

·综述·

缺血性卒中患者颈动脉粥样硬化斑块高分辨率磁共振成像研究进展

张小楠 吴世政 张淑坤

【摘要】 脑卒中是严重危害人类生命健康的主要疾病之一,而以动脉粥样硬化性病变为病理基础的缺血性卒中为其最常见的临床发病类型。因此,及时识别粥样硬化斑块易损性即显得愈发重要。颈动脉MRI作为一项无创性检查手段,对动脉粥样硬化斑块性质的检测具有独特优势,对显示斑块形态和成分具有较高的敏感性和特异性,可以对粥样硬化斑块破裂的潜在危险进行评价和分层,进而为临床制定有效治疗方案提供影像学诊断依据。

【关键词】 脑缺血; 动脉粥样硬化; 颈动脉疾病; 磁共振成像

Advances in the research of high-resolution magnetic resonance imaging used for treating carotid atherosclerotic plaques in ischemic stroke patients

ZHANG Xiao-nan¹, WU Shi-zheng¹, ZHANG Shu-kun²

¹Department of Neurology, ²Department of Pathology, Qinghai Provincial People's Hospital, Xining 810007, Qinghai, China

Corresponding author: WU Shi-zheng (Email: wushizheng2005@hotmail.com)

【Abstract】 Stroke causes permanent neurological damage and death and badly endangers human's life and health. Ischemic stroke with the pathological basis of atherosclerotic lesions is the major type of stroke. Thus, early and timely detection of plaque vulnerability has become more and more important. As a noninvasive examination, carotid magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) has tremendous advantages on detecting the characteristics of atherosclerotic plaque, such as high sensitivity and specificity on the plaque morphology and composition as well as hierarchical evaluation on the risk of plaque rupture, and furthermore provides significant imaging support on clinical treatments.

【Key words】 Brain ischemia; Atherosclerosis; Carotid artery diseases; Magnetic resonance imaging

脑血管病是威胁全世界人类生命健康的疾病,其中缺血性卒中为中枢神经系统常见病和多发病,其发病率、病死率和病残率均较高;而且随着人口老龄化和吸烟人口的增加,脑血管病的发病率呈逐渐上升之趋势。在缺血性心脑血管病临床事件中,颈动脉粥样硬化与缺血性卒中密切相关,主要发病机制是易损斑块的破裂和血栓形成。目前,用于评价粥样硬化斑块的方法以彩色多普勒超声和DSA为主,但二者均不能对斑块易损性进行详细分析。MRI血管壁成像结合黑血技术、亮血技术和动态对

比增强技术,能够直观地反映颈动脉血管壁结构,以及颈动脉粥样硬化斑块大小和成分等重要生物学特征,在评价不同类型动脉粥样硬化斑块,特别是易损斑块稳定性方面,较其他检查方法具有得天独厚的优势^[1]。

一、颈动脉MRI

颈动脉MRI技术具有无创性、无辐射性、软组织分辨力高、多对比成像等诸多优势。常用扫描序列包括“黑血”的T₁WI、T₂WI和质子密度加权像(PDWI),“亮血”的三维时间飞跃(3D-TOF)和动态对比增强技术。通过颈动脉粥样硬化斑块的MRI、彩色多普勒超声与组织切片的对比研究证实,前两种检测技术相结合可对血管腔和血管壁的信息进行互补,二者敏感性和特异性具有较高的一致性,而增强T₁WI对评价斑块内炎症和新生血管有肯定

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作者单位:810007 西宁,青海省人民医院神经内科(张小楠、吴世政),病理科(张淑坤)

通讯作者:吴世政(Email:wushizheng2005@hotmail.com)

价值^[2]。因此,MRI显示颈动脉管壁和评价斑块成分即使存在扫描时间长、检查费用高、易受血流和运动伪影影响等不足,仍较其他检查方法具有明显优势。

二、正常颈动脉管壁的MRI特征

颈动脉属于弹力型动脉,内膜周围弹力层明显,外膜相对薄弱。颈动脉内膜在T₂WI显示为高信号,中膜呈中等偏高信号,外膜为低信号。应用于颈动脉成像时,PDWI较T₂WI信噪比(SNR)高,因此PDWI是测量血管壁厚度的最佳序列^[3],而T₂WI和T₁WI则在显示血管壁层次和钙化性病变方面具有更为显著的优势。

三、粥样硬化斑块的MRI信号特点

脂质核、纤维帽、出血和钙化是粥样硬化斑块的主要成分,斑块内发生炎症时还可有新生血管形成。这些成分并非独立存在,而是彼此交织;其比例亦不固定且处于动态变化中。此外,斑块内还散在少量巨噬细胞和平滑肌细胞,高分辨力MRI是研究热点。虽然斑块内各种成分因构成和期龄不同而呈现不同的MRI表现,但结合多种MRI影像,依然可以发现不同类型斑块的信号特点,并进行定性和定量分析,从而发现斑块成分、易损性与急性缺血性脑血管事件之间的关系。

1. 脂质核 经研究表明,脂质核在粥样硬化斑块中所占比例越大,其破裂的危险性也越大。薄纤维帽伴体积较大的坏死脂质核,是易损斑块的主要特点之一。脂质核是由细胞外脂质、富含脂质的巨噬细胞、泡沫细胞所组成。由于脂质核成分与人体其他脂质成分和比例不同,因此在MRI上可能呈现“与众不同”的信号强度,3D-TOF、T₁WI、T₂WI、PDWI或增强T₁WI均可清晰地显示脂质核。与同一层面胸锁乳突肌相比,富脂坏死核心(LRNC)在3D-TOF和T₁WI上显示为等信号^[4],PDWI呈等或低信号,T₂WI为低信号^[5-6]。富脂坏死核心是非细胞性的富脂区域,其坏死区成分复杂,其中脂质主要以胆固醇及其结晶酯的形式存在,信号衰减迅速^[7],因此T₂WI呈低信号。血管周围脂质主要由甘油三酯构成,其MRI表现不同于粥样硬化斑块内脂质,通常呈短T₁、长T₂信号,而血管外坏死区大多由自由水组成,表现为T₂WI高信号。

2. 纤维帽 脑血管缺血性事件主要由易损斑块破裂所致^[8-9]。研究显示,纤维帽的MRI表现与组织病理学具有良好的一致性,结合多种MRI影像可以

反映纤维帽是厚而完整、薄而完整或已破裂^[10]。与同一层面胸锁乳突肌相比^[11],纤维帽在3D-TOF上显示为低信号,T₁WI呈等信号,PDWI和T₂WI为等或高信号。聚集在帽内的纤维组织类似血管中层结构,比斑块内坏死区的T₂信号高。由于纤维帽内富含新生毛细血管,如行对比增强扫描,可使纤维帽的信号升高而脂质核信号降低,强化的纤维帽和未强化的脂质核即形成良好的对比,从而更易勾勒出脂质核边界,而且能够更清晰地反映纤维帽厚度和连续性等信息。

如何区分粥样硬化斑块的脂质核和纤维帽亦十分重要。较早的一些研究通过1.5T或3.0T MRI扫描仪证实,无论离体^[12]还是在体^[13]脂质核均比纤维帽的T₂弛豫时间短,PDWI为高信号、T₂WI呈低信号^[8,14-16],而纤维帽在T₂WI上表现为高信号^[17-18],此为脂质核和纤维帽的重要鉴别点。Trivedi等^[19]还曾报告,T₂WI所显示的纤维帽和脂质核厚弦,与组织病理学表现具有高度一致性。尽管如此,当坏死的脂质核内发生出血时,纤维帽在T₂WI上的信号即升高,使相对高信号的纤维帽与坏死脂质核之间的边界变得模糊^[19-21]。此时,最能体现Gd CE-MRI之优势,纤维帽在对比剂的作用下信号增强,而坏死的脂质核内出血信号稍增强,通过这种信号差异可有效区分二者^[19,22]。值得注意的是,当邻近血管腔存在钙化时,纤维帽成像易受干扰,仅靠3D-TOF很难区别,需结合PDWI进行区分,表现为钙化呈低信号、纤维帽呈高信号。

3. 斑块内出血 斑块内出血通常发生在斑块破裂过程中,可加速动脉粥样硬化进程,是斑块进展的危险阶段,红细胞大量聚集和斑块内炎症引起的生物学反应均可使斑块不稳定性增加^[23]。不同阶段出血所含成分不同,每种成分有其特异的T₁或T₂弛张特性,可产生不同的信号强度,因此斑块内出血在MRI影像上往往表现为复杂信号。有学者分析术前颈动脉MRI影像发现,新鲜出血在3D-TOF和T₁WI上呈高信号,在PDWI和T₂WI上呈等或低信号;近期出血在所有序列均呈高信号;慢性血肿在所有序列均呈低信号^[20]。Saam等^[24]将粥样硬化斑块内出血的信号特征归因于巨噬细胞内高铁血红蛋白和含铁血黄素的磁化性质,在T₂WI上,斑块内出血表现为薄片状或纹状,显示为低信号的层面即为新鲜出血层,聚集大量完整红细胞,而红细胞破裂后巨噬细胞吞噬含铁丰富的崩解产物,显示为高

信号的更深层面即为较陈旧的出血层。Saam等还发现,与无症状性颈动脉粥样硬化相比,引起缺血症状的斑块其邻近血管腔出血或血栓形成发生率达61%,二者差异具有统计学意义($P=0.039$);而斑块内出血两组均十分常见,无症状组为83%、症状组为91%,差异无统计学意义^[26]。

4. 钙化 钙化是易损斑块的次要诊断标准之一。一般情况下,钙化斑块较稳定且不易脱落,但当纤维帽内的钙化斑块邻近血管腔,存在向腔内突出、导致纤维帽破裂的可能时,即成为斑块易损的危险因素。由此可见,在评价斑块易损性时,钙化灶位置比其本身属性更重要。钙化区质子密度和扩散介导的磁敏感性较低,在所有MRI影像上均呈低信号。尽管钙化常发生于粥样硬化斑块内,但其与斑块易损性之间的关系尚无定论。

5. 炎症 活动性炎症是易损斑块的主要病理特点之一。炎性斑块的主要病理改变为单核巨噬细胞和T细胞浸润,以及新生血管形成。炎性细胞可直接或间接诱发一系列生物学反应,例如促进胶原纤维变性并抑制其再生,诱导新生毛细血管生成等,而使斑块形态、结构发生改变,导致易破裂^[27]。对比增强MRI可用于观察斑块内炎症活动,为评价斑块易损性提供更多信息。目前常用的对比剂包括钆和超顺磁性氧化铁(SPIO),均被证实是评价斑块内炎症反应程度的良好指标^[25,28-29]。

四、粥样硬化斑块的分子影像学

分子影像学能够在分子和细胞水平对生物学反应过程进行定量和定性研究,而斑块内炎症、新生血管及细胞凋亡、血栓形成等均是导致斑块不稳定的重要因素,应用靶向对比剂对斑块内成分或其相关产物进行标记追踪研究,可有效监测有关斑块易损性的重要的生物学信息。颈动脉粥样硬化斑块靶向对比剂种类繁多,其中以SPIO颗粒应用最为广泛,可被巨噬细胞特异性摄取,有助于斑块内炎性细胞的检测,相关研究证实,斑块内局部信号减低区域即为巨噬细胞吞噬铁颗粒所致^[30]。与此同时,SPIO颗粒亦可用于髓过氧化物酶(MPO)活性和新生血管的检测。而监测易损斑块邻近脱落微栓子的MRI分子成像技术,可用于评价缺血性卒中抗凝治疗效果^[31]。

五、颈动脉MRI技术发展前景

MRI作为集形态学和功能学成像为一体的极具潜力的无创性颈动脉粥样硬化诊断技术,已逐渐显

示出对易损斑块的诊断价值。然而,MRI血管成像技术还需要克服扫描时间、图像伪影等技术上的不足^[32],并面临着将研究目标推广到其他血管床如股动脉、脑动脉,甚至冠状动脉等的巨大挑战。磁共振波谱成像(MRS)、多模态融合影像和分子影像学技术的发展,也为颈动脉MRI技术提供了更加全方位的新技术支持。今后,我们需要更大规模的多中心合作研究,以证实MRI在诊断颈动脉粥样硬化性病变中的应用价值,为帮助临床制定个体化治疗方案提供最佳的影像学信息。

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下期内容预告 本刊2014年第2期报道专题为颈动脉内膜切除术临床研究,重点内容包括:科学而安全地开展颈动脉内膜切除术;颈动脉内膜切除术临床研究进展;超声观察颈动脉粥样硬化斑块纤维帽完整性的临床价值;右美托咪啶联合全身麻醉在颈动脉内膜切除术中的应用;复合手术技术治疗复杂颈动脉狭窄和闭塞性疾病;颈动脉内膜切除术的手术技巧与疗效