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IMAGES IN NEONATAL MEDICINE.....

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Abdominal cellulitis due to *Escherichia coli* in a two month old premature newborn

This girl was born at 28 weeks gestation, weighing 780 g. Her first two months of life were unremarkable, with oxygen therapy for moderate bronchopulmonary dysplasia, good growth, and normal neurological examinations. She was not colonised by multiresistant bacteria. On the 60th day of life, the expected discharge date, a small violet spot was seen on her right flank, without any history of local trauma. Twelve hours later, she developed respiratory distress and shock. Biological inflammatory variables were moderately raised. Lumbar puncture was normal. Probabilistic antibiotic therapy was begun. She was intubated, ventilated, and referred to the paediatric intensive care unit. On admission, she was hypoxaemic, hypotensive, and pancytopenic. She was switched from conventional ventilation to oscillatory ventilation. Overall, she needed 100 ml/kg fluids and transfusions during the first 12 hours and continuous infusion of vasopressors on a central venous catheter. Tracheal, blood, and urinary cultures were negative. Cerebral and abdominal ultrasounds were normal. Despite intensive treatment, the skin lesion progressively enlarged (fig 1), and ventilatory and haemodynamic requirements increased. A surgical debridement was performed 24 hours after her admission.¹ Peroperative observation confirmed the diagnosis of cellulitis without fascia injury. One can assume that the prompt surgical treatment prevented the occurrence of necrotising fasciitis.² Cultures of the abdominal wall showed cephalosporin sensitive *Escherichia coli*,³ also found in her rectal colonisation. Her clinical status improved rapidly after surgery.⁴ She was weaned from vasopressors after 12 hours and from the ventilator after five days. She received a skin autograft one month later and was discharged home in good health.

Figure 1 Cutaneous presentation of abdominal cellulitis immediately before surgical debridement. The child's parents have consented to the publication of this picture.

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