

PROTOCOL #10 - Maternal Fetal Medicine, University of New Mexico

USE OF CORTICOSTEROID IN PATIENTS AT RISK FOR PREMATURE DELIVERY

A. General:

Corticosteroid therapy for fetal maturation has been shown to reduce neonatal mortality, respiratory distress syndrome and intraventricular hemorrhage in preterm infants. These benefits extend to gestational ages between 24 to 34 weeks and are not limited by gender or race. Although the beneficial effects of corticosteroids are greatest more than 24 hours after beginning treatment, treatment less than 24 hours in duration also improves outcome. The benefits of corticosteroids have also been shown to be additive to those derived from surfactant therapy. In the presence of preterm premature rupture of membranes, antenatal corticosteroids therapy reduces the frequency of intraventricular hemorrhage and neonatal death, although to a lesser extent than with intact membranes.

B. Patient Selection

Patients at risk of delivery between 24 and 34 weeks will be candidates for treatment. Patients with multiple gestations, preeclampsia, diabetes or fetuses with IUGR, or with PPRM between 24 and 34 weeks, should not be excluded from corticosteroid treatment.

Patients will be excluded from therapy if 1 or more of the following is present:

1. There is clinical evidence of chorioamnionitis.
2. Clinical evidence of tuberculosis or viral keratitis.

Procedure:

- 1) Eligible patients will received 12.5 mg of betamethasone IM to be followed by a second 12.5 mg dose in 12 hours. The total dose should be 25 mg and the duration of treatment should be 24 hours.
- 2) At present, we do not support the use of multiple courses of antenatal corticosteroids as there is no good evidence to support any benefit and some studies suggest adverse neonatal complications.
- 3) The use of a rescue course (immediately before delivery) in selected cases could be considered. The possible benefits as well as unknown risks should be documented in the medical record before administering the medication.

CONSULTATION: Twenty-four hour consultation is available by calling the Maternal Fetal Medicine service at the University of New Mexico Hospital, 1-888-866-7257.