectives To evaluate the timing of a delayed rise in thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) levels in preterm infants with congenital hypothyroidism, and to determine whether cases of congenital hypothyroidism would be missed by using current consensus guidelines of repeat screening at approximately 2 weeks of age or 2 weeks after the first screening.

Study design The study was performed over a 13-year period (January 2004-December 2016). Whole-blood TSH samples were collected between 72 and 120 hours after birth. Repeat samples were collected weekly in preterm infants until the infant was term-corrected (37 weeks' gestation). Patients were followed up to determine whether congenital hypothyroidism was permanent or transient.

Results Twenty-seven (50.9%) preterm infants born at <33 weeks of gestation who were diagnosed with congenital hypothyroidism had delayed TSH elevation and would not have been detected on first newborn screen. Twelve of these infants (40.7%) with delayed TSH elevation had decompensated hypothyroidism at diagnosis (free thyroxine [FT4] <10 pmol/L), and 4 had severe congenital hypothyroidism (FT4 <5.5 pmol/L) at diagnosis. If screening had been repeated only at 2 weeks of life, 13 infants (48%) with delayed TSH elevation would not have been identified. Of the 27 infants with delayed TSH elevation, 6 (22%) have permanent congenital hypothyroidism, and another 12 will be reevaluated at age 3 years.

Conclusion Repeat screening for congenital hypothyroidism in preterm infants is necessary to avoid missing cases of congenital hypothyroidism with delayed TSH elevation. Repeat screening once at 2 weeks of life will miss infants with delayed TSH elevation and decompensated permanent congenital hypothyroidism. (*J Pediatr* 2018;■■■:■■■-■■■).

Congenital hypothyroidism affects approximately 1 in 2000-4000 births¹⁻⁴ and is a preventable cause of neurodevelopmental disability. Newborn screening programs have increased the rate of early detection of this condition and almost eradicated the neurologic complications. The reported incidence of congenital hypothyroidism has significantly risen during the past 2 decades.⁵⁻⁷ Suggested factors contributing to this rise are the change in thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) screening cutoff levels over time and increasing survival of preterm infants.^{5,8}

A unique form of congenital hypothyroidism has been described in preterm infants. This atypical form of hypothyroidism is characterized by a delayed elevation in TSH concentration, such that preterm infants pass their first newborn screening test but are detected on repeat screening.⁹ The timing of this elevation, although variable, occurs between 2 and 6 weeks in most cases.¹⁰ Although a small percentage of these infants have thyroid dysgenesis, the majority have a structurally normal thyroid gland.¹⁰

Several studies have recommended repeating newborn screening in preterm neonates to identify those with delayed elevations in TSH concentration.^{11,12} This approach reflects a concern that primary congenital hypothyroidism may be masked due to the suppression of TSH secretion caused by hypothalamic-pituitary immaturity, medication administration, and effects of serious neonatal illness.¹³ The utility of the second screening, its timing, and the optimal TSH cutoff to be used remain subjects of active debate.^{10,14,15} The most recent European congenital hypothyroidism screening consensus guidelines recommend a strategy of second screening in preterm and low birth weight infants at approximately 2 weeks of age, or 2 weeks after the first screening test was performed.¹⁶ The guidelines published by the American Academy of Pediatrics¹⁷ in 2006 acknowledge a disproportionate incidence of delayed TSH rise and congenital hypothyroidism in very low birth weight infants (incidence 1 in 250 births) and low birth weight infants (incidence 1 in 1589 births). Although they do not provide recommendations on when and how often to repeat screening in these infants, they state that some screening programs routinely screen

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FT4 Free thyroxine
TSH Thyroid-stimulating hormone

again at 2 weeks and 6 weeks and recommend initiating thyroid hormone replacement if hyperthyrotropinemia persists at 6 weeks of age.

Newborn screening of preterm infants for congenital hypothyroidism in the Republic of Ireland consists of whole-blood TSH measurement at 72-120 hours and then repeat whole-blood TSH measurement weekly until 37 weeks corrected gestational age or discharge from the hospital. The aims of this study were to review these national screening data to determine the timing of the delayed TSH rise in infants with congenital hypothyroidism, and to determine whether cases of congenital hypothyroidism would be missed by using current European consensus guidelines of repeat screening at approximately 2 weeks of age or 2 weeks after the first screening.

Methods

The Ethics Committee of the Children's University Hospital, Temple St approved this study. The population-based, prospective records of the Republic of Ireland's National Newborn Bloodspot Screening Program for congenital hypothyroidism, coordinated from the Children's University Hospital, Temple Street were reviewed.

Screening for congenital hypothyroidism in the Republic of Ireland consists of collection of whole-blood samples on filter paper following a heel-prick between 72 and 120 hours after birth. Whole-blood TSH concentration is measured by AutoDELFI Immunoassay (PerkinElmer, Waltham, Massachusetts), and this assay has been used throughout the study period. In patients with a whole-blood TSH concentration >15 mU/L, serum TSH and free thyroxine (FT4) are requested, and the patient is referred for evaluation to a pediatric endocrinologist. If the whole-blood TSH level is between 8 and 15 mU/L, a second newborn screen sample is requested within a recommended time frame of 7 days. If this repeat measurement is >8 mU/L, serum TSH and FT4 concentrations are measured and the patient is referred for assessment. Unlike other screening programs, the newborn screening program has used the same assay and a consistent screening whole-blood TSH cutoff for preterm infants of 8 mU/L since the program's inception in 1979. In the preterm population, even if the initial whole-blood TSH is normal, repeat whole-blood TSH samples are collected weekly until the infant is term-corrected (37 weeks of gestation) or until the infant is discharged to home from the neonatal intensive care unit.

Term infants with positive screens for congenital hypothyroidism are called to attend the National Screening Centre for scintigraphy. Because preterm infants in neonatal intensive care units are unable to attend for scintigraphy, thyroid ultrasonography is arranged as soon as is practical. Congenital hypothyroidism is then classified as thyroid dysgenesis (athyreosis, ectopy, and hypoplasia) or normal/hyperplastic gland based on imaging. Follow-up care is provided either by a pediatric endocrinologist or a local pediatrician, according to local availability and family preference.

Patient Population

All preterm infants (≤ 33 weeks of gestation) diagnosed with congenital hypothyroidism and treated with levothyroxine in the Republic of Ireland between 2004 and 2016 were identified. A gestational age of 33 weeks was selected as a cutoff for this study to ensure follow-up TSH screening data for at least 4 weeks after delivery. Age at first screening, TSH concentration on newborn screen, thyroid function test results at diagnosis, sex, gestation, ethnicity, comorbidities, thyroid imaging results (if performed), presence of medical iodine exposure, and family history of thyroid disease were recorded for all patients.

Determination of Transient and Permanent Congenital Hypothyroidism in Patients with Early and Delayed TSH Elevation

In cases in which a normal gland in situ was confirmed or no imaging was performed in the neonatal period, the pediatric endocrinologist or local pediatrician treating the patient was contacted. If the patient had not required an increase in levothyroxine dose over time, a trial off levothyroxine was performed after age 3 years. This involved discontinuing levothyroxine and repeating thyroid function tests after 2 weeks, then 4 weeks later, and then 6 weeks later (ie, 3 months after discontinuing levothyroxine). If thyroid function tests remained normal, the patient was classified as having transient congenital hypothyroidism. If the plasma TSH concentration was >10 mU/L following complete withdrawal of treatment, permanent congenital hypothyroidism was diagnosed. If plasma TSH increased slightly (5.5-10 mU/L), the patient was followed and, if the mild hyperthyrotropinemia persisted, reevaluated with a thyrotropin-releasing hormone test to confirm primary hypothyroidism and restarted on levothyroxine. Patients who had dysgenesis on imaging or increasing levothyroxine dose requirements in childhood did not undergo a trial off treatment.

Statistical Analyses

All statistical analyses were performed with SPSS 22.0 (IBM, Armonk, New York, New York). Data are presented as median and absolute range. The Mann-Whitney *U* test was used to compare groups of non-normally distributed data, and the independent-samples *t* test was used for normally distributed data. A *P* value $<.05$ was considered statistically significant.

Results

Between January 2004 and December 2016, a total of 898 424 infants were screened for congenital hypothyroidism in the Republic of Ireland, and of these, 586 infants were treated for congenital hypothyroidism (incidence, 1:1533 births). A total of 53 infants (11%) were <33 weeks of gestation. Gestational age in the preterm cohort ranged from 23 to 33 weeks (median, 29 weeks), and median birth weight was 1.2 kg (range, 0.46-3.16 kg). The median serum TSH concentration at diagnosis was 78.3 mU/L (range, 13.3-1122 mU/L), and median FT4 concentration was 8.9 pmol/L (range, 1.0-18.7 pmol/L) (Figure).

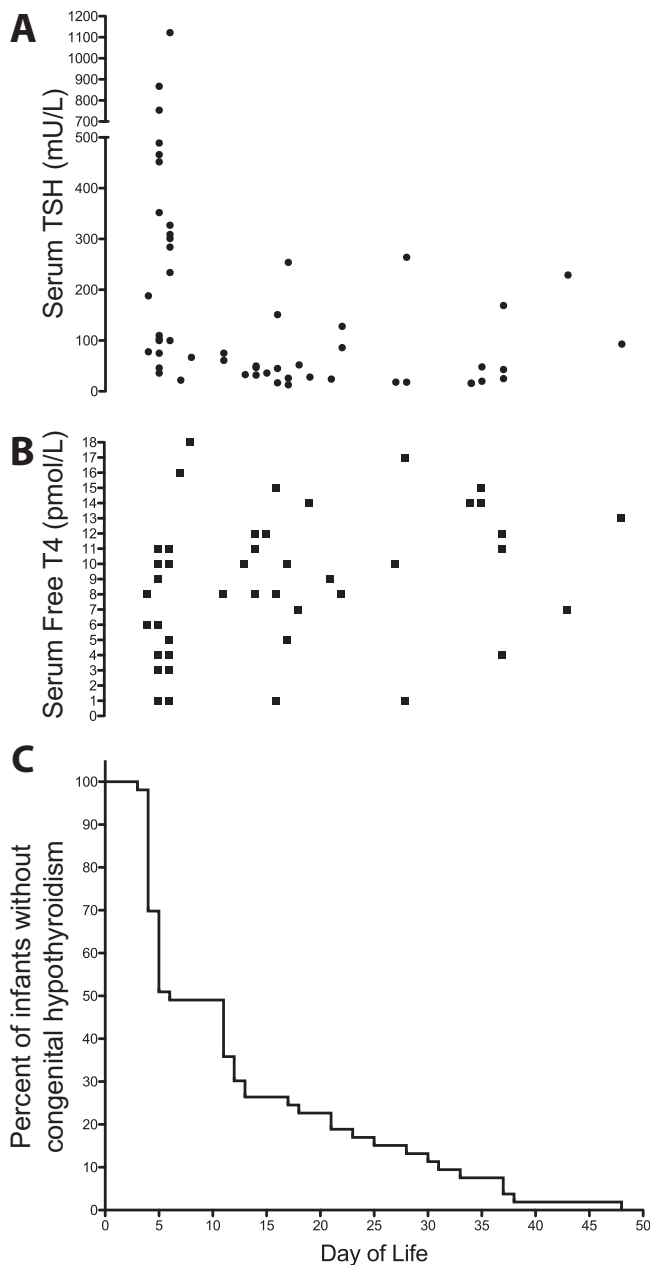


Figure. Serum TSH (A) and FT4 (B) concentrations at diagnosis in preterm infants according to age at detection of congenital hypothyroidism. C, Kaplan-Meier plot including all preterm infants who were diagnosed with congenital hypothyroidism, demonstrating the percentage of infants not yet diagnosed with congenital hypothyroidism over the first 50 days. Note that within the first 10 days, one-half of the infants were not yet diagnosed with congenital hypothyroidism.

Thyroid imaging was performed in 37 infants (68.5%), of whom 28 had a normal gland in situ, 6 had athyreosis, 1 had an ectopic gland, and 2 had a hypoplastic gland. All infants with thyroid dysgenesis were identified on the first newborn screen. Seven infants had abnormal thyroid function following exposure to iodine, including 1 infant who had trisomy

21 and 6 infants who developed thyroid dysfunction after surgery for necrotizing enterocolitis, of whom 3 died in the neonatal period from complications of necrotizing enterocolitis.

Incidence of Delayed TSH Elevation

Twenty-seven (50.9%) of the preterm infants born at <33 weeks of gestation who were diagnosed with congenital hypothyroidism had delayed TSH elevation and would not have been diagnosed on the first newborn screen at 72-120 hours. Characteristics of the infants with delayed TSH elevation are presented in Table I. Of the infants who had an initial normal whole-blood TSH on the newborn screen, a delayed TSH rise was detected between 8 and 48 days (median, 13 days). Twelve infants (40.7%) with delayed TSH elevation had decompensated hypothyroidism at diagnosis (FT4 <10 pmol/L), and 4 had severe congenital hypothyroidism (FT4 <5.5 pmol/L) at diagnosis.¹⁸ Thirteen infants with delayed TSH elevation had a structurally normal thyroid gland, 8 were unclassified, and 6 had exposure to iodine, all of whom underwent surgery for necrotizing enterocolitis. One infant had trisomy 21. Had current European consensus guidelines¹⁶ been followed and TSH level been repeated only at 2 weeks of life, 13 infants (48%) with delayed TSH elevation would not have been detected, because TSH concentration at 14 days of age was normal. Seven of these infants had decompensated hypothyroidism with a low FT4 concentration when diagnosed with congenital hypothyroidism at a median age of 30 days (range, 17-48 days). If the

Table I. Characteristics of patients treated for congenital hypothyroidism with normal initial newborn TSH screen and delayed TSH elevation

Age at first elevated screen, d	Newborn screen TSH, mU/L	Serum TSH at diagnosis, mU/L	FT4 at diagnosis, pmol/L	Diagnosis
25	9	18.9	17.5	Normal gland
23	9	18.3	15.9	Normal gland
11	32	47	12.1	Normal gland
13	12	13.3	10.7	Normal gland
17	18	20.4	14.6	Normal gland
11	18	61.5	8.4	Normal gland
14	11	24	9.1	Normal gland
22	55	86.9	8.8	Normal gland
8	10	75	8.1	Normal gland
37	12	25.3	12.3	Normal gland
12	18	36.7	12.2	Normal gland
11	26	32	11.1	Normal gland
13	24	45.8	8.9	Normal gland
38	59	229	7.3	Iodine exposure
30	11	16.3	14.9	Iodine exposure
11	8	16.3	14.9	Iodine exposure
33	13	48	15	Iodine exposure
37	56	169	4.9	Iodine exposure
11	130	151	1.5	Iodine exposure
12	13	29	14.5	Unclassified
31	18	43.5	11.5	Unclassified
11	8	26	10.9	Unclassified
12	18	52.5	7.2	Unclassified
22	240	128	8.1	Unclassified
25	58	264	1	Unclassified
10	42	254	2	Unclassified
48	70	93.6	13.5	Unclassified

Table II. Characteristics of patients diagnosed on first newborn screen and patients with delayed TSH elevation diagnosed on repeat screening

Characteristics	Total (n = 53)	Diagnosed on first TSH screen (n = 26)	Delayed TSH elevation (n = 27)	P value
Sex, male:female, n	1:1	1:1.36	1.45:1	.005
Birth weight, kg, median (range)	1.2 (0.46-2.47)	1.47 (0.51-2.47)	0.87 (0.46-2.3)	<.001
Gestational age, wk, median (range)	29 (23-33)	30 (23-33)	28 (24-33)	.005
Whole-blood TSH at diagnosis, mU/L, median (range)	26 (8-500)	140 (9-500)	17.9 (8-240)	<.001
Serum TSH at diagnosis, mU/L, median (range)*	78 (11-1122)	149 (14.7-1122)	47 (11-229)	.002
Serum FT4 at diagnosis, pmol/L, median (range)†	8.9 (1.0-18.8)	6.3 (1.0-18.8)	10.9 (1.5-18.2)	.029

Significant P values are in bold type.

*Reference range, 0.1-5.5 mU/L.

†Reference range, 10-22 pmol/L.

final repeat screen was taken at age 4 weeks, congenital hypothyroidism would not have been detected in 7 infants (26% of patients with delayed TSH elevation). These 7 infants had normal whole-blood TSH levels at day 28 that later became elevated, and 2 of 7 (28%) had decompensated hypothyroidism at the time of congenital hypothyroidism diagnosis.

Characteristics of Preterm Infants Diagnosed on First Newborn Screening TSH vs Those with Delayed TSH Elevation Diagnosed on Repeat Screening

Infants with delayed TSH elevation were born at an earlier gestational age (median, 28 weeks vs 30 weeks; $P = .005$) and had a lower birth weight (median, 0.87 kg vs 1.47 kg; $P < .001$). Infants with delayed TSH elevation had a lower median whole-blood and serum TSH concentration at diagnosis ($P = .002$) (Table II), likely reflecting the fact that all infants with thyroid dysgenesis were detected on the first newborn screen.

Incidence of Permanent Congenital Hypothyroidism in Patients with Early and Delayed TSH Elevation

Of the 53 preterm infants treated with congenital hypothyroidism between 2004 and 2016, 15 were aged <3 years at the time of this study and were not eligible for a trial off treatment to determine whether they had transient or permanent congenital hypothyroidism. Three infants died in the neonatal period, and we were unable to contact the families of 6 infants for follow-up. Of the remaining 29 infants, 18 (62%) had permanent congenital hypothyroidism and 11 (38%) had transient congenital hypothyroidism. Of those with permanent congenital hypothyroidism, 9 (50%) had thyroid dysgenesis and 7 (39%) had increasing levothyroxine dose requirements over the first 3 years. Another 2 infants (11%) failed a trial off levothyroxine treatment. Of those 27 infants with normal TSH concentration on initial newborn screen but subsequent delayed TSH elevation, 6 (22%) had permanent congenital hypothyroidism (4 had increasing levothyroxine dose requirements over time and 2 failed a trial off treatment) and 8 (29%) had transient congenital hypothyroidism. One infant died in the neonatal period, and the remaining 12 patients will be reevaluated at age 3 years.

Discussion

In this study, we have found that repeat screening for congenital hypothyroidism in preterm infants is necessary to avoid missing cases of permanent and decompensated hypothyroidism. One-half of the preterm infants diagnosed with congenital hypothyroidism were not diagnosed on initial newborn screening. Among the infants with delayed TSH rise, >40% had decompensated hypothyroidism at diagnosis, and >20% had permanent congenital hypothyroidism. Along with emphasizing the importance of repeat TSH screening in preterm infants, we have also demonstrated that repeat screening once at 2 weeks or 4 weeks of age is insufficient to detect all cases of congenital hypothyroidism with delayed TSH elevation. Based on these data, we recommend that congenital hypothyroidism screening protocols for preterm infants include measurement on days 3-5 and at 1 week, 2 weeks, 4 weeks, and term-corrected gestational age.

Repeat screening of preterm infants has not been adopted by all screening programs.¹⁹ The utility of serial testing has been questioned on the basis of low yield,²⁰ the possibly transient nature of most detected cases,²¹ and conflicting long-term neurodevelopmental outcome data.²¹ However, we have shown that many patients have decompensated hypothyroidism at diagnosis and have permanent congenital hypothyroidism. Our data are consistent with studies showing a high incidence of delayed TSH rise, particularly in very low birth weight infants.^{9,22} In addition, many of these infants have permanent congenital hypothyroidism.^{10,23} Suggested approaches to frequency of screening have included measurement at 2 weeks²⁴ or 1 month²⁵ to screen for delayed TSH elevation. Had these approaches been applied to our patient population, 13 infants (48%) with delayed TSH elevation would have been missed by a 2-week-only screen, 7 of whom had decompensated hypothyroidism. Similarly, a single second screening test at 1 month would have resulted in delayed diagnosis of congenital hypothyroidism in many infants with decompensated congenital hypothyroidism. Of the 27 preterm infants with a delayed TSH rise, 13 (48%) were detected between 8 and 13 days of life. Nearly one-half of the infants had a delayed TSH elevation before age 2 weeks, so waiting until 2 weeks would have delayed their diagnosis.

One-quarter of the infants with delayed TSH elevation in our cohort had been exposed to iodine during surgery for necrotizing enterocolitis, and 4 of these infants had an elevated TSH level after 28 days of age. Three of these infants had severe decompensated hypothyroidism at diagnosis. This finding highlights the need for repeat screening and close monitoring of infants exposed to iodine.²⁶ In these infants, TSH elevation was identified between 3 and 26 days (median, 18 days) after iodine exposure; thus, exposed infants may need to be monitored for up to 1 month following exposure. Whether the iodine exposure was the cause of these infants' transient hypothyroidism cannot be stated with certainty, however.

The main strengths of our study are the availability of weekly whole-blood TSH screening results in a cohort of preterm infants over a 12-year period using the same assay, with a stable screening TSH cutoff of 8 mU/L and detailed follow-up data on treated patients. In the Irish protocol, the last TSH screening in preterm infants was performed at term-corrected gestational age; thus, it is not possible to determine whether any infants developed congenital hypothyroidism with delayed TSH elevation after this period. However, we are not aware of any infant who was diagnosed with congenital hypothyroidism after term-corrected gestational age. At our center, thyroglobulin is not currently measured. Some studies suggest that a diagnosis of athyreosis should be validated by measuring thyroglobulin.^{27,28}

In conclusion, repeat screening for congenital hypothyroidism in preterm infants is necessary to avoid missing cases with delayed TSH elevation. Delayed TSH elevation is common in this cohort and is seen in one-half of preterm infants with congenital hypothyroidism. Repeat screening once at 2 weeks of life will miss a significant number of infants with delayed TSH elevation and decompensated permanent congenital hypothyroidism and repeat screening only at 4 weeks will delay the diagnosis of decompensated hypothyroidism in the first 2 weeks. We recommend initial screening at 72-120 hours with repeat screening at 1 week, 2 weeks, 4 weeks, and term-corrected gestational age or discharge from hospital. Infants exposed to iodine should be monitored for up to 1 month after exposure to identify delayed TSH elevation following exposure. ■

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