Identifying and Managing Children with Auditory Neuropathy/Dys-synchrony

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Clinical Goals

- To understand the nature and characteristics of a hearing disorder.
- To obtain sufficient information to provide appropriate management of a hearing disorder.
- To meet the goals of Universal Newborn Hearing Screening programs
  - Identify and evaluate by 3 months; intervention by 6 months

Auditory Neuropathy/Dys-synchrony

Patients with outer hair cell responses (OAE, CM) and absent/abnormal auditory brainstem responses (ABR), are classified as having auditory neuropathy*/auditory dys-synchrony**.

A new recommended name:
Auditory Neuropathy Spectrum Disorder***

*** Auditory neuropathy consensus conference. 2008, Como, Italy

Possible sites of abnormality:
- Inner hair cells
- Inner hair cells - VIIIth nerve synapse
- VIIIth nerve

Patient Variation:
A Continuum of AN/AD

Neural Synchrony

Stimulus Envelope
Single Unit Discharges
Compound Action Potential

Inconsistent auditory responses, best in quiet, poorest in noise. Audiograms can be misleading or fluctuate. ABR always desynchronized, middle-ear muscle reflexes absent. Visual phonetic language usually works best until cochlear implantation, unless family prefers cultural Deafness.
Variable Characteristics of AN/AD

- Onset: Congenital, later onset, acquired
- Underlying mechanisms: Hair cell, synaptic, neural
- Risk factors in infants
  - Currently unclear, can involve prematurity, hyperbilirubinemia, oxygen deprivation, exchange transfusion
  - Some infants with AN/AD have no risk factors and come through the well-baby nursery.

Variable Characteristics of AN/AD

- Genetic patterns: Dominant, recessive, non-syndromic, syndromic, mitochondrial
- Changes over time
  - Stable, fluctuating, progressive (changes in hair cell and/or neural responses)
  - Partial recovery of auditory ability (improved pure tones and sound awareness despite continued dys-synchrony)
  - Ability to utilize speech information

Demographic information (n=244)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>136/244</td>
<td>55.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>108/244</td>
<td>44.3</td>
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</table>

From Berlin, Hood et al., 2008

Tests Results: Hair Cell Function

- Normal otoacoustic emissions (despite abnormal pure tone thresholds)
- Present cochlear microphonics
- Absent middle ear muscle reflexes
- Absent auditory brainstem responses
- No suppression of otoacoustic emissions
- No masking level differences
- Variable audiograms
- Poor speech recognition

AN/AD: Otoacoustic Emissions

- Normal ABR to condensation and rarefaction clicks: CM inverts - neural components do not.
- AN/AD patient - all CM, no neural response

ABR and Cochlear Microphonics

(CM - electrical responses generated in part by the outer hair cells)
Cochlear vs Neural Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cochlear</th>
<th>Neural</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latency*</td>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>Increases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amplitude</td>
<td>Decreases</td>
<td>Decreases</td>
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<tr>
<td>Response*</td>
<td>Inverts</td>
<td>Slight shifts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masking</td>
<td>Resistant</td>
<td>Decreases</td>
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</table>

Tests Results: Neural Function

- Normal otoacoustic emissions
- Present cochlear microphonics
- Absent auditory brainstem responses
- Absent middle ear muscle reflexes
- No suppression of otoacoustic emissions
- No masking level differences
- Variable audiograms
- Poor speech recognition

Auditory Brainstem Response

Most patients have absent ABRs; some show responses only at high intensities that are low in amplitude.

Reference: Normal ABR

Infant Twin 1:
- ABR con clicks
- ABR con and rar clicks
- TEOAEs

Infant Twin 2 ABR

Condensation clicks

Condensation and rarefaction clicks

Distinguishing auditory neuropathy/dys-synchrony from neuromaturation
MEMRs in AN/AD Patients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stimulus Ear</th>
<th>Right 500</th>
<th>1000</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>4000</th>
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<td>125</td>
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<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Berlin, Hood, Morlet et al., 2005

Auditory Efferent Reflexes

• The olivocochlear reflex (OAE suppression) is absent in AN/AD patients

Test Results: Other Measures

• Normal otoacoustic emissions
• Present cochlear microphonics
• Absent auditory brainstem responses
• Absent middle ear muscle reflexes
• No suppression of otoacoustic emissions
• No masking level differences
• Variable audiometric configurations
• Poor speech recognition (most often)

Middle Ear Muscle Reflexes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absent MEMRs (all absent)</td>
<td>127/150</td>
<td>84.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bilateral AN/AD</td>
<td>8/150</td>
<td>5.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Absent</td>
<td>135/150</td>
<td>90.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abnormal (combination of elevated and absent)</td>
<td>13/150</td>
<td>8.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilateral AN/AD</td>
<td>2/150</td>
<td>1.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Abnormal</td>
<td>15/150</td>
<td>10.00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(number of subjects)

From Berlin, Hood et al., 2008

Audiometric test results

(n=153 Ss)

From Berlin, Hood et al., 2008
Speech audiometric test results
(based on data from 71 subjects over 4 years old)

Percent
Speech Reception or Awareness Thresholds
Speech Awareness (SAT) 33.8
Speech Reception (SRT)* 66.2

*SRTs were typically obtained using a very limited set of spondees.

From Berlin, Hood et al., 2008

Kresge AN/AD Database:
Speech recognition ability
Subset of 71 patients aged 4 years and older

Measurable word recognition in quiet: 27
- Average maximum word recognition 45%
Measurable word recognition in noise: 0%

Kresge AN/AD Database:
Speech recognition ability
Subset of 71 patients aged 4 years and older

Measurable word recognition in quiet: 27
- Average maximum word recognition 45%
Measurable word recognition in noise: 0%

Speech audiometric test results
(based on data from 95 subjects)

Subjects with measurable word recognition in Quiet and Noise (over 4 years of age) = 5 subjects

| Left ear (Quiet) Mean: 86.0% (SD: 12.8%) |
| Right ear (Quiet) Mean: 87.2% (SD: 8.7%) |
| Left ear (Noise**) Mean: 48.0% (SD: 15.8%) |
| Right ear (Noise**) Mean: 64.0% (SD: 22.1%) |

** Speech in noise testing was typically at a +10 signal-to-noise ratio.

From Berlin, Hood et al., 2008

Auditory Neuropathy/Dys-synchrony

Elements of sound: frequency, intensity, time

Psychophysical testing on AN/AD patients:
- Intensity processing
- Frequency processing
- Temporal processing (timing)
  - Evidence suggests poor temporal function, dys-synchrony (e.g., Starr et al., 1998; Zeng et al., 2000).
- What AN may sound like - Dr. F-G Zeng

Unilateral Auditory Neuropathy

Kresge AN/AD Database:
Unilateral AN/AD

- Hearing in opposite (non-neuropathy) ear
  - Normal or near normal = 13
  - Mild-moderate hearing loss = 1
  - Severe-profound hearing loss = 1
  - Atretic = 1

Kresge AN/AD Database:
Unilateral AN/AD

- Hearing in opposite (non-neuropathy) ear
  - Normal or near normal = 13
  - Mild-moderate hearing loss = 1
  - Severe-profound hearing loss = 1
  - Atretic = 1
### Patient History and Risk Factors

**Subjects aged 0-18 years (n=175/260)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Factor</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normal history</td>
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<tr>
<td>Normal pregnancy</td>
<td>24.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Premature birth</td>
<td>42.9</td>
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<td>Hyperbilirubinemia</td>
<td>45.7</td>
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<td>Exchange transfusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anoxia</td>
<td>15.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respiratory distress</td>
<td>12.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artificial ventilation</td>
<td>19.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ototoxic drugs</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low birth weight</td>
<td>5.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anemia</td>
<td>4.0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Some infants with AN/AD have no risk factors and come through the well-baby nursery. NOT ALL infants with AN/AD are found in the NICU. From Berlin, Hoad et al., 2008

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### Genetics and AN/AD

- Recessive, dominant, and mitochondrial inheritance patterns are associated with AN/AD.
- AN/AD can be part of a syndrome or non-syndromic.
- 36/225 patients comprising 16 families with AN/AD
  - 13 sibling pairs (6 pairs nonsyndromic)
  - 3 families show a dominant pattern with multi-generational AN/AD

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### Genetics and AN/AD

- Non-syndromic recessive AN is associated with abnormalities in *OTOF* – *otoferlin* (Varga et al., 2003).
  - *Otoferlin* is expressed in the inner hair cells, possible roles in membrane trafficking and/or IHC synaptic vesicle fusion
  - In mice, *otoferlin* has been localized to IHC associated synaptic vesicles

*OTOF* expression

From: Hereditary Hearing Loss Homepage

(Smith and Van de Water)

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### Genetics and AN/AD

**AN/AD occurs as part of a syndrome with various inheritance patterns**

- Accompanying other hereditary motor sensory neuropathies - HMSN (e.g., Butinar et al., 1999; Starr et al., 2004)
- Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease
- Friedreich’s ataxia
- AN and optic nerve abnormalities

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### What is the incidence of AN/AD?

- About 1 in 10 patients with desynchronized ABRs will have OAEs and/or cochlear microphonics.
- This prediction is based on research from:
  - Berlin et al., 2000 – Of 1000+ children screened in schools for the Deaf, 10-12% had either robust OAEs or evidence of residual OHC function.
  - Lee et al., 2001 - Of 72 students at schools for hearing-impaired, approximately 10% had either robust OAEs or evidence of OHC responses.
  - Rance et al., 1999 – 1 in 9 infants with permanent hearing loss had cochlear microphonics but no ABR.
  - Sininger, 2002 – Approximately 10% of infants had OAEs and no ABR in the NIDCD Newborn Screening Study.

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### AN/AD versus [C]APD

- AN/AD:
  - Synchrony disorder, possible pre-neural site
  - ABR, MEMR absent
  - Cochlear implants a management option
- Central APD
  - More diffuse in nature, peripheral synchrony usually WNL
  - ABR, MEMR usually normal
  - Cochlear implants not useful
AN/AD: Another Challenge

Some children are identified with AN/AD but develop speech and language without intervention, despite no recordable ABRs.

*How they come to us:*
- AN/AD identified at birth
- Often with recommendation for a cochlear implant
- Responsive to auditory stimuli without visual cues and speech and language is developing, on or near target

AN/AD patient with good recognition in quiet but poor in noise

AN/AD Patient “M”

Implications for management

- Hearing aids? Some have tried, variable benefit
- FM system? As their world expands, if they have difficulty in noise
- Cochlear implant? Monitoring speech and language development, progress in learning
- Communication mode? Include visual information, encourage visual contact
- Will they stay on track as listening situations become more challenging?
  - Closely monitor; keep options open
- Do we have sufficiently sensitive measures to identify problems in these children?

How identify these children?

- Need objective approaches in this population
- Temporal processing and speech perception (e.g., Rance, 2007)
  - An objective measure of temporal processing ability?
- Cortical responses
  - Understanding auditory processing and effects of treatment
  - Some associations with speech recognition reported in AN/AD patients, though not consistent across studies
  - Novel stimuli and paradigms may add information
- Brainstem responses to speech and other novel (non-click) stimuli (e.g., BioMap – Kraus et al.)
  - ABR and FFR (Freq Following Resp) components of speech
Issues in AN/AD Management: Variation in Auditory Function

AN/AD Database: Hearing Aid Use
- Benefit from hearing aids is variable.
  - Limited benefit in majority of patients
  - Important to distinguish detection from discrimination
  - Optional component when evaluating cochlear implant candidacy in some practices
- AN/AD patients, particularly with some speech recognition ability, report benefit from FM system use when listening in background noise.

Auditory Neuropathy/Dys-synchrony and Cochlear Implants
- Success with cochlear implants has been demonstrated in infants, children and adults with AN/AD.
- Post-implant neural response telemetry, EABR, MEMR reflexes are comparable to responses in non-AN/AD implant patients (Shallop et al., 2001)

Cochlear implant use
Patients with Cochlear Implants by age group
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>0-24 months</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-48 months</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>4-6 years</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>7-12 years</td>
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<td>13-18 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>19-30 years</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over 30 years</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Berlin, Hood et al., 2008

Cochlear Implant Performance
- Matched 10 AN/AD and 10 non-AN/AD children with cochlear implants
- Threshold and comfort levels comparable
- MAIS (Meaningful Auditory Integration Scale) results comparable

Why do cochlear implants work?
- Inner hair cell, neurotransmitter, synaptic losses could leave neural function intact.
- If neural function is affected, then electrical stimulation may still synchronize remaining neural units better than acoustic stimuli.
Patient

- Female, age: 15 years
- Increased listening difficulty, particularly with background noise
- Greater difficulty in school, losing interest
- Vision problems, progressively worsening
  - Optic nerve atrophy
- Other affected family members in each generation
  - Autosomal dominant inheritance pattern

Audiometric Results
(Age 15 years)

SRT: 20 dB R / 25 dB L
WR Quiet (40 SL):
W22*: 8% R / 10% L
CID Sentences*:
  19% R / 36% L
WR Noise (+10):
W22*: 0% R / 0% L
SIN*: 0% R / 0% L
Tymps: Type A R&L
MEMRs: Ipsi and contra absent R&L*recorded stimuli

OAE and ABR Results
(Age 15 years)

Speech Recognition Results
with a Cochlear Implant
(Age 16 years)

- HINT at 60 dB HL
  - 96% in quiet
  - 94% in noise at +15 S/N

- CID Everyday Sentences at 60 dB HL
  - 74% in noise at +10 S/N
  - Pre-implant reference: 0% at +10 S/N

Communication Methods

- Language Development is critical.
  - Work closely with speech/language pathologists, early interventionists, educators
- Visual Communication methods (Cued speech, sign language, signed English) are important to facilitate language development.
- Auditory Verbal Therapy by itself, before cochlear implantation, has not worked in our practice as the sole method of teaching language.

Management: Other Methods

- Preferential seating
- Note-taking service for high school and college students
- Real-time closed-captioning
Time Courses for Auditory Neuropathy

• Stays the same
  – OAEs and CM remain but do not develop speech and language by auditory means alone
  • Some patients maintain cochlear microphonics and OAEs, but do not learn speech and language by auditory means alone.
  • Visual information (e.g., Cued speech, ASL, signed English) is necessary for language learning.
  • A number of patients in this group are successful cochlear implant users and have moved away from visual cues post-implant.

• Progressive Loss of Peripheral Auditory Integrity
  – Loss of OAEs, CM over time
  • Some patients show a retrograde loss of cochlear microphonics and OAEs, and become audiologically almost indistinguishable from peripherally deaf children.
  • Such children have been successfully implanted and perform well with a cochlear implant.

• Progressive and other neuropathies
  – Progressive auditory problems; develop other peripheral neuropathies (e.g., HMSN)
  • Some patients show a worsening of symptoms and develop other peripheral neuropathies, such as hereditary motor-sensory neuropathy (e.g., Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease).

• Partial improvement
  – Recover some awareness of sound; continue to show desynchronized ABRs
  • Some patients seem to recover pure-tone sensitivity and awareness of sound, but continue to show desynchronized ABRs, robust cochlear microphonics, and normal OAEs.
  • Speech and language are delayed, but develop.

AN/AD: Summary

• Effect, directly or indirectly, is on neural processing of auditory stimuli
  – Physiologic measures are needed to accurately identify AN/AD

• Sound processing, among other characteristics, is highly variable in patients with AN/AD
  – Relationships between hearing sensitivity and ability to process speech do not follow the typical hearing loss rules.
  – Progression, fluctuation, stability

• “Milder” forms of AN/AD are seen in patients of all ages
  – Infants/children, young adults
  – Older adults – a form of neural presbycusis? (e.g., Gates et al.)

• Management should proceed with thorough assessment of individual capabilities
  – Visual information is important in the majority of patients with AN/AD.
  – Cochlear implants provide significant benefit.
  – Distinguish detection (sensitivity) from discrimination (especially in noise) when evaluating hearing aid benefit.

• Follow patients closely and consider the possibility of change in auditory function over time.
Resources

• Listserve for parents and professionals interested in AN/AD
  AuditoryNeuropathy@yahoogroups.com

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• Phone: 615-936-4612 (Vanderbilt University)
• Fax: 615-936-6914 (Vanderbilt University)

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Diane Wilensky, MS

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