COMPARISON BETWEEN THE RESULTS OF ACID FAST BACILLI OBTAINED FROM
SPONTANEOUS SPUTUM WITH SPUTUM INDUCTION BY SALINE 0.9 % AND BY SALBUTAMOL NEBULES
IN THE DIAGNOSIS OF SPUTUM SMEAR NEGATIVE PULMONARY TUBERCULOSIS
(Kusdiantoro, M. Julis Wibisono)

ROLE OF FREE RADICALS IN CHILDREN WITH MALNUTRITION
(Taufiqur Rahman, Siti Nurul Hidayati, Boeman Hicajat)

EFFECT OF PROBIOTIC ADMINISTRATION ON THE LEVELS OF
FEcal SECRETORY IMMUNOGLOBULIN A IN PREMATURE INFANTS
(Lucia Pudiyastuti Retnaningtyas, Risu Efka, Subijanto Merto Sudarmo)

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HIDDEN MARKOV MODEL FOR EXON PREDICTION
ON DNA-Gene PLASMODIUM FALCIPARUM
(Suhartati Agos, Daeng Gunawan, Sar Sandy)

CORRELATION BETWEEN COX-2 EXPRESSION WITH HISTOPATHOLOGICAL GRADING IN ASTROCYTOMA
(Eniayo Sufarlap, M. Sajid Damadipura)

EFFECT OF LOW LEAD EXPOSURE ON GESTATIONAL AGE, BIRTH WEIGHT
AND PREMATURITY RUPTURE OF THE MEMBRANE
(Zein Mqhmari, Tasye Riz)<br />

DIAGNOSTIC ACCURACY OF PRE-OPERATIVE FINE NEEDLE ASPIRATION BIOPSY IN AMEBOLASTOMA
(Anny Setjjo Rahaju, Dyah Fauziah, Elty Hary Kusumastuti)

CHEMICAL ANALYSIS OF LORANTHACEAE DAENDROPHOE SP. BY THIN LAYER CHROMATOGRAPHY
(Roostantia Indrawati, Ainfa Mustik, Nurnaini Farida)

MOLECULAR CHARACTERIZATION OF mexB GENE FRAGMENT
IN BANDUNG ISOLATE MULTIRESISTANT PSEUDOMONAS AERUGINOSA
(Feimrawaty Badruddin, Imam Supardi, Usman Chatib Wansa, Debbye Soefie Retmoningrum)

GRACILIS MUSCLE TRANSPOSITION FOR TRAUMATIC ANAL INCONTINENCE
A Case Report
(Tomy Lesmana, Iwan Kristian, Sudjiatmiko)

Review Article
MANAGEMENT OF POLYCYSTIC OVARY SYNDROME IN ADOLESCENT
(Budi Santoso)

THE CLINICAL FEATURES OF TRANSIENT ELASTOGRAPHY (FIBROSCAN) EXAMINATION
AMONG LIVER DISEASES PATIENTS AT GASTROENTEROHEPATOLOGY DIVISION
OF DR. SOETOMO HOSPITAL, SURABAYA
(Sowan A Rudi et al.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>COMPARISON BETWEEN THE RESULTS OF ACID FAST BACILLI OBTAINED FROM SPONTANEOUS SPUTUM WITH SPUTUM INDUCTION BY SALINE 0.9 % AND BY SALBUTAMOL NEBULES IN THE DIAGNOSIS OF SPUTUM SMEAR NEGATIVE PULMONARY TUBERCULOSIS</td>
<td>1 - 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ROLE OF FREE RADICALS IN CHILDREN WITH MALNUTRITION</td>
<td>7 - 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>EFFECT OF PROBIOTIC ADMINISTRATION ON THE LEVELS OF FECAL SECRETORY IMMUNOGLOBULIN A IN PREMATURE INFANTS</td>
<td>15 - 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HIDDEN MARKOV MODEL FOR EXON PREDICTION ON DNA-GENE Plasmodium falciparum</td>
<td>24 - 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>CORRELATION BETWEEN COX-2 EXPRESSION WITH HISTOPATHOLOGICAL GRADING IN ASTROCYTOMA</td>
<td>30 - 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>EFFECT OF LOW LEAD EXPOSURE ON GESTATIONAL AGE, BIRTH WEIGHT AND PREMATURE RUPTURE OF THE MEMBRANE</td>
<td>36 - 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>DIAGNOSTIC ACCURACY OF PRE-OPERATIVE FINE NEEDLE ASPIRATION BIOPSY IN AMEBOBLASTOMA</td>
<td>41 - 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>CHEMICAL ANALYSIS OF Loranthaceae daendropthoe sp. BY THIN LAYER CHROMATOGRAPHY</td>
<td>45 - 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>MOLECULAR CHARACTERIZATION OF mexB GENE FRAGMENT IN BANDUNG ISOLATE MULTIRESISTANT Pseudomonas aeruginosa</td>
<td>50 - 59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>GRACILIS MUSCLE TRANSPOSITION FOR TRAUMATIC ANAL INCONTINENCE A Case Report</td>
<td>60 - 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Review Article: MANAGEMENT OF POLYCYSTIC OVARY SYNDROME IN ADOLESCENT</td>
<td>66 - 71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>THE CLINICAL FEATURES OF TRANSIENT ELASTOGRAPHY (FIBROSCAN) EXAMINATION AMONG LIVER DISEASES PATIENTS AT GASTROENTEROHEPATOLOGY DIVISION OF DR. SOETOMO HOSPITAL, SURABAYA</td>
<td>72 - 77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EFFECT OF LOW LEAD EXPOSURE ON GESTATIONAL AGE, BIRTH WEIGHT AND PREMATURE RUPTURE OF THE MEMBRANE

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Abstract

Lead pollution from cosmetics remains a significant public health problem not only to men at work but to women using lead containing cosmetics. The aim of this study is to find out the effect of prenatal exposure to low lead from cosmetics on gestational age, premature rupture of the membrane and birth weight. The study was carried out in the mountainous Aseer region, Southwest of Saudi Arabia where the air is thought to be clean and free of lead pollution due to the absence of petroleum smelting and other heavy industries. The region is famous as a holiday resort for tourists from Arabia and the gulf countries. All 176 pregnant women included in the study were of singleton pregnancies of gestational age 27 weeks or more who attended the antenatal outpatient clinic of the main maternity hospital. On the day of delivery 4 milliliters of venous blood from each singleton parturient was placed in a heparinized non-silica containing tube and stored at -20°C prior to analysis. In premature rupture of the membrane a total of 127 women with maternal blood lead levels above and below 200 mg/L and 150 mg/L, no significant differences (P=0.64) in these lead levels. Ninety-four (70.1%) women out of 134 have maternal blood lead concentration < 200 μg/L and only 40 women have > 200 μg/L, the mean difference in gestational age is 10.5 days, showing a non significant difference (P=0.152). Ninety-three women (72.7%) out of a total of 128 who have blood lead concentration <200 mg/L gave birth to infants weighing an average of 2.87 kg while 35 women who have blood lead level >200 mg/L gave birth to infants weighing an average of 2.99 kg. The mean difference is 0.12 kg which is non-significant (P=0.261). The Chi-square test of the relationship between the birth weight (kg) and the levels of blood lead above and below 200 mg/L was not significant while the relationship between the birth weight (kg) and the levels of blood lead above and below 150 mg/L resulted in very slight differences in the values of infants' birth weight. It is concluded that the detected low lead exposures do not produce statistically significant effects on the above three pregnancy outcome. However, the importance of low lead exposure from the 100% lead sulfide eye cosmetic "kohl" is emphasized.

Keyword : lead, exposure, gestational, age, birth, weight, premature, rupture, of, the, membrane,

Daftar Pustaka :