Investigating the role of choroid plexus in CSF pulsation by combining in-vivo and post-mortem MRI


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Introduction
Cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) pulsation is thought to play an important role in many neurological disorders, e.g. hydrocephalus. Mainly two theories on the transformation of the cardiac pulse pressure wave to the ventricular system were established in the past. The thalamic pump theory was introduced by du Boulay (1). Bering et al. (2) claimed the choroid plexus (CP) responsible for CSF pulsation. Due to many controversial findings in the past, current research still aims to identify the exact physiological origin of this pulsation. Recent MRI studies on phase shift between CSF flow in the foramina of Monro and the aqueduct suggest CP as the main pulsation source, with its volume variations in the lateral ventricles being mainly responsible for phase variations of the pulse wave between different subjects (3). To evaluate the capability of CP to drive CSF pulsation, the periodical volume change of CP necessary to produce CSF strokes in ranges measured in-vivo needs to be determined.

Subjects and methods
Post mortem: Five deceased subjects without known neurological deficits (age range: 48 – 81ys) underwent MRI within 72 hours after death. All measurements were performed on a 3T Tim Trio (Siemens Healthcare, Erlangen, Germany) transversally covering the whole brain with a spatial resolution of 1.3x1.3x1.3 mm³. The MRI protocol consisted of two bSSFP sequences with a fixed flip angle of 30° and varying TR/TE ratios of 8.2 and 6.8 and two bSSFP sequences with TR/TE ratio of 5.8 and varying flip angles of 30° and 35°. For contrast enhancement, these four datasets were combined by multiplication. The combined datasets were segmented using the ‘Threshold segmentation’ tool of Avizo (VSG Visual Sciences Group, Inc., MA). For optimized thresholding, two histograms with undersmoothed bin sizes for i) a region containing CSF, grey and white matter and ii) a region additionally including CP were compared. Partial volume effects were minimized by manual segmentation refinement (Figure 1). Following smoothing of the rough surfaces, the CP volume was derived with Avizo’s ‘Calculate volume’ analysis tool. CP length L was calculated as the central arc length of a line following the curvature of the corresponding CP, as depicted in Figure 2c.

In-vivo: PC-MRI flow measurements were conducted in three healthy volunteers (age range 24-65 years) in the cerebral aqueduct (venc=15 cm/s, 26-28 heart phases, spatial res. 0.4x0.4x4 mm³) on a 3T Philips Achieva System (Philips Healthcare, Best, The Netherlands). CSF stroke volumes (5) were computed with Matlab (MathWorks, Inc., Natick, MA). For optimized thresholding, two histograms with undersmoothed bin sizes for i) a region containing CSF, grey and white matter and ii) a region additionally including CP were compared. Partial volume effects were minimized by manual segmentation refinement (Figure 1). Following smoothing of the rough surfaces, the CP volume was derived with Avizo’s ‘Calculate volume’ analysis tool. CP length L was calculated as the central arc length of a line following the curvature of the corresponding CP, as depicted in Figure 2c.

Results
Volumes of CP in the range of 4-5 ml were found (Table 1). A mean arc length of approximately 68 mm was derived. The mean stroke volume was 60 µl, which corresponds, under assumption of isotropic volumetric deformation of CP, to a mean CP volume variation of 1.27% (range 0.5-2.6%) necessary to drive the CSF stroke in the aqueduct.

Discussion and Conclusions
Geometric characterization of choroid plexus in humans based on postmortem MRI scans was carried out successfully. Variations of CP volume of 1.27% are shown here to be necessary for producing realistic stroke volumes. This is plausible, and therefore the CP cannot be excluded as a source of CSF pulsation.

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References