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Clinical Outcomes of Extremely Low and Very Low Birth Weight Infants at a Tertiary Neonatal Intensive Care Unit: A Pilot Study

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Local outcome data on extremely low birth weight (ELBW) and very low birth weight (VLBW) infants are essential for evaluating unit-specific practices and guiding future research. This study aimed to describe baseline characteristics and short-term clinical outcomes of ELBW and VLBW infants admitted to the study centre over a 2 year period as preparatory work for a 5 year retrospective study. **Materials and Methods:** This retrospective descriptive study included all ELBW and VLBW infants admitted to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) of Sultan Ahmad Shah Medical Centre (SASMEC) between January 2022 and December 2023. Exclusion criteria comprised infants with major lethal congenital anomalies, death and incomplete medical records. Data were obtained from medical records and NICU databases. Variables analysed included demographic characteristics, maternal risk factors, neonatal morbidities, and short-term outcomes, summarised using descriptive statistics. **Results:** Total subjects were 35. Median gestational age and birth weight were 31 weeks (IQR 29.0–33.0) and 1.3 kg (IQR 0.98–1.40) respectively. 80% of the infants were delivered preterm for maternal indications, including diabetes mellitus (51.4%), preeclampsia (45.7%) and hypertension (28.6%). Respiratory distress syndrome occurred in 88.6% of infants, followed by probable sepsis (85.7%), feeding intolerance (60.0%), anaemia of prematurity (54.3%), and necrotising enterocolitis (37.1%). Bronchopulmonary dysplasia occurred in 22.9%, while intraventricular haemorrhage was observed in 34.3%. **Conclusion:** This study demonstrates substantial morbidity among ELBW and VLBW infants at the NICU SASMEC and confirms the feasibility of extended retrospective evaluation.

Keywords: Infant, extremely low birth weight; infant, very low birth weight; neonatal morbidity