

BRITISH PAEDIATRIC SURVEILLANCE UNIT

WHAT IS THE BRITISH PAEDIATRIC SURVEILLANCE UNIT (BPSU)?

The aim of the BPSU is to encourage the study of rare conditions in children. It was founded in 1986 by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, the Health Protection Agency and the Institute of Child Health (London).

WHAT DOES THE BPSU DO?

It allows doctors and researchers to find out how many children in the UK are affected by the particular disease or condition each year - this is called epidemiological surveillance. Researchers can gather information about all the cases of a particular rare condition so they can begin to understand what might have caused it and how to diagnose and treat.

On receiving the card, the BPSU informs the study team, who send the reporting doctor a confidential anonymised questionnaire to gather more information about the child. BPSU researchers never contact families or children and surveillance studies don't affect a child's treatment. The purpose is ONLY to collect information to learn more about the condition.

HOW DOES THE BPSU WORK?

Each month the unit sends a distinctive orange card to over 3500 consultant paediatricians; the card lists the rare conditions currently being studied. If a doctor has seen a child affected by one of these conditions they tick a box on the card and return it to BPSU.

WHAT HAS THE BPSU ACHIEVED?

The BPSU has now helped to undertake surveys of over 90 rare conditions which may affect children. These have helped to increase understanding of these conditions and the healthcare services needed to manage them.

For further information contact:

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Public Health
England



BRITISH PAEDIATRIC SURVEILLANCE UNIT

Public Information Sheet

UK SURVEILLANCE OF GROUP B STREPTOCOCCAL DISEASE IN UK & IRISH INFANTS LESS THAN 90 DAYS OF AGE

What is Group B streptococcus?

Group B Streptococcus (GBS) is a bacterium (germ) that can cause serious infections such as meningitis, blood poisoning and pneumonia in newborn infants

How does GBS cause infection?

GBS is found in the gut and genital tracts of between 20 - 25% of pregnant women and doesn't cause disease in most instances (this is called colonisation). Transmission from a colonised mother to her baby can occur before or during the birth. A number of factors, such as prematurity, may make this more likely to occur. In a small proportion of cases GBS colonisation of the infant can result in disease.

Can GBS infection be prevented?

Infection occurring in the first 6 days of life (called early onset) may be prevented by antibiotics given to the mother during labour. National guidelines were introduced in 2003 and currently recommend this for women with certain risk factors.

A vaccine against GBS has also been developed (called a GBS conjugate vaccine) and is currently being tested. If effective this could be offered to pregnant women.

Why is this study being performed?

The last GBS surveillance study in the UK and Ireland was undertaken over 12 years ago and there are a number of reasons why the number of infections, the risk factors and the mortality may have changed.

We need to collect comprehensive information about the current disease burden so that we can assess the impact of prevention guidelines as well as provide the baseline for a possible GBS vaccine programme.

Where is this study happening?

The study is being led by investigators based at St George's, University of London (SGUL) in collaboration with investigators from Public Health England, Health Protection Scotland, Health Protection Surveillance Centre, Ireland, Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Northern Ireland, Public Health Agency Northern Ireland, Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Edinburgh. Surveillance will take place in all hospitals across the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland.

How is the study being performed?

Babies less than 90 days of age who have GBS disease will be identified by paediatricians through the British Paediatric Surveillance Unit (BPSU) and through collaborations with microbiologists and public health specialists in each country. Paediatricians will be asked to complete a short confidential questionnaire to provide information about the affected child and mother. We will not contact families and the study won't in any way affect a child's treatment. The purpose is ONLY to collect information to learn more about the condition.

How long will the study go on for?

13 months

What are the possible risks and benefits?

There are no direct benefits to taking part in this study although data collected on infants with GBS infections will help us to improve our understanding of the current burden of infection and its risk factors. This will help target future strategies to prevent infections. All data collected will be held securely and confidentiality maintained at all times.

Who should be contacted if you have any questions about this study?

Please contact the British Paediatric Surveillance Unit of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, London (see over page).

Who has funded the study?

Meningitis Now, a meningitis charity.

Further website information

PHE - <http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/InfectionsAZ/StreptococciGroupB/>

SGUL - <http://www.vaccine.ac.uk/>

Meningitis UK - <http://www.meningitisnow.org/>