

# **Proton Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy in Protein Energy Malnourished Infants**

## ***Thesis***

*Submitted for Partial Fulfillment of M.D Degree  
In Pediatrics*

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**2009**

<b>List of contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
Acknowledgement .....	I
List of abbreviations .....	II
List of tables .....	IV
List of figures .....	VI
Introduction and aim of the work .....	1
Review of Literature	
I - Protein Energy Malnutrition .....	5
II- Malnutrition and Nervous System .....	27
III- Brain Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy .....	46
Subjects and methods .....	81
Results .....	91
Discussion .....	119
Summary .....	138
Conclusion .....	140
Recommendations .....	141
References .....	142
Appendix (1) .....	182
Appendix (2) .....	183
Appendix (3) .....	189
Arabic summary	

## **Acknowledgement**

*First of all, Praise be to **Allah** the most merciful, the most mightyful.*

*I would like to express my endless thanks and deepest appreciation to **Prof. Dr. / Sanaa Youssef Shaaban**, Professor of Pediatrics, Faculty of Medicine, Ain Shams University, for her valuable advice, insightful criticism and limitless patience. It has been an honour and a privilege working under her keen and meticulous supervision.*

*I am deeply indebted to **Prof. Dr./ Yasser Abdel Azzim Abbas**, Professor of Radiology, Faculty of Medicine – Ain Shams University, for his great help, continuous support and sincere advice during the practical part of this work..*

*Endless thanks to **Prof. Dr./ May Fouad Nassar**, Professor of Pediatrics, Faculty of Medicine, Ain Shams University, for her great help, kind advice, meticulous supervision and*

*persistent encouragement were important cornerstones of the present work.*

*I am greatly thankful to **Prof. Abla Galal**, Professor of Child Health in National Research Centre, for her great help and effort in achieving this work.*

*I wish to extend my thanks to my colleagues in the pediatric department for their cooperation and encouragement.*

*No words of gratitude would be enough to express what I owe my family. They have been there every step of the way and to them I dedicate every achievement.*

*Last but not least, all the thanks and prayers to the sick children by whom and for whom the present work was done.*

**Ahmed Naguib**

## List of Abbreviations

<b><sup>1</sup>H</b>	: Proton
<b><sup>1</sup>H MRS</b>	: Proton magnetic resonance spectroscopy
<b>Ala</b>	: Alanine
<b>ALA</b>	: $\alpha$ -linoic acid
<b>ALT</b>	: Alanine transaminase
<b>AST</b>	: Aspartate transaminase
<b>BRS</b>	: Behavior rating scale
<b>BSID-II</b>	: Bayley scales of infant development – second edition
<b>CBC</b>	: Complete blood count
<b>Cho</b>	: Choline
<b>cMRI</b>	: Conventional magnetic resonance image
<b>Cr</b>	: Creatine
<b>CRP</b>	: C-reactive protein
<b>CSI</b>	: Chemical shift image
<b>CT</b>	: Computed tomography
<b>DHA</b>	: Docosahexaenoic acid
<b>EDTA</b>	: Ethylene diamine tetracetic acid
<b>EFAs</b>	: Essential fatty acids
<b>FAO</b>	: Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>FDA</b>	: Food and drug administration
<b>GER</b>	: Gastroesophygeal reflux
<b>Gln</b>	: Glutamine
<b>Glu</b>	: Glutamate
<b>Glx</b>	: Glutamate and glutamine
<b>Hb</b>	: Hemoglobin
<b>HC</b>	: Head circumference
<b>IBR</b>	: Infant behavior recording
<b>KWO</b>	: Kwashiorkor
<b>Lac</b>	: Lactate

## **List of Abbreviations (Cont.)**

<b>Lip</b>	: Lipids
<b>MAC</b>	: Mid arm circumference
<b>MDI</b>	: Mental developmental index
<b>MRC</b>	: Medical research council
<b>MRI</b>	: Magnetic resonance image
<b>MRS</b>	: Magnetic resonance spectroscopy
<b>NAA</b>	: N-acetyl aspartate.
<b>NAAG</b>	: N-acetylaspartylglutamate
<b>PDI</b>	: Psychomotor developmental index
<b>PEM</b>	: Protein-energy malnutrition
<b>Ppm</b>	: Part per million
<b>PRESS</b>	: Point resolved spectroscopy
<b>PUFA</b>	: Polyunsaturated fatty acids
<b>SCU</b>	: Severe childhood undernutrition
<b>SES</b>	: Socioeconomic scoring
<b>SFT</b>	: Skin fold thickness
<b>SPECT</b>	: Single photon emission computed tomography
<b>Tc<sup>99m</sup> HMPAO</b>	: Technetium hexamethyl propyleneamineoxime
<b>TLC</b>	: Total leucocytic count

# **List of tables**

	<b><u>Page</u></b>
Table 1: Wellcome classification of PEM: .....	- 9 -
Table 2: Gomez classification of PEM: .....	- 10 -
Table 3: Classification of acute PEM according to Z score: .....	- 11 -
Table 4: WHO Classification of Malnutrition .....	- 14 -
Table 5: Causes, manifestations, management and prevention of the major micronutrient deficiencies. ....	- 21 -
Table 6: Laboratory features of severe malnutrition: .....	- 23 -
Table 7: Elements in the management of severe protein-energy malnutrition: .....	- 26 -
Table 8: Showes Metabolites, their meaning and main pathologies that result in metabolic abnormalities. ....	- 65 -
Table 9: Basal and ceiling rules of BSID-II .....	- 87 -
Table 10: Comparison between patients and control as regards the maternal age, socioeconomic scoring, order of birth and dietetic data. ....	- 92 -
Table 11: Comparison between patients and control as regards the anthropometric measurements.....	- 94 -
Table 12: Comparison between patients and control as regards the anthropometric measurements.....	- 95 -
Table 13: Comparison between patients and control groups as regards Z values anthropometric measures. ....	- 97 -
Table 14: Comparison between patients and control regarding hematological investigations. ....	- 98 -
Table 15: Comparison between patients and controls regarding liver and kidney functions. ....	- 98 -

## **List of tables (Cont.)**

	<u><b>Page</b></u>
Table 16: Comparison between patients and controls as regards the metabolic ratios of M.R.S. in Rt frontal region. ....	101 -
Table 17: Comparison between patients and controls as regards the metabolic ratios of MRS in Lt frontal region. ....	103 -
Table 18: Comparison between patients and controls as regards the metabolic ratios of MRS in Rt basal ganglia. ....	105 -
Table 19: Comparison between patients and controls as regards the metabolic ratios of MRS in Lt basal ganglia. ....	107 -
Table 20: Comparison between patients and controls as regards the metabolic ratios of MRS in Rt thalamic region. ....	109 -
Table 21: Comparison between patients and controls as regards the metabolic ratios of MRS in Lt thalamic region. ....	111 -
Table 22: Comparison between patients and controls as regards the BSID-II scores. ....	113 -
Table 23: Correlation between Albumin level and both of MRS ratios and parameters of Bayley scale in all patients. ....	114 -
Table 24: Correlation between Z score of weight/length and both of MRS ratios and Bayley scale parameters in all patients. ....	115 -



# List of figures

	<u>Page</u>
Figure 1: Determinants of malnutrition\ .....	18 -
Figure 2: MRS of normal brain (short echo time ) .....	52 -
Figure 3: MRS of normal brain (long echo time ) .....	53 -
Figure 4: A memory aid to reading and understanding clinical brain spectra. A) Peaks of MRS reflect individual metabolites. B) Metabolites reflect brain cell-type or function.....	55 -
Figure 5: The new neurochemistry. Neurochemical pathways (scheme). .....	56 -
Figure 6: NAA peaks .....	57 -
Figure 7: Choline peaks .....	59 -
<b>Figure 8:</b> Creatine peaks .....	61 -
Figure 9: The creatine pool.....	62 -
Figure 10: Myo-inositol peak .....	63 -
Figure 11: Glutamine/Glutamate peaks .....	63 -
Figure 12: Typical cerebral MR spectra for subjects of different age. ....	72 -
Figure 13: Comparison between patients and control group as regards NAA/Cr and Cho/Cr in Rt frontal region. ....	102 -
Figure 14: Comparison between patients and control group as regards NAA/Cho and NAA/Cho + Cr in Rt frontal region.....	102 -
Figure 15: Comparison between patients and control group as regards NAA/Cr and Cho/Cr in Lt frontal region. ....	104 -

## **List of figures (Cont.)**

	<u><b>Page</b></u>
Figure 16: Comparison between patients and control group as regards NAA/Cho and NAA/Cho + Cr in Lt frontal region.....	104 -
Figure 17: Comparison between patients and control group as regards NAA/Cr and Cho/Cr in Rt basal ganglion.....	106 -
Figure 18: Comparison between patients and control group as regards NAA/Cho and NAA/Cho + Cr in Rt basal ganglion.....	106 -
Figure 19: Comparison between patients and control group as regards NAA/Cr and Cho/Cr in Lt basal ganglion. ....	108 -
Figure 20: Comparison between patients and control group as regards NAA/Cho and NAA/Cho + Cr in Lt basal ganglion. ....	108 -
Figure 21: Comparison between patients and control group as regards NAA/Cr and Cho/Cr in Rt thalamic region. ....	110 -
Figure 22: Comparison between patients and control group as regards NAA/Cho and NAA/Cho + Cr in Rt thalamic region.....	110 -
Figure 23: Comparison between patients and control group as regards NAA/Cr and Cho/Cr in Lt thalamic region. ....	112 -
Figure 24: Comparison between patients and control group as regards NAA/Cho and NAA/Cho + Cr in Lt thalamic region.....	112 -
Figure 25: Multivoxel MR spectroscopy in a control subject. ....	116 -
Figure 26: Multivoxel MR spectroscopy in a non-edematous case. ....	117 -
Figure 27: Multivoxel MR spectroscopy in an edematous case. ....	118 -

## INTRODUCTION

Nutrition plays a critical role in prenatal and early postnatal development of the brain at different levels including structural, chemical and functional levels (*Guesry, 1998*).

Moderate to severe periods of malnutrition prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> two years of life are known to be associated with delay in cognitive development and poor scholastic performance in children (*Galler and Ross, 1993*).

The rapidly developing brain is more vulnerable to nutrient insufficiency. Certain nutrients have greater effects on brain development than do others. These include protein, energy, certain fats, iron, zinc, copper, iodine, selenium, vitamin A, choline, and folate. The effect of any nutrient deficiency or overabundance on brain development will be governed by the principle of timing, dose, and duration (*Georgieff, 2007*).

Severe, moderate and even mild malnutrition have been shown to have permanent effect on brain development (*Wachs, 1995*).

Early studies done by *Gunston et al. (1992)*, reported that the consequences of severe protein energy malnutrition (PEM) on the developing brain were still ill defined. Imaging studies were done to explore the underlying abnormalities in PEM infants.

**Shaaban (1977)** had used pneumoencephalographic study for PEM infants and concluded that the small head circumference in her patients was due to atrophy of cerebral cortex and subcortex with some dilatation of the ventricles and enlargement of subarachnoid spaces of both marasmic and kwashiorkor infants. The study also reported that severe malnutrition when started at an early age regardless its type threatened the brain growth and the earlier the onset, the severer the insult to the brain. With advances of imaging studies, **Househam and de Villiers (1987)** reported cerebral atrophy in children with kwashiorkor (KWO) using computerized tomography (CT) study.

Later on, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) study done by **Gunston et al. (1992)** and revealed cerebral shrinkage in children with KWO yet the underlying reason for cerebral shrinkage was unclear.

In trials to reach to the functional changes or the underlying pathology in the brain of KWO infants, **Mohamed (1996)** showed brain atrophy and significant decrease in cerebral blood flow (especially affecting the frontal lobes and basal ganglia) which was correlated positively with the severity of the condition through CT and single photon emission computerized tomography (SPECT) study using technitium ( $Tc^{99m}$ ).

In the last years, magnetic resonant spectroscopy has been developed as a direct medical application of nuclear

magnetic resonant system. It determines non-invasively the presence and the quantity of various compounds in tissues. It has been used in patients with refractory epilepsy and brain tumours referred to surgery (*Frahm and Hanefeld, 1997*).

There is evidence that the concentration of normal metabolites in the brain varies with age, this variation is more noticeable during the first three years of life. The most striking variation is an increase in N. acetyl aspartate (NAA)/creatinine (Cr) ratio and decrease in choline (Cho)/creatinine ratio as the brain matures. These changes may reflect neuronal maturation and an increase in number of axons, dendrites and synapses (*Stoll et al., 1995*).

NAA is a neuronal marker and its concentration will decrease with many insults to the brain. Whereas choline is a constituent of the phospholipid metabolism of cell membrane and reflects membrane turnover and it is the precursor of acetyl choline (A.Ch) and phosphatidylglycerol. The former is a critical neurotransmitter involved in memory, cognition and mood, the latter is used to build up cell membranes and low choline has been observed in hepatic encephalopathy also low intake of choline can modulate cerebral choline level. Whereas creatine plays a role in maintaining energy dependent systems in brain cells (*Stoll et al., 1995*).

## **AIM OF THE WORK**

This study was designed to assess the potential role of proton MRS in detecting the metabolic changes in the brain of PEM infants.

## **Protein Energy Malnutrition**

Protein-energy malnutrition (PEM) continues to affect millions of human beings in developing countries. Children suffer most from the shortage of nutrients because at early ages malnutrition has an important impact on the central nervous system. The changes that malnutrition triggers in the brains of these children will have severe consequences on their development and learning abilities (*Cornelio-Nieto, 2007*).

Malnutrition remains one of the most common causes of morbidity and mortality among infants and children throughout the world. The earlier the onset, the more the incidence of permanent impairment of brain development (*WHO, 1999*).

The long-term effects of nutritional deficiencies in early life depend on the severity and duration of the deficiency, the stage of the children's development, the biological condition of the children and the socio-cultural context (*Grantham-McGregor, 2000*).

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines malnutrition as "the cellular imbalance between the supply of nutrients and energy and the body's demand for them to ensure growth, maintenance, and specific functions" (*Onis et al., 1993*). The term protein-energy malnutrition (PEM) applies to a group of related disorders that include marasmus, kwashiorkor, and intermediate states of marasmus-kwashiorkor. The term