

Screening of Newborn Infants: What Should We Test And Why?

Newborn screening is a health program aimed at identifying infants who have genetic conditions that can be helped by early intervention. In many cases, this early intervention means the elimination or reduction of symptoms that would have left an unscreened individual with a lifetime of disability. Newborn screening is more than just testing. With a prick of the heel we now have the ability to screen newborns for many genetic disorders. Information from ever-improving technologies has identified numerous genes that may carry mutations causing genetic disorders. Simple tests for many of these disorders have been developed and more promise to follow. As we consider the wide-scale use of these tests to screen for disorders in newborns, the need to create and adopt a public policy to guide actions and decisions about these tests is still to become clear in India. One is still not clear about the position of these tests in our day to day practise. There are many questions still to be answered. Questions like

- What are the specific disorders?
- What are the tests available?
- What is the technology involved?
- How sensitive and reliable is each test?
- Can a test in question be performed on a large scale in laboratories?
- What are the costs of the tests?
- What treatment is currently available for each genetic disorder, and at what age does treatment begin?
- Should tests be restricted only to those disorders that are treatable?
- Should all newborn infants receive the same screening tests?

These and many more questions are still to be answered. In this issue we will try to answer the few about few disorders but largely the debate is still on.

I request you to kindly give your reviews and suggestions so that we will be able to make this journal more interactive.