Infectious Diseases, Vaccine/Immunization

Rotavirus Vaccine and Intussusception: A Gut Check

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In the early 2000s, the rotavirus vaccine was withdrawn because of its association with an increased incidence of intussusception. In 2007, a new and improved version of the vaccine was introduced. How does the risk of intussusception compare? Tate et al. (10.1542/peds.2016-1082) investigated intussusception rates before and after the introduction of the current form of the vaccine using data from 26 states.

The authors looked at rates in children less than one year as well as at key infant age points of vaccination (6-14 weeks, 15-24 weeks, and 25-34 weeks) with a special focus on 8-11 weeks when the first dose is usually given. Only in the "first dose" age category of 8-11 weeks was there a small increase in intussusception rates post the implementation of rotavirus vaccination compared to pre-vaccine rates—but this increase paled in comparison to the declines in rotavirus disease that have ensued with this much-needed vaccine.

To help make sense of the ongoing small but present intussusception risk, we have invited a commentary by infectious disease experts Drs. Emmanuel Walter and Mary Allen Staat (10.1542/peds.2016-1952) who provide a useful perspective regarding the importance of continuing to use this vaccine rather than view the intussusception issue as outweighing the vaccine's benefit. This is an important article and commentary to know about in case parents inquire about the risk of intussusception. These two articles should enable us to stay the course—and in doing so, prevent thousands of infants from suffering from this serious gastrointestinal illness.

Further Reading

- Pneumococcal Vaccines in Preterm Infants: Are More Doses Better? Implications for Other Vaccines
- Pertussis Antibody Concentrations in Infants Born Prematurely to Mothers Vaccinated in Pregnancy
- Pediatrics on Facebook
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