

Septic Arthritis

Topic Reviewers: Robyn Dixson (RAN, Yirrkala Clinic); Dr Ian Dumbrell (Port Keats)

[Editor:

- Dr Mathew Sharland (RDH orthopaedics) says protocol did not need changing from third edition. No background offered.
- Dr Gavin Wheaton (ASH Paediatrician) says rheumatic fever has been missed in ASH and treated as septic arthritis. Presentations can be similar so RHF needs to be thought of and excluded. This is consistent with the detailed discussion of rheumatic fever.
- Gary Lum, (clinical microbiologist RDH) offered these additional comments:

'If advised give flucloxacillin 50 mg/kg (up to max. of 2 g in adults) IV/IM every six hours or in a child under five years give ceftriaxone IV/IM (see doses page).

'If a child is sent in immediately, the ceftriaxone should hold staphylococci and haemophili. I would hope the hospital doctors will consider carefully the value of ampicillin over ceftriaxone in ampicillin susceptible haemophili.

'In general the most common cause of adult septic arthritis is Staphylococcus aureus but gonococcus should be considered in the sexually active. In children, while Haemophilus influenzae must be considered, management should be guided by relevant microscopic and culture results.

'My aim is to minimise the use of third generation cephalosporins and to avoid the use of two beta-lactams together.

'With respect to the blood culture bottles, any clinic served by Western Diagnostic Pathology will probably have bioMérieux VITAL bottles as opposed to Becton Dickinson BACTEC bottles. The VITAL bottles will not fit into our (RDH) automated reader. The same is true vice versa. This leads us to perform blind sub-culture after 48 hours. We have issues of delayed diagnosis and laboratory contamination of bottles. It is important the correct bottles are collected for the referring laboratory. A delay or problem could mean an adverse patient outcome.

'Getting statistical data is a nightmare particularly for something like this. Suffice to say gonococcal arthritis is more common here than anywhere else in Australia. I wouldn't say our septic arthritis due to all causes is significantly different to other places where I have worked.'