



The MFMU Networker

Volume VIII Issue 3

September 1998

Study of C Sections Nears Start

The next study to be initiated in the Network will be the largest prospective observational study of cesarean sections ever conducted. The purpose of the study is to gather information on trials of labor and vaginal birth after prior cesarean delivery (VBAC) and a variety of important clinical issues related to abdominal delivery which ultimately could be used to reduce the high rate of cesarean delivery. The protocol contains seventeen different concepts that will be studied, including rates of cesarean delivery, indications for operative intervention, frequency of maternal and neonatal complications, and patient characteristics of women undergoing a trial of labor. A number of these concepts look at data according to provider and payor status.

Over the next three years, data will be gathered on more than 60,000 women undergoing cesarean delivery or VBAC at participating MFMU Network clinical centers. Maternal data will be collected up to six weeks after delivery to capture any readmission data and neonatal data collection will continue up to 120 days after delivery.

Coordinators will attend a new study training session during a two day meeting, September 17-18, in Chicago. The meeting will also be an opportunity for coordinators to discuss other Network related issues. The new study will be started before Thanksgiving.

New Pilot Study for BEAM

The MFMU Network, with support from The Institute of Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, will soon be collecting hearing test data done in the nursery on infants in the BEAM trial. Magnesium is believed to be protective against hearing loss, and a natural history study at the University of Utah has found a significant association between maternal magnesium exposure and reduced risk of abnormal hearing test in the newborn. The data from this pilot study will be evaluated at the end of the feasibility period, when a decision will be made on how to proceed. Study documents have been developed and the data forms are being field-tested for capitation. The new study should begin this fall.

Meanwhile, centers have received updates to the manual on the follow-up study, based on suggestions from the last training session with the pediatric examiners. Steve Weiner also reported that the retreatment problem is improving, especially at the University of Alabama. Better communication with floor nursing staff seems to have helped. Recruitment is going well, with 244 patients randomized as of August 26.



MFMU Network Logo Available from Web Site

The MFMU Network logo that was approved at the last Steering Committee meeting can now be downloaded from the web site for use on slides and study documents. It looks like the one on this masthead and can be edited in the photo editor on your hard drive. To access it, connect to the BCC web site at www.bsc.gwu.edu/~mfmuweb, go to MFMU Network Study Documents and Reports and, after entering your password, click on MFMU Network Logo under Study Documents. Right click on the image with your mouse and choose "save as" to save the '.gif' file onto your hard drive.

RFP Issued for Biological Fluids Specimen Repository

NICHD has issued a RFP for a Biological Specimen Repository. The Network biological fluids will be included in this repository. If interested, it is RFP NICHD-DESPR-98-15 and is due November 2, 1998.

10 Abstracts Approved for SMFM....see page 2 for details

SMFM ABSTRACTS

Though fewer abstracts were submitted this year to the annual meeting of the Society of Maternal Fetal Medicine (formerly SPO), there was the usual flurry of faxes, phone calls and revisions by the August 20 deadline. Any Network manuscripts for the special issue of the *Gray Journal*, which is published after the SMFM meeting, must be submitted to Dr. Meis by December 1. The following lists the authors, abstract titles and related study of the submitted abstracts.

Dr. Helen How. *Histologic progression of clinical chorioamnionitis in patients with preterm premature rupture of membranes.* (pPROM Pathology Ancillary)

Dr. Robert Goldenberg. *The Preterm Prediction Study: Sequential cervical length and fetal fibronectin testing for the prediction of spontaneous preterm birth.* (Preterm Prediction Study)

Drs. Robert Goldenberg and William Andrews. *The Preterm Prediction Study: Granulocyte Colony Stimulating Factor (GCSF) and spontaneous preterm birth (SPB).* (Preterm Prediction Study)

Dr. James Alexander. *The impact of digital cervical examination on expectantly managed preterm ruptured membranes.* (pPROM study)

Dr. Baha Sibai. *Expectant management of pPROM: The relationship between cord blood gases and chorioamnionitis.* (pPROM study)

Drs. Mark Klebanoff and Chris Carey. *The effect of metronidazole on preventing preterm birth in asymptomatic women with bacterial vaginosis.* (BV trial)

Dr. Baha Sibai. *Risk factors for preeclampsia and adverse neonatal outcomes in women with preexisting diabetes mellitus.* (High Risk Aspirin trial)

Dr. R Newman. *Increased maternal weight gain in twins improved perinatal outcome.* (High Risk Aspirin trial)

Dr. B Hogg. *Safety of a labor epidural in women with severe preeclampsia (PE) or severe pregnancy induced hypertension (PIH).* (High Risk Aspirin trial)

Dr. B Rosenn. *What are the odds against the second twin?* (High Risk Aspirin trial)

MFMU Network Preparing for New Corticosteroids RCT

Study documents are being developed for a randomized placebo controlled trial to determine the efficacy and quantify the risks of repetitive doses of corticosteroids compared with a single dose for women at risk for preterm delivery (PTD). Women who are at risk for PTD commonly receive an initial course of corticosteroids over a 24 hour period to reduce the risk of neonatal complications, including RDS and IVH. Since the beneficial effects of the initial course of steroids appears to diminish after 7-10 days, many clinicians re-administer corticosteroids on a

weekly basis if the patient remains undelivered and less than 34 weeks gestation. Though the efficacy and safety of a single course of corticosteroids has been substantiated, little information exists about repeated doses.

The double masked trial of 2000 patients between 24 and 32 weeks gestation who are at risk for PTD will assess whether weekly re-administration of betamethasone decreases neonatal morbidity compared with a single course of corticosteroids. Study drug will be administered weekly until 34 weeks gestation. There will be a two year

follow-up of infants born on the study. The study drug is being provided by Schering Pharmaceuticals. Negotiations are underway with another company to provide the placebo drug, which needs to be specially manufactured. The protocol is being finalized for approval by the Steering Committee and the data forms and the manual are in progress. Drs. Ron Wapner and Don Dudley are the Co-PI's for the trial. Plans are for the trial to begin early in 1999 and to take 5-1/2 years to complete, including infant follow-up.

Collaborating Centers Sought for Canadian Study

The Medical Research Council of Canada is seeking 30 obstetrical centers in Canada, the US, Europe and South Africa to participate in a RCT of Amnioinfusion for Thick Meconium. The primary objective of this trial is to determine if a policy of amnioinfusion for thick meconium stained amniotic fluid (MSAF) results in a reduction in the summary outcome of either perinatal death or moderate to severe meconium aspiration syndrome. The start-up date is January 1999, with a total of 1968 patients expected to be recruited, and reimbursement provided on a per patient basis. If interested, contact William Fraser, MD at Tel.: 418-525-4437, Fax: 418-525-4481, Email: william.fraser@ogy.ulaval.ca.

Data Quality Review of Cervical U/S Study

Dr. Owen and Cora MacPherson spent August 24 reviewing a sample of cervical ultrasound tapes and comparing the readings to data forms. It was a long day in front of the video with seventeen patients, each with an average of four tapes. Dr. Owen was greatly impressed by the overall excellent quality of the data, though the quality of machines at each center varied widely. If discrepancies were found, requests

were made to the centers to re-read the tapes and correct the data forms. Some minor clarifications to the manual are being made as a result of the review.

Network Reps Attend 10th Annual NICHD Aspen Conference

Single vs. Repetitive Doses of Antenatal Steroids and Preventing Perinatal Brain Injury by Brain Cooling were the trial design topics assigned to Fellows at the annual NICHD Aspen Conference on Maternal-Fetal-Neonatal-Reproductive Medicine held August 26-29. The intensive three day meeting, organized by NICHD with the cooperation of the Children's Hospital, Denver, and the Departments of Pediatrics and Obstetrics/Gynecology, endeavors to prepare Fellows and junior faculty for a research career in maternal-fetal, perinatal and reproductive medicine.

Drs. Don McNellis, Charlotte Catz, Elizabeth Thom, Ron Wapner, and Gerry Merenstein led the steroids workshops, while Drs. Jim Roberts, Robert Goldenberg, Ray Bain, Linda Wright and Seetha Shankaran led the brain cooling workshops. In addition to designing clinical trials, Fellows participated in Mock Study Sessions, led in part by Drs. Roberts, McNellis, Thom, Goldenberg and Bain, where real grant proposals (with identifying information removed) were reviewed. A variety of other

sessions were also presented, including one on sample size calculations by Elizabeth Thom and one on clinical trial issues and methodology by Ray Bain.

Asthma Observational Study Winding Down

Recruitment to the Moderate/Severe and Control Cohorts ended on August 31. 903 and 921 patients were enrolled in the two cohorts respectively, as of August 26. However, recruitment to the Mild Cohort continues. Only 28 more patients are needed to reach the goal of 900 for the Mild Cohort, at which time recruitment will be ended.

The ancillary to the observational study became its own study at the end of July. Now, any patients meeting the eligibility criteria can be enrolled in the study called Plasma Levels of Inhaled Steroids. Maternal and cord blood samples and the placenta are to be obtained from a total of 50 patients -- 25 who have inhaled BDP and 25 who have inhaled TAA for at least 21 days prior to delivery.

Centers Ready to Start Terbutaline Study

Drugs were shipped to Magee Womens, and the Universities of Alabama, Miami and Cincinnati at the end of August, following each center's certification. Several other centers are nearly certified. A revised manual of operations was distributed in August.

Bits & Pieces

- Adeza Biomedical has reported to the BCC that recent follow-up FFN samples have been shipped carelessly. Please make sure that the samples are packaged correctly and there is plenty of ice. Refer to the manual for complete directions.
- Watch for updates to all the study manuals of operation. The definition of diabetes for our studies has been redefined.
- Did you know you can download the most recent versions of most MFMU Network study protocols, manuals and data forms from the MFMU Web site?

People in the News

- ◆ Welcome to **Kim Brunette**, new research assistant at the BCC, who has replaced **Scott Brancolini** on the Asthma studies. She graduated from Clemson University with a degree in microbiology and is working on her MPH at George Washington University. She enjoys her two cats, is a sports enthusiast, especially volleyball (volleyball in a racket ball court), and is a leader of the youth group in her church. Scott left the BCC to enter medical school at Penn State, where Dr. Chris Carey happens to be his advisor!!
- ◆ Best wishes for a speedy recovery to **Dr. Don Dudley**, following a spinal fusion of a disk in his lower back. Reports say he is doing well and walking 2 miles a day. The surgery, done in early August, puts him out of the office for three months, but it is expected he will have lots of time to devote to developing the Steroids Trial documents. He has had surgery on the same disk three times before and hopes this will be the last!
- ◆ **Allison Northen** has been named the new coordinator at UAB. She has been with the department 11 years and, according to Rachel Copper, was largely responsible for the success with the Preterm Prediction and HUAM studies. In addition to OB responsibilities, Allison also does the transvaginal ultrasounds. She is the mother of two sons, ages 5 and 9, and was a patient on the Preterm Prediction study with the youngest one.
- ◆ **Lisa Reynolds** is officially stepping down as coordinator at the University of Utah on October 1, but will remain a study nurse for the Network. **Elaine Taggart**, who has attended a Steering Committee meeting in Lisa's absence, has been named the new coordinator. Elaine, the mother of 6, has been a nurse for 25 years -- 18 in labor and delivery and 7 in research. She has been associated with the University of Utah for the last 2 years. "Extracurricular" activities include singing with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, with which she just returned from a 3 week tour in Europe, theater, gardening and reading.

Calendar of Events



- Steering Committee Mtgs:** October 22-23, 1998, Rockville, MD
 February 11-12, 1999, Rockville, MD
 May 10-11, 1999, Rockville, MD
- Coordinators Meeting:** September 17, 1998, Chicago IL
- C-Section Registry Coordinator Training:** Sept. 18, 1998, Chicago, IL
- Data & Safety Monitoring Committee:** October 6, 1998, Rockville, MD

ON THE LIGHT SIDE