Long-term fate of children operated for the hypoplastic left heart syndrome in a country with high foetal termination rate and centralized paediatric cardiovascular care

Vojtovic P., Tlaskal T., Gebauer R., Hucin B., Reich O., Selko M., Chaloupecky V., Skovranek J., Tomek V., Krupickova S., Matejka T., Hecht P., Janoušek J.
Children’s Heart Centre, University Hospital Motol, Prague, Czech Republic

Objectives: To evaluate long-term results of surgical palliation for the hypoplastic left heart syndrome (HLHS) on a territory (Czech Republic, 10.5 million inhabitants) with a country-wide prenatal detection program (estimated detection rate of HLHS >90 %, termination rate of detected HLHS 87 %) and postnatal care centralized to one paediatric cardiovascular centre.

Methods: Retrospective analysis of all consecutive newborns with HLHS admitted between 1999-2012. Non-obligatory re-interventions were defined as those additional to the 3 stages of the Norwood pathway.

Results: From a total of 65 consecutive newborns with HLHS 13 pts. (20%) did not receive surgical treatment because of parental decision, associated anomalies or non-fulfilment of the indication criteria. 52 patients (prenatal diagnosis in 33 %) were directed to the Norwood pathway (median age/weight 7 days/3.2 kg). Early/total mortality after Norwood stage I was 9.6/19% (10/52 pts.) with a significant risk factor being lower weight at surgery (Cox proportional risk per 1 gram =0.997, CI 0.995-0.990, P<0.001). Between Norwood stage I and II 15 catheter/surgical re-intervention were carried out in 13 pts. (aortic arch narrowing in 10/13). 42 pts. aged median 6.8 months underwent stage II surgery with a total mortality of 4.8% and 18 subsequent re-interventions in 13 patients. Finally, 26 patients aged median 3.9 years underwent Fontan completion with early/total mortality 0 and 8%, resp. The probability of survival at 1/5/10 years of age was 77/77/71 %. Probability of freedom from non-obligatory surgical/catheter reinterventions was 58/45/41 %. At long-term follow-up (median 7.8 years) 37/38 pts. are in NYHA functional class I or II.

Conclusions: Due to high foetal termination rate the population of live-born HLHS patients is biased towards those without a prenatal diagnosis. Despite a highly centralized care, surgical treatment of HLHS is still associated with significant mortality and morbidity. Long-term survivals, however, have an acceptable functional status during childhood corresponding to other groups of patients after surgical palliation for functionally single ventricle.

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