Novel pilot data - Cardiac MR Imaging Post Catheter Ablation: Does T2 and DE ratios matter in predicting clinical outcome?

A. Arujuna1, R. Karim1, B. Knowles1, D. Caulfield1, M. O’Neill1, A. Rinaldi1, M. Cooklin2, J. Gill1, T. Schaeffter1, K. Rhode1, and R. Razavi1

1Imaging Sciences, King's College London, London, United Kingdom, 2Cardiothoracic Department, Guy's & St Thomas' Hospital, London, United Kingdom

Background Wide area circumferential ablation (WACA) is used to achieve pulmonary vein isolation (PVI) for the treatment of symptomatic drug refractory paroxysmal atrial fibrillation (PAF). However, PAF recurrences associated with pulmonary vein reconnection are common. We assessed firstly the hypothesis that acute PVI results from a combination of irreversible (necrosis) and reversible (interstitial edema) tissue damage at the left atrial (LA)–pulmonary vein (PV) junction as evaluated by cardiac magnetic resonance (CMR) imaging. Secondly, we proposed that given the reversible nature of edema, the higher the proportion, the higher the likelihood of recurrences arising.

Methods Delayed enhancement, DE (necrosis) and T2-weighted enhancement, T2 (edema) imaging sequences were performed pre and immediately post WACA in 15 patients with paroxysmal atrial fibrillation (PAF). Images were analyzed by firstly segmenting the LA from the 3D whole heart image to generate a 3D shell. These shells were next fused onto the DE and T2 source images allowing the maximum intensity projections (MIP) to be obtained on to the shells. Quantification of the percentage (%) circumferential extent of DE and T2 lesion formation on the shells were performed.

Results Following electrical isolation, 30 pairs of PVs (15 right, 15 left) were imaged and the percentage (%) circumferential lesion of DE, T2 and DE + T2 was quantified. Both Figure 1 and Figure 2 demonstrate DE and T2 pre and post ablation in 3 of our patients. The mean±SD percentages on the right side were 52.4±31.4 for DE, 61.6±26.7 for T2 and 77.7±23.8 for DE + T2. On the left side, the mean ± SD percentages were 63.4± 28.3 for DE, 58.1± 20.7 for T2 and 84.5±17.1 for DE + T2. Both DE and DE+T2 means were statistically significant (0.02) suggesting the contribution of T2 in completing PV antral encirclement. The clinical outcome at 6 months was then correlated to the MRI findings. 8 cases free from AF (16 pairs of PV) had mean ± SD values of 70.3±22.9 for DE and 69.2±16.2 for T2. Both DE and T2 means from the two groups were statistically significant (p-values of 0.02 and 0.03). Areas of T2 enhancement (edema) not only overlapped with areas of DE but also filled in gaps between areas of DE producing in combination almost circumferential lesions in all PVs (Figure 3). Both the T2 / DE ratios (p=0.001) and DE / (DE+T2) ratios (p=0.0003) calculated are represented in Figure 4.

Conclusion T2-weighted enhancement (edema) in combination with DE on CMR contributes to near completion of pulmonary vein encirclement leading to acute electrical isolation. In PAF recurrences, more of this ring was composed of increased T2-weighted signal than DE. This pilot data raises the hypothesis that resolution of oedema causes PV reconnection leading to recurrence of AF.