



Intracranial hemorrhage before start of prophylaxis in children with hemophilia: incidence, timing, and potential for prevention

by Nadine G. Andersson, Marloes de Kovel, Giancarlo Castaman, Roseline d'Oiron, Gili Kenet, Christoph Königs, Christoph Male, Beatrice Nolan, Martin Olivieri, Fernando Pinto, Sigridur Sigurgisladottir, Ester Zapotocka, and Kathelijin Fischer.

Collaborative Groups: PedNet Research Foundation (M.T. Alvarèz Román, O. Benitez Hidalgo, M. Bührlen, M. Carvalho, H. Chambost, A. Rosa Cid, G. Castaman, A. Rosa Cid, C. Eckhardt, C. Escuriola Ettinghausen, K. Fischer, N. G. Andersson, S. Holzhauer, M. Kartal-Kaess, H. Knudsen, C. Königs, M. Koskenvuo, V. Labarque, R. Ljung, C. Male, T. Stamm Mikkelsen, A. Molinari, J. Motwani, B. Nolan, R. d'Oiron, J. Oldenburg, M. Oliveri, C. Oudot, H. Pergantou, F. Pinto, S. Ranta, E. Zápotocká, G. Kenet, M. Carcao, G. Rivard).

Received: June 27, 2024.

Accepted: November 15, 2024.

Citation: Nadine G. Andersson, Marloes de Kovel, Giancarlo Castaman, Roseline d'Oiron, Gili Kenet, Christoph Königs, Christoph Male, Beatrice Nolan, Martin Olivieri, Fernando Pinto, Sigridur Sigurgisladottir, Ester Zapotocka, and Kathelijin Fischer.

Collaborative Groups: PedNet Research Foundation (M.T. Alvarèz Román, O. Benitez Hidalgo, M. Bührlen, M. Carvalho, H. Chambost, A. Rosa Cid, G. Castaman, A. Rosa Cid, C. Eckhardt, C. Escuriola Ettinghausen, K. Fischer, N.G. Andersson, S. Holzhauer, M. Kartal-Kaess, H. Knudsen, C. Königs, M. Koskenvuo, V. Labarque, R. Ljung, C. Male, T. Stamm Mikkelsen, A. Molinari, J. Motwani, B. Nolan, R. d'Oiron, J. Oldenburg, M. Oliveri, C. Oudot, H. Pergantou, F. Pinto, S. Ranta, E. Zápotocká, G. Kenet, M. Carcao, G. Rivard). Intracranial hemorrhage before start of prophylaxis in children with hemophilia: incidence, timing, and potential for prevention. *Haematologica*. 2024 Nov 28. doi: 10.3324/haematol.2024.285874 [Epub ahead of print]

Publisher's Disclaimer.

E-publishing ahead of print is increasingly important for the rapid dissemination of science. *Haematologica* is, therefore, E-publishing PDF files of an early version of manuscripts that have completed a regular peer review and have been accepted for publication.

E-publishing of this PDF file has been approved by the authors.

After having E-published Ahead of Print, manuscripts will then undergo technical and English editing, typesetting, proof correction and be presented for the authors' final approval; the final version of the manuscript will then appear in a regular issue of the journal.

All legal disclaimers that apply to the journal also pertain to this production process.

Intracranial hemorrhage before start of prophylaxis in children with hemophilia: incidence, timing, and potential for prevention

Running head: ICH in hemophilia before the start of prophylaxis

Nadine G. Andersson^{1,2,3}, Marloes de Kovel⁴, Giancarlo Castaman⁵, Roseline d'Oiron⁶, Gili Kenet⁷, Christoph Königs⁸, Christoph Male⁹, Beatrice Nolan¹⁰, Martin Olivieri¹¹, Fernando Pinto¹², Sigridur Sigurgisladottir², #Ester Zapotocka^{13,14}, #Kathelijn Fischer¹⁵, on behalf of the PedNet Study Group*

1. Center for Thrombosis and Haemostasis, Skåne University Hospital, Malmö, Sweden
2. Department of Paediatric Haematology and Oncology, Skåne University Hospital, Lund, Sweden
3. Department of Clinical Sciences and Paediatrics, Lund University, Lund
4. PedNet Haemophilia Research Foundation, Baarn, The Netherlands
5. Department of Oncology Careggi University Hospital, Florence, Italy
6. Centre de Référence de l'Hémophilie et des Maladies Hémorragiques Constitutionnelles, et HITH UMR_S1176 INSERM, Hopital Bicêtre, APHP Université Paris Saclay, Le Kremlin Bicêtre, France
7. National Hemophilia Center Sheba Medical center, Tel Hashomer & Amalia Biron Research Institute of Thrombosis & Hemostasis, Tel Aviv University, Israel
8. Goethe University Frankfurt, University Hospital, Department of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, Clinical and Molecular Haemostasis, Frankfurt, Germany
9. Department of Paediatrics, Medical University Hospital of Vienna, Vienna, Austria
10. Department of Paediatric Haematology, Our Lady's Children's Hospital for Sick Children, Crumlin, Dublin, Ireland
11. Paediatric Thrombosis and Haemostasis Unit, Paediatric Haemophilia Center, Dr. von Hauner Children's Hospital, LMU Munich, Munich, Germany
12. Paediatric Haematology, Royal Hospital for Children, Glasgow, UK
13. Center for Benign Haematology, Thrombosis and Haemostasis, Van Creveld Kliniek, University Medical Center Utrecht, Utrecht, The Netherlands
14. Department of Paediatric Haematology and Oncology, Second Faculty of Medicine, Charles University/University Hospital Motol, Prague, Czech Republic
15. Medical Faculty, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

Equal contribution.

*complete list of the PedNet group/contributors in the supplementary appendix

The Pednet Registry (www.pednet.eu) is registered at:

ClinicalTrials.gov identifier NCT02979119

Corresponding author:

Nadine G. Andersson, Centre for Thrombosis and Haemostasis, Jan Waldenströms gata 16, Skåne University Hospital, 20502 Malmö, Sweden

Email: nadine.gretenkort_andersson@med.lu.se

Phone: +46-40-331000

Word count: 3097

Authors' contribution

N.G.A., K.F. and M.d.K. are responsible for the concept and design of the study; E.Z. and K.F. contributed equally as last authors. All authors participated in the analysis and interpretation of data; drafting, writing and/or revising of the manuscript. Each author listed on the title page of the manuscript has approved the submission of this version of the manuscript and takes full responsibility for the manuscript. Contributors belonging to the PedNet Study Group are listed as collaborative group "PedNet Group" in the online submission and as Supplement Table S1 in the Supplement Section.

Disclosures:

N.G.A. has served as a speaker for lectures, educational courses and/or on Advisory Boards for CSL Behring, Octapharma and Sobi/Sanofi and received grants/research support to the institution from NovoNordisk and Sanofi. M.d.K. declares no conflict of interest. G.C. has served as a speaker for lectures, presentations, speakers' bureau, or educational events for Bayer, Bioviiix, CSL Behring, Biomarin, Sanofi, Novo Nordisk, Takeda, LFB, Roche and SOBI and participated on a Data Safety Monitoring Board or Advisory Board for Bayer, CSL Behring, Biomarin, Sanofi, Novo Nordisk, Takeda, LFB and Roche. R.d.O. has received grants or funding outside this study from Shire/Takeda, Biomarin, CSL Behring, LFB, NovoNordisk, Octapharma, Pfizer, Roche, Sobi/Sanofi, Spark and UniQure; served as a speaker and/or on advisory boards for Shire/Takeda, Biomarin, CSL Behring, LFB, NovoNordisk, Octapharma, Pfizer, Roche, Sobi/Sanofi, Spark and UniQure. G.K. declares Grant/Research support or funding outside this study for BSF, Pfizer, Roche, Tel Aviv University and Sheba research authorities; consulting fees from ASC therapeutics, Bayer, Biomarin, Novo Nordisk, Pfizer, Roche, Sobi, Sanofi- Genzyme, Takeda, UniQure outside this study and participation on a Data Safety Monitoring Board or Advisory Board for ASC therapeutics, BioMarine, Pfizer, Novonordisk, Uniquore, Roche, Sanofi- Genzyme, Sobi, Spark; director for PedNet. C.K.'s institution has received funds for research or clinical trials from Bayer, Biotest, CSL Behring, Intersero, Novo Nordisk, Pfizer, Roche/Chugai, Sobi/Sanofi, Takeda, EU H2020 ITN and he has served as an advisor or speaker for BFSH, Bayer, Biotest, CSL Behring, MSD, Novo Nordisk, Roche/Chugai, Sobi/Sanofi, Takeda. C.M received research support/grants to

institution outside the submitted work from Bayer, Biotest, CSL Behring, Novo Nordisk, Swedish Orphan Biovitrum, Takeda; personal honoraria/travel support from Bayer, Biomarin, Biotest, Bioproducts Laboratory, CSL Behring, LFB, Novo Nordisk, Pfizer, Roche, Swedish Orphan Biovitrum Takeda. B.N. has received support for pharmaceutical studies of IMP from Roche, Takeda, Sanofi, Sobi and Novo Nordisk and served at an Advisory board for Sobi (fee paid to institution). M.O. has received grants/research support from Bayer, Biomarin, Biotest, Takeda, CSL Behring Octapharma, Pfizer, Shire, Roche, Stago and Swedish Orphan Biovitrium, consultancy and speaker fees from Bayer, BioMarin, Biotest, Novo Nordisk, Takeda, CSL Behring, Pfizer, Roche and Swedish Orphan Biovitrium. F. P. has received financial support from Roche for participating in advisory board and for attending meeting. S.S. declares no conflict of interest. E.Z. has served as a consultant, honoraria for lectures or advisory boards for NovoNordisk, Roche, Sobi and Takeda. Grant from MH CZ – DRO, Motol University Hospital, Prague, Czech Republic 00064203. KF has acted as a consultant and participated in expert groups for Bayer, Biogen, CSL Behring, NovoNordisk, and SOBI, has received research grants from Bayer, NovoNordisk, Pfizer, and has given invited educational lectures for Bayer, NovoNordisk, and Pfizer, and has received travel support from Sobi and Bayer. All fees were paid to the institution.

Data sharing statement:

All data used in this study are from the PedNet Registry, which is governed by the nonprofit-making organization PedNet Haemophilia Research Foundation. The data that support the findings of this study are available from the Registry of the PedNet Haemophilia Research Foundation. Restrictions apply to the availability of these data, which were used under license for this study. Data are available from the authors with the permission of the PedNet Registry Foundation (www.pednet.eu).

Trial registration: registered at ClinicalTrials.gov at NCT02979119

Funding:

This study is supported by the PedNet Haemophilia Research Foundation. Unrestricted sponsorship for the PedNet Haemophilia Foundation is currently received from Bayer AG, Biotest AG, LFB Biotechnologies, Novo Nordisk Healthcare AG, Pfizer SRL, CSL Behring GmbH, Sanofi, Swedish Orphan Biovitrum AB (SOBI), Takeda, Hoffmann La-Roche NGA received an

unrestricted research grant from Ulla Hedner Foundation, Denmark (2023). EZ received an unrestricted research grant from MH CZ – DRO, Motol University Hospital, Prague, Czech Republic 00064203.

Acknowledgements:

The authors greatly appreciate the support of the PedNet Foundation staff members.

Abstract:

Children with hemophilia have a significantly higher risk of intracranial hemorrhage (ICH) compared to the normal population. Prophylaxis reduces the risk of ICH and earlier initiation of prophylaxis may now be feasible, especially in hemophilia A (HA). The aim of the study is to explore the potential for preventing ICH by earlier start of prophylaxis by assessing the natural course of ICH before the initiation of prophylaxis and describe timing and incidence. In total, 2727 children (2275 with HA; 452 with HB) were included from the PedNet Registry, followed from 28 days until 36 months of life. ICH was observed in 61 children (incidence 2.2%; 10 per 1000 patient years), with 75% of cases occurring before one year of age. Cumulative incidence was significantly lower in HB (0.9%) compared to HA (2.5%) and in non-severe HA (0.7%) compared to severe HA (3.5%). ICH occurred early, with a rise at 3 months, and a median age of 7.0 months in severe HA and 5.4 months in severe HB. In 40% of children, ICH occurred before the diagnosis of hemophilia was established, underscoring the importance of early diagnosis. Assuming that prophylaxis would have been started at the time of diagnosis and preventing all ICH in children with severe HA, the number needed to treat with prophylaxis would be 44 patients to prevent one ICH. Hopefully, prophylaxis options allowing initiation early in life, ideally before 3 months of age for children with severe HA, will reduce the incidence of ICH in the future.

Introduction

Children with hemophilia have a significantly increased risk of intracranial hemorrhage (ICH) compared to the normal population¹. The consequences of ICH in children with hemophilia can be severe, ranging from acute neurological impairment to long-term developmental disabilities or even death²⁻⁴. Studies of children with hemophilia with ICH have reported mortality rates ranging from 2.5% to 30.4%⁵⁻⁸. Instrumental delivery by forceps or vacuum extraction significantly increases the odds of ICH more than 4 -fold in neonates with hemophilia⁹⁻¹¹. When compared with later childhood, neonates have the highest incidence of ICH, where mode of delivery, especially instrumental delivery, and prematurity have to be taken into account, followed by children up to 2 years of age^{4, 12}. In a UK national cohort study the median age at presentation of ICH was 5 months for children with hemophilia and 91% of ICH occurred <2 years of age¹⁰. ICH can occur after trauma or spontaneously, especially in patients with severe hemophilia. In a recent meta-analysis, ICH was classified as spontaneous in 35-58% of patients with hemophilia⁸.

Prophylactic replacement therapy with factor concentrates has not only significantly reduced the occurrence of joint bleeds, but also the incidence of ICH, especially in severe hemophilia A (HA)^{13, 14}. Prophylaxis with factor concentrates has become the standard of care for severe and moderate HA and hemophilia B (HB) patients and has been started earlier over the past decades—in many countries with access to these therapies¹⁵. However, starting earlier than around one year of age remains challenging, mostly due to difficulties with regular intravenous access, the risk of development of inhibitors and adherence¹⁶⁻¹⁸. In recent years, new treatment options with non-replacement therapies have emerged. Emicizumab, a bispecific antibody administered subcutaneously every 1-4 weeks is licensed for all ages and available in many countries. Prophylaxis with emicizumab can be initiated very early in life in children with hemophilia A^{19, 20}.

The PedNet (Paediatric Network on Haemophilia Management) Registry collects prospective data on children with HA or HB born since January 1, 2000, in 32 Hemophilia Centers in 19 countries. Children are followed prospectively from birth until 18 years of age and data are collected at least annually including data on start of prophylaxis, treatment details and major bleeds such as ICH²¹.

The aim of this study is to assess the incidence of ICH in children with hemophilia after the neonatal period before the initiation of prophylaxis in the PedNet Registry to explore the potential of preventing ICH by earlier start of prophylaxis.

Methods

Study group

Data were retrieved from the 'PedNet Registry', which is owned and administered by the 'PedNet Haemophilia Research Foundation', consisting of 32 international Hemophilia Treatment Centers, and registered at clinicaltrials.gov identifier: NCT02979119. The PedNet Registry includes all consecutive patients diagnosed and treated in each Centre born after 1st January 2000. Patient data are collected prospectively from birth onwards and detailed information is collected on the first 50 exposure days of treatment with factor concentrate; thereafter at least annually. All major bleeds, including ICH are recorded with detailed information. Approval for data collection was obtained from the Institutional Ethics Boards of each of the participating centers, and written informed consent was obtained from the parents or guardians of all participants in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. The data quality in the PedNet Registry is monitored regularly and independent audits are carried out in all participating centers. A list of all contributors is found in the Supplementary.

Inclusion criteria

Children included in the Registry by 1st January 2023 with HA and HB were enrolled following the inclusion criteria of the PedNet protocol (available at www.pednet.eu). To describe the natural course of ICH before the start of prophylaxis, data was extracted on each patient from 28 days of life until start of prophylaxis or until occurrence of ICH or until 36 months of age. Children with ICH occurring before 28 days of life were excluded from this analysis to exclude birth related bleeding such as instrumental delivery and prematurity.

Definitions

Hemophilia severity was defined as severe with a factor VIII/IX activity less than 0.01 IU/dL, moderate with a factor VIII/IX activity of 0.01-0.05 IU/dL, and mild with a factor VIII/IX

activity of 0.06-0.25 IU/dL. Start of prophylaxis was defined as a minimum of one factor injection per week for standard half-life factor VIII and IX concentrates and for extended half-life FVIII concentrates over a period of two months. For HB, prophylaxis with extended half-life FIX concentrates was defined as a minimum of one injection per two weeks over a period of at least two months. For emicizumab, the first injection was counted as start of prophylaxis. The primary outcome was ICH requiring treatment with factor concentrate as reported and confirmed by the investigator of each center. Events when patients were treated preventively with factor concentrate after a head injury without evidence for ICH were not considered as ICH in this analysis.

Data collection

Data was collected on type of hemophilia, severity, gender, date of hemophilia diagnosis, ICH including information on whether traumatic or spontaneous, whether neurosurgery needed and start of prophylaxis.

Statistical analysis

Patient characteristics are presented as medians and P25-P75 percentiles (interquartile range: IQR). Statistical comparisons between different groups were made using χ^2 test or Fisher's exact test at a significance level of 0.05. Kaplan-Meier Survival curves were used for analyzing time until ICH with log rank tests for comparison of subgroups. Statistical power was shown by the width and magnitude of the 95% Confidence Interval (95%CI). All analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 29.0.0.0 Armonk, NY: IBM Corp., NY, USA. Numbers needed to treat (NNT) was calculated by the formula $NNT=1/\text{absolute risk reduction}$, assuming that prophylaxis could prevent all ICH.

Results

Cohort demography

In total, 2727 patients were included in this study: 2275 with HA (83.4%) and 452 HB (16.6%), the observation covering a total of 5629 patient years. Regarding severity and details of the cohort demography, see table 1. The cohort included 23 girls, including four with severe hemophilia and four with moderate hemophilia. Median age at diagnosis of hemophilia was 3.9 months (IQR 0.0-9.8) for severe HA and 4.2 months (IQR 0.0-9.8) for

severe HB. Diagnosis was delayed in mild HA and HB (table 1). Patients were analyzed until start of prophylaxis with factor concentrate or emicizumab or occurrence of ICH or reaching 36 months of life; 121 over, 4.4% of the cohort, did not reach the end of follow-up. The median follow-up time was at 13.0 months (IQR 9.4-18.9) in HA and 14.4 months (IQR 9.5-19.3) in HB.

Intracranial hemorrhages

In the total cohort of 2727 children, 61 ICH occurred, resulting in a cumulative incidence of 2.2% (CI 1.7-2.8), and incidence rate of 10 ICH per 1000 patient years (CI 8-14), see table 2. Of the 61 patients with ICH, 51 had severe HA, four had severe HB, three had moderate HA and three mild HA (table 2). ICH was not observed in moderate or mild HB. The incidence for ICH in severe hemophilia, 23 per 1000 patient years, was significantly higher compared to non-severe patients, 1.8 per 1000 patient years ($p < 0.00001$).

HA had a significantly higher incidence rates of ICH than HB: 12 versus 4 per 1000 patient years ($p = 0.018$). Incidence rates for ICH followed the severity of hemophilia: 24 for severe HA and 11 for severe HB, 4 for moderate HA and 2 per 1000 patient years for mild HA (table 2). One of the three girls with severe HA had an ICH.

The cause of ICH for severe HA was traumatic in 19 children (37.2%), spontaneous in 17 (33.3%) children and unknown in 15 cases (29.4%). The distribution of causes was about similar between patients with or without established diagnosis of hemophilia. Three ICH occurred in the moderate HA group: one in a patient with a FVIII activity level of 1 IU/dL (traumatic, at age 4 months), one in a patient with a FVIII activity level of 2 IU/dL (traumatic, at age 5 months) and one in a patient with FVIII activity level of 3 IU/dL (spontaneous, at age 30 months), respectively. Three children in the mild HA group had ICH secondary to trauma. Two of these children were diagnosed with HA only at the time of ICH, at age 7 and 11 months and FVIII activity 6 and 15 IU/dL, respectively.

In severe HB, the diagnosis of hemophilia was made at the time of presentation with ICH in 3 of 4 ICH. Two of four ICH were due to trauma (table 2). No spontaneous ICH were reported in children with HB or in children with mild HA.

Neurosurgical intervention was required in 23 of 61 patients (37.7%) with ICH, 22 with severe hemophilia (22/51; 43.1%) and only one with moderate hemophilia (1/3; 33.3%). No data on neurological sequelae was collected for this study.

Timing of ICH in relation to age

Only one ICH was observed before the age of 3 months, at the age of 1.2 months (observation time starting from 28 days of life). By six months of age, 37% (21/57) of ICH had occurred in HA and 50% (2/4) of HB and by 12 months 79% (45/57) of ICH had occurred in HA and 75% (3/4) of ICH in HB (including both patients diagnosed with hemophilia and undiagnosed patients), see table 3. The median age at the time of ICH was 7.0 months (IQR 4.4-11.1) for severe HA and 5.4 months (IQR 4.0-12.8) for severe HB. Figures 1 and 2a and 2b show the timing of ICH for all patients - severe and non-severe for all hemophilia (figure 1) and separately for HA (figure 2a) and HB (figure 2b). Similar timing of ICH was observed in all three categories of ICH cause – traumatic, spontaneous, and unknown without any significant difference in timing (data not shown).

Timing of ICH in relation to diagnosis of hemophilia

In 25 of 61 ICH (40.9%), ICH occurred before the diagnosis of hemophilia was made, in most cases ICH was the reason for diagnosis. Inversely, 36 of 61 ICH (59.1%) occurred in children whose diagnosis of hemophilia was already established, 33 in children with severe HA. Children without a diagnosis of hemophilia had ICH at an earlier age compared to children with an established diagnosis (p value 0.021 in log rank, see also figure in supplement for illustration). Table 3 shows, for children with and without an established hemophilia diagnosis at time of ICH, the cumulative proportion of ICH per three months age periods. In children with an established diagnosis of hemophilia before occurrence of ICH, 31% of ICH had occurred by 6 months of age, thus the remaining 69% could potentially have been prevented by starting all children on prophylaxis by 6 months. By 12 months of age, 69% of ICH had occurred, etc. For further illustration, see also supplemental figure S1.

Discussion

This prospective multicenter study, which included 2727 children observed for 5629 patient years with HA and HB from 32 hemophilia centers without prophylaxis, shows that ICH in hemophilia after the neonatal period occurs early from the age of 1 month with an increase at three months of age. The cumulative incidence for ICH was 2.2 % for the whole cohort and, as expected, was higher for severe hemophilia patients than for non-severe hemophilia patients. Also, the incidence of ICH was higher for HA (2.5%) than HB (0.9%). One of 23 girls was diagnosed with an ICH. In the children with an established diagnosis of hemophilia before ICH (n=36; 59.1%) and in whom ICH could potentially be prevented, 31% of ICH had already occurred by six months of age and 69% by 12 months of age. No ICH was reported in moderate and mild HB.

The cumulative incidence of 2.2 % for ICH and incidence rate of 10 ICH per 1000 patient years for the whole cohort, 2.5% ,12/1000 patient years for HA and 0.9%, 4 per 1000 patient years for HB is in line with other studies: A review noted that ICH affects between 3% to 10% of all hemophilia patients¹. In a UK national study, in a cohort from birth until 16 years of age and including patients on prophylaxis, an incidence of 6.4 per 1000 patient years (95%CI 4.8-8.6) for HA and 4.2 per 1000 patient years (95%CI 1.9-9.5) for HB was found¹⁰. Our cohort displays the natural course of ICH in young children below 36 months of age. This is in line with several studies, showing a relatively high occurrence of ICH in young children with haemophilia: A US study showed that children in the youngest age group (2-9 years) exhibited the highest odds ratio of 1.92 for the occurrence of ICH¹⁴ and in addition, an Italian study observed the highest risk of ICH during the first two years of life, but also later during adulthood⁷.

The incidence of ICH was significantly higher for HA than HB. This is in accordance with other studies reporting a tendency for a difference in ICH incidence between HA and HB¹⁰. It has been discussed whether patients with severe HB probably have a generally less severe clinical phenotype than severe HA patients with e.g. less joint replacement by arthroplasty^{22, 23}. Future studies with a focus on the differences between HA and HB need to be done to further explore this topic.

Prophylaxis is known to reduce the incidence of ICH^{13, 14} and should ideally start as early as possible. Some of the barriers for the start of prophylaxis such as the need for intravenous access have now been addressed: For patients with HA, emicizumab can be started early. The pivotal study in neonates and infants (HAVEN 7) is still ongoing, but the recently reported primary analysis show promising results in this patient group, with no ICH reported, however, in a very limited number of 52 patients with a 95% CI of 0-5.6% for ICH incidence²⁰. Given the relatively low incidence of ICH, further evaluation is required in a larger number of patients to assess the effect of emicizumab prophylaxis on ICH incidence. In addition, other non-replacement therapies such as fitusiran^{24, 25} or concizumab^{26, 27} could also be started early and could also be used in HB, which lack alternatives to CFCs in young children, but these products are still under investigation in clinical trials. More research is needed to determine if these products are suitable in neonates and infants. Earlier prophylaxis for patients with HA could also be possible with a new extended half-life FVIII concentrate, EHL rFVIII-Fc-VWD-EXTEN, which has reached the market due to its longer half-life and 1-week injection intervals^{28, 29}, avoiding the need for central venous devices.

However, only patients diagnosed with hemophilia can be started on prophylaxis, emphasizing the importance of early diagnosis for both, boys and girls. As recommended in the WFH hemophilia guidelines, the training and educating of both medical staff and families with hemophilia is of high importance³⁰. In families with a known family history of hemophilia, carriers should get diagnosed and when pregnant, prenatal or early postnatal diagnosis can be made. In our study, approximately 40% of patients did not have an established diagnosis of hemophilia at the time of ICH and in this group, ICH occurred earlier and was frequently the reason for the diagnosis of hemophilia. In these cases, unexpected bleeding and/or a prolonged activated partial thromboplastin time (aPTT) are the most typical indicators of suspected hemophilia and their immediate diagnosis is crucial to offer the best treatment in children with ICH³¹. To improve diagnosis even more in this group and due to advances in genomic sequencing, some countries have projects to implement screening for hemophilia into newborn screening, e.g. “The Generation Study” in the UK (<https://www.genomicsengland.co.uk/initiatives/newborns>)³². This possibility for an early diagnosis of hemophilia would most likely have an impact on the timing of prophylaxis initiation and with that on the prevention of early bleeding in the hemophilia population³³.

However, in our study, the majority of 60% of ICH occurred when the diagnosis of hemophilia was already established and could potentially be prevented by an immediate start of prophylaxis. In this study, 33 ICH occurred in 1466 children after the diagnosis of severe HA was made, resulting in an incidence of 2.2%. If we assume that prophylaxis started immediately in children with severe HA at the time of diagnosis would lower the incidence of ICH to 0%, the number needed to treat with prophylaxis would be 44 patients to prevent one ICH; traumatic ICH is included in this calculation. Prevention of all traumatic ICH in children on prophylaxis with e.g. emicizumab may not be possible and the number needed to treat could be higher.

Strengths of our study are the large population, multicenter design, and longitudinal follow-up of an unselected cohort. One of the limitations was the challenge in obtaining information on the cause of ICH (spontaneous or traumatic), due to unclear patient histories. Moreover, 4.4% (121 patients) did not reach the end of follow-up, defined as occurrence of ICH, start of prophylaxis, or age of 36 months. Also, data was collected over the past two decades with changes in treatment recommendations during that period. Treatment was significantly started earlier in the PedNet registry during the last decade¹⁵, which may have resulted in a shorter period at risk for ICH for these patients over time.

Twenty-three girls with hemophilia were included. Girls with hemophilia are likely to be underreported in most studies. However, our study included several girls with severe hemophilia with one girl experiencing an ICH. In accordance with the principles of care, woman and girls who are carriers of hemophilia should be offered factor level analysis and if fulfilling the criteria for hemophilia, should be followed and treated as per hemophilia guidelines by EAHAD and WFH^{30, 34}.

In this large multicenter study of children with hemophilia, we observed the majority of ICH in severe HA (51/61; incidence 3.5%), while non-severe hemophilia and HB showed significantly lower frequencies of ICH. ICH after the neonatal period occurs early, with a clear increase at 3 months of age and around 75% of cases occurring before the age of 12 months. Approximately 40% of ICH occurred in patients before the diagnosis of hemophilia was

made, underscoring the importance of early diagnosis. The majority of 60% of ICH occurred after an established diagnosis of hemophilia and could potentially have been prevented by an immediate start of prophylaxis. Hopefully, prophylaxis options allowing initiation early, ideally before three months of age in severe HA, will change the incidence of ICH in children in the future.

References:

1. Ljung RC. Intracranial haemorrhage in haemophilia A and B. *Br J Haematol.* 2008;140(4):378-384.
2. de Tezanos Pinto M, Fernandez J, Perez Bianco PR. Update of 156 episodes of central nervous system bleeding in hemophiliacs. *Haemostasis.* 1992;22(5):259-267.
3. Morales G, Matute E, Murray J, Hardy DJ, O'Callaghan ET, Tlacuilo-Parra A. Is executive function intact after pediatric intracranial hemorrhage? A sample of Mexican children with hemophilia. *Clin Pediatr (Phila).* 2013;52(10):950-959.
4. Andersson NG, Wu R, Carcao M, et al. Long-term follow-up of neonatal intracranial haemorrhage in children with severe haemophilia. *Br J Haematol.* 2020;190(2):e101-e104.
5. Stieltjes N, Calvez T, Demiguel V, et al. Intracranial haemorrhages in French haemophilia patients (1991-2001): clinical presentation, management and prognosis factors for death. *Haemophilia.* 2005;11(5):452-458.
6. Witmer CM. Low mortality from intracranial haemorrhage in paediatric patients with haemophilia. *Haemophilia.* 2015;21(5):e359-363.
7. Zanon E, Pasca S, Demartis F, et al. Intracranial Haemorrhage in Haemophilia Patients Is Still an Open Issue: The Final Results of the Italian EMO.REC Registry. *J Clin Med.* 2022;11(7):1969.
8. Zwagemaker AF, Gouw SC, Jansen JS, et al. Incidence and mortality rates of intracranial hemorrhage in hemophilia: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Blood.* 2021;138(26):2853-2873.
9. Davies J, Kadir RA. Mode of delivery and cranial bleeding in newborns with haemophilia: a systematic review and meta-analysis of the literature. *Haemophilia.* 2016;22(1):32-38.
10. Chalmers EA, Alamelu J, Collins PW, et al. Intracranial haemorrhage in children with inherited bleeding disorders in the UK 2003-2015: A national cohort study. *Haemophilia.* 2018;24(4):641-647.
11. Andersson NG, Chalmers EA, Kenet G, Ljung R, Mäkipernaa A, Chambost H. Mode of delivery in hemophilia: vaginal delivery and Cesarean section carry similar risks for intracranial hemorrhages and other major bleeds. *Haematologica.* 2019;104(10):2100-2106.
12. Kulkarni R, Presley RJ, Lusher JM, et al. Complications of haemophilia in babies (first two years of life): a report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Universal Data Collection System. *Haemophilia.* 2017;23(2):207-214.
13. Andersson NG, Auerswald G, Barnes C, et al. Intracranial haemorrhage in children and adolescents with severe haemophilia A or B - the impact of prophylactic treatment. *Br J Haematol.* 2017;179(2):298-307.
14. Witmer C, Presley R, Kulkarni R, Soucie JM, Manno CS, Raffini L. Associations between intracranial haemorrhage and prescribed prophylaxis in a large cohort of haemophilia patients in the United States. *Br J Haematol.* 2011;152(2):211-216.
15. Ljung R, de Kovel M, van den Berg HM, PedNet study g. Primary prophylaxis in children with severe haemophilia A and B-Implementation over the last 20 years as illustrated in real-world data in the PedNet cohorts. *Haemophilia.* 2023;29(2):498-504.
16. Lindvall K, Colstrup L, Wollter IM, et al. Compliance with treatment and understanding of own disease in patients with severe and moderate haemophilia. *Haemophilia.* 2006;12(1):47-51.
17. Gouw SC, van der Bom JG, Ljung R, et al. Factor VIII products and inhibitor development in severe hemophilia A. *N Engl J Med.* 2013;368(3):231-239.

18. Khair K, Ranta S, Thomas A, Lindvall K, PedNet study g. The impact of clinical practice on the outcome of central venous access devices in children with haemophilia. *Haemophilia*. 2017;23(4):e276-e281.
19. Young G. Management of children with hemophilia A: How emicizumab has changed the landscape. *J Thromb Haemost*. 2021;19(7):1629-1637.
20. Pipe SM, Collins PW, Dhalluin C, et al. Emicizumab prophylaxis in infants with hemophilia A (HAVEN 7): primary analysis of a phase 3b, open-label trial. *Blood*. 2024;143(14):1355-1364.
21. Fischer K, Ljung R, Platokouki H, et al. Prospective observational cohort studies for studying rare diseases: the European PedNet Haemophilia Registry. *Haemophilia*. 2014;20(4):e280-286.
22. Morfini M, Agnelli Giacchiello J, Baldacci E, et al. Managing Relevant Clinical Conditions of Hemophilia A/B Patients. *Hematol Rep*. 2023;15(2):384-397.
23. Melchiorre D, Linari S, Manetti M, et al. Clinical, instrumental, serological and histological findings suggest that hemophilia B may be less severe than hemophilia A. *Haematologica*. 2016;101(2):219-225.
24. Srivastava A, Rangarajan S, Kavakli K, et al. Fitusiran prophylaxis in people with severe haemophilia A or haemophilia B without inhibitors (ATLAS-A/B): a multicentre, open-label, randomised, phase 3 trial. *Lancet Haematol*. 2023;10(5):e322-e332.
25. Pasi KJ, Rangarajan S, Georgiev P, et al. Targeting of Antithrombin in Hemophilia A or B with RNAi Therapy. *N Engl J Med*. 2017;377(9):819-828.
26. Chowdary P, Lethagen S, Friedrich U, et al. Safety and pharmacokinetics of anti-TFPI antibody (concizumab) in healthy volunteers and patients with hemophilia: a randomized first human dose trial. *J Thromb Haemost*. 2015;13(5):743-754.
27. Shapiro AD, Angchaisuksiri P, Astermark J, et al. Long-term efficacy and safety of subcutaneous concizumab prophylaxis in hemophilia A and hemophilia A/B with inhibitors. *Blood Adv*. 2022;6(11):3422-3432.
28. von Drygalski A, Chowdary P, Kulkarni R, et al. Efanesoctocog Alfa Prophylaxis for Patients with Severe Hemophilia A. *N Engl J Med*. 2023;388(4):310-318.
29. Konkle BA, Shapiro AD, Quon DV, et al. BIVV001 Fusion Protein as Factor VIII Replacement Therapy for Hemophilia A. *N Engl J Med*. 2020;383(11):1018-1027.
30. Srivastava A, Santagostino E, Dougall A, et al. WFH Guidelines for the Management of Hemophilia, 3rd edition. *Haemophilia*. 2020;26(Suppl 6):1-158.
31. Andersson NG, Kenet G. Intracranial Hemorrhages in Neonates: Incidence, Risk Factors, and Treatment. *Semin Thromb Hemost*. 2023;49(4):409-415.
32. Boardman FK, Hale R, Young PJ. Newborn screening for haemophilia: The views of families and adults living with haemophilia in the UK. *Haemophilia*. 2019;25(2):276-282.
33. Moorehead PC. Considering the benefits of newborn screening for haemophilia. *Haemophilia*. 2019;25(4):e298-e299.
34. van Galen KPM, d'Oiron R, James P, et al. A new hemophilia carrier nomenclature to define hemophilia in women and girls: Communication from the SSC of the ISTH. *J Thromb Haemost*. 2021 2021;19(8):1883-1887.

Tables:

Table 1: Demographics of the study cohort: Age at diagnosis of hemophilia shown as median and IQR.

Haemophilia	Severity	Number of patients (<i>female</i>)	Age at diagnosis in months (median, IQR)	Follow-up time in months (median, IQR)	Patient years
A	all	2275 (15)	4.5 (0.0-12.0)	13.0 (9.4 - 18.9)	4613
	severe	1466 (3)	3.9 (0.0-9.8)	12.8 (9.4–18.5)	2382
	moderate	292 (2)	3.4 (0.0-17.7)	16.1 (10.9-21.6)	756
	mild	517 (10)	7.0 (0.1-32.7)	31.3 (14.7 - 32.9)	1475
B	all	452 (8)	4.3 (0.0–13.9)	14.4 (9.5–19.3)	1016
	severe	214 (1)	4.2 (0.0-9.8)	14.4 (9.6–18.8)	357
	moderate	116 (2)	0.6 (0.0–15.4)	14.2 (9.4-24.7)	302
	mild	122 (5)	10.5 (0.1-39.2)	-*	357
Total		2727 (23)	4.4 (0.0-12.2)	13.2 (9.4–19.0)	5629

Follow-up time is shown as median and IQR in months for patients in the study (from 28 days of age until start of prophylaxis), patient years in years. * indicates that numbers are too low for analysis; only two mild HB patients on prophylaxis

Table 2: Frequencies of intracranial hemorrhage before initiation of prophylaxis by hemophilia type and severity

Hemophilia	Severity	ICH [n]	Cause: traumatic/ spontaneous/ Unknown [n]	Cumulative incidence [% (95% CI)]	Incidence rate [per 1000 patient years (95% CI)]
A	All (n=2275)	57	24/18/15	2.5 (1.9-3.1)	12 (9-16)
	Severe (n=1466)	51	19/17/15	3.5 (2.5-4.4)	24 (16-27)
	Moderate (n=292)	3	2/1/0	1.0 (0-2.2)	4 (0-8)
	Mild (n=517)	3	3/0/0	0.6 (0-1.2)	2 (0-4)
B	All (n=452)	4	2/0/2	0.9 (0-1.7)	4 (0-8)
	Severe (n=214)	4	2/0/2	1.9 (0.1-3.7)	11 (0-22)
	Moderate (n=116)	0	-	0	-
	Mild (n=122)	0	-	0	-
Total	(n=2727)	61	26/18/17	2.2 (1.7-2.8)	10 (8-14)

95%CI denotes 95% confidence interval. ICH = intracranial hemorrhage.

Table 3: Cumulative proportion of total intracranial hemorrhage occurrence by age, separate for patients with and without established hemophilia diagnosis and by hemophilia type

Age in months	HA: ICH without established hemophilia diagnosis (n=22)	HA: ICH with established hemophilia diagnosis (n=35)	HA total (n=57)	HB: ICH without established hemophilia diagnosis (n=3)	HB: ICH with established hemophilia diagnosis (n=1)	HB total (n=4)
3	0% (0/22)	2.9% (1/35)	1.8% (1/57)	0% (0/3)	0% (0/1)	0% (0/4)
6	45.5% (10/22)	31.4% (11/35)	36.8% (21/57)	66.6% (2/3)	0% (0/1)	50% (2/4)
9	81.8% (18/22)	57.1% (20/35)	66.7% (38/57)	66.6% (2/3)	100% (1/1)	75% (3/4)
12	95.4% (21/22)	68.6% (24/35)	78.9% (45/57)	66.6% (2/3)	100% (1/1)	75% (3/4)
15	100% (22/22)	74.3% (26/35)	84.2% (48/57)	66.6% (2/3)	100% (1/1)	75% (3/4)
18	100% (22/22)	82.9% (29/35)	89.5% (51/57)	100% (3/3)	100% (1/1)	100% (4/4)
36	100% (22/22)	100% (35/35)	100% (57/57)	100% (3/3)	100% (1/1)	100% (4/4)

HA = haemophilia A; HB = haemophilia B; ICH = intracranial hemorrhage

Figure titles and legends:

One panel figure 1:

Figure 1:

Natural course of intracranial hemorrhage: children with severe and non-severe hemophilia A and B before initiation of prophylaxis. Cumulative incidence of intracranial hemorrhage in children with hemophilia before initiation of prophylaxis by severity with 95% confidence interval month by month.

Footnote: ICH = intracranial hemorrhage, cum incidence = cumulative incidence.

Two-panel figure 2a and 2b:

Natural course of intracranial hemorrhage in hemophilia A and B:

Figure 2a:

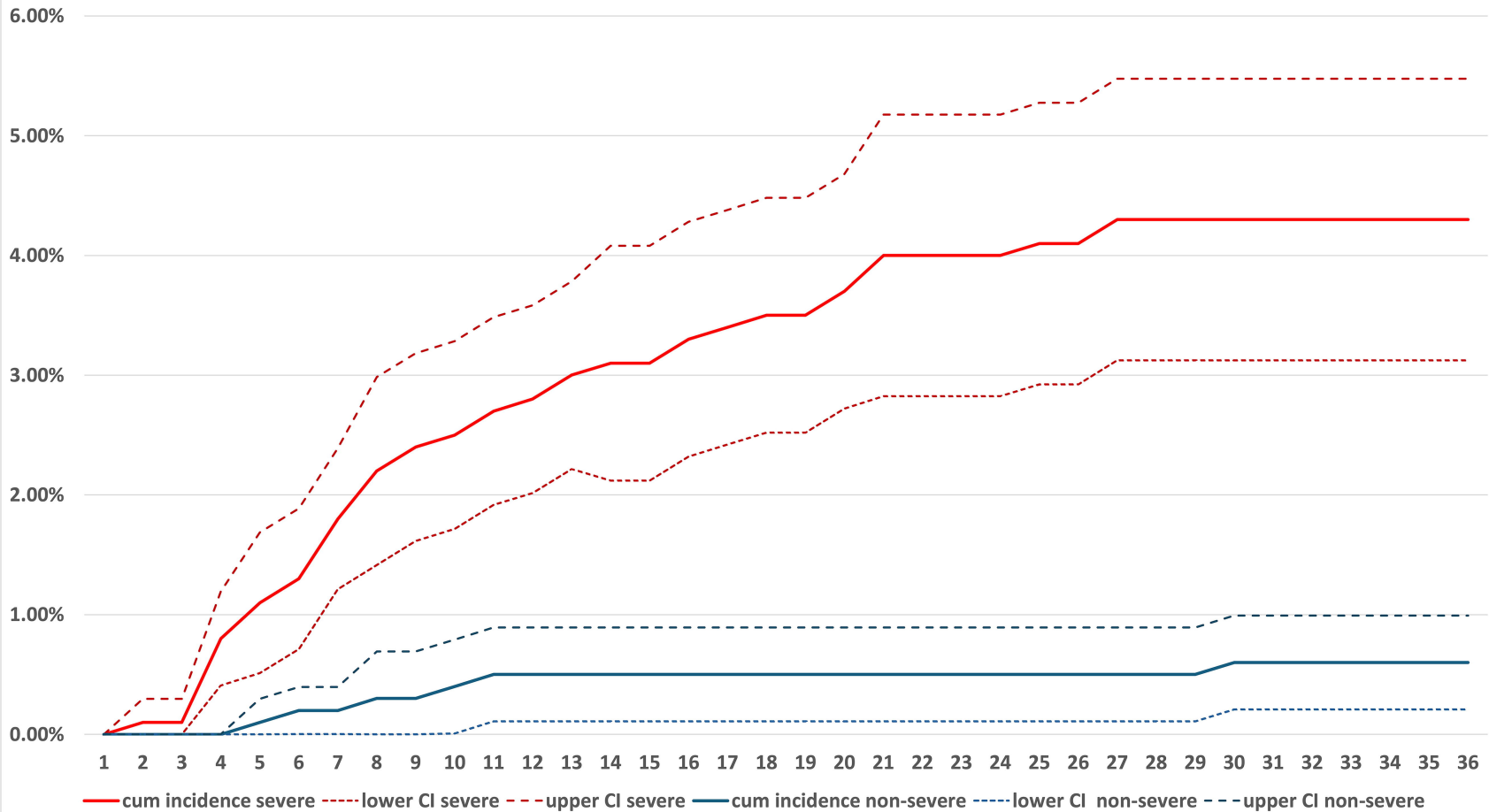
Cumulative incidence of intracranial hemorrhage in children with hemophilia A before initiation of prophylaxis by severity month by month; including all patients, with and without established diagnosis of hemophilia at the time of intracranial hemorrhage.

Figure 2b:

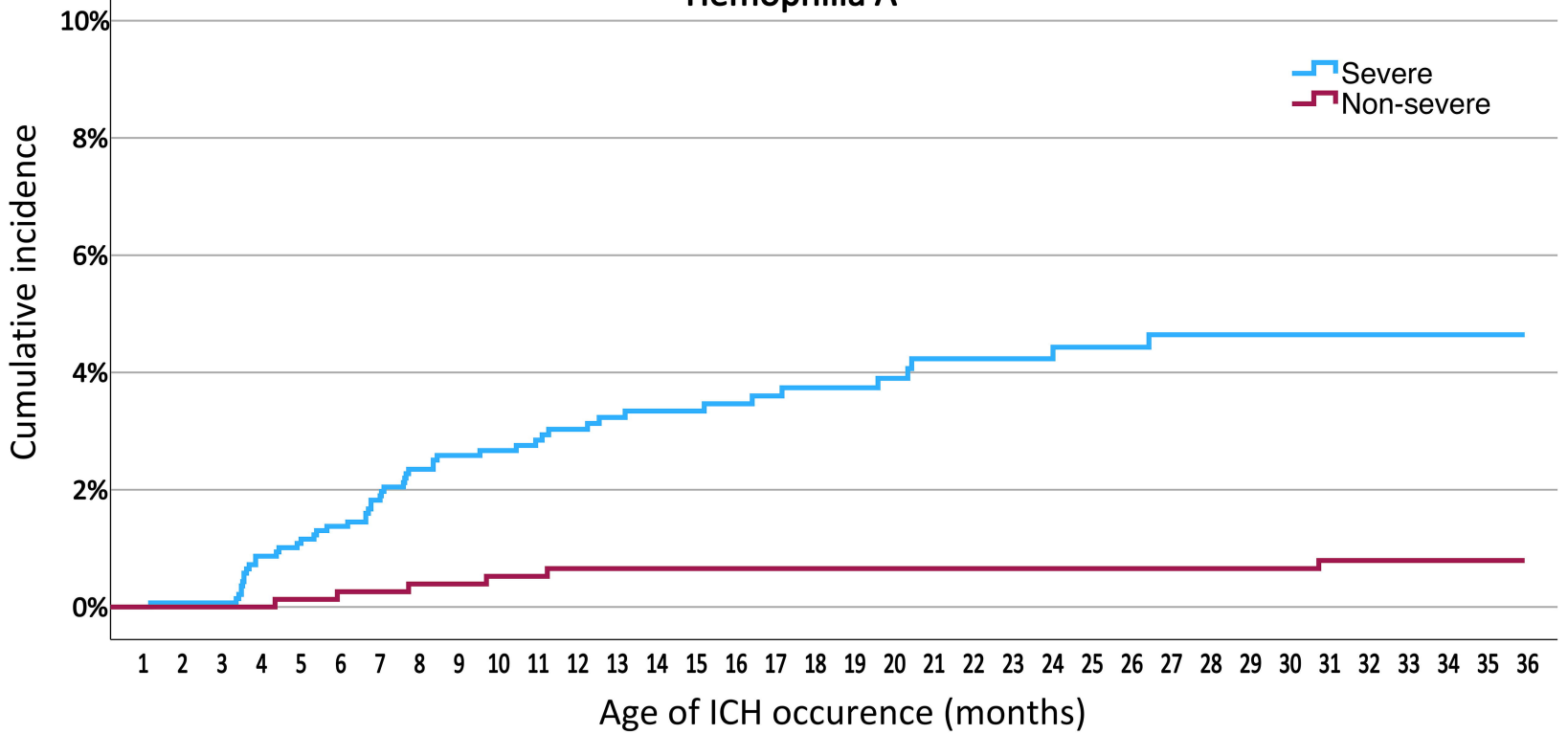
Cumulative incidence of intracranial hemorrhage in children with hemophilia B before initiation of prophylaxis by severity month by month; including all patients, with and without established diagnosis of hemophilia at the time of intracranial hemorrhage.

Footnote: ICH = intracranial hemorrhage

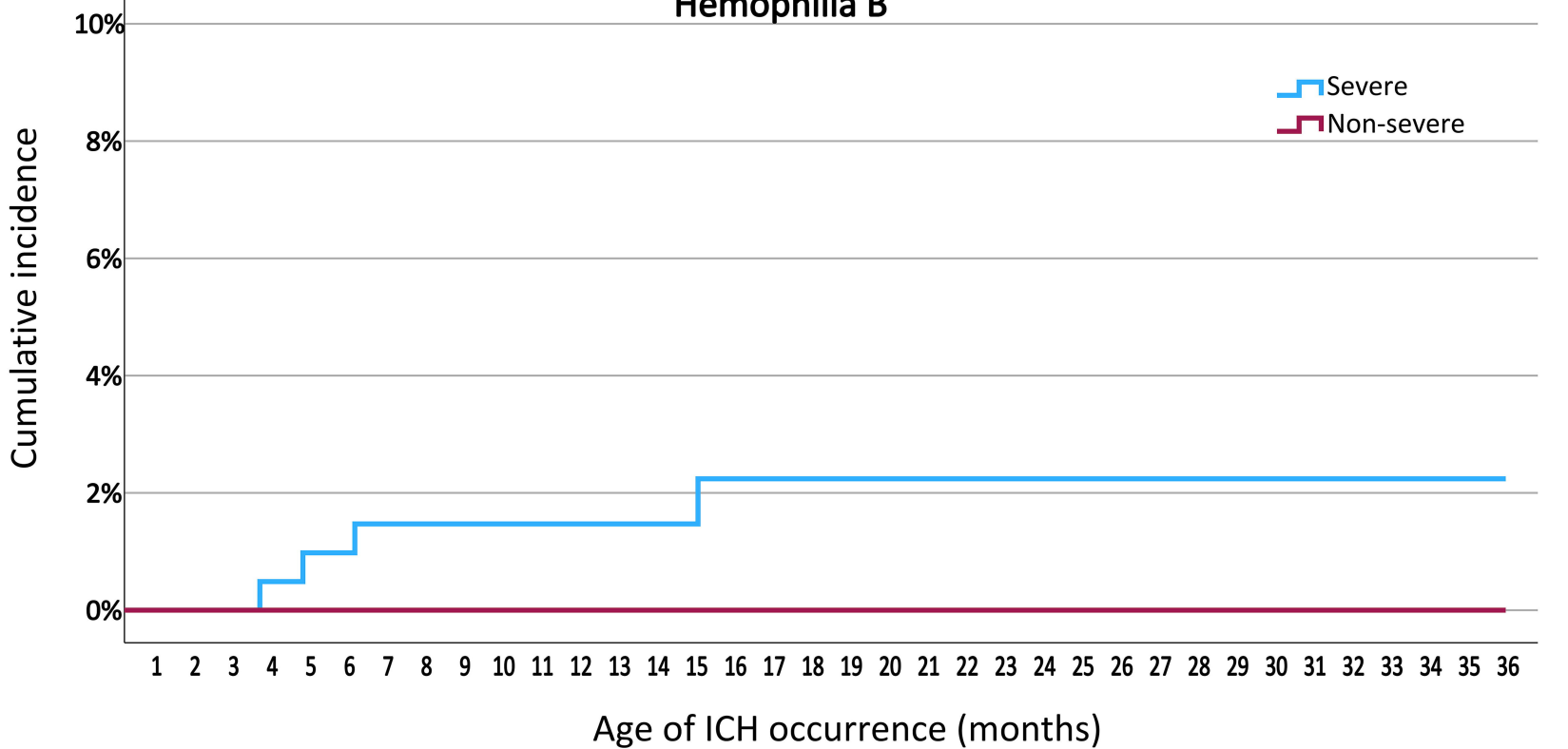
Cumulative incidence of ICH according to severity



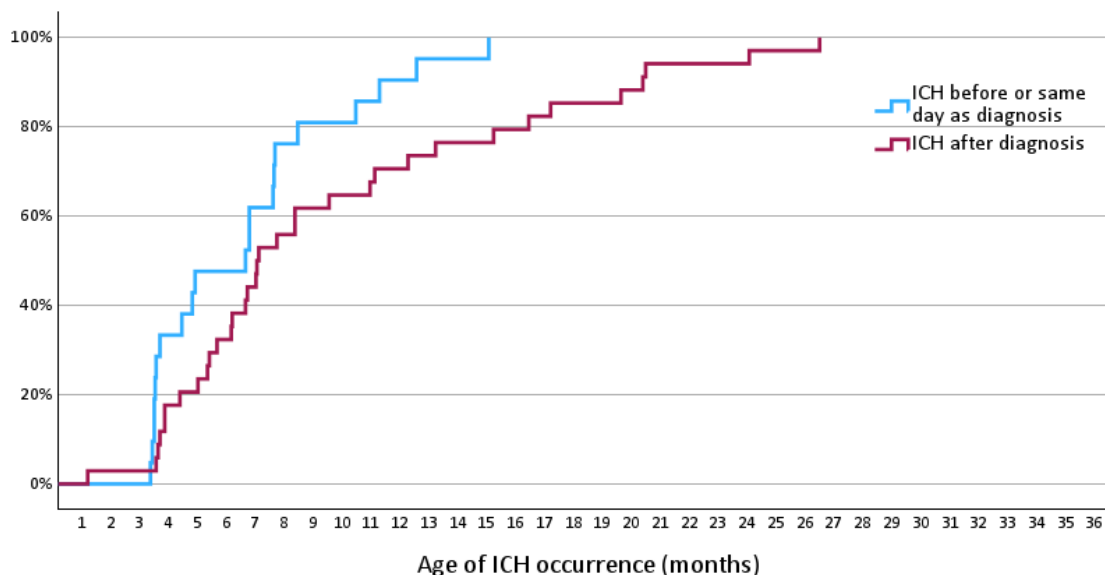
Hemophilia A



Hemophilia B



Supplement figure S1: Natural course of ICH: Proportion of all ICH patients with severe hemophilia A and B without prophylaxis: timing of ICH for patients with and without established diagnosis of hemophilia by month of age



Supplement appendix:

The PedNet Study group members and centers

Europe

- MT Alvarèz Román, Unidad de Coagulopatías, Hospital Universitario La Paz, Madrid, Spain
- O Benitez Hidalgo, Unitat Hemofilia, Hospital Vall d'Hebron, Barcelona, Spain
- J Blatny, Department of Paediatric Haematology, Children's University Hospital, Brno, Czech Republic
- M Bührlen, Gesundheit Nord, Klinikum Bremen Mitte, Prof.-Hess-Kinderklinik, Bremen, Germany
- M Carvalho, Immunohemotherapy Department, Congenital Coagulopathies Reference, Centro Hospitalar e Universitário São João, E.P.E., Porto, Portugal
- G Castaman, Department of Oncology Careggi University Hospital, Florence, Italy
- H Chambost, APHM, La Timone Children's Hospital, Center for Bleeding Disorders & Aix Marseille Univ, INSERM, INRA, C2VN, Marseille, France
- A Rosa Cid, Unidad de Hemostasia y Trombosis, Hospital Universitario y Politécnico La Fe, Valencia, Spain
- C Eckhardt, Van Creveld Kliniek, University Medical Center Utrecht, Utrecht, The Netherlands
- C Escuriola-Ettingshausen, HZRM Hämophilie Zentrum Rhein Main GmbH, Mörfelden-Walldorf, Germany
- K Fischer, Van Creveld Kliniek, University Medical Center Utrecht, Utrecht, The Netherlands
- C Van Geet, Catholic University of Leuven, Campus Gasthuisberg, Service of Pediatric Haematology, Leuven, Belgium
- N Gretenkort Andersson, Department of Clinical Sciences, Lund University, Lund; Department of Pediatrics and Malmö Centre for Thrombosis and Haemostasis, Skåne University Hospital, Malmö, Sweden
- S Holzhauer, Department of Pediatrics, Division of Oncology and Hematology, Charité Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Berlin, Germany

- M Kartal-Kaess, Division of Pediatric Hematology & Oncology, Department of Pediatrics, Inselspital, University Hospital, University of Bern, Bern, Switzerland
 - H Knudsen, Oslo University Hospital HF, Oslo, Norway
 - C Königs, University Hospital Frankfurt, Department of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, Frankfurt, Germany
 - M Koskenvuo, New Children's Hospital , University of Helsinki and Helsinki University Hospital, Helsinki, Finland
 - V Labarque, Catholic University of Leuven, Campus Gasthuisberg, Service of Pediatric Haematology, Leuven, Belgium
 - R Ljung, Department of Clinical Sciences - Paediatrics, Lund University, Lund, Sweden
 - C Male, Department of Paediatrics, Medical University Hospital of Vienna, Vienna, Austria
 - T Stamm Mikkelsen, Department of Pediatrics, University Hospital of Aarhus at Skejby, Aarhus, Denmark
 - A Molinari, Dipartimento di Ematologia ed Oncologia, Unità Trombosi ed Emostasi, Ospedale Pediatrico Giannina Gaslini, Genova, Italy
 - J Motwani, Department of Haematology, The Children's Hospital, Birmingham, UK
 - B Nolan, Department of Paediatric Haematology, Our Lady's Children's Hospital for Sick Children, Crumlin, Dublin, Ireland
 - R d'Oiron, Centre de Référence de l'Hémophilie et des Maladies Hémorragiques Constitutionnelles, et HITH UMR_S1176 INSERM, Hopital Bicêtre, APHP Université Paris Saclay, Le Kremlin Bicêtre, Franc
 - J Oldenburg, Institut für Experimentelle Hämatologie und Transfusionsmedizin, Universitätsklinikum Bonn, Germany
 - M Olivieri, Dr. V. Hauner Children's Hospital, University of Munich, Munich, Germany
 - C Oudot, Centre Regional d'Hemophilie, Centre Hospitalo Universitaire, Toulouse, France
 - H Pergantou, Haemophilia Centre/Haemostasis and Thrombosis Unit, Aghia Sophia Children's Hospital, Athens, Greece
 - F Pinto, Department of Haematology, Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Yorkhill, Glasgow, UK
 - S Ranta, Pediatric Coagulation Unit, Astrid Lindgren Children's Hospital, Karolinska University Hospital, Stockholm, Sweden
 - E Zápotocká, Department of Pediatric Hematology and Oncology, Prague, Czech Republic
 - Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Edinburgh, UK*
 - Universitäts-Klinik für Kinder- und Jugendheilkunde, Graz, Austria*
 - Hemophilia Comprehensive Care Centre, Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children, London, UK*
 - Maggiore Hospital Policlinico, A. Bianchi Bonomi Hemophilia and Thrombosis Centre, Milan, ITALY*
 - Hospital General Unidad de Hemofilia, Hospitales Universitarios Virgen del Rocio, Sevilla, Spain*
- * No longer participating as PedNet center

Israel

- G Kenet, National Hemophilia Center Sheba Medical center, Tel Hashomer & Amalia Biron Research Institute of Thrombosis & Hemostasis, Tel Aviv University, Israel

Canada

- M Carcao, Division of Haematology/Oncology, Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, Canada
- G Rivard, Division of Hematology/Oncology, Hôpital St Justine, Montréal, Canada