

Intestinal Barrier Maturation in Preterm Infants

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EDITORIAL

Intestinal barrier immaturity, or "leaky gut," is that the proximate explanation for susceptibility to necrotizing enterocolitis in preterm neonates. However, the impact of intestinal microbiota development on intestinal mucosal barrier maturation has not been evaluated during this population. During this study, we investigated a longitudinally sampled cohort of 38 preterm infants monitored for intestinal permeability (IP) and fecal microbiota during the primary fortnight of life. Rapid decrease in IP indicating intestinal barrier function maturation correlated with significant increase in community diversity. Especially, members of the *Clostridiales* and *Bifidobacterium* were highly transcriptionally active, and progressively increasing abundance in *Clostridiales* was significantly related to decreased gut permeability. Further, neonatal factors previously identified to market intestinal barrier maturation, including early exclusive breast milk feeding and low antibiotic exposure, favor the first colonization of the gut microbiota by members of the *Clostridiales*, which altogether are related to improved intestinal barrier function in preterm infants.

The intestinal mucosa paracellular trafficking of macromolecules is controlled by a competent epithelial barrier. The intestinal barrier constitutes a protective shield to the diffusion of pathogens and other elements with pro-inflammatory and tissue injury properties, and regulates absorption and secretion of essential nutrients. A functional intestinal barrier is driven by a posh structure that has physical barrier with coinciding chemical, immunological and microbiological components. The colonization with microorganisms starts at birth and undergoes rapid shifts in composition and structure because the host matures over time. These microorganisms perform essential functions mechanistically linked to intestinal barrier competency, including epithelial metabolism, proliferation and survival, mucin and antimicrobial compound production, and cell-cell communication signalling molecule secretion.

The microbial community generally is taken into account to play critical roles within the early development of the intestinal

epithelium, the system, nutrient acquisition and energy regulation, and opportunistic pathogens suppression. Disrupting intestinal microbiota, on the opposite hand, results in symbiosis, a state of ecological imbalance where the community loses diversity, key bacterial species, and more critically metabolic capacity with reduced colonization resistance to opportunistic pathogens. Youth gut symbiosis is related to disease susceptibility alongside short-term and lifelong health issues, like NEC (NEC), sepsis, asthma and allergies, type 1 diabetes, disorder, inflammatory bowel disease and obesity, among others. NEC may be a life-threatening, gastrointestinal emergency affecting approximately 7-10% of preterm neonates with mortality as high as 30-50%. During this condition, bacteria across the intestinal wall resulting in local and systemic infection and inflammation, and bowel wall necrosis and perforation.

Intestinal barrier immaturity, characterized as elevated intestinal permeability (IP), or "leaky gut", is that the proximate explanation for susceptibility to NEC in preterm neonates. It's critical to characterize the premature baby intestinal microbiota to spot symbiotic states related to increased intestinal leakiness, also as beneficial bacteria related to improved intestinal barrier function, for subsequent stratification of early diagnosis, early intervention and first prevention of leaky gut and its sequelae. Despite the critical role of the microbial community in intestinal barrier function, its effect on new born IP is unknown. Especially, the microbiota of preterm neonates with measured elevated IP, a high-risk population for NEC, has not been studied previously. We hypothesize that the intestinal microbiota plays a pivotal role in modulating IP which the presence of "beneficial" bacteria are going to be related to improved intestinal barrier function in preterm infants. During this study, we studied a cohort of 38 preterm infants born before 33 weeks of gestation. IP was measured by urinary detection of orally administered sugar probes lactulose and rhamnose using high liquid chromatography 16 with coinciding measures of the composition and performance of the focal microbial communities were investigated.

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