What's New in Distortion Product Otoacoustic Emissions in Infants?

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Learner Outcomes
1. Explain differences in infant and adult DPOAEs and identify underlying causes.
2. Interpret DPOAE level and SNR using newly defined cut-off values.
3. Explain how middle ear measures can be used in conjunction with DPOAEs to aid in the prediction of hearing loss.

Introduction to DPAOEs in Infants
- Advantages
  - Doesn’t rely on behavioral response
  - Ear-specific
  - Frequency specific
- Disadvantages
  - Lack of infant normative data
  - Limited data on prediction of hearing loss
  - May miss mild hearing loss
  - Cannot tell type of loss (conductive, sensory)

Development of DPOAEs – Cross Sectional Studies

Test Protocol
- Otoscopy
- Wideband Absorbance Tympanometry and Reflexes
- DPOAE: 65/55 dB SPL, 1-8 kHz, 7 frequencies
- Threshold ABR: 500-4000 Hz air and bone*
- VRA: 500-4000 Hz air and bone*, SAT
  * Minimum protocol AC/BC 1000 and 4000 Hz
Normal Development of DPOAEs

- Number of Infants and Ears Tested
- Infants
- Ears

Risk Factors

- Risk Factors:
  - Family History: 7%
  - Stigmata: 0%
  - Intrauterine Infection: 1%
  - Ototoxic drugs: 15%
  - Hyperbilirubinemia: 17%
  - NICU > 5 days: 22%
  - LBW: 7%
  - None: 31%

- 32.4% of infants had more than one risk factor present.

Normal and Hearing Loss Groups

- Infants with Normal Hearing
  - 420 infants (843 ears)

- Infants with Hearing Loss
  - 68 infants (85 ears) diagnosed with hearing loss:
    - CHL: 63 ears
    - SNHL: 10 ears
    - MHL: 8 ears

Normal Longitudinal Development of DPOAEs

- Model estimated mean DPOAE signal level (left) and noise level (right) in normal hearing infants at 1, 2, 6, 9, and 12 months of age as a function of DPOAE f2 frequency.
- Error bars represent the 95% confidence intervals and were offset for visualization purposes.

Why are DPOAE signal levels larger in younger infants?

- Ambient absorbance increases from 1 mo to age 12 months
- Largest change occurs between 1 and 6 months
- Ear canal size: cross sectional area and length decrease from birth to age 12 months
- Ear canal and middle ear development: (mechanics) correlates with DPOAE signal decreases

Why are noise levels higher in infants?

- Noise is mainly due to blood flow and breathing.
- Noise increases likely due to infant noise eg., movement and breathing increases with age.
- Eustachian tube is open at rest in infants, so nasopharyngeal noise is higher.
DPOAEs in Infants (Birth to 3 mos.) and Adults

DPOAEs in Infants (6 mos.) and Adults

Normal Hearing Normative Percentiles
(Birth – 15 months)

Summary: Longitudinal Development
• Developmental differences are seen in absorbance across the frequencies tested with DPOAE, ABR and VRA
• Development of DPOAE signal level is most rapid between 1-6 months of age, and is stable between 6-15 months.
• Development of DPOAE signal level is consistent with decreases in middle ear absorbance and increases in ear canal length
• Noise levels increase only slightly between 1-12 months but are higher in infants then in adults

Results
• Section 2: Prediction of Hearing Loss
  • Defined as conductive (SHL), sensorineural (SNHL), or mixed hearing loss (MHL).
  • Hearing loss defined as >25 dB at any frequency
  • Conductive loss = ABG >10 dB at any frequency

Individual DPOAE Data
(Birth to 4 months)
DPOAE by Hearing Loss Type (Birth to 4 months)
Mean DPOAE signal level and SNR values plotted as a function of $f_2$ frequency. Brackets represent the 95% confidence intervals.

Absorbance by Hearing Loss Type (Birth to 4 months)
Mean ambient absorbance values for the NH, CHL, SNHL/MHL groups. Brackets represent the 95% confidence intervals.

ROC Analysis (Birth to 4 months)
- Purpose is to evaluate discrimination accuracy of a diagnostic test
- Determine optimal DPOAE signal level and SNR cut-off values for clinical interpretation

Prediction of Hearing Loss (Birth to 4 months)

Normal and Impaired DPOAE Distributions (Birth to 4 months)

Infant DPOAE Interpretation compared to Gorga (1997) Norms
Discussion & Case Examples

- Group data look good, but…
- Individual data can be a bit messy!
- What’s an audiologist to do?

**Case 1:** Infant from NICU
- 30 week GA
- C-section
- Phototherapy
- Pass NHS

**Hearing Test Results:**
- Diagnostic ABR normal
- VRA normal

**Case 2:** Well Infant
- 37 week GA
- No risk factors
- Pass NHS

**Hearing Test Results:**
- Diagnostic ABR normal
- VRA normal

**Case 3:** Well Infant
- 40 week GA
- No risk factors
- Pass NHS

**Hearing Test Results:**
- Diagnostic ABR borderline-normal
- VRA normal

**Case 4:** Infant from NICU
- 30 week GA, C-section
- Phototherapy, Gentamicin
- Refer NHS

**Hearing Test Results:**
- Diagnostic ABR moderate hearing loss
- VRA moderate mixed HL

**Summary: Prediction of Hearing Loss**

- Prediction of conductive hearing loss is somewhat poorer than for SNHL or MHL.
- Prediction of all types of hearing loss >25 dB is good to excellent at 3 – 8 kHz, and increases with frequency.
- Best prediction of overall hearing loss is based on 3-4 frequencies in normal range out of 5 tested.
- Both SNR and Signal level should be examined compared to normal cutpoints.
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Questions?