A Retrospective Study of Parent’s First-Hand Experience of Premotions and Other Anomalous Aspects of the SIDS Phenomenon: A potential “SIDS early warning system?”

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Abstract:

The main purpose of this study is to determine the incidence of premonition in SIDS parents vs. Non-SIDS/Control Group parents and to test for a number of other anomalous “markers” noted anecdotally by decades of in the field observation. Evidence of premonition and these other “markers” as consistent elements of the SIDS phenomenon could serve as an “early warning system” for a future SIDS event if confirmed by larger studies.

Methodology: Both groups of SIDS parents and Control parent participants completed electronic questionnaires on the SurveyMonkey platform for statistical analysis.

Results: The results of this pilot study indicated statistically significant differences between the SIDS parent and Non-SIDS control study groups for premonition and a set of other anomalous markers.

Conclusion: The authors believe that this pilot study of premonition and other markers may provide an “early-warning” system for an impending SIDS event if confirmed with future larger studies.

Introduction

Parents of SIDS infants have described premonitions prior to the death of their infants to pediatric providers for many years, including in a study by Hardoin and colleagues (1). Pregnant mothers have expressed concern about their fetuses, which have been described as premonitions before their infants are stillborn (2,3). In a survey study by Erlandsson and colleagues, 392 of 614 (64%) of women of stillborn infants had a premonition that their unborn baby might be unwell (2).

A simple search amongst SIDS Support Groups on Facebook or postings on YouTube provides additional anecdotal examples for these factors, such as this posting from March 25th, 2021(5)

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Key Points

Question: Are premonitions and other anomalous factors more frequently noted in SIDS parents compared with Non SIDS control parents?

Findings: The results of this pilot study confirm and expand upon the statistically-significant results of the 1992 study by Hardoin, Henslee and Sheehan indicating that premonition, along with the presence of a consistent set of other anomalous factors may serve as a reliable “early warning system” for an upcoming SIDS event within one week’s time if these results are confirmed with larger studies.

Meaning: Though outside the parameters of traditional clinical studies, this pilot study along with a list of peer-reviewed findings on the subjects of premonition, intuition and the like, points to the necessity of further research in this area.
Having recognized two of the markers (unusual gaze/tendency to stare and “old soul/wise character”) surveyed for in this Facebook post, Eric Sage (one of this study’s authors) reached out to the mother and was able to confirm that she had experienced a premonition of her son’s death.

Interestingly, premonition as a feature of the SIDS phenomenon has been previously studied/presented in a 1992 paper by The Southwest SIDS Research Institute reporting a 21.8% incidence among SIDS parents compared to a 2.4% incidence in Non-SIDS parents. This study was revisited, expanded, and republished in 2007 in book form titled “The Voice Within (1,2)”

In preparation for this pilot study, Eric met with Dr. Hardoin and Judith Henslee at their office in Lake Jackson, Texas. At that time, Dr. Hardoin indicated that his team felt that though still statistically relevant, the 21.8% of reported premonitions amongst SIDS Parents was being significantly underreported by this group due to the plain strangeness of the experience, along with the associated guilt/shame of having pre-knowledge and having done nothing to prevent their infant’s death from happening (1). More recently, Meadow and colleagues have also studied the clinical intuition of bedside providers in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) regarding the survival and neurodevelopmental outcome of critically ill neonates (6).

The main purpose of this study is to determine the incidence of premonition in SIDS parents vs. Non-SIDS/Control Group parents and to test for a number of other anomalous “markers” noted anecdotally by decades of in the field observation. Evidence of premonition and these other “markers” as consistent elements of the SIDS phenomenon could serve as an “early warning system” for a future SIDS event.

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Methods

Setting, Design, and Participants:

SIDS Parents

Working from a list of 517 SIDS parents who had previously taken part in a SIDS study (Torres personal communication, August 31st, 2017) and who had authorized contact for further research, a survey of 58 questions was sent out via email through SurveyMonkey.com. Of these, 117 returned as undeliverable leaving a potential pool of 400 respondents. The survey closed with 100 responses in total (25% response rate). From the 58 questions, we identified eight key questions/markers that consistently appeared together and produced statistically relevant results. (See questions in Table below.)

These SIDS parents were asked various questions; Yes/No, Multiple Choice, and Open Field (Appendix). When respondents answered Yes to one of the factors being tested for, they were asked to provide further information/detail in the following Open Field question. Evidence of premonition and these other “markers” including unusual gaze or tendency to stare by the infant, unusual electrical or mechanical phenomenon associated with the time period of the infant’s death, infant perceived as “wise” or “old soul,” infant advanced on standard developmental milestones, and delivery issues were the areas of information on which the questions were based.

Of the 100 respondents who completed the survey, 86 were from the United States (U.S.), 12 international, and two unknowns.

Survey responses were collected from 1/8/18 to 3/19/18.

Control Group

A survey of 38 questions was launched through the SurveyMonkey platform for U.S. parents of children up to 18 years. The survey received 138 responses, of which 32 were eliminated as invalid due to not having been completed or because of other disqualifying criteria on the part of the respondents (Answered as Mickey Mouse etc.), providing a total response pool of 106 participants. The shorter length of this survey was due to the fact that some questions relating directly to the experience of the SIDS event were not included as they were not pertinent to this Control Group. These non-SIDS parents were asked various questions; Yes/No, Multiple Choice, and Open Field. In the cases where respondents answered Yes to one of the factors being tested for, they were asked to provide further information/detail in the following Open Field question. The survey ran from 3/22/18 to 4/20/18.

Methodology

Statistical tests were carried out to determine if the proportions of positive responses were the same between the SIDS parents and Non-SIDS control groups. Subsequent p-values were obtained from the statistical tests for each result category. The null hypothesis is that the proportion of positive responses from the control group is the same as that from the parents’ group. The alternative hypothesis is that positive responses are not the same between the control and parents groups. If the number of positive responses for each group is greater than 5, sample sizes are considered large enough, and thus, proportions are approximately normally distributed. In this case, 2 proportions z-tests will be carried out to obtain p-values. If the number of positive responses for any group (either control or parents group) is less than 5, proportions have deviated from normality; thus, z-tests are no longer appropriate. Fisher’s exact test will be carried out instead, and p-values will be obtained from this test. The overall p-value is also calculated by comparing all positive counts across all categories between control and SIDS parents groups. A p-value of < 0.05 was considered statistically significant. Work performed by Hong Tran, Ph.D. Bioinformatics, MSc. Statistics, Virginia Tech.

Results: The comparison of the experiences of the SIDS parents with the control Non-SIDS parents is presented in the Table. The statistically significant differences between the SIDS parent and Non-SIDS parents’ groups included: the premonition of infant’s death: SIDS Parents 48.98% vs. Non-SIDS Parents 1.88%, Unusual gaze/ tendency to stare: 27.84% vs. 13.21%, Old Soul/Wise: 12.0% vs. 1.88%, and delivery issues: 53.13% vs. 23.58%.

“This pilot study identified a statistically significant difference between the SIDS Parents and the Non-SIDS Control Group for a combination of common anomalous factors both pre and post the SIDS event.”

Discussion

This pilot study identified a statistically significant difference be-
between the SIDS Parents and the Non-SIDS Control Group for a combination of common anomalous factors both pre and post the SIDS event. The presence of these “pre-” common factors in the SIDS Parents group indicates that these could serve as a reliable “early-warning” system within one week of the SIDS event based on the reporting that 22.2% of these individuals experienced a premonition within one week of the event, and an additional 37.7% within one day of the event.

This is important because now some thirty years later, the world has changed significantly as to its acceptance of and willingness to discuss things of this anomalous nature. This change may explain the difference between the 1992 reporting of 21.8% and this study’s 48.98%. The numbers are practically identical in the Non-SIDS Control Group, with 2.4% in the Hardoin study vs. 1.88% in this pilot study (2,6).

It would be hard to overstate the importance of finally identifying SIDS infants prior to their deaths reliably. If confirmed with larger studies, this newly identified potential “early-warning” system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Control Group (N = 106)</th>
<th>SIDS Parents (N = 100)</th>
<th>P.value</th>
<th>Statistical test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Premonitions of child’s death</td>
<td>1.88%</td>
<td>48.98%</td>
<td>1.455e-16</td>
<td>Fisher's exact test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timing of Premonition &lt; 1 Week</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
<td>22.20%</td>
<td>0.0006</td>
<td>2 proportion z-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timing of Premonition &lt; 1 Day</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
<td>37.70%</td>
<td>2.141e-08</td>
<td>2 proportion z-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unusual gaze/tendency to stare</td>
<td>13.21%</td>
<td>27.84%</td>
<td>0.0149</td>
<td>2 proportion z-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery Issues</td>
<td>23.58%</td>
<td>53.13%</td>
<td>2.389e-05</td>
<td>2 proportion z-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unusual behaviors; Old Soul/Wise</td>
<td>1.88%</td>
<td>12.00%</td>
<td>0.0046</td>
<td>Fisher's exact test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was your child &quot;advanced&quot; in any way; physically, communicatively, other?</td>
<td>27.36%</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
<td>0.969</td>
<td>2 proportion z-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anomalous Electrical or Mechanical Event(s)</td>
<td>8.49%</td>
<td>12.00%</td>
<td>0.547</td>
<td>2 proportion z-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total comparison</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>30.30%</td>
<td>1.346e-22</td>
<td>2 proportion z-test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The authors here share representative answers from the work to offer an “early-warning” system for an impending SIDS. It provides the medical and scientific communities the opportunity to study these infants for the possible mechanism(s) that trigger these SIDS events. It offers a much greater opportunity to provide the intervention(s) necessary potentially to eradicate this phenomenon.

The results of this pilot study point directly to special non-natural faculties and/or supernatural sources of information that together work to offer an “early-warning” system for an impending SIDS event. The authors here share representative answers from the SIDS Parents group to illustrate both the consistency of these experiences and how truly “anomalous” they appear to be in the Table.

### Limitations

The limitations of this study are that it is a retrospective pilot study and so subject to potential recall bias. However, much of this is offset through contemporaneous notes and/or sharing the premonitions and other markers with family or friends, creating a larger witness pool to these anomalous aspects of the SIDS phenomenon.

#### Table 2: Answers from SIDS Parents

**Q: Did you experience any type of premonition regarding your SIDS experience?**

1. **The event happened at nine weeks of age. At eight weeks, she was fine, and I was imagining what I might write on the dedication section of my Ph.D. (I was working on it at the time). I saw a short dedication to ‘my daughter who lived such a short time, with a date of birth, date of death and a Bible verse, ‘The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord, Job 1:21. I didn’t think anything of it at the time, but it was strong and odd, and when I did write my Ph.D. a couple of years later, that was the dedication I used.**

2. **It was a very detailed daydream. I pictured myself home with her, and something was wrong, and I couldn’t help her. It was three days before she passed away.**

3. **A week before death, I started worrying and even asked hospital for a breathing monitor, even though he seemed fine. The hospital refused to give me a monitor as they said he was fine. Also, I had these shoes for him, I never could believe that he would ever wear them.**

**Q: Did your child have an unusual gaze/have a tendency to stare?**

1. **Very alert from the moment of birth. Always staring as if looking directly at you.**

2. **He seemed to look right through you. He would stare right into our eyes for long periods of time without getting overstimulated or bored per se like “normal” babies do.**

3. **Well we just thought that it was amazing that he could hold our gaze like that - like for example, our other kids would get overstimulated when they would look at your eyes for too long at age but he would just be able to just look at your eyes for forever and - just like locked his eyes in with yours and just stare at you without getting you know how they get kind of over stimulated and they turn their heads to the side - they just they don’t they can’t just do something like that for so long at such a young age.**

**Q: Unusual behaviors; Old Soul/Wise**

1. **My child was a very laid-back baby and rarely cried. Seemed to me like he had an old soul.**

2. **She was a very quiet baby. We referred to her as an old soul.**

3. **I thought he was quiet and thoughtful, and there was something special about him.**

### SIDS Survey Questions

#### SIDS Parents

1. Did you experience any unusual physical phenomenon (electrical or mechanical) during the time you had to spend with your child or in the period associated with their loss? i.e., lights turning off or on unexpectedly, equipment doing the same or suddenly not working etc.?

2. Did you experience any type of premonition regarding your SIDS experience?

3. If yes, please describe your premonition, was it visual, auditory, was it detailed/ realistic, or more suggestive?

4. Who experienced the premonition associated with this SIDS occurrence; father, mother, anyone else? (Grandparent, aunt/uncle, sibling, caretaker, other).

5. When did this premonition or series of premonitions occur?
   - Prior to birth
   - Constant fear/Constant since the time of birth
   - One month or greater
   - One week or greater
   - Less than one week
   - Within one day

6. Was there anything unusual about the delivery of the child, i.e., back labor, breech etc.?

7. Was your child “advanced” in any way, physically, communicatively, other?

8. Did your child have an unusual gaze/have a tendency to stare?

#### Non- SIDS Parents – Control Group

1. Did you experience any unusual physical phenomenon (electrical or mechanical) during your child’s first year of life, i.e., lights turning off or on unexpectedly, equipment doing the same or suddenly not working etc.?

2. Did you experience any type of premonition regarding the health of your child during your child’s first year of life?

3. If yes, please describe your premonition, was it visual, auditory, was it detailed/ realistic, or more suggestive?

4. Who experienced the premonition; father, mother, anyone else? (Grandparent, aunt/uncle, sibling, caretaker, other).

5. When did this premonition or series of premonitions occur?
   - Prior to birth
   - Constant/ongoing
   - 1-3 months
   - 3-6 months
   - 7-12 months

6. Was there anything unusual about the delivery of the child, i.e., back labor, breech etc.?

7. Was your child “advanced” in any way, physically, communicatively, other than during their first year of life?

8. Did your child have an unusual gaze/have a tendency to stare during their first year of life?
“The limitations of this study are that it is a retrospective pilot study and so subject to potential recall bias. However, much of this is offset through contemporaneous notes and/or sharing the premonitions and other markers with family or friends, creating a larger witness pool to these anomalous aspects of the SIDS phenomenon.”

References

Nancy Maruyama, RN, BSN, NCBF
Mother of Brendan 6/1/85-10/18/85

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