Infantile beriberi: clinical symptoms and case studies

Common symptoms of infantile beriberi

- Rapid heartbeat
- Rapid breathing
- Hoarse cry (no voice)
- Edema (swelling) of extremities
- Convulsions
- Vomiting
- Lack of appetite
- Little urination

Case studies of mother and infant thiamine deficiency, from a village survey conducted in Laos (adapted from Barennes et al, 2015)*:

Case study 1:

"Mother: 28 years old, Hmong ethnic group, farmer, illiterate, 7 children, 5 deaths.
Post partum: strict food avoidance after delivery: she ate only polished rice, and salt during one month.
Symptoms: edema of legs and arms; paresthesias, dyspnea.
Infant: In the age of 1 month and in good health, he died suddenly after a day with silent screams, cyanosis of the body, and inability to breastfeed. The child was anuric, no liquid stools, no fever, no cough”.

Case study 2:

"Mother: 25 years old, Khmu ethnic group, farmer, primary school, 2 living children and one child deceased at one month of probable meningitis.
Post partum: food avoidance after delivery: she ate white rice, chicken, rarely vegetable, fish, birds, during 30 days
No clinical symptoms.
Infant: 2 months old. Presence of restlessness, refusal to suck, hoarseness, aphonia, and cyanosis. Symptoms appeared suddenly and severely.
Physical examination: dyspnea, cyanosis, tachycardia and hepatomegaly.
Treatment: The infant was treated by intramuscular injection of thiamine; thiamine tablets given to the mother.
Evolution: after 1 hour the child was able to suckle and no more cry”.