Impairment of the medullary veins on neonatal subependymal hemorrhage using susceptibility-weighted imaging

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Introduction
Subependymal hemorrhage (SEH) occurs with a hypoxic-ischemic injury especially in preterm infants. SEH arises at the metabolically active germinal matrix as a consequence of rupture of the primitive vessel due to fluctuation in cerebral blood pressure and flow. It is known that unilateral parenchymal hemorrhagic infarction occurs in some population of infants with SEH, which is thought to be related to occlusion of the medullary veins [1, 2]. Susceptibility-weighted imaging (SWI) has been introduced as a highly sensitive magnetic resonance (MR) method for the visualization of substances with susceptibility effects such as blood, iron, calcification, and air [3]. It provides highly sensitive imaging for intracranial hemorrhage as well as venography. Despite recent increasing recognition of the clinical utilities to SWI, those for assessment of the deep veins in relation to SEH has not been well established. The purpose of this study was to assess the visualization of the branches of the deep veins in infants with SEH.

Subjects and Methods
Thirty seven neonates (gestational age, 23 – 38 weeks; corrected age at MRI, 33 – 46 weeks) with SEH, who underwent SWI, were retrospectively assessed. Infants with both SEH and periventricular leukomalacia were excluded in this study. SWI was performed with either a 1.5T or a 3T MRI unit. The sequence parameters for a 1.5T unit, TR/TE, 69/60 ms; flip angle, 12 degree; slice thickness, 1.3 mm; field of view, 150× 200; matrix size, 130-150 × 256; GRAPPA, 2; for a 3T-MR unit, TR/TE, 38/30; flip angle, 15 degree; slice thickness, 1.2 mm; field of view, 150× 200; matrix size, 224 × 320; GRAPPA, 2. SEH was graded as follows: Grade I; SEH with no or minimal intraventricular hemorrhage; II, SEH with extension into the ventricle; III, IVH with association with ventricular enlargement; VI, SEH with parenchymal hemorrhage. Visualization of branches of the medullary vein on SWI (i.e., thalamostriate vein, caudal veins) were rated using a four-point scale by two experienced pediatric neuroradiologists with consensus; 1, prominently visualized; 2, slightly stenotic; 3, prominently stenotic; 4, obscure or interrupted. Grade of SEH was compared to the score regarding the visualization of the medullary veins. Differences of the scores among the SEH grade were assessed using Kruskal-Wallis test followed by evaluation with the pairwise test for comparison of two proportions.

Results
The grade of SEH included I in 10, II in 13, III in 2, and IV in 12. The score of visualization of the medullary vein included score 1 in 23, score 2 in 2, score 3 in 3, and score 4 in 9. Median score in SEH-Grade I-IV were 1, 1.2, 2.5, and 4, respectively. There was a significant difference in score of visualization of the medullary vein among the infants according to the SEH grade (p<0.01). The score of the visualization of the vein in infants with SEH-Grade 4 was significantly higher than that in SEH-Grade 1 or Grade 2 (p<0.01).

Discussion and Conclusions
We found more frequently impaired branches of the medullary veins in infants with SEH-Grade IV. On the contrary, SEH with lower grade showed less frequent relation to the impairment of the medullary veins. SEH-Grade IV had been thought to extensions of germinal matrix bleeds into the surrounding parenchyma. However they are currently thought to results from venous infarction due to occlusion of collector veins (i.e., the branches of the medullary veins) by the results of postmortem studies [2,4]. The results in this study support these previous studies. It should be noted that SWI shows these venous impairment even in vivo.

In conclusion, SEH with parenchymal hemorrhage may be accompanied with more frequent impairment of the branches of the medullary veins.

References
4. Barchovich AJ. Pediatric neuroimaging. 4th edition. Lipponcott Williams & Wilkins, 2005