PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR CYCLOSPORINE USE

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Cyclosporine is a challenging drug to use in clinical practice because of wide variability in the dose and the concentration measured in the blood. In the pediatric patient, dosing is made even more difficult because these patients exhibit different pharmacokinetics compared with adults; faster absorption, faster clearance and altered volume of distribution. The following information provides guidelines only, but reflects current practice at Children’s Hospital.

MONITORING CYCLOSPORINE LEVELS:

1. **ASSAY METHOD USED AT CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL**
   Whole blood samples of cyclosporine (CsA) are measured by specific monoclonal immunoassay (tandem mass spectrometry), which measures only CsA and demonstrates no clinical significant cross reactivity with its metabolites.

2. **TIMING OF SAMPLES**
   Be consistent with timing (e.g. always before the morning dose) to minimize variation.
   - For intermittent PO or IV dosing: draw morning trough concentration (before the morning dose).
   - For AUC_{0-12} (area under the curve from 0-12 hours) calculations: draw the morning trough (C_0) and the 2 hour post dose (C_2) concentrations around the morning dose. [reference: Pediatr Transplantation 2005: 9: 566-573. Strong DK, Lai A, Primmett D et al.]
   - For continuous IV infusions: draw morning concentration.

3. **DRAWING OF SAMPLES**
   If the patient has a double lumen CVC (central venous catheter), the sample should be drawn from the lumen OTHER than the one through which the CsA (cyclosporine) is administered. If CsA is being administered via continuous infusion, the infusion should be shut off for 5 minutes before drawing the sample.
   
   If the patient has a single lumen CVC, the sample should be drawn peripherally.

4. **PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR DOSE CHANGES**
   a. To alter the CsA blood concentration, change the dose by 10%, rounding off to the nearest 5 or 10 mg. Do not change the dose more than 20% at any single time. The new steady-state blood concentration will not be reached until approximately 2 - 3 days after a dose change, and blood concentrations should not be measured until steady-state is reached.
   b. If a stable blood concentration changes suddenly, check for a new drug interaction before altering the dose (see 7, below).

5. **TARGET LEVELS**
   Refer to Therapeutic Drug Monitoring in References and Supplementary.

6. **CONVERTING FROM IV TO PO ROUTE**
   When changing from IV cyclosporine to oral cyclosporine (Neoral®) the IV dose is multiplied by three as the oral bioavailability of cyclosporine is about 30%. It is recommended to obtain blood CsA concentrations 4 to 8 days after switching to PO to ensure a similar CsA blood concentration is obtained.
7. **ORAL CYCLOSPORINE (NEORAL®)** See the latest CPS or eCPS for up to date instructions.

**LIQUID**
- **a.** Always measure the liquid using the supplied “pipette”, and remember there is only 1 pipette per bottle, so don’t throw it away. Dry the outside of the pipette after use. Do not rinse with water or any other liquid.
- **b.** If the dose is < 1 mL, use the 1 mL pipette supplied by the manufacturer or a 1 mL tuberculin syringe to measure it. Administer the dose immediately after drawing up.
- **c.** Administer the dose from a glass or ceramic cup (not plastic, Styrofoam, or paper). Mix dose in a liquid like apple juice or orange juice (NOT grapefruit juice) or a soft drink (pop). Stir well and drink at once. Rinse glass with more diluent and drink to ensure total dose is taken. Always use the same liquid when giving the dose to minimize variation with drug absorption.
- **d.** Or, for small children, simply measure the dose and squeeze directly into the mouth. May give small sips of fluid afterward to mask the taste.
- **e.** Gtube administration: giving Neoral liquid by the Gtube is not an approved method of administration according to the pharmaceutical company, and they have not done any studies on this route or on the tubing. However, it is sometimes necessary to give Neoral liquid through a tube. If so, measure the dose and administer it through the tube, and flush the tube immediately afterward with a sufficient volume of an appropriate diluent like apple or orange juice.
- **f.** Milk should never be used to mix with Neoral Liquid, it is extremely unpalatable.

**CAPSULES**
- **a.** Leave the capsules in the foil wrapper until the time of administration.

8. **CYCLOSPORINE DRUG INTERACTIONS**

CsA is known to interact with many medications, and new interactions continue to be discovered as new medicines or herbal products are introduced.

CsA may interact with medications that increase its renal toxicity, or increase or decrease its blood levels, leading to toxicity or lack of effect.

CsA interacts with grapefruit juice and grapefruit, so never eat or drink grapefruit or grapefruit juice.

Check with a pharmacist or consult references before starting new medications in patients receiving CsA.