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# Phototherapy and Seizures: Should We Change Practice?

James A. Taylor

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Abbreviations:

HR — hazard ratio

TSB — total serum bilirubin

It is axiomatic that for every treatment there are associated adverse events. For many medical conditions, the risk/benefit assessment of treatment is trivial, with an example being antibiotics for patients with bacterial meningitis. Even the risk of therapies leading to serious adverse events may be outweighed by the potential benefit, such as chemotherapy for a child with leukemia. However, the calculus becomes more difficult when the likelihood of an adverse outcome without treatment is small and/or the patients receiving the treatment are not sick but healthy

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Such is the case with phototherapy. In this issue of *Pediatrics*, Newman et al<sup>1</sup> analyzed data from a large and rich database and found an increased risk of subsequent seizures in newborns treated with phototherapy. Although the increased risk was small, with an adjusted hazard ratio (HR) of 1.22, and only truly apparent in boys, the results are troubling. Phototherapy is a common therapy for newborns; in the data evaluated by Newman et al,<sup>1</sup> ~8% of ~500 000 newborns received this treatment for hyperbilirubinemia. Most of the infants who ...

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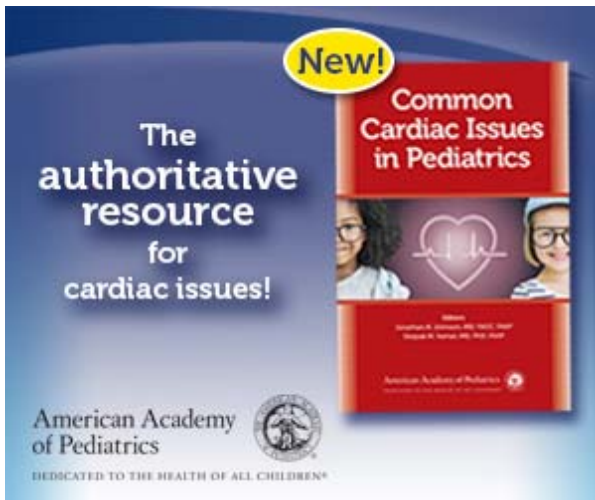
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