

Discovering the Best Treatment for Drug-Exposed Babies at EMMC

By Michael A. Rooque, Clinical Research Center



EMMC's commitment to continuous improvement of our care and service has led to the HOME NOW Study. Mark Brown, MD, chief of Pediatrics and director of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), and others have designed this study to ask whether there is a more effective treatment for infants with narcotic withdrawal. When an infant has been exposed to substances such as opiates during pregnancy, they must be monitored and treated carefully for withdrawal if it occurs.



"Medical experts have not yet determined the best way to treat infants with opiate withdrawal, or Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome. EMMC is uniquely positioned to help determine best practice treatments for the syndrome because of the increase we have seen in recent years in babies born with withdrawal symptoms. Finding the best way to treat these infants is a priority, which is why the NICU team developed the HOME NOW study.

HOME NOW initially compared two treatment regimens, to determine which works better to stabilize infants with withdrawal, allowing them to go home as soon as possible. "We need to make sure that we are doing the right thing for these babies," says Dr. Brown. "Research helps us take the subjectivity out of treatment and put more science behind our care."

Thus far, Dr. Brown, who is assisted on the project by Marie Hayes, PhD; Kumar Akilesh, MD; Jay Hagerly, MD; Ramesh Krishnan, MD; and Lynn Osmer, PharmD, have enrolled 30 patients in the study. During the study, they have found a different way to determine optimal dosing levels, based on the pharmacodynamics of the infant. The next step for the team is evaluation of a single medication treatment for newborn withdrawal.

Dr. Brown has had a longtime interest in research and quality improvement, dating to his days as a medical student. "I wanted to do it," he says. "I thought research was what you should do as part of being a critical thinker. It's a way of taking things apart and putting them back together. That's exciting! There's satisfaction in finding something out that allows us to provide better care to our patients." The HOME NOW study is just one example of how EMMC's caregivers are continuing to support clinical research, bringing the latest innovations and scientific knowledge to our patients and the community.

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