Introduction
Acute gastroenteritis (AGE) is one of the most common infectious illnesses of childhood [1]. In the United States, it accounts for up to 10% of hospital admissions of children younger than 5 years [2].

Symptoms of AGE are pathogen-dependent and frequently include vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, and fever [3].

While no treatment is needed for self-limited virus-induced AGE, dehydration caused by diarrhea and emesis is of great concern and...
Frequency of Hyponatremia in Gastroenteric Patients – Badeli HR et al

should be treated vigorously [4] because it is the most important complication and a major reason for hospital admission [5]. Also, assessing the dehydration level determines the immediate management of this condition [6].

Hyponatremia is the most common electrolyte abnormality in post-operative pediatric patients. If the plasma sodium concentration (p-Na+) declines to below 125 mmol/L in < 48 h, transient or permanent brain damage may occur [7]. The clinical manifestations of hyponatremia include headache, dizziness, nausea/vomiting, seizures and death [8]. It is associated with an increasing risk of cognitive dysfunction and falls [9].

A series of pediatric researches support the notion that a hospital acquired hyponatremia in ill children receiving parenteral fluid therapy is the result of administering an hypotonic saline solutions [10,11].

Although most guidelines recommend low osmolar oral rehydration solutions for children with mild to moderate dehydration secondary to non-cholera gastroenteritis [12,13], there is no consensus on the most appropriate electrolyte composition of intravenous fluids and there are some recommendations for using 0.45% to 0.9% saline solutions [14,15].

Also, a number of studies which have focused on the relation between hypotonic IV fluid therapy and hyponatremia in gastroenteritis have concluded that hypotonic saline solutions can cause hyponatremia in children with gastroenteritis [16] and concerns regarding hyponatremia have led some authors to recommend isotonic saline as the routine maintenance fluid therapy for hospitalized patients and hypotonic fluids for special situations [17-20]. Although different studies have reported that isotonic saline administration may result in an increase in serum [Na] and/or chloride [21-23], they did not show an increase in the risk of hypernatremia [24]. Neville et al recommended that normal saline solution is preferable to hypotonic saline in pediatric gastroenteritis treated with IV fluids, because it protects against hyponatraemia without causing complications like hypernatraemia [23].

Therefore, according to the protocols in our hospital which recommend hypotonic fluid therapy, investigators aimed to assess the frequency of hyponatremia in gastroenteritis patients treated with intravenous hypotonic fluid therapy.

Materials and Methods

In this cross sectional study conducted between September 2008 and January 2011, 1020 patients’ medical records were assessed. The inclusion criteria were age between 1 month to 14 years, diagnosis of gastroenteritis and dehydration, at least two checked serum Na levels at the first 24 hours with 4 to 24 hours interval. Exclusion criteria included a baseline serum [Na] of less than 130 or greater than 150 mEq/L, renal disease, cardiac dysfunction, pre-existing hypertension, diuretic use, edema, known adrenal dysfunction, acute or severe chronic neurological illness, meningitis, and sepsis. Hence, 86 patients were included in the study.

The severity of dehydration at T0 was assessed by an attending pediatrician according to standard clinical methods and based on their weight and dehydration level; also, the volume of bolus, deficit, and maintenance serum was determined. Subsequently, the estimated deficit fluid and maintenance fluid were replaced over 24 h. Ringer lactate or normal saline serum was used as bolus serum and 5% dextrose water and Ç normal saline were applied as maintenance and deficit serum.

According to sodium concentration at T0, patients were divided into three groups: hyponatremic (130-134 mEq/L), isonatremic (135-145mEq/L) and hypernatrmic (146-150mEq/L). The blood samples were analyzed for sodium concentration at T0 and during 24 hours, BUN and Hb and urine specific gravity (SG) were also assessed. The amount and type of fluids received in hyponatremic and isonatremic patients were compared. The study protocol was approved by the Guilan University of Medical Sciences Ethics Committee and informed consent was obtained from parents of all participants.
Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS 18. Differences between quantitative variables were analyzed by T-tests, and chi-square was used for qualitative variables. P-value <0.05 was considered significant.

**Results**

The medical records of 1020 patients were assessed; however, 86 patients were finally eligible to participate in the study according to exclusion criteria. The mean age of the participants was 16.43±11.1 months, 58 patients were male (67.4%) and 28 female (32.6%). At T0, 35 patients (40.7%) were hyponatremic, 2 patients (2.3%) were hypernatremic, and 49 patients were isonatremic (Table 1).

The serum sodium concentration in all the participants who received bolus serum and those who did not was 136.97±4.42 and 135.26±3.44 meq/L, respectively (p=0.49). In the isonatremic group, 28 patients received bolus serum and 21 did not; logistic regression analysis showed that patients who received bolus serum had less hyponatremia (p=0.029).

The mean sodium intake in the hyponatremic and isonatremic groups was 52.26±4.51 and 50.9±3.34 meq/L, respectively (p=0.676).

After intravenous fluid therapy during the second assessment, 32 patients (65.4%) in the isonatremic group still had isonatremia while 17 patients in this group developed hyponatremia (34.6%). The sodium concentration in the hyponatremic and isonatremic group was 137.25±1.9 and 138.29±2.04 meq/L, respectively which showed a significant difference (p=0.028). The comparison between groups in T0 isonatremic group is shown in Table 2.

Also, In T0 hyponatremic group, 18 patients (51.4%) had hyponatremia and 17 (48.6%) became isonatremic.Furthermore, in the hypernatremic group, 1 patients remained hypernatremic and 1 developed hyponatremia.

**Table 2.** The comparison between groups in T0 isonatremic group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hyponatremic Group</th>
<th>Isonatremic Group</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (Mean±SD)</td>
<td>18.11±2.28</td>
<td>15.27±1.22</td>
<td>P=0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>P=0.492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>serum intake (Mean±SD)</td>
<td>13.52±8.64.24</td>
<td>1339.51±60.18</td>
<td>P=0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hb (Mean±SD)</td>
<td>10.67±0.22</td>
<td>10.75±0.17</td>
<td>P=0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUN (Mean±SD)</td>
<td>14.39±1.47</td>
<td>14.9±1.7</td>
<td>P=0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG (Mean±SD)</td>
<td>1018.13±1.81</td>
<td>1014.41±2.19</td>
<td>P=0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sodium intake (Mean±SD)</td>
<td>52.26±4.51</td>
<td>50.9±3.34</td>
<td>P=0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T0 sodium concentration (Mean±SD)</td>
<td>137.25±1.9</td>
<td>138.29±2.04</td>
<td>0.028</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean sodium intake in the hyponatremic and isonatremic groups was 52.26±4.51 and 50.9±3.34 meq/L, respectively (p=0.88).

The mean sodium intake in the hyponatremic and isonatremic groups was compared according to less than 50 meq/L, 50-80 meq/L and more than 80 meq/L which showed no significant difference (p=0.676).

**Discussion**

Gastroenteritis is one of the most common disorders seen by pediatricians. The standard approach to IV fluid therapy for these patients has been to administer a 0.9% sodium chloride (NaCl) bolus followed by a hypotonic solution ranging from 0.2-0.45% NaCl to replace the deficit plus maintenance [25].
Fluid therapy restores circulation by expanding extracellular fluid. However, there has been dispute regarding the nature of intravenous therapy for acutely ill children following the development of acute hyponatraemia from overuse of hypotonic saline. Some propose changing the definition of "maintenance therapy" and recommend that isotonic saline be used as maintenance [26].

In this retrospective study which focused on acquired hyponatraemia in acute gastroenteritis, administering hypotonic fluids made 34.6% of isonatremic patients hyponatremic. According to our results, patients receiving bolus serum were significantly less hyponatremic (p=0.029); in contrast, patients with hyponatremia at T0 were more hyponatremic (p=0.028). Sodium intake was compared between isonatremic and hyponatremic groups but showed no significant difference (p=0.88).

Similar to a report made by Hanna et al, there was no significant correlation between Hb, BUN, SG, and serum intake in patients who became hyponatremic. They demonstrated that the single significant variable was age and hyponatremic patients were older than isonatremic groups (p<0.05). They also reported that hypotonic intravenous fluids could increase acquired hyponatremia (p<0.05). They concluded that administration of 0.9% NaCl in a continuous infusion following bolus therapy was as a safer and more effective approach. NaCl 0.9% not only serves as prophylaxis against hyponatremia, it is superior to hypotonic fluids as an extracellular volume expander and corrects the volume deficit more rapidly [16].

In addition, in a clinical trial by Neville et al, the frequency of hyponatremia in patients who received sodium concentrations similar to normal saline were obviously less than those receiving 3% sodium concentration (p<0.001), and they concluded that in gastroenteritis treated with intravenous fluids, normal saline is preferable to hypotonic saline because it protects against hyponatraemia without causing hypernatraemia [23].

Conclusions

Our study showed that increased sodium intake more than 1% normal saline could decrease acquired hyponatremia. It seems that hyponatremia could be prevented by administering serum with high sodium concentrations. In addition, because it was a retrospective study and a limited number of participants were enrolled, we recommend a prospective clinical trial with more samples.

Acknowledgement

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Conflict of Interest

None declared

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None declared

References

Frequency of Hyponatremia in Gastroentric Patients – Badeli HR et al