

₹ 100

ISSN - 2249-555X

**Volume : 1    Issue : 4    January 2012**



**Journal for All Subjects**

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Listed in International ISSN Directory, Paris.



ISSN - 2249-555X

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## INDEX

| Sr. No | Title   | Author  | Subject           | Page. No. |
|--------|---|---|-------------------|-----------|
| 1.     | Statistical Optimization Of Ferulic Acid Esterase Production In Aspergillus Niger Isolate Using Response Surface Methodology  | Balljinder Kaur , Neena Garg                              | Biotechnology     | 1-6       |
| 2.     | Development Of Forest Area In Tropics: The Urgency Of People's Participation In The Indian Context  | Dr. M. P. Naik  | Commerce          | 7-8       |
| 3.     | Opportunity For International Corporations At Bop Segments Of Emerging Markets (Focus : India)  | Bhudhar Ranjan Chatterjee , Sukanya Chatterjee.           | Commerce          | 9-11      |
| 4.     | Retail Trade  | Viram. J. Vala , Dr. (Prof.) Vijay Kumar Soni             | Commerce          | 12-15     |
| 5.     | Determinants Of Market Value Added Some Empirical Evidence From Indian Automobile Industry  | Dr. A. Vijayakumar  | Commerce          | 16-20     |
| 6.     | The Welfare Facilities Available To The Workers In Paper Mills In Madurai   | Dr. M. Sumathy , A. Vijayalekshmi                         | Commerce          | 21-24     |
| 7.     | Green Marketing - New Hopes And Challenges  | Dr. Prashant M. Joshi                                     | Commerce          | 25-27     |
| 8.     | A Study On Employee Welfare Measures In Maharashtra State Transport Corporation With Special Reference To Kolhapur District.  | Dr. H. M. Thakar , Prof. Urmila Kisan Dubal               | Commerce          | 28-30     |
| 9.     | Business Environment In South Korea An International Perspective  | Dr. M. Kamalun Nabi , Dr. M. Saeed                        | Commerce          | 31-35     |
| 10.    | Market Timing - Implications Of Market Valuation On Share Issues By Indian Companies  | L. Ganesamoorthy , Dr. H. Shankar                         | Commerce          | 36-38     |
| 11.    | The Conceptual Framework Of Corporate Social Accounting   | Rechanna , Dr. B. Mahadevappa                             | Commerce          | 39-50     |
| 12.    | Labour Welfare Measures And The Extent Of Satisfaction Of Tirupur Garment Employees   | Mr. S. Hariharan , Mr. N. Selvakumar, Dr .H. Balakrishnan | Commerce          | 51-53     |
| 13.    | Mahila Savstha Aur Jacha-Bacha Ko Bachane Ko Chunoti  | Dr. Anup Chaturvedi                                       | Community Science | 54-55     |
| 14.    | Mapping Of Existing Waste Dumping Sites And Newly Proposed Waste Dumping Sites In And Around Chitradurga Taluk, Karnataka State, Using Remote Sensing And GIS Techniques. | Sunil Kumar R. K Chinnaiiah , Suresh Kumar B.V            | Earth Science     | 56-58     |
| 15.    | A Role Of Municipal Council And Corporation Of Financial Problems In Nanded District (Maharashtra)  | Dr. A. S. Pawar   | Economics         | 59        |
| 16.    | Impact Of Institutional Credit On Weaker Section In Akola District  | Dr. Devyanee K Nemade, Dr. Vanita K Khobarkar             | Economics         | 60-62     |
| 17.    | Right To Education In India   | Dr. Pawar A. S.   | Economics         | 63-65     |
| 18.    | Gramin Ayam Adivasi Mahilo Ke Arthik Shakti : Sukhma Virti (Adipur Jila Ke Gramin Ayam Adivasi Mahilao Ka Ek Ayaktik Adhiyan Shobha Gupta                                 | Shobha Gupta  | Economics         | 66-67     |

|     |  |  |                              |         |
|-----|--|--|------------------------------|---------|
| 19. | Knowledge On Food Security Education Among Higher Secondary Students   | Dr. P. Paul Devanesan , Dr. A. Selvan                              | Education                    | 68-69   |
| 20. | Family Environment As A Determinant of Academic Anxiety And Academic Achievement                                   | Dr. RajKumari Kalra , Ms. Preeti Manani                            | Education                    | 70-71   |
| 21. | Awareness On Man-Made Disaster In Environmental Education Among High School Students                               | Dr. A. Selvan , Dr. P. Paul Devanesan                              | Education                    | 72-73   |
| 22. | Teaching Strategies For Simplifying Fractions In Mathematics   | M. Kavitha , Dr. A R. Saravanakumar                                | Education                    | 74-76   |
| 23. | Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA): A Boon to Tribal Women                        | Dr. Sherly Thomas  | Education                    | 77-78   |
| 24. | Sports as a Tool for Interest Oriented Learning  | E. Baby Sumanna  | Education                    | 79-80   |
| 25. | Balanced Scorecard for Higher Education  | Jyoti D Joshi  | Education                    | 81-83   |
| 26. | A Study Of The Interactive Influence Of CAI Package On Academic Achievement  | Kunal D. Jadhav  | Education                    | 84-85   |
| 27. | Reduction Of Fault Current Using SFCL At The Suitable Location In The Smartgrid                                    | Pudi Sekhar , K .Venkateswara Rao , M. Ebraheem , P. Nageswara Rao | Electronics                  | 86-88   |
| 28. | HRD Climate in Private Manufacturing Sector: An Appraisal  | Dr. Sukhwinder Singh Jolly   | Engineering                  | 89-90   |
| 29. | Wireless Speed Measurement And Control Of Universal Motor  | G. Prasad , G. Ramya Swathi, Dr. P. V. N. Prasad , A. Muneiah      | Engineering                  | 91-94   |
| 30. | Design Of Decentralized Load-Frequency Controller For Deregulated Hydro-Thermal Power Systems With Non-Linearities | M. Vinothkumar , Dr. C. Kumar , Dr. S. Velusami                    | Engineering                  | 95-99   |
| 31. | Optimization Of Process Parameters For Gas Tungsten Arc Welding Aluminum Alloy A6061 By Taguchi Method             | P. Hema , K. Allama Prabhu , Prof. K. Ravindranath                 | Engineering                  | 100-103 |
| 32. | Numerical Approach To Predict The Thermal Performance Of Parallel And Counter Flow Packed Bed Solar Air Heaters    | Satyender Singha , Prashant Dhiman , Ritika Kondal                 | Engineering                  | 104-108 |
| 33. | Institute For Entrepreneurship Development Amongst Farmers- Especially Small And Marginal Land Holders.            | Sweta Sanjog Metha   | Entrepreneurship Development | 109-111 |
| 34. | Phytoplankton Diversity From Godavari River Water (Maharashtra)  | Satish.S.Patil , Ishwar.B.Ghorade                                  | Environmental Science        | 11-114  |
| 35. | Nutrient Adequacy Among Selected Tribal Adolescent Girls Of Kattunayakan Tribes In Tamil Nadu                      | Somishon Keishing , Saranya .R                                     | Home Science                 | 115-116 |
| 36. | Vaigyanic Sacharata Aur Arthik- Samajik Vikas  | Dr. Sudobh Kumar   | Humanities                   | 117-118 |
| 37. | E-Pharmacy In India For Reducing Inter-State Accessibility Dispersion  | Satinder Bhatia  | Information Technology       | 119-121 |
| 38. | Impact Of Intermediaries' Service Delivery In Insurance Sector   | Dr. P. Anbuoli , R. Meikanda Ganesh Kumar                          | Insurance Sector             | 122-124 |

|     |  |   |                 |         |
|-----|--|---|-----------------|---------|
| 39. | Fate And Human Endeavour In The Mahabharata  | Dr Maneeta Kahlon                                   | Literature      | 125-127 |
| 40. | Facets of Hunger in Bhabani Bhattacharya's So Many Hungers and Kamala Markandaya's Nectar in a Sieve                                 | Dr. Paramleen Kaur Syali , Ruchee Aggarwal          | Literature      | 128-129 |
| 41. | Business Financial Strategy In Small And Medium Scale Brick Industries In Kolar District, Karnataka State.                           | Muninarayanappa , Dr. S. Muralidhar                 | Management      | 130-132 |
| 42. | A Study On Brand Equity Analysis Foreign Global Brands Vs Domestic Popular Brands Of Adult Consumer's Perspective In Coimbatore City | A.Pughazhendi , S. Susendiran , R. Thirunavukkarasu | Management      | 133-135 |
| 43. | Comparative Analysis of Cellular Phone Usage Outline of Undergraduate Students.  | Atul Patel  | Management      | 136-138 |
| 44. | A Study On Management Practices Of Entrepreneurs In Informal Sector  | Dr. P. Vikkraman , Mr. S. Baskaran                  | Management      | 139-142 |
| 45. | E-commerce: Emerging Channel for Marketing in India  | Dr Mahalaxmi Krishnan                               | Management      | 143-144 |
| 46. | The Role Of Educational Institutions In Imparting Entrepreneurship Qualities Among Student Community                                 | Dr. N. Ramanjaneyalu                                | Management      | 145-147 |
| 47. | Impulsive buying and In-store shopping environment   | Dr. Surekha Rana , Jyoti Tirthani                   | Management      | 148-149 |
| 48. | A Study On Management Practices Of Entrepreneurs In Informal Sector  | Dr. P. Vikkraman , S. Baskaran                      | Management      | 150-153 |
| 49. | Risk Management Processes And Techniques For Resolving Customer - Supplier Relationship Issues                                       | Pramod Kumar , Prof (Dr.) S.L.Gupta                 | Management      | 154-160 |
| 50. | Risk Management Processes & Techniques For The Successful Delivery Of Web Based Software Projects                                    | Pramod Kumar , Prof (Dr.) S. L. Gupta               | Management      | 161-166 |
| 51. | Effect Of Brand Equity On Consumer Purchasing Behaviour On Car: Evidence From Car Owners In Madurai District                         | R. Suganya  | Management      | 167-169 |
| 52. | Relationship Management Model For Global It Industry.  | Rishi Mohan Bhatnagar , Prof (Dr.) S. L. Gupta      | Management      | 170-173 |
| 53. | It's A Myth That Kirana Stores Will Be Wiped Out If FDI Is Allowed In Multi Brand Retail Sector In India                             | Shweta Patel , M R Brahmachari                      | Management      | 174-176 |
| 54. | Learning Organization  | Sitheswaran K , Dr. K. Balanaga Gurunathan          | Management      | 177-178 |
| 55. | Behavior Management: A Ready-made Soup For Indian Managers   | Winnie Jasraj Joshi                                 | Management      | 179-180 |
| 56. | Customer Relationship Management In Public Sector Banks  | Dr. P. Anbuoli , T. R. Thiruvengat Raj              | Marketing       | 181-182 |
| 57. | Nifedipine Compared With Isoxuprine In Treatment Of Preterm Labor  | Dr. Santosh Khajotia                                | Medical Science | 183-184 |

|     |  |  |                          |         |
|-----|--|--|--------------------------|---------|
| 58. | Single Intraoperative Dose of Tranexamic Acid In Orthopedic Surgery (A Study of Bipolar Modular Prosthesis and Dynamic Hip Screw fixation) | Dr. B. L. Khajotia , Dr. S. K. Agarwal, Dr. Prasant Gadwal   | Medical Science          | 185-187 |
| 59. | MVA - A Simple & Safe Surgical Procedure For First Trimester Abortion / Medical Termination Of Pregnancy (MTP)                             | Dr. Priyamvada Shah , Dr. Sameer Darawade  | Medical Science          | 188-190 |
| 60. | Pneumococcal Septic Arthritis in an Infant A Case Report   | Dr. Vrishali A Muley , Dr. Dnyaneshwari P Ghadage, . Dr. Arvind V Bhore                                  | Medical Science          | 191-192 |
| 61. | A Clear CSF may not be a Normal CSF A Case Report  | Dr. Dnyaneshwari P Ghadage , Dr. Vrishali A. Muley , Dr. Arvind V. Bhore                                 | Medical Science          | 193-194 |
| 62. | Neurectomy For Tic How Much Reliable?  | Dr. Monali H. Ghodke , Dr. Seemit V. Shah , Dr. Smita A. Kamtane   | Medical Science          | 195-198 |
| 63. | To Assess Acceptability Of Female Condom As A Method Of Temporary Contraception Among Indian Women   | Dr Priyanka Shekhawat , Dr. Col (Retd) Gulab Singh, Dr Vidula Kulkarni Joshi                             | Medical Science          | 199-200 |
| 64. | A Study To Evaluate The Efficacy Of Teaching Intervention On Reduction Of Pediatric Immunization Pain Among Nursing Students               | Dr. Ramachandra , Dr. S. Valliammal, Mr. Raja Sudhakar   | Nursing                  | 201-202 |
| 65. | Screening Of Antenatal Patients For Thalassemia  | Dr Mukta Rayate , Dr Durga Karne , Dr Shilpa Bhat, Dr Hemant Damle , Dr Sameer Darawade, Varsha Gogavale | Obstetrics & Gynaecology | 203-204 |
| 66. | Reservoir Rock Quality of the Lakadong Member in the Eastern Part of Upper Assam Basin, India  | Dr. Pradip Borgohain   | Petroleum Geology        | 205-207 |
| 67. | Study Of Refractive Index And Excess Parameters For Different Liquid Mixtures At Different Temperatures                                    | Sheeraz Akbar , Mahendra Kumar   | Physics                  | 208-210 |
| 68. | Refractometric And Excess Parameter Study For Liquid Mixtures Containing High Order Alkanes (C17) And 1-alkanols At Different Temperatures | Sheeraz Akbar , Mahendra Kumar   | Physics                  | 211-213 |
| 69. | Assessment Of Knowledge About Health Services Available At Subcentre Level Among Village Inhabitants                                       | Balpreet Singh , Jayanti Dutta   | Public Health            | 214-215 |
| 70. | Effect Of Yogic, Aerobic And Laughter Exercises On Body Composition (An experimental study)  | Dr. Manjappa. P. , Dr. Shivarama Reddy. M  | Sports                   | 216-220 |
| 71. | Age At Menarche In Physically Active And Non Active Urban Girls Of Patiala District  | Jyoti Sharma , Dr. Ajita   | Sports Science           | 221-222 |
| 72. | Use Of Ranks For Analysis Of Groups Of Experiments   | Dr. Vanita K Khobarkar , Dr. S. W. Jahagirdar, Dr. N. A. Chaube  | Statistics               | 223-225 |



## Nifedipine Compared With Isoxuprine In Treatment Of Preterm Labor

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### ABSTRACT

*Preterm labour and delivery remains a major cause of perinatal morbidity and mortality. Numerous drugs and interventions have been used to prevent and inhibit preterm labour but none have been found to be completely effective with the choice being further limited by troublesome side effects. This study compares in a prospective and randomised design the efficacy and safety of the calcium antagonist Nifedipine with the beta mimetic Isoxuprine. 80% of patients receiving Nifedipine and 78% of those receiving Isoxuprine achieved successful tocolysis. The mean prolongation of pregnancy with Nifedipine was 25+/-19.85 days and with Isoxuprine it was 19.18+/-17.82 days. Nifedipine had significantly less side effects compared to Isoxuprine. These side effects are easily reversible with intravenous saline and calcium<sup>4</sup>. Hence It can be concluded that Nifedipine is a safe and effective alternative to Isoxuprine for suppressing preterm labour.*

**Keywords : Preterm labour, Tocolysis, Nifedipine, Bishop's Score**

### Introduction

The incidence of low birth weight in India is around 30-40% of which 12-18% are associated with gestational age less than 37 weeks<sup>5</sup>. Between 30-36 weeks of gestation the incidence of Idiopathic Respiratory Distress (IRDS) is 15% to 20%<sup>1</sup>. It is a major cause of perinatal morbidity. If preterm labour can be delayed by 48 hours, fetal lung maturity can be accelerated with betamethasone<sup>3</sup>. If the pregnancy proceed to term the perinatal complications are significantly decreased. These facts are of special importance in developing countries where neonatal facilities are limited. Isoxuprine is an accepted tocolytic agent requiring initial parenteral administration and rigorous monitoring. Calcium channel blockers on the hand are good tocolytic agents with a few and easily reversible side effects and are easily administered. Hence the latter was compared with the former in this study.

### Material And Methods

A prospective study was conducted in S.P. Medical college Bikaner during January 1,2010 to October 31,2010 on consecutive patients with preterm labour admitted in P.B.M. Hospital over a period of 10 months. The inclusion criteria were a) cases with known dates or where gestational age was confirmed by ultrasound scan before 20 weeks. b) gestational age between 28-36 weeks. c) singleton pregnancies. d.) uterine contractions occurring atleast once every 10 minutes and lasting for 30 seconds or more e) cervical dilatation less than 2 cm. Women who had premature rupture of membranes, intrauterine infections, malformed foetus, hydramnios and medical complications were excluded from the trial. The patients were assigned to the two groups using a table of random numbers. All patients were rested in bed and sedated with Inj. Diazepam 10 mg Two doses of Inj. Betamethasone 12 mg each were given intramuscularly at 12 hourly interval. Nifedipine was administered as capsules orally, initially 30 mg, followed by 20 mg every 8 hours. Maternal bloods pressure and pulse rate and fetal heart rate were monitored every 15 min. for the

first 2 hours, hourly for 24 hours and subsequently before the drug administration. Calcium gluconate and IV fluids were kept ready at hand<sup>4</sup>. Isoxuprine 40 mg in 500 ml of GDW was started at a drip rate of 30 drops/mt and accelerated with close monitoring to achieve tocolysis, then continued for 4 hours. Subsequently the drug was administered intramuscularly at a dose of 30 mg /24 hours for 2 days. Maternal blood pressure and pulse rate monitoring was done every 15 minute. while on the IV drip and subsequently before each intramuscular injection and oral dosing.

The treatment was considered successful if the pregnancy was prolonged for 48 hours from the beginning of therapy.

### Results

Twenty eight patients received Nifedipine and 22 control Isoxuprine. The two groups were comparable for age,

**Table I -Clinical Details**

| Particular                     | Nifedipine (n=28) | Isoxuprine (n=22) | Significance |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Age (Years)                    | 23.03 ±3.98       | 25.5±5.8          | NS           |
| Maternal wt (kg)               | 49.79±9.7         | 54.2±8.9          | NS           |
| Maternal Height (cm)           | 150.89±7.1        | 152.7±4.8         | NS           |
| Gestation at treatment (weeks) | 33.7±1.7          | 33.7±4.8          | NS           |
| Bishop's Score                 | 4.85±2.3          | 4.0±1.9           | NS           |
| Tocolytic Index                | 3.28±1.06         | 2.9±1.0           | NS           |

NS- Not Significant.

Weight, height, parity gestational age, Bishop's score (1984) and Tocolytic index<sup>10</sup> (Table I). In the nifedipine group 22/28 patients had tocolysis while in the isoxuprine groups 20/22 had successful treatment (p=0.4 N.S.).

There were 8 primigravidae in the nifedipine group and 2 in the isoxuprine group. The mean Bishop's scores and Tocolytic indices of patients are shown in Table II. Lower indices were significantly associated with successful nifedipine tocolysis (Mann-Whitney U Test). Tachycardia was significantly higher in the isoxuprine group (10/22) compared to the nifedipine group (2/28) (p0.04). Hypotension was recorded in two patient who had received isoxuprine. In the isoxuprine group, 20/22



Table- II Bishop's Scores And Tocolytic Indices

| Drug                   | Successful Tocolysis                             | Failed Tocolysis | Significance |
|------------------------|--|------------------|--------------|
| <b>Bishop's Score</b>  |  |                  |              |
| Nifedipine             | 5,4,4,5,2,2,5,3,7,8,1<br>8,1,7,3,5,2,2,5,4,4,5   | 8,8,7,8,8,7      | P .05        |
| Isoxuprine             | 4,3,3,4,0,6,7,4,4,3<br>3,4,7,4,6,0,3,4,4,3       | 6,6              | NS           |
| <b>Tocolytic Index</b> |  |                  |              |
| Nifedipine             | 3,3,4,3,4,3,1,3,3,2,3,<br>2,3,1,3,3,4,3,4,3,3,3, | 5,5,5,4,5,4      | P .01        |
| Isoxuprine             | 2,3,2,4,1,4,4,3,3,2<br>3,3,2,4,1,4,2,4,3,2       | 4,4              | NS           |

patients were discharged following successful tocolysis after 72 hours, of these 16/20 delivered at term in this hospital, and 4/20 went elsewhere for delivery. Of the Nifedipine group 22/28 were discharged after tocolysis. Of these 16 patients delivered at term, 2 delivered after 4 days, 4 delivered elsewhere. There were no neonatal complications in any of infants.

### Discussion

Due to strict inclusion criteria the patients studied are limited as in previous studies<sup>12,13</sup> However the treatment and control groups were comparable for the mean Tocolytic index and Bishop's score. Successful Nifedipine tocolysis is associated with lower scorers as previously shown with tocolytic agents<sup>4,11</sup>. Fetal survival is directly related to fetal birth weight and age. Due to small number we did not experience IRDS or other complications in infants born preterm following unsuccessful tocolysis. 16 out of 20 (80%) patients in the isoxuprine group and 22 out of 28(78.6%) in the nifedipine group delivered at term following successful tocolysis. In this regard both the drugs were equally effective.

### Conclusion

Nifedipine had significantly less side effects compared to Isoxuprine. These side effects are easily reversible with intravenous saline and calcium<sup>4</sup>. Hence It can be concluded that Nifedipine is a safe and effective alternative to Isoxuprine for suppressing preterm labour therapy<sup>8,11</sup>.

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