

Childhood pneumonia

Background

In the great majority of children who cough with fever, the diagnosis is an upper respiratory infection

Chest auscultation under 2 years is unreliable in diagnosing pneumonia

History

- nature/pattern of coughing
- most often non-productive
- assoc. fever
- features of respiratory distress

Examination

- RR – norms for different ages
- use of accessory muscles of respiration
- grunting
- fever +/- toxicity
- local chest signs

Background

Pneumonia is a clinical diagnosis and 90% < 12 months is viral

Wheeze and bacterial pneumonia almost never co-exist – if the child is wheezy rethink the diagnosis

Referral to hospital

RR > 70 in infants and RR > 50 in older children

Significant respiratory distress +/- grunting

O2 saturations < 92%

Symptoms not getting better despite treatment (think empyema)

Investigations

- most in community require no tests
- **CXR if admitted**
- **repeat CXR 4-6 weeks later only if rounded /lobar pneumonia**

Treatment

PO amoxicillin in the pre-school child

PO clarithromycin in the older child with community-acquired pneumonia

Evidence Base

• Systematic reviews show that a **raised respiratory rate** is the *best predictor* of childhood pneumonia

References

Archiv Dis Child 2004; **89**:29-34

Archiv Dis Child 2011; **96**: 708-714

BTS 2002 guidelines

TAKE HOME MESSAGES

Measuring the respiratory rate is very important in diagnosis

A diagnosis of pneumonia generates significant concern in parents

If signs of coryza or URTI symptoms, bacterial pneumonia is rare

Asthma is always in the differential diagnosis

Few require CXR

Empyema

Consider if not improving

Usually very sick

u/s chest +/- CT

Early chest drain +/- urokinase

This algorithm has been produced by the National Paediatric and Neonatology Clinical Programmes. It is aimed at medical, nursing and allied health professionals working in both primary and emergency care settings.

Amended following suggestions of QIP committee of ICGP . Secondary care treatment denoted in pink

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