1.0 Introduction

Acute chest syndrome (ACS) is defined as a new infiltrate on chest x-ray associated with new respiratory symptoms and is responsible for up to 25% of all deaths in children with sickle cell disease, and is the second most common cause for hospitalization in these children. The etiology of ACS is variable and may include both infectious and non-infectious causes; infections are more common in younger children. (Organisms include but are not limited to those listed below.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infectious Causes</th>
<th>Non-infectious Causes of ACS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bacteria</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pulmonary infarction (in situ sickling)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Pneumococcus</td>
<td>• Hypoventilation secondary to rib/sternal infarction or narcotic administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Gram-negative bacteria</td>
<td>• Fat embolism</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Chlamydia pneumoniae</td>
<td>• Pulmonary edema secondary to fluid overload</td>
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<td>• Mycoplasma pneumoniae</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Viruses</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Respiratory syncytial virus</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Para-influenza</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Influenza</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In patients with sickle cell disease, ACS occurs most frequently in patients with haemoglobin genotype SS (12.8 events/100 patient-years); less so in those with HbSβ0 thalassemia (9.4 events/100 patient-years) or HbSC (5.2 events/100 patient-years); and least often in those with HbSβ+ thalassemia (3.9 events/100 patient-years) (Castro et al. 1994). Within each Hb type, the incidence is strongly but inversely related to age, being highest in children 2–4 years old (25.3 events/100 patient-years) and decreasing to its lowest value in adults.

2.0 Clinical/Laboratory Features

Frequency of presenting symptoms in ACS appears to be age-specific. In young children (2-4 years old), fever and cough are typical; pain is rare; and upper lobe disease is more common. Adults tend to present with shortness of breath, chills, severe pain, and no fever; multi-lobe and lower lobe disease are more frequent. Seasonal variation is seen, with more cases reported in the winter.

Tenderness may be present over the ribs or sternum. Chest x-rays of patients with ACS may show infiltrates in one or more lobes (66% of all presenting cases have single lobe involvement), pleural effusion may be visible in up to 30% of cases. Haemoglobin is often slightly lower than baseline (by a mean drop of 7g/L); leukocytes are often increased.
3.0 Clinical Recommendations for Management of Acute Chest Syndrome or Pneumonia in Sickle Cell Disease

Child with Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) presents to ED with respiratory distress and/o fever (oral or rectal temperature > 38.0°C or axillary temperature > 38°C).

Complete Initial Assessment and Management:

1. Refer to ED Fever order set in Epic: complete history, physical exam, and lab investigations.
2. Request chest x-ray if child has a fever, chest pain, tachypnea, or respiratory symptoms.
3. Encourage child to drink orally. If not tolerating fluids or dehydrated, commence IV fluids/normal saline at total fluid intake (TFI) of maintenance. See Fluid and Electrolytes Guidelines.
4. Administer oxygen to maintain O₂ saturation ≥ 95%.
5. Start antimicrobials (refer to Antimicrobial Guidelines for details).
6. Treat with appropriate analgesics and antipyretics (refer to Acute Painful Episodes Vasculocclusive Crisis and Fever Guidelines for Sickle Cell Disease).
7. Complete rapid flu testing during influenza season to guide use of Tamiflu if clinically indicated.
8. Consult Haematology to review use of Tamiflu if clinically indicated.
10. Consult Haematology fellow 1 if he meets the discharge criteria.

ALL children with ACS MUST be admitted to TSCID under Pediatric Medicine or PICU for critically ill child.

Inpatient Management

Vital signs monitoring:
- Refer to Vital Signs Monitoring Guidelines
- Maintain O₂ saturation ≥ 95%
- Watch for signs of infection
- Consult Haematology for worsening hypoxia

Administer
- Antibiotics as indicated
- Hydration with IV fluids at maintenance flow rates. Increase fluids as needed, if child is dehydrated or unstable.
- Oxygen therapy, if needed

Complete the following if indicated:
- CBC with reticulocyte counts on admission and then as clinically indicated
- Blood gas, if indicated
- Blood cultures, if indicated
- Radiography (X-ray): chest, neck, and abdomen

Physiotherapy:
- Refer to Physiotherapy Guidelines for chest, neck, and abdominal VFC
- Refer to Sickle Cell Clinic Guidelines for management of severe pain
- Encourage mobility and incentive spirometry unless contraindicated
- Consult Haematology fellowship if severe respiratory distress

Lab investigations to include:
- CBC, differential, and reticulocyte count
- Blood culture
- C-reactive protein
- Serum Electrolytes (NA, K, glucose, creatinine) should be ordered

Physical exam to include:
- Vital signs i.e. pulse oximetry and pain score
- Cardiopulmonary
- Hydration status
- Spleen size
- Abscess
- Presence of jaundice
- Signs of infection

Refer Vital Signs Monitoring Guidelines

Antimicrobials
- Refer to Acute Painful Episodes Vasculocclusive Crisis and Fever Guidelines for Sickle Cell Disease

Medications already used
- Medications previously used
- Associated symptoms
- Nature
- Duration
- Frequency
- Intake
- Dosage
- Tolerance
- Other health care professionals should encourage ambulation and activity as per physiotherapists’ recommendation and within child’s tolerance.
- Discuss need for tapering preload medication

Child discharged home with appropriate follow-up if he/she meets the discharge criteria.

PRINTABLE VERSION OF CLINICAL PATHWAY

4.0 References


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5.0 Related documents

- Fever: Guidelines for Management in Children with Sickle Cell Disease
- Acute Painful Episodes Vaso-occlusive Crisis: Guidelines for Management in Children with Sickle Cell Disease
- Fluid and Electrolyte Administration in Children

Attachments:

Acute Chest Care Pathway 2021 FINAL.pdf
Acute Chest Discharge Criteria Revision 2021.pdf
Revision History.docx
SC_Clinic Follow Up Revised 2021_FINAL.pdf
SCD pain plan_july 2015.pdf