

# EMERGENCY CARE THALIDOMIDE VICTIMS

Sint Maartenskliniek Nijmegen The Netherlands

**In case of emergency care for Thalidomide victims, the following important issues must be taken into account:**

## Intubation:

Intubating may be different from normal due to anatomical abnormalities in the E.N.T. area (jaw, nose, narrowed or closed nasal passages and paralysis of the soft palate). There may also be anatomical deviations in the cervical vertebral column, as a result of which extension of the neck is impossible or more difficult. If anatomical abnormalities in the mouth and throat area are suspected, an anaesthetist or an ENT doctor should be consulted.

## Respirator:

A respirator mask may have an inferior fit, due to birth defects of the jaw and the nose.

One should monitor the level of oxygen saturation in the patient's blood with a

pulse oximeter and consult a anesthetist or an ENT doctor.

## Circulation

### **Cardial:**

Cardiac abnormalities can occur, including arrhythmias and congenital anatomical defects, these can lead to abnormal heart sounds. Palpation of pulsation in the pulse may be difficult or impossible as well as pulsation in the groin, due to birth defects of the vascular bed.

### **Blood vessels**

The structure of the vascular bed may be affected, especially in the arms, which may hamper placing an infusion in the arm.

Congenital anatomical defects of the vascular bed may also be present in the legs, which may limit the infusion of the leg vessels. In urgent cases, intraosseous access may be considered. Severe haemorrhaging may occur differently due to birth defects of the vascular bed.

### **Blood pressure:**

In many cases it is not possible to measure the patient's blood pressure on the arms and legs reliably.

## Disability

### **Assessment of neurological deficit**

Congenital defects of the eyes may lead to an unreliable pupillary reflex.

Congenital defects of the limbs may cause unreliable movements and lateralization.

Due to congenital defects of the limbs and the peripheral nerves, testing the reflexes may not be reliable.

Flexion of the neck can be limited and painful. Due to abnormalities of the spine, appropriate assessment of neurological stiffness in the neck is not always easy or possible.

Many Thalidomide victims are hearing impaired, this must be taken into account during the assessment.

# EMERGENCY CARE THALIDOMIDE VICTIMS

Sint Maartenskliniek Nijmegen The Netherlands

## Infusion

When an infusion has to be placed, one has to assess whether normal access to the veins is possible.

In case it is not possible to place an infusion in the arms, it may be an option to place an infusion in the leg, foot, groin or neck. If blood vessels are not visible, ultrasound equipment can be used to insert the infusion.

### **Please note**

- In case of absence of the limbs or abnormalities in the limbs, distribution of the body weight is different from normal. This has to be taken into account when determining the dose of medication for anaesthesia.

## Blood sampling

Many Thalidomide victims have an atypical vascularization pattern and a deviated anatomy, which makes it difficult to take a blood sample. Because of the wide variety of abnormalities an individual assessment

of possible blood sampling sites should be made.

When it is necessary to take a blood sample, an initial assessment will be made whether blood vessels can be assessed in the normal way (by palpation and visual inspection of suitable veins).

If it is not possible to take a blood sample from the arms, it may be an option to take a blood sample from the veins of the legs, feet, groin or neck. If vessels are difficult or not visible ultrasound equipment can be used to visualize and puncture the vessels.

### **Please note**

- The Thalidomide victim themselves can indicate the body part and the specific sites where blood has been previously drawn and explain in which way the blood sample was taken.

## More information

For more medical information about thalidomide, call the Sint Maartenskliniek Rehabilitation Centre and ask for Mrs van der Wielen, rehabilitation physician:

**+31 24 3659776**

Available during office hours on Monday, Tuesday and Friday.

**nesos** | Stichting  
Nederlandse  
Softnon Slachtoffers

**[www.softnon.nl](http://www.softnon.nl)**

Enter the contact details of your general practitioner below:

Name:..... Telephone number:.....