
Clinico-pathological findings in non-immune hydrops fetalis

Sir - We read with interest the paper of Harahan et al¹, who described 33 cases of non-immune hydrops fetalis born at the National Maternity and Rotunda Hospitals between 1982 and 1988. Prognosis was poor, with only four (12%) of babies surviving.

It is not possible to determine the survival rate of live-born babies from this paper. Others have reported better outcome in non-immune with a survival rates of liveborn babies quoted as 25%² and 29%³. We have recently reported our experience with liveborn cases of hydrops fetalis in Royal Maternity Hospital.⁴ Of 27 cases gathered over 16 years four were non-immune in origin. These were due to congenital cytomegalovirus infection, chronic feto-maternal transfusion, congenital heart disease (Ebstein's anomaly) and an idiopathic failed to reveal a cause. Three babies survived, giving a survival rate of 75%. The outlook for non-immune hydrops is not as gloomy as Harahan et al suggest with improved results being due to antenatal ultrasound detection, delivery of the hydropic baby in a controlled setting by elective caesarean section, and advances in neonatal intensive care.

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References

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