Non-sedated ABR techniques

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Presentation outline

• Brief review of ABR role in pediatric hearing assessment
• The need for Non-sedated ABR
• Non-sedated ABR techniques
  – Technological
  – Protocols
  – Test administration
• Conclusions

Audiological assessment from birth to 6 months of age should include:

• Frequency-specific ABR with air-conducted and bone-conducted tone bursts – to determine the degree and configuration of HL in each ear for fitting of amplification devices.

• Click-evoked ABR with condensation and rarefaction polarity stimulus if there are indicators of neural HL – to determine if a cochlear microphonic is present, and all infants who demonstrate “no response” on tone-burst ABR.

For subsequent testing of infants and toddlers at 6 – 36 months of age the confirmatory test battery should include:

• ABR if responses to behavioral audiometry are not reliable or if ABR testing has not been performed in the past.
ABR is widely recommended and used in audiological assessment of infants and young children

Extensive literature exists on pediatric ABR, e.g.:
- Berlin, C.
- Cone-Wesson, B.
- Don, M.
- Gorga, M.
- Hall, J.
- Hood, L.
- Hyde, M.
- Picton, T.
- Shallop, J.
- Sininger, Y.
- Stapells, D.

Hearing threshold estimation is the most common use of ABR in post-screening audiological assessment

- Frequency-specific
- Stimuli are tone bursts: 500, 1000, 2000, 4000 Hz, as needed for HA fitting
- Challenges:
  - Very small signal at threshold, difficult to recognize
  - Response at threshold can be masked acoustically in noisy test environments
  - Inter-subject response variability
  - Inter-tester response interpretation variability
  - Wave V is not always well expressed, especially at 500 Hz
  - No latency norms, as for click-ABR
  - If retro-cochlear pathways are involved, Wave V may be absent, so it cannot be used for threshold estimation.

Condensation and rarefaction click ABR – an essential tool for detecting Cochlear Microphonic for AN/AD

Example of CM in AN/AD

ABR is the smallest transient Auditory Evoked Potential – 0.1-0.5 microvolt amplitude – easily masked by artifacts & interferences

Physiological artifacts and extraneous interferences contaminate ABR signal, particularly at threshold

Due to physiological artifacts, ABR tests in pediatric patients with conventional technology often require sedation or general anesthesia
2006 AAP & AAPD Guidelines for monitoring and management of pediatric patients during and after sedation for diagnostic and therapeutic procedures

The AAP & AAPD Guidelines: Sedation imposes serious risks on the child. Monitoring & rapid intervention readiness required.

Sedation of pediatric patients has serious associated risks, such as hypoxemia, apnea, airway obstruction, laryngospasm, and cardiovascular impairment. These adverse responses during and after sedation for a diagnostic or therapeutic procedure may be minimized, but not completely eliminated, by a careful preprocedure review of the patient’s underlying medical conditions and consideration of how the sedation process might affect or be affected by these conditions.

Appropriate drug selection for the intended procedure as well as the presence of an individual with the skills needed to recognize a patient from an adverse response are essential. Appropriate anesthetic monitoring and continuous observation by personnel not directly involved with the procedure allow for accurate and rapid diagnosis of complications and initiation of appropriate rescue interventions.

ABR under anesthesia is administered in the OR, involves Audiologists and Anesthetists, is costly, unavailable in many clinics, and may affect the timeliness of diagnostics and intervention (reaching the 1-3-6 targets).

Photo: Courtesy of Dr. Jay Hall, III, Ph.D., University of Florida, Gainesville, FL
Moreover, recent findings suggest general anesthesia may affect child development. More studies required.

- Early research suggests a possible link between exposure to general anesthesia in infancy and early childhood and behavioral and developmental disorders later on.
- Children in the study exposed to general anesthesia were twice as likely as unexposed children to be diagnosed with such disorders.
- After adjusting for factors associated with behavioral and developmental disorders, including low birth weight and gender, the researchers concluded that children with a history of exposure to general anesthesia were nearly twice as likely to have a recognized developmental or behavioral disorder as children with no exposure.
- The findings are preliminary and must be confirmed.

These findings were presented at the 2008 Annual Meeting of the American Society of Anesthesiologists in Orlando, FL by Dr. Lena S. Sun, MD, Columbia University, NYC.

The risks and costs of sedation and anesthesia evoke the need of the new, non-sedated ABR techniques and the goal of their development.

Both sedation and general anesthesia may present health or developmental risks to children.

Significant additional costs to health care system:
- Sedation: $500-800 / case
- Non-complicated anesthesia: $4,000-5,000 / case
- Complicated anesthesia (10% cases): $10,000-20,000 / case

Therefore, administering ABR without sedation and anesthesia is needed from both patient-care and healthcare cost perspectives.

Avoiding the risks associated with sedation and anesthesia, in as many cases as possible, is the goal of the new ABR techniques.

ABR is particularly challenging in the NICU due to large EMIs from life-support equipment.

Extensive electric wiring, CRT monitors, respiratory-equipment pumps, heaters, etc. emit significant EMI's.

However, being life-support, this equipment cannot be switched off for ABR!
The goal of non-sedated ABR is achieved by combining technological advancements with clinical protocols and test-administering practices.

### Technological advancements

- **In-situ pre-amplification and pre-filtering**
- **Wireless recording**
- **Kalman-weighted averaging**
- **Real-time noise estimate with A, B, and A-B traces, and meaningful correlation coefficient**

### Clinical protocols

- **Increased number of equivalent / accepted sweeps**
- **Increased stimulus rate**
- **Stimulus rate close to 40/sec to utilize 40-Hz response in AWAKE children**

### Test administration practices

- **Positioning the child in a (perceived by the child) safe & friendly environment**
- **Comforting by caregivers**
- **Pacifying infants – breast-feeding, bottle, pacifier**
- **Occupying toddlers & older children – games, videos, drawing**

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**Technological advancements for ABR recording in non-sedated patients**

**Technological advancements reduce physiological artifacts & environmental interferences enabling non-sedated ABR**

- **In-situ amplification – on the ground electrodes – protects from EMI**
- **High-resolution A/D conversion – increases the accuracy of ABR**
- **Kalman-weighted filtering in DSP – removes EMG artifacts**
- **Confidence-enhancing A&B buffering – enhances confidence of ABR trace repeatability & correlation**
- **Band-pass filtering prior to amplification – eliminates EOG, ECG and EEG artifacts, and RF interference**
- **Wireless interface – eliminates conducted power-line noises**
- **Real-time statistics – for repeatability confidence**

*Patented, patents pending*
Statistical techniques enhance confidence in response repeatability

- A (even sweeps) & B (odd sweeps) buffers show response repeatability within each test run – instead of repeating each test – and saves test time.
- A-B (the difference between A and B) shows EEG noise floor – helps identify the response.
- Correlation coefficient (CC) between Statistics Start (SS) and Statistics End (SE) labels – helps detecting response objectively.

High-definition ABR enables detecting very small inter-aural differences of ABR wave latencies

- ABR waveforms recorded from a 79-year-old patient with moderate SNHL, showing clear inter-aural differences in Waves III and V.

High-definition ABR helps identifying subtle variances that may increase the diagnostic value of ABR

- ABRs from LE of a 5-week-old, 8-week-premature, non-sedated, female NICU infant 80 and 90 dB nHL (shown are age norms for 80 dB nHL).
- ABRs from RE of a 3.5-year-old, non-sedated male patient with Cerebral Palsy 70, 80, 90 dB nHL (shown are age norms for 80 dB nHL).

ABR indicates similarity of Wave V/I Ratio in premature and 3.5-year-old CP patient.
New statistical techniques provide the clinician with good stop criteria to obtain meaningful results

The clinician can stop the test based on the following Integrity™ criteria:

- A and B traces are visually repeatable
- A-B trace, which represents the residual noise, is visually flatter than the A+B (total average) trace
- Correlation Coefficient in the latency range of interest is larger than 0.5 (50%), which indicates a non-random response, preferably larger than 0.75 (75%)

Alternating Split stimulus automatically administers Condensation (A) and Rarefaction (B) polarity clicks for CM identification in neural HL.

Clinical approaches
to ABR recording in AWAKE pediatric patients
Using larger numbers of stimuli (sweeps) near threshold improves response clarity and helps ABR detection

Examples of click-ABR under the same conditions recorded with different number of accepted sweeps

Run as many sweeps as necessary to obtain a clear response, not a “standard” 2000, particularly at near-threshold stimulus levels.

Stimulus rate affects wave morphology, but not Wave V amplitude. High stimulus rates save testing time

Dr. Todd Sauter, University of Massachusetts Medical Centre, 2006

Use window long enough to include full negative deflection following Wave V (Wave V’ or SN10), particularly for low frequency stimuli

Example of ABR to various stimuli at 20 dB nHL. Adult Subject.
Test NICU babies in their incubators – this will eliminate the disturbance of moving out of the incubator and sound-proof from the NICU noise.

When testing in an NICU or Step Down Unit, the wireless interface unit is placed in or on the incubator, and the test is administered from an up to 30-foot (10 meter) distance. Shown: Administering ABR in a premature, 10 days old (gestational 31 weeks) female patient in the NICU incubator.

Allow NICU babies for suckling on their pacifiers, remain in their natural position, and minimize other disturbances.

Non-sedated, premature 10-week-old infant girl, in a NICU, suckling on her pacifier. Conventional ABR results unattainable. New techniques enabled recording clear ABR to 35-90 dB nHL clicks.

New techniques enable the recording of clear ABR and CM in non-sedated NICU infants.

10-days old, premature (31-week gestational) infant girl, was impossible to test with a conventional ABR device due to very large artifacts. Clear response: clickABR to 0-80 dB nHL, R (red) & L (blue) ears.
Wide high-pass filtering (30-1500 Hz) utilize not only Wave V, but also 40-Hz response in AWAKE patients.

The user runs a test until A-B "flattens out" to below 0.03-0.05 µV. "Running" CC value is continuously updated, and CC > 0.5 indicates the presence of response, as in this sample 500 Hz tone-burst ABR clearly identifiable to 10 dB nHL.

ABR can be recorded in non-sedated infants down to 0-10 dB nHL (nHL stimulus levels calibrated for adults).

Bottle- or breastfeeding & known environment, like the child’s car seat or stroller, help keeping awake infants quiet.
Comforting infants by the parent or care-giver is helpful in keeping the infant quiet.

Testing newborns and infants is very patient- and parent-friendly in comforting hands of the parent or care-giver.

When testing newborns and infants, VivoLink™ is placed in the crib or a car seat, or held by the caregiver. The caregiver can comfort the child during the test, while the child can be bottle-feeding or even breast-feeding.

Feeding on the bottle helps not only in infants, but in many toddlers.
A position where the child feels safe may work better than sedation in some cases

A 2-year-old female toddler was given 5 cc of Chloral Hydrate, then another 2 cc – with no sedative effect. ABR could not be completed with a conventional ABR system.

Then she found safety on her father’s shoulders where she was successfully ABR-tested with new techniques.

Tests conducted at a private Otolaryngology clinic, Cairo, Egypt.

Photos: Courtesy of Dr. Sameh Farheed

Holding the child’s hands in a safe position doesn’t allow her to use the hands for removing the electrodes and inserts

Positioning the wireless unit as a “backpack” makes it invisible to the child and reduce the child’s fear of the procedure
A good way to keep an older child "quiet" is to occupy the child with watching a cartoon, toys, drawing, games.

VivoLink™ attracted the 3-year-old female patient and allowed for a faster test.

Non-sedated capability is particularly helpful in developing countries with limited anesthesia facilities.

Photos: Courtesy of Dr. Jay Hall, III, Ph.D., and Dr. De Wet Swanepoel, Ph.D. does not mean their endorsement of the new techniques.
Very important is to keep acoustically quiet during a threshold ABR test, as background acoustic noise elevates thresholds by masking!

- Test in a quiet room in the clinic, but not necessarily booth
- Switch off devices that can produce acoustic noise – fans, ventilators, etc.
- Instruct parents and caregivers, and other staff to restrain from talking and producing noises otherwise near the patient
- Ensure good occlusion of the inserts

Survey of Audiologists using new ABR technology found the quality of non-sedated ABR largely at par with sedated conventional ABR

Respondents who are using the new techniques on more than half of cases requiring an ABR have found:

- It had positive overall impact on patient during diagnostic tests: 48%
- Chose the new technology for the quality of diagnostic tests: 90%
- The test quality was on par with Sedated ABR’s: 61%
- New technology helps to test a wider range of patients: 70%


Conclusions

- New techniques enable practical ABR evaluation in non-sedated pediatric patients.
- The quality of Non-sedated ABR obtained with the new techniques is largely at par with sedated ABR using conventional equipment.
- New techniques can be effectively used in electro-magnetically challenging environments like Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICU) and enable timely delivery of audiological assessment to the NICU population.
- By eliminating the need of sedation and anesthesia in most cases, new techniques can reduce time-to-service timeline, reduce the age of identification, and help achieving the 1-3-6 EHDI goals.
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Thank you for your interest
Best wishes from vivosonic
Questions?