Blood Volume in response to Hypercapnia: MRI Study Using Spontaneously Breathing Mice

Ji-Yeon Suh1, Woo Hyun Shim1, Christian Thomas Farrar1, Jeong Kon Kim2, and Young Ro Kim1

1Athinoula A, Martinos Center for Biomedical Imaging, Massachusetts General Hospital, Charlestown, MA, United States; 2Department of medical imaging, Asan Medical Center, University of Ulsan, Seoul, Korea, Democratic People's Republic of

INTRODUCTION: The elevated arterial CO\textsubscript{2} (pCO\textsubscript{2}) is a strong vasodilator under the normal brain condition, leading to a significant increase in cerebral blood flow (CBF) and cerebral blood volume (CBV)\cite{1}. In a number of brain diseases (e.g., brain stroke, Alzheimer’s disease, atherosclerosis, etc), impaired vasoreactivity in response to systemic hypercapnia has been observed. Despite the promising potential for evaluating neurovascular diseases, the method has not been used in mouse models mainly due to the difficulty in the quantification of vasoreactivity. In the current study, using an alternating gradient and spin echo (GE/SE) EPI and superparamagnetic intravascular contrast agent (Superparamagnetic iron oxide nanoparticles: SPION), we monitored multiple MRI-derived hemodynamic parameters during the graded hypercapnic episodes in normal healthy mice.

MATERIALS & METHODS: CBV (i.e., ΔR2\*), microvascular volume (MVV; ΔR2), and vascular size index (VSI; CBV/MVV) were quantified from three ROIs drawn in cortex, thalamus, and caudate regions of the C57BL/6 mice brain. For the simultaneous monitoring of these parameters, mice anesthetized with 1% isoflurane were allowed for spontaneous respiration while exposed to four different CO\textsubscript{2} gases (2.5%, 5%, 7.5%, and 10% CO\textsubscript{2} in the 50/50 air/oxygen gas mixture) for three minutes per each dose. T2- and T2*-weighted images were acquired alternatively using GE/SE EPI sequence with TR/TE = 3000/15.16 ms for GE and 3000/27.73 ms for SE before and after administering SPION.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION: Spontaneous inhalation of CO\textsubscript{2} gas resulted in the significantly increased CBV, MVV and VSI, exhibiting the general trend of cerebral vasodilation. Spatially heterogeneous responses as well as the CO\textsubscript{2} dose-dependent response magnitude were observed for both the CBV and MVV responses (Figure 1). In particular, the CBV response was more localized than the MVV response, in which the CBV responses were spatially concentrated in the cortex and thalamus across the CO\textsubscript{2} dose (Figure 2). Moreover, for the CBV response, the rise time to the peak decreased with the increasing CO\textsubscript{2} concentration whereas such trend was not observed in MVV. On the other hand, the recovery from the peak to baseline following the cessation of CO\textsubscript{2} gas was increasingly delayed as the CO\textsubscript{2} concentration increased for both the CBV and MVV. The peak-to-peak response magnitude was proportional to the CO\textsubscript{2} gas concentration for both the CBV and MVV at low doses (< 5%), which reached a plateau at high doses. Dynamic features of the CO\textsubscript{2}-evoked VSI change were distinct from the volume-related responses, in which the rise time increased as the CO\textsubscript{2} dose increased while the peak VSI values were reached a few minutes after turning off the CO\textsubscript{2} gas for the dose greater than 5%. Our results demonstrate significant changes of hemodynamic MRI parameters during systemic hypercapnia in spontaneously breathing mice under the isoflurane anesthesia. The current experimental setting, the use of GE/SE EPI sequence and SPION with the non-invasive subject preparation, produced consistent vasoreactive responses, thus validating the hypercapnic method for evaluating hemodynamic changes altered by numerous pharmacologic agents and pathophysiological states in the different disease models.