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Researcher contributes to study on safety of anesthesia

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An international team of researchers that includes a pediatric anesthesiologist from the University of Colorado School of Medicine and Children's Hospital Colorado is reporting that limited use of general anesthesia with an infant does not cause developmental problems for the child.

The study, published online Sunday in the British medical journal *The Lancet*, is the largest of its kind and the first randomized study to compare whether general anesthesia in infancy has any effect on neurodevelopmental outcome.

David Polaner, MD, professor of anesthesiology and pediatrics and director of transplant anesthesia at Children's Hospital Colorado, is one of the authors of the paper. There were more than 700 infants involved in the study between 2007 and 2013 at 28 hospitals around the world.

"While these results apply to use of anesthetics for a short duration of less than an hour in infants, this research provides strong evidence and reassurance to parents and physicians that under the conditions we studied, anesthesia is unlikely to be the cause of developmental problems," Polaner said. "We did not find any difference between children who received general anesthesia and spinal anesthesia, suggesting that the previous human studies may have been affected by confounding factors."

The results presented in the Lancet article are an "intermediate analysis,"

reviewing the outcomes of children at 2 years of age. The final results will be determined when the children are five years old. The study, while not yet definitive, provides evidence that limited exposure general anesthesia does not increase the risk of developmental issues.

Provided by University of Colorado Denver

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