



CODEN [USA]: IAJPBB

ISSN : 2349-7750

INDO AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PHARMACEUTICAL SCIENCES

SJIF Impact Factor: 7.187

<http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4334787>

Available online at: <http://www.iajps.com>

Research Article

EFFECTIVENESS OF SILDENAFIL IN NEWBORNS & PULMONARY HYPERTENSION

¹Dr. Shazia Noureen, ²Dr. Aneeqa Noor, ³Dr Muhammad Nida e Hussain

¹Ganga Ram Hospital, ²BHU 379 GB Jaranwala, Faisalabad, ³DHQ Teaching Hospital
Gujranwala.

Article Received: October 2020

Accepted: November 2020

Published: December 2020

Abstract:

Sildenafil taken vocally is a good prospective solution to the problem but it hasn't been methodically assessed in babies with PPHN. Every 7 out of 1000 live births experience persistent pulmonary hypertension (PPHN). The rate of deaths is high but is reduced to around 15% with the use of inhalation of nitric oxide, surfactant and ventilation of the high frequency type. Selective decrease in the pulmonary vascular resistance is achieved with Sildenafil, which is a phosphor diesterase in hibitor of kind. The best to treat neonates suffering from hypertension of the pulmonary type is inhalation of nitric oxide including vasodilator of the pulmonary type.

Material & methods: *in this study and research all that patients who fulfilled the inclusion criteria and visited to lahore general hospital, lahore were included. Informed consent was taken from parents / guardian after explaining the procedure, risks and benefits of the study. Sildenafil tablet (50 mg) was crushed and reconstituted with distilled water and then stored in a plastic container in a refrigerator at 5°C. Oral sildenafil was given as per study protocol with a starting dose of 0.5 mg/kg/dose and increased by 0.5 mg/kg/dose to a maximum of 2 mg/kg/dose after assessing every 6 h if non-responsive. Oi, oxygen saturations (spo), alveolar-arterial oxygen gradient (a-ado2), a/a ratio, and sopi (for non-invasive ventilated babies) were monitored serially every 6 hours.*

Results: *efficacy of oral sildenafil was noted in 208 (78.78%) patents while 56 (21.22%) was found to be non-effective (p-value<0.001*). Mean ± sd of gestational age was 38.5±8.39 with c.i (37.4 to 39.5) weeks. Mean ± sd of birth weight was 3215±348 with c.i (3172.8 to 3257.1) grams.*

Conclusion: *efficacy of oral sildenafil in maintenance of persistent pulmonary hypertension was found to be effective and underscores the need for a large, controlled trial, also to be concluded.*

Keywords: *Oral Sildenafil, Efficacy, Persistent pulmonary Hypertension, Neonates.*

Corresponding author:

Dr Shazia Noureen

Ganga Ram Hospital.

QR code



Please cite this article in press Shazia Noureen et al, *Effectiveness Of Sildenafil In Newborns & Pulmonary Hypertension., Indo Am. J. P. Sci, 2020; 07(12).*

INTRODUCTION:

The respiratory system and its serious failure and hypoxemia are the characteristics of a physical condition called Persistent pulmonary hypertension(1, 2). Persistent pulmonary hypertension is associated with high rates of mortality and morbidity occurring in about 2 for every 1000 births around the globe(1). Although positive developments have taken place to treat PPHN, it still remains a deadly disease particularly in low income countries around the world who don't have the necessary resources(1). Walsh-Sukys et al.(1) documented a total mortality rate of 11% with the overall range between 5% and 32%) in a combined analysis conducted across the United States of America. Razzaq et al(3). documented a mortality rate of 25% at Multan Children's Hospital in Pakistan and Abdel et al.(4) documented a mortality rate of 22% at Al-Minya University Hospital in Egypt.

The occurrence of PPHN through various findings in South Africa was documented to be around 1% with a high rate of mortality ranging from 25% to 3% and 48% at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital as documented by Velaphi et al(5).

In the past, Persistent pulmonary hypertension of the newborn (PPHN) is considered as a very problematic neonatal illness due to its connection with high rates of mortality and morbidity. This illness is caused by the inability of the newborn to make a postnatal move from a high resistance fetal pulmonary state to a less resistant pulmonary circulation(4, 6).

PPHN is a neonatal serious condition categorized by a shared pathophysiological structures involving continuous raise of pulmonary vascular resistance and hypoxemia because of the right-to-left additional pulmonary thrusting of the flow of blood through the ductus arteriosus(7). PPHN impacts 2-6/1,000 of live births or around 1 in 10 of combined newborns disclosed to intensive care of the neonatal type and is complemented with a 7-9% danger of mortality including substantial morbidity(4).

The physiologic results of PPHN might originate with relation to a vast array of disorders including but not limited to congenital diaphragmatic hernia (CDH), asphyxia, pneumonia, meconium aspiration and sepsis(7)

Besides the treatment mentioned above, there are other ways to treat hypertension including bosentan, milrin one, magnesium sulfate, sildenafil and

epoprostenol. The best to treat neonates suffering from hypertension of the pulmonary type is inhalation of nitric oxide including vasodilator of the pulmonary type. Regardless, it must be noted that these methods of treatment are particularly proscribed in treating neonatal hypertension(8). Sildenafil yields vasodilatation by growing cyclic guanosine monophosphate (cGMP) by the reticence of the phosphodiesterase included in the dilapidation of cGMP to guanosine monophosphate(9, 10).

In the models of the humans and animals, it has been proven that the use sildenafil is able to decrease resistance in the pulmonary vascular vein. The goal of these methods of treatment is to decrease pulmonary vascular resistance, regulate blood pressure, inverse right to left shunt, and better arterial O2 saturation(7).

To treat pulmonary arterial hypertension and to better the ability to work out and in delaying physical determination in people of old age, sildenafil has been regulated by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA)(11, 12).

The treatment of newborns in Pakistan remains a dire issue due to the lack of nitric oxides availability, which is the main way for its treatment. Since sildenafil is readily present in Pakistan, this study will focus on its use for treating PPHN in a local setting. Therefore, this study will help establish sildenafil as treatment modality for PPHN locally. The goal of our analysis is to categorically find the initial data with relation to the viability of administering oral sildenafil and its impact on babies' oxygenation suffering from PPHN.

DATA COLLECTION:

After approval from institutional ethical review committee (ERC), in the study conducted at Lahore General Hospital, Lahore Pakistan. A total of n=264 consecutively newborns having persistent pulmonary hypertension were recruited. Echocardiography (ECHO) was used to screen all newborns entering neonatal intensive care and after they fulfilled the predefined criteria, they were induced in the study following signed permissions from the family. Those Neonates of gestation age 35-42 weeks with (PAP) on ECHO >25 mm of Hg were included in the study. Neonates with Hyaline membrane disease diagnosed by clinical features and X-ray findings or having any congenital heart diseases are excluded from the study. Those Infants of >42 weeks with mild respiratory disease were also excluded.

A 50 mg tablet of was turned into powder form and reconstructed with purified water and then placed in a plastic bottle to be refrigerated at 5°C. Sildenafil was then orally administered as defined previously in the protocols of the study with the first dose of 0.5 mg/kg/dose and gradually augmented by another 0.5 mg/kg/dose to a total of 2 mg/kg/dose after evaluating each six hours if the patient was non responsive.

The criteria for eligibility included all newborns born in the range of 34 to 42 weeks gestational age. OI, oxygen saturations (SpO₂), alveolar-arterial oxygen.

To evaluate the PAP, ECHO was conducted earlier and each 6 hours after the administration of sildenafil. Gradient (A-aDO₂), a/A ratio, and SOPI (for non-invasive ventilated newborns) were observed consecutively each six hours. Separate evaluations were conducted for all newborns regardless if they were noninvasive ventilated or invasive.

The entire evaluation of the patients, diagnostic tests and treatment were at the discretion of treating pediatric physician. A 50 mg tablet of was turned into powder form and reconstructed with purified water and then placed in a plastic bottle to be refrigerated at 5°C. Sildenafil was then orally administered as defined previously in the protocols of the study with the first dose of 0.5 mg/kg/dose and gradually augmented by another 0.5 mg/kg/dose to a total of 2 mg/kg/dose after evaluating each six hours if the patient was non responsive. According to their predefined standard criteria the effectiveness were evaluated was considered effective if at least 2 out of the three indicators are present from the baseline values like 1) SaO₂>10% increase in ABG from baseline, 2) OI decreases by 10-20% from the baseline, 3) Decrease in FiO₂ by 5-10% from the baseline PPHN. Pulmonary hypertension (PPHN) considered presence when the following criteria satisfied like 1) PAP > 25 mmHg, 2) PO₂< 80 mmHg, 3) SPO₂ < 90% at 100% respectively. Frequency and percentage was computed for qualitative variables like gender, cesarean section, and efficacy. Mean±SD was calculated for quantitative variable i.e. gestational age, birth weight, apgar score at 1 and 2 min, peak inspiratory pressure, peak end expiratory pressure, airway pressure, rate, inspired oxygen, duration of time, FiO₂, PaCO₂, PaO₂, HCO₃, A- aDO₂ and Oxygen Indices. The

stratification was done according to gender, gestational age, birth weight, and Apgar score to see the effect of these modifiers on outcome using Chi-square test/Fisher exact test. P value <0.05 was considered as significant in all analysis. All analysis were performed in SPSS-21.

Confidentiality about the patient's particulars was ensured. All the cases/subjects were entered on the proforma by their MR number and a separate study ID number were assigned to each case and it were used during further analysis. Patients name were not mentioned at any stage the data were kept confidential with primary investigator and were not be shared with anyone else. Data were stored in password protected computer with principal researcher.

RESULTS:

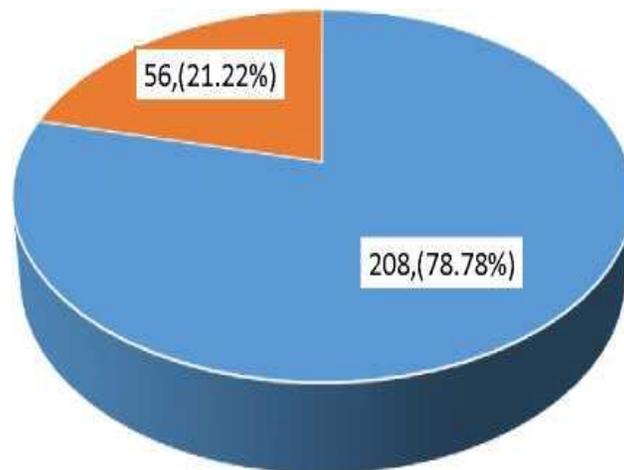
The efficacy of oral sildenafil in newborns having persistent pulmonary hypertension and the results were analyzed as the average maternal age of the mother was 38.5±8.39 with C.I (37.48 to 39.51) years in this study 264 patients were included to. Mean birth weight of neonatal baby was 3215±348 with C.I(3172.8to 3257.1) grams in contract Apgar score at one and two minute reading was 6.48±1.25 with C.I (6.3 to 6.63) & 6.56±1.34 with C.I (6.39 6.72). In this study, sildenafil was not effective in 21.22% newborn patients with severe PPHN, 5 newborn were transferred to another center for iNO and/or ECMO and one newborn died with sepsis. significant improvement of oxygenation after sildenafil treatment was indicated by a significant reduction of oxygenation index (OI) s and increase of PaO₂ ranging from 34.9 ± 9.6 to 13 ± 3.2 (p < 0.001), 42.4 ± 13.5 to 78 ± 11.5 (<0.01), and reduction of FiO₂ from 1.22±0.45 to 0.3±0.06. Reduction of OI was more significant in post-hoc analysis after the 3rd and 4th doses of sildenafil i.e. from 18 to 24 hours from the start of treatment. Similarly mean peak inspiratory pressure was 33.2±5.1 & peak end expiratory pressure was observed 4.2±0.75 with C.I (4.10 to 4.29) respectively. Out of 264 patients 114 (56.81%) were male and 150 (43.19%) were female. Female are more predominant in this study. Cesarean section was documented in 76(28.78%) patients. Efficacy of oral sildenafil was noted in 208 (78.78%) patents while 56 (21.22%) was found to be non-effective as shown in **Chart#1**.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of demographics and babies characteristics at time of entry

Descriptive statistics	Mean±SD	95% C.I.
Gestational Age in (Weeks)	38.5±8.39	(37.4 to 39.5)
Birth weight in (Gram)	3215±348	(3172.8 to 3257.1)
Apgar Score at 1 Min	6.48±1.25	(6.32 to 6.63)
Peak Inspiratory Pressure (cm H20)	6.56±1.34	(6.39 to 6.72)
Peak End Expiratory Pressure (cm H20)	4.2±0.75	(4.1 to 4.29)
Inspired Oxygen	19.2±4.2	(18.69 to 19.7)
Airway Pressure (cm H20)	1.34±0.72	(1.25 to 1.42)
Rate (beats/min)	42.2±5.4	(41.5 to 42.8)
FIO2 in Days	2.7±1.6	(2.5 to 2.89)
Duration of Treatment	1.22±0.45	(1.16 to 1.27)
PaOz	19.1±2.9	(18.7 to 19.4)
A-aDOz	42.5±7.48	(41.6 to 43.4)
PaCo2	34±8.2	(33 to 34.9)
HCO3	34.2±12.48	(32.6 to 35.7)

Table 2: Comparison of efficacy of sildenafil among demographics and study characteristics

Study Characteristics	EFFICACY		P-Value
	Yes	No	
Gestation Age (Weeks) 35—39 >39	150 (56.8%) 58 (22.0%)	30 (11.4%) 26 (9.8%)	0.008
Gender Male Female	105 (39.8%) 103 (39.0%)	45 (17.0%) 11 (4.2%)	<0.001*
Birth Weight (gm) 100-300 >3000	72 (27.3%) 136 (51.5%)	40 (15.2%) 16 (6.1%)	<0.001*
Apgar Score at 1 (min) 3-5 >5	60 (22.7%) 148 (56.1%)	42 (15.9%) 14 (5.3%)	<0.001*
Apgar Score at 2 (min) 3-5.5 >5.5	72 (27.3%) 136 (51.5%)	38 (14.4%) 18 (6.8%)	<0.001*

Chart 1: Stratification of Gestation Age Group with Efficacy (N=264)**DISCUSSION:**

The strength of the study was further enhanced by the use of successive sampling which was perfectly suited in conducting the study. The strict criteria for including and excluding newborns in the study made it a strong one. Furthermore any bias in the study was reduced by using definitions that were objective for predicting and outcome variables. The chief confines of our analysis was the use of a substandard study plan case series the analysis and power of indication of which is inadequate and ergo. No calculation of the prior sample size is required for a successful conduct of this study.

Extent of oral sildenafil in newborns to measure the effectiveness having (PPHN) has been significantly varied range of severity. There were a cumulative effect for multiple dosing; oxygenation further improved with each dose of sildenafil. Sildenafil causes pulmonary vasodilatation by increasing the availability of cGMP(11). In this study, a significant improvement of oxygenation after sildenafil treatment was indicated by a significant reduction of oxygenation index (OI) s and increase of PaO₂ ranging from 34.9 ± 9.6 to 13 ± 3.2 ($p < 0.001$), 42.4 ± 13.5 to 78 ± 11.5 (<0.01), and reduction of FiO₂ from 1.22 ± 0.45 to 0.3 ± 0.06 . Reduction of OI was more significant in post-hoc analysis after the 3rd and 4th doses of sildenafil i.e. from 18 to 24 hours from the start of treatment. Data on the use of sildenafil in PPHN is currently very scarce with a few published case reports (12-15). Prospective randomized studies were all pilot in nature with a limited number of patients(1, 16). Our results were comparable to Herrera et al.(17) who also reported a significant improvement in OI in a group of infants who

received sildenafil compared to a control group. Treatment groups had greater PaO₂ at 72 hours and shorter duration of ventilation. In line with this study, Baquero et al.(18) conducted a pilot randomized blinded study in infants with severe PPHN with OI >25 who received oral sildenafil. In the treatment group, OI improved in all infants within 6 to 30 hours, with a steady improvement in sildenafil group as regards to O₂ saturation, and in mortality. Similar results were reported in a couple of non- randomized reports (3, 18, 19).

Sildenafil was not effective in 21.22% newborn patients with severe PPHN, 5 newborn were transferred to another center for iNO and/or ECMO and one newborn died with sepsis in this study. The low mortality rate among patients treated with sildenafil in our study was comparable to those reported by Baquero et al.8 and by Shaltout et al(4). However; it cannot be concluded that oral sildenafil improve survival of PPHN patients since we did not conduct a randomized trial. In this study, sildenafil was well tolerated in newborn patients with no short term side effects for sildenafil particularly systemic hypotension as shown by non-significant difference of mean blood pressure between pre and post-sildenafil patients ($p = 0.63$); as it was reported by other studies(18, 19). A Cochrane meta-analysis study was conducted by Shah and Ohlsson(20) to measure the effectiveness sildenafil in the treatment of PPHN .It was found that sildenafil was safe, effective, and easily administered.

CONCLUSION:

Our results are equivalent with most of national and international studies. We conclude that oral sildenafil

could be a promising pulmonary vasodilator and effective for improving oxygenation in newborns with PPHN, particularly in medical facilities without iNO or ECMO. It was well tolerated and was not associated with short term side effects. Large multicenter randomized controlled studies are recommended to determine the long term safety and neuro developmental outcomes of infants receiving this treatment. In our study gestational age was 38.5 ± 8.39 weeks and birth weight was 3215 ± 348 grams. Efficacy of oral sildenafil was noted in 78.78% patents while 21.22% was found to be non-effective.

Strength & Weakness and Recommendation:

Since this study was conducted in a hospital setting, the findings do not truly represent the accurate frequency and extremity of the disease. Furthermore, generalizations cannot be made since this study was performed in one single unit of a hospital. The study was further affected by the lack of outcome variables available in the study. Many factors with a direct connection to predictor and outcome variables were not included in the study which further weakened the strength of our study. Generalizations could also not be made since we use sampling that was non probable. Regardless, this was mitigated by the small number of newborns being tested including the fact that the durations of the follow ups were succinct.

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