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Title: Empyema in children, clinical characteristics and therapeutic trends in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala

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Body: Introduction: pleural effusions are the result of an inflammatory response of the pleura, that might be caused by a variety of mechanisms including infectious diseases, resulting in a parapneumonic effusion also known as empyema. Aim: To identify the clinical characteristics and therapeutic trends in pediatric patients with diagnosis of empyema, in the Western National Hospital. Methods: Descriptive study -consecutive case series from year 2000 to 2010 Results: We included 63 clinical files. 50.8% were male. Age 4 ± 3 years, with a normal nutritional state in 87.3%. Mean time of hospital stay was 23 ± 15 days. The main signs and symptoms that characterized this review were fever in 88.9% and consecutively hypophonesis in 76.2% and cough 58.7%. Only 44 pleural fluids were cultured, and 13 of them were positive, isolating gram negative bacteria mainly (6/13) followed by staphylococcus aureus (3/13) and group A streptococcus (2/13). The therapeutic trends were: thoracic drainage and diagnostic and therapeutic thoracentesis in 91.1 and 88.3% of the cases respectively, followed by open thoracotomy and decortication 23.8%. At last, and practically unused, fibrinolysis and video assisted thoracoscopy (VATS) was conducted only in one patient. Conclusions: As already known, the early intervention with VATS and fibrinolysis in the management of patients with empyema has reduced disease related complications and length of hospitalary stay. After this review, we encouraged our authorities to acquire medical equipment to perform VATS and improve the availability of fibrinolytics on demand in our center in order to start using the newer therapeutics techniques in the management of empyema.