

A Look Back at HIB Disease

Debbie G. Thompson, MS, RN, PNP

During the early 1980's, I was a staff nurse at a free-standing children's hospital on a floor for children ages birth to 2 years of age. I cannot even venture to say how many children I took care of with *Haemophilus Influenzae* type b (HIB) meningitis. It seemed so common years ago. I can still recall the shock and despair of families whose child had been well or only mildly ill days or hours before. It was a horrible disease that seemed to overcome an infant or young child so rapidly that even prudent medical care could not catch up and intervene quick enough. And unfortunately, the infants who survived HIB meningitis were often left neurologically impaired and unable to complete oral feedings or interact with their family as they had prior to the infection.

The significant decline in patients with life-threatening illness from *Haemophilus Influenzae* type b is miraculous. I work with so many colleagues who have never cared for an infant or child with HIB disease. The emergence of a vaccine to fight the devastation of HIB was my first opportunity to see clinically, the impact that a vaccine could have on promoting wellness and preventing disease.