

# Incidence of Neonatal Convulsion/Seizures Associated with Primary Disturbance of Calcium, Phosphorus, and Magnesium in University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital (UPTH)

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## Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

## Article Information

DOI: 10.9734/AJPR/2022/v8i330246

## Open Peer Review History:

This journal follows the Advanced Open Peer Review policy. Identity of the Reviewers, Editor(s) and additional Reviewers, peer review comments, different versions of the manuscript, comments of the editors, etc are available here: <https://www.sdiarticle5.com/review-history/83064>

Received 18 January 2022

Accepted 24 March 2022

Published 05 April 2022

Original Research Article

## ABSTRACT

Neonatal seizures are abnormal electrical discharge in the neonates that usually manifest as stereotyped muscle activity of autonomic change. Seizure occur in up to 1.4% of mature infant and 20% of pre-mature infant. Neonate in university of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital were used for the study, 86 blood samples were collected from the children department, the children include both male and female within the Age range of 1 day to 7 day. Out of the total of 86 sample analyzed for calcium, magnesium and Phosphorus from the results obtained from both calcium and magnesium failed below the reference value, that indicate that calcium and magnesium where the major causes of the neonatal seizures.

Keywords: Neonatal seizure; electrolytes; calcium; magnesium.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Neonatal seizures are abnormal electrical discharge in the neonates that usually manifest as stereotyped muscle activity of autonomic change. The most common causes of Neonatal seizures may occur before delivery or after delivery. Seizure occur in up to 1.4% of mature infant and 20% of pre-mature infant, Neonatal seizure occur as a result of ischemic stroke in Neonate with polycythemia with thrombophiua, a genetic disorder or with severe hypotension., infections such as meningitis and sepsis may cause seizure. In such cases seizure is usually accompanied by others symptoms and signs [1]. Group B streptococci and gram-negative bacteria are common causes of such infections in neonates. Encephalitis due to cytomegalovirus, herpes, simplex virus, rubella virus, treponema pallidum, or Toxoplasmgondii can also causes seizures.

Neonatal seizure are usually focal and be difficult to recognized, common manifestation include migratory clonic jerks of extremities, alternating hemi-seizures, and primitive subclonal seizure (which cause respiratory arrest, chewing movements, persistent eye dilation mystagmoid movements, and episodic changes in muscle (tone) [2].

Generalized tonic-clonic seizures are uncommon. Neonatal seizures have a vast number of possible aetiologies, common actiologics include neonatal encephalopathy (60%), intracranial infection (5-10%), intracranial hemorrhage, developmental malformations and correctable metabolic disturbances such as hypoglycemia and derangement of electrolytes (example, sodium, calcium and magnesium) [3].

This metabolic disturbances since they are correctable, early diagnosis is necessary for timely institution of appropriate treatment and important in diatomic clinical outcome this project is therefore aim that early determination of electrolyte that are associated with nernatal seizures.

Neonatal convulsion associated with primary disturbance of calcium, phosphorus, and magnesium metabolism f. Cockburn J.K Brown, N. R. BELTON, and J.O FORFAR (1947), from the department of child, life and Health, university of Edinburgh, Simpson Memoria maternity pavilion, and Royal Hospital for sick children, Edinburgh. Neonatal seizures

associated with primary disturbance of calcium, phosphorus and magnesium metabolism have been studied by Cockburn, F, Brown, J.K Betton N. R. and Forfar, J.O (1973). Hypocalcemia was present in 92% of cases, hypomagnesemia in 53% and hyperphosphataemia in 64%.

In nearly 80% of cases combinations of biochemical disturbance were present, the commonest being hypocalcaemia/hypomagnesaemia/hyperphosphataemia. Isolated hypocalcaemia occurred in 19% of cases but isolated hypomagnesaemia in only 3%.

Neonatal convulsions may result from a variety of causes including primary disturbance of mineral metabolism [4] (McInerney and Schubert, 1969), [5,6].

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this cross analytical study, 86 neonate diagnosed with seizure disorder were used as the subjects. 3mls of blood were collected into heparinized anti-coagulant bottles from the paediatric phlebotomy unit. Each batch collected were taken to the laboratory for analysis.

**Inclusion:** the study aim at neonates within the age range of 1-28 days after birth diagnosed with seizure disorder.

**Exclusion:** Neonates ranging within the age of 5 weeks and above and those without diagnosis of seizure

### 2.1 Phosphorus

**Materials and Equipments:** Centrifuge, Hand glove, Anticoagulant free bottles, pipettes (Pasteur pipettes), Test tube racks, spectrophotometer, micro-pipettes (1000 pl), phosphorus Reagent (ROT), phosphorus standard (STD), QC, Distilled water, cuvette.

#### Reagent Contents:

RGT: 2 x 100 ml Reagent

Animoniurnheptamolybdate - 0.3 mmol/L  
Sulphuric acid (PHL1.0) -160 mmol/l  
Detergent– 1%

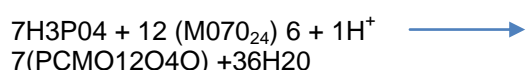
#### Activators and Stabilizers:

STD: 1 x 5 m1 standard 32

Phosphorus – 10 mg/dl or 3.2 mmol/L

**(Photometric UV test for the Determination of phosphorus)**

**Principle of the Test:** Phosphate reacts with molybdate in strong acid medium to form a complex. The absorbance of this complex in the near UV is directly proportional to the phosphate concentration. Reaction principle (simplified).



**Procedure:**

1. Four test tubes were arranged into the test tube rack and labeled as test (T), Blank (B) standard (s) and Qc (C)
2. 10  $\mu$ l . of sample was pipetted into the sample tube
3. 10  $\mu$ l . of standard was added to standard tube
4. 10  $\mu$ l . of QC was added into the QC tube
5. 1000  $\mu$ l (1.0l) of reagent (RGT) was added to each of the tubes
6. The tubes were mixed, incubated at Room temperature for 1 minute

**Table 1. Procedure table**

Tubes	Reagent Blank	Sample	STD	QC
Sample (s)		10 $\mu$ l	-	-
Standard (STD)			10 $\mu$ l.	
QC	-	-	-	10 $\mu$ l
Reagent	1000 $\mu$ l	1000 $\mu$ l	1000 $\mu$ l	1000 $\mu$ l (1ml)

**Calculation:**

$$\text{Concentration C} = 10 \times \frac{A_{\text{sample}}}{A_{\text{STD}}} \text{ mg/dl}$$

$$C = 3.2 \times \frac{A_{\text{sample}}}{A_{\text{STD}}} \text{ mmol/L}$$

**Normal Values:**

Children 4.0 – 70 mg/dl – 1.30 – 2.26 mmol/L

**2.2 Calcium (CA)**

**Materials and Equipment:** Spectrophotometer, test tubes, Distilled water, calcium kit, micro-pipette, test tube rack, 1 ml pipettes.

**Reagent Composition:**

- R<sub>1</sub> Buffer
- 2 – amino -2- methyl Propan -1.0l
- 3.5m mol/L, PH 10.7

**R2 Chromogen:**

- 0 - Cresolphthalein complexone -0.16 mmol 35
- 8 - Hydroxyquinoline - 6.89 mmol/L

**Colorimetric Method:**

**Principle of the Test:** Calcium ions form a violet complex with 0- cresolphthalein complexone in alkaline medium.

**Procedure:**

1. Four test tubes were arranged in the test tube rack as Reagent Blank, standard, sample and Qc.

2. 25 µl (0.025 ml) Jof Distilled water was added to the blank tube.
3. 25 µl of standard was added to the standard tube.
4. 25 µl of sample was added to the sample tube.
5. 25 µl of QC was added to Qc tube
6. 0.5 ml of reagent (R<sub>1</sub>) was added to each to each tubes
7. 0.5 ml of R<sub>2</sub> was added to each tubes.
8. Each tubes were mixed, the absorbance of the sample (A sample), standard (A Standard), QC was read against the reagent blank of 5 to 50 minutes at room temperature at a wavelength of (550-590 nm).

**Table 2. Procedure table**

Tubes	Reagent Blank	Sample	STD	QC
Sample	-	-	25 µl.	-
DH <sub>2</sub> <sup>0</sup>	25 µl.	-	-	-
Std	-	25 µl.	-	-
QC	-	-	-	25 µl.
R <sub>1</sub>	0.5 ml	0.5 ml	0.5 ml	0.5 ml
R <sub>2</sub>	0.5 ml	0.5 ml	0.5 ml	0.5 ml

**Calculation:**

Magnesium 2 mg/d/(0.82 mm0/k)

$$\text{Conc. (mmol/L)} = \frac{A_{\text{sample}} \times \text{Standard concentration}}{A_{\text{standard}}}$$

= **Colorimetric Method:**

$$\text{Conc. (mg/dl)} = \frac{A_{\text{sample}} \times \text{Standard concentration}}{A_{\text{standard}}}$$

**Principles of the Test:** Magnesium in the sample reacts with calmogite in alkaline medium formign a coloured complex that can be measured by spectrophotometer in the reagent to remove calcium interference.

**Normal Values:**

Serum = 2.02 – 2.60 mmol/l

(8.10 – 10.4 mg/d).

**Procedures:**

1. Four test tubes int eh test tue rack labelled blank, samle, standard and Q.C.
2. 10µl of standard was added into standard tube
3. 10 µl of sample was added into sampel tube
4. 10µl of QC was added to QC tube.
5. 1ml off reagent (A) was added to each of the tubes.
6. The tubes were mixed and allowed to stand for 2 minutes at room temperature.
7. The absorbance of standard, sample and QC was read at 520nm against the reagent Blank.

**2.3 Magnesium**

**Materials and Equipment Used:**

Spectrophotometer micro pipette, 10ml pipette, test tubes, test tube rack, magnesium kit (standadrd and Reagent (A) and sample.

**Contents and Composition of Reagent:**

- A. Reagent 4x50 ml. calmagite 80 µmol/L
- EGTA 60 µmol/L, diethylamine 0.2 mo 1/h
- S. Magnesium standard 1 x 5 ml.

**Table 3. Procedure table**

Tubes	Reagent Blank	Sample	STD	QC
Magnesium standard	-	10 µl.	-	-
Sample	-	-	10 µl.	-
QC	-	-	-	10 µl.
Reagent	1.0ml	1.0ml	1.0ml	1.0ml

**Calculation:**

$$\frac{A \text{ sample} \times \text{standard}}{A \text{ standard}} = (\text{Sampel concentration})$$

$$\frac{A \text{ sample} \times 2}{A \text{ standard}} = \text{mg/dl}$$

$$\frac{A \text{ sample} \times 0.82}{A \text{ standard}} = \text{mmol/dl}$$

**Reference Values:** Serum and plasma 1.7 – 2.4 mg/dl = 0.70 – 0.98 mmol/140.

**3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 4 reveals the value of serum calcium of the neonates failed below the reference range of normal calcium 2.02-2.60 mmol IL.

**Table 4. For calcium**

(x)	Freq. (f)	Mode	Mean (x)	Standard Deviation (δ)
1.4 – 1.6	13			
1.7 – 1.9	15	51		
2.0 – 2.3	22		1.82	
				1.12

**Table 5. Magnesium**

Ranking (x)	(x)	(x)	(x)
1	10	34	0.5
2	0.8	35	0.8
3	1.0	36	0.5
4	0.7	37	0.4
5	0.5	38	0.9
6	0.6	39	0.4
7	0.8	40	0.6
8	0.9	41	0.7
9	0.7	42	0.8
10	0.5	43	0.7
11	0.4	44	0.6
12	0.9	45	0.6
13	0.4	46	0.5
14	0.7	47	1.0
15	0.9	48	0.6
16	0.8	49	0.5
17	1.1	50	0.7
18	0.6	51	0.9
19	0.7	52	0.7
20	0.5	53	0.6
21	0.6	54	0.5
22	0.6	55	0.8
23	0.8	56	0.7
24	0.6	57	0.6
25	0.7	58	0.4
26	0.8	59	1.0
27	0.7	60	1.1
28	1.2	61	0.8
29	0.8	62	0.6
30	0.6	63	0.8
31	0.5	64	0.7
32	0.4	65	0.6
33	0.7	66	0.8

$$\sum x = 59.4$$

$$\text{Mean } \bar{x} = \frac{\sum}{n}$$

$$= \frac{59.4}{86}$$

$$= \mathbf{0.69}$$

$$\sqrt{\frac{(2.023 - 1)^2}{86 - 1}}$$

$$\sqrt{\frac{(1.023)^3}{85}}$$

$$\sqrt{\frac{1.0465}{85}} = 0.012$$

$$\delta = \mathbf{0.046}$$

Standard deviation

$$\delta = \text{Log } x = \sum \frac{(10x - \log x)^2}{n - 1}$$

Table 6 reveals that mean x of magnesium and standard deviation all failed below the normal range of magnesium which is 0.70 – 0.98 mmol/L.

**Table 6. Magnesium**

(x)	Freq. (f)	Mode	Mean (x)	Standard Deviation (δ)
0.4 – 0.6	39			
0.7 – 0.9	38	39		
1.0 – 1.9	9			
			0.69e	0.012

**Table 7. Phosphorus**

Ranking (x)	(x)	(x)	(x)
1	1.9	34	2.4
2	1.8	35	2.9
3	3.0	36	3.2
4	2.1	37	2.4
5	1.8	38	2.8
6	2.1	39	3.1
7	2.4	40	2.6
8	1.9	41	2.8
9	2.3	42	2.3
10	3.0	43	2.6
11	1.8	44	3.0
12	2.5	45	2.6
13	2.9	46	3.0
14	1.7	47	2.5
15	2.4	48	2.9
16	2.4	49	2.5
17	2.4	50	2.5
18	2.3	51	1.6
19	2.4	52	1.6
20	2.0	53	2.9
21	2.1	54	1.8
22	1.8	55	2.0
23	2.6	57	2.6
24	2.4	57	2.6
25	2.6	58	2.0
26	2.3	59	2.3
27	2.7	60	2.3
28	1.8	61	1.6
29	2.4	62	1.7

	Ranking (x)	(x)	(x)
30	2.9	63	2.3
31	2.5	64	2.0
32	1.6	65	2.1
33	1.7	66	2.6

$$\sum x = 200.6$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Mean } \bar{x} &= \frac{\sum x}{n} \\ &= \frac{200.6}{86} = 2.33 \end{aligned}$$

**Standard deviation  $\delta$**

$$\delta = \text{Log } x = \sum \frac{(10x - \log x)^2}{n - 1}$$

$$\sqrt{\frac{(2.30 - 0.37)^2}{85}}$$

$$\sqrt{\frac{3.75}{85}}$$

$$\sqrt{\frac{12.64}{85}} = 0.03$$

Table 8 reveals that the mean (x) and standard deviation of phosphorus the mean ( ) shows the value above the reference range but the standard deviation felled below the reference range of 1.30 – 2.26 mmol/L.

**3.1 Discussion**

The results obtained from the study shows that, the seizure diagnosed by the pediatrician resulted from low level of calcium and magnesium concentration in the neonate’s plasma.

Therefore, the results revealed that neonatal seizure is mainly caused by hypocalcemia and

hypomagnesemia. This is consistent with the work of Mcinerney et al, [7,8].

Also the study show that increase in phosphorus may lead to decrease in calcium and magnesium as the mean value of phosphorus above the reference value.

Electrolyte imbalance in neonatal seizure: acute or severe electrolyte imbalance rapidly progressive neurologic symptoms or seizures which is the major reason for neonatal seizure.

Seizure are more frequently observed in patients within hypocalcemia and hypomagnesaemia and hyponetremia.

Investigation have shown that magnesium, calcium, sodium depletion causes a marked irritability of the nervous system, eventually resulting to seizures [9].

**Symptoms and Signs:** Neonatal seizures are focal and may be difficult to recognize. Common manifestation include migratory clonic jerks of extremities, alternating hemiseizures, and primitive subclonic seizures (which cause respiratory arrest, chewing movements, persistent eye deviations nystagmoid movements, and episodic changes in muscle tone). Generalized tonicclonic seizures are, uncommon.

Clinically silent electrical seizure activity is often present after a hypoxic-ischemic result prenatal asphyxia or stroke) and in neonates with CNS infections, especially after initial treatment, which is more likely to stop clinical manifestations than electrical seizure activity (Burke, (1954).

**Table 8. For phosphorus**

(x)	Freq. (f)	Mode	Mean (x)	Standard Deviation ( $\delta$ )
1.6 – 1.9	19			
2.0 – 2.5	42	42		
2.6 – 2.9	18			
3.0 – 3.3	7		2.33	0.03

Zimmet, P; Breidah.i, H.D., and Nayler, W.G. [10] reported that Hypomagnesaemia is a rare cause of seizures, which may occur when the serum mg level 1.4m Eg//L 0.7 mmo/L). Hypomagnesemia often occurs with hypocalcemia and should be considered in neonates with hypocalcemia if seizures continue after adequate Ca therapy.

Blood Plasma calcium concentrations in the convulsing infants had significantly lower plasma calcium concentrations based on mean  $\pm$  /SD). The mean and  $\pm$  SD of magnesium in some infants with convulsions were low but. As observed in this study, Mcinerney and Schubert a (1969), rose and lombroso [6], and keen [11] found the outcome satisfactory in the majority of neonatal convulsions due to primary hypocalcemia and hypomagnesaemia. Other several studies has explained the condition of neonatal seizure/convulsion in association with other factors [12-30].

Hypocalcaemia and hypomagnesaemia infants who convulsed frequently showed a clinical pattern compounded of hypertonicity, jitteriness, increased muscle response to stimulation, increased tendon reflexes, a hyperalert state between fits, and transient hemisyndrom, these are not always present, nor are they specific for primary hypocalcaemia/hypomagnesaemia they may also occur in brain damaged infants probably due to the secondary disturbances of mineral metabolism which accompany brain damage (Brown et al; 1972).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This work revealed a significant low level in calcium and magnesium.

There is an exceptionally important role for patient education pregnant mothers on diet support, electrolytes screening, culture and sensitivity, blood Glucose should be a routing test for all pregnant mothers.

Also the neonates diagnosed of seizure should be treated for hypocalcemia and hypomagnesemia by the paediatrician.

It can be safely concluded that pregnant mothers should develop the habit of attending antenatal clinic, so that the baby state of health can be closely monitored within this period.

#### 5. RECOMMENDATION

Enlightenment campaign on neonatal seizure associated with electrolytes disturbance should be done using various information media as Television, Newspaper, Radio and seminars. Further work may be necessary on neonatal seizures such as glucose test, neurocranial x-ray, sodium determination etc.

#### CONSENT

It is not applicable.

#### ETHICAL APPROVAL

The research was approved by the University of Port Harcourt teaching Hospital Research and ethics committee.

#### COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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