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高分辨率 MRI 评价大脑中动脉粥样硬化疾病研究进展

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[摘要] 颅内动脉粥样硬化是引起国人缺血性脑卒中的最常见病因之一。随着影像学的发展,人们已能利用磁共振成像(MRI)新技术显示动脉粥样硬化斑块。本文就近年来国内外 3.0T 高分辨率 MRI 评价大脑中动脉粥样硬化斑块的研究进展进行综述。

[关键词] 大脑中动脉;动脉粥样硬化;卒中;磁共振成像

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3.0T HR-MRI for evaluation of middle cerebral artery atherosclerotic plaque: recent progress

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[Abstract] Intracranial atherosclerosis constitutes a major reason for ischemic stroke in Chinese population. Progression in magnetic resonance technology has enabled us to display atherosclerotic plaque. This review discussed the recent progress on the performance of 3.0T high-resolution magnetic resonance imaging in depicting middle cerebral artery atherosclerotic plaques.

[Key words] middle cerebral artery; atherosclerosis; stroke; magnetic resonance imaging

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在欧美国家,颅内动脉粥样硬化症(intracranial atherosclerotic disease, ICAD)导致的卒中发病率相对较低,约占全部卒中原因的 8%~10%,而在中国等亚洲人群中其比例高达 33%~55%^[1-2],已成为卒中的主要亚型之一,其中发生在大脑中动脉(middle cerebral artery, MCA)的动脉粥样硬化所产生症状的比例约占 38%^[3-5]。MCA 是最常受累的动脉血管,它的狭窄和闭塞是高致残率、高致死率卒中最常见的原因之一。在我国,卒中中年死亡人数约 160 万,已超过心脏病成为排名第一的致死原因和成年人致残的主要原因,卒中相关的年治疗费用支出约 400 亿人民币^[6-7]。近年来,磁共振成像(magnetic resonance imaging, MRI)新技术在 MCA 粥样硬化的诊断和评估中得到应用,它较传统的血管造影有更多优势,如显示 MCA 斑块的成分、活化特征、管壁形态等,某些病态的血流特征也可通过 MRI 序列描述^[8-11]。本文综述了高分辨率 MRI 评价 MCA 粥样硬化斑块的研究进展及前景,为指导临床治疗及疗效评估提供参考。

1 ICAD 及临床症状

动脉粥样硬化斑块是一种包含炎症反应的系统性病变,可发生于冠状动脉^[12]或颅内的 MCA^[13]。典型斑块的病理特征有:富含脂质的坏死核心(lipid-rich necrotic core, LRNC)、钙化、斑块出血(plaque hemorrhage, PH)、覆盖于表面的一层纤维帽(fibrous cap, FC)等。对有症状和无症状患者的颈动脉粥样硬化斑块的回顾性研究表明,比例较大的 LRNC、PH、薄而不完整的 FC 等是斑块不稳定性的高危特征^[12-15]。ICAD 常见危险因素如高血压、高血脂、糖尿病、吸烟在 MCA 粥样硬化中亦起作用^[16]。早期的临床病理相关研究发现,动脉粥样硬化中 27.5%为 MCA 狭窄,而且比例逐年增高^[17]。MCA 动脉粥样硬化狭窄与其他原因所致的 MCA 狭窄明显不同,动脉粥样硬化所致病灶更邻近血管^[18]。一项尸检研究揭示:MCA 斑块内的大面积脂质、PH、新血管形成、血栓可增加梗死危险^[13]。

ICAD 引起脑缺血症状反复发作的比例很高,有

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症状的MCA狭窄患者每年发生卒中的风险约10%^[19-21]。有关MCA闭塞引起的卒中,多数认为是颈动脉斑块破裂、脱落、栓塞所致,或因心律失常心源性栓子脱落栓塞所致。因此,MCA闭塞型卒中的实验模型、病理生理学的解释、治疗方案均是以上述两种原因为基础。而对于原发性内源性MCA粥样硬化导致卒中的机制却知之甚少,临床上也缺少评估ICAD严重程度的标准,即使针对此病的防治有过不少尝试,但目前的药物治疗和介入手术的效果总体上不太令人满意^[19,22-26]。

卒中有多种不同临床症状,每种病因学及病理生理学均不同。例如,颈动脉狭窄并不是导致腔隙性脑梗死的直接原因,而颅内小血管的动脉粥样硬化已被证明是导致腔隙灶的主要原因^[27-28]。作为颅内最大血管的MCA在卒中和短暂性脑缺血中最常受累,由于小分支血管动脉粥样硬化闭塞,MCA狭窄将引起腔隙灶及基底节区梗死灶^[19,29-30]。当患者确诊为ICAD,在排除心源性栓塞疾病后,应考虑存在MCA粥样硬化^[31]。

2 颅内动脉粥样硬化检查技术

影像学技术中数字减影血管造影(digital subtraction angiography, DSA)仍为诊断MCA狭窄的金标准,但DSA是一种创伤性检查,患者自主或不自主的运动均可产生伪影;颅内血管重构使粥样硬化斑块向管壁外侧移位可造成狭窄程度的低估,且检查费用昂贵,使其临床应用受到限制^[32]。CT血管造影(computed tomography angiography, CTA)诊断颅内动脉狭窄及闭塞的准确率较高,与DSA对照,敏感度为80%~98%,特异度达到71%~100%^[33-34]。随着螺旋CT的发展,应用CTA可获得薄层原始图像以清晰显示血管腔和血管壁的细微改变,并可根据血管腔面积的改变来评价狭窄程度、根据CT值评价斑块的特性。但X线辐射、大量造影剂的使用及复杂的图像后处理限制了CTA在MCA疾病中的临床应用。经颅多普勒超声(transcranial Doppler, TCD)可通过探测血流速度评估MCA狭窄程度,为缺血性脑血管病的诊断、监测、治疗等提供重要信息,并可对引起脑血液动力学变化的因素进行分析、评估^[35]。虽然患者精神情绪、心功能情况,或合并颅内其他血管病变、侧支循环建立、

超声探头的角度以及种族等因素都会影响MCA血流速度,使得TCD特异性和敏感度有所降低,但TCD摒弃了脑血管造影的有创性,更重要的是提供了实时脑血流动力学参数,可动态评估颅内血管血流变化。目前,TCD已经成为缺血性脑血管病患者首选的筛查项目。随着高场设备及新技术的应用,MRI在诊断颅内粥样硬化狭窄及斑块性质的敏感度和特异性越来越高。时间飞跃法磁共振血管成像(time of flight magnetic resonance angiography, TOF-MRA)无需注入造影剂,扫描时间也很短^[36-37],近年来成为脑血管病的主要检查方法之一。有研究通过对139例颅内动脉狭窄患者行3.0T三维TOF-MRA,得到在检测>50%狭窄方面的敏感性为78%~85%、特异性为95%;检测闭塞的敏感性为100%、特异性为99%^[38]。MRA可提供全面的图像以确定MCA狭窄部位是否缺血,在发现颅内血管狭窄病变上已成为一种有效的筛查方法,并可以提示患者是否需要利用高分辨率MR来精确显示狭窄区域(图1)。MRA除了作为检测MCA疾病风险的一种手段,还可以评估临床治疗效果。

3 高分辨率MRI技术在MCA粥样硬化疾病中的应用

对具有缺血性症状及临床适应证的患者,MCA成像应结合常规扫描序列,如自由水抑制反转恢复法(fluid-attenuated inversion recovery, FLAIR)、磁共振弥散加权成像(diffusion weighted imaging, DWI)、T₁WI及T₂WI。DWI是必需的,因为它可以早于其他序列发现颅内缺血性病变,并可以评估梗死的程度。TOF-MRA可以对颅内血管的狭窄程度进行整体显示,预测基于动脉粥样硬化的疾病风险,尤其是在同时并发颅内及颅外血管狭窄的时候,可以提升评估脑血管事件及死亡风险的能力^[39]。TOF-MRA不使用钆对比剂的MRA已成为颅内动脉无创检查的常规方法。但是MRA和CTA虽然能够提供颅内动脉如MCA管腔的详细信息,却不能很好地显示非闭塞性动脉粥样硬化斑块的存在,需要高分辨率MRI对粥样斑块进行显示,并获取斑块组成成分的信息^[40]。有研究指出,由于动脉壁的重塑和伸缩作用,较大的斑块可能不会引起可识别的管腔狭窄,从而混淆血管造影和光学检查结果的可靠性^[41]。在颅外动脉粥样硬化患者中,动脉粥样

硬化产生的血管轻度狭窄与症状发生的风险有一定的关联,这种假设同样适用于 ICAD^[42]。对于常规颅内 MRI 上不能显示出的狭窄的小斑块,可以通过在保持较大采集矩阵的情况下,针对感兴趣区(region of interest, ROI)减小扫描视野(field of view, FOV)来实现高分辨率 MRI,推荐使用 T₁WI、T₂WI、T₂-STIR、T₁WI+C 和快速自旋回波质子密度加权像(fast spin echo proton density weighted imaging, FSE-PDWI)等序列(图 2),对轻度狭窄血管可提供

更多详尽有用的信息^[43],这在颈动脉 MRI 中已经得以证实^[44-45]。为了提高小血管成像的空间分辨率以及在薄层扫描时获得更高的信噪比,颅内血管系统的检查可在高场磁共振扫描仪中进行。研究表明 3.0T 磁共振扫描仪用于 MCA 管壁成像检查是必要的^[46-47]。对 MCA 管壁成像扫描定位时,应沿着其走行方向的垂直矢状面,这些序列可以在获得 MCA 图像的基础上对血管狭窄段进行成像,评估狭窄程度及探究斑块性质。

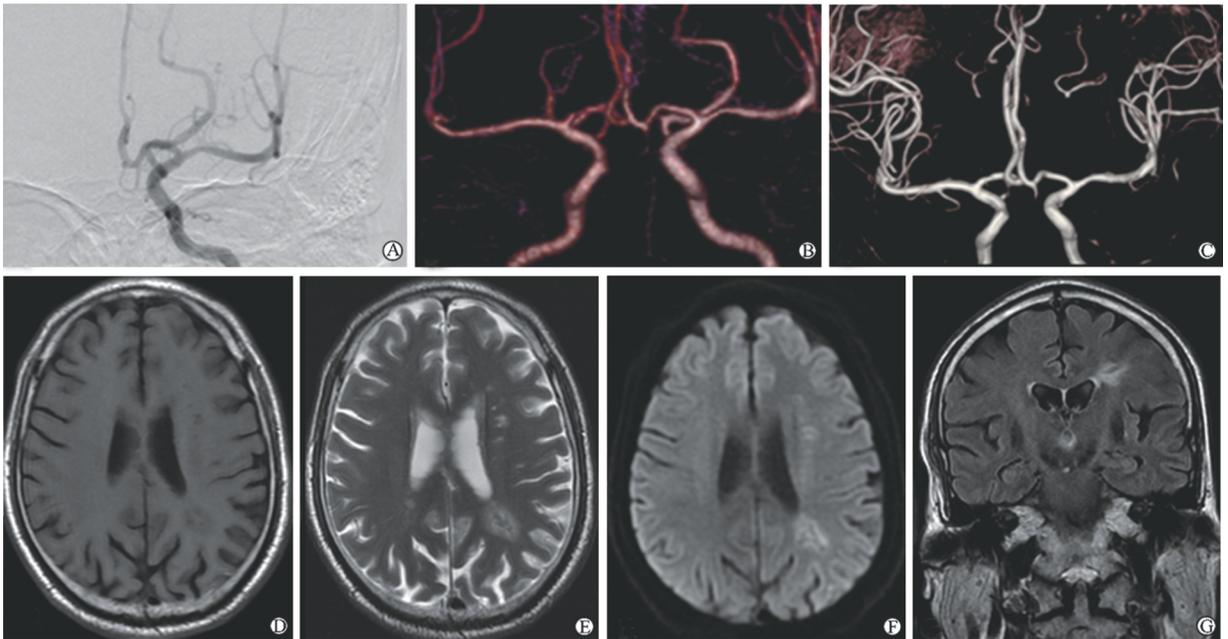


图 1 左侧大脑中动脉轻度狭窄患者 DSA (A)、CTA (B)、TOF-MRA (C) 及 MRI 常规图像 (D-G)
 Fig 1 DSA (A), contrast-enhanced CTA (B) and volume-reduced TOF-MRA (C) findings of mild stenosis within the left middle cerebral artery in a symptomatic patient with small ischemic lesions seen on T₁WI (D), T₂WI (E), DWI (F) and FLAIR (G)

DSA: Digital subtraction angiography; CTA: Computed tomography angiography; TOF-MRA: Time of flight magnetic resonance angiography; DWI: Diffusion weighted imaging; FLAIR: Fluid-attenuated inversion recovery

用高分辨率 MRI 评估 MCA 狭窄程度的常用公式为:狭窄率 = (1 - 狭窄处管径/参考管径) × 100%,参考管径为近端非闭塞的无病变血管直径^[48-49]。该方法具有一定的局限性,因为参考管径亦是 MCA 的一部分,高分辨率 MRI 图像中,其测量值会因 MCA 特殊部位管径的选取、图像参数、层间距、层厚的不同而不同。特殊部位的狭窄可以测量对侧与病变相对应的位置的正常管径^[50]。这种方法易于发现假象,也适用于单侧病变。其他计算方法也会有类似限制,如管径最窄处管壁情况等^[48,51]。然而,所有这些定量评估 MCA 斑块的方法均取决

于扫描的层厚,因此可能会过高估计病变体积^[50]。

从形态学来看,动脉粥样硬化损害表现为由于动脉管壁增厚、管腔面积减少引起的偏心性病损。高分辨率 MRI 已经在血管临床应用取得成功,如在颈动脉颅内段和颅内表浅动脉^[52]的应用。理论上,高分辨率 MCA 管壁成像可以显示易损斑块的成分,如 LRNC 或 PH。目前文献报道颅内动脉斑块的性质和颈动脉相似^[13]。基于大量颈动脉及冠状动脉粥样硬化的文献,多重对比加权像可以观察到斑块内的组成成分。由于 MCA 特殊的解剖结构,目前对其粥样硬化斑块的组织学检查只能在尸检后

进行。对检查图像进行分析时,可以把MCA斑块成像的信号强度与灰质或翼状肌作对比;而颈动脉斑块成像的信号强度一般与胸锁乳突肌作对比^[53]。高分辨率T₂WI对检查管腔狭窄、管壁增厚有良好

的可重复性^[54],大多数关于MCA高分辨率MRI的研究主要集中于在3.0T扫描仪上利用T₂WI对管壁的成像^[48,54]。

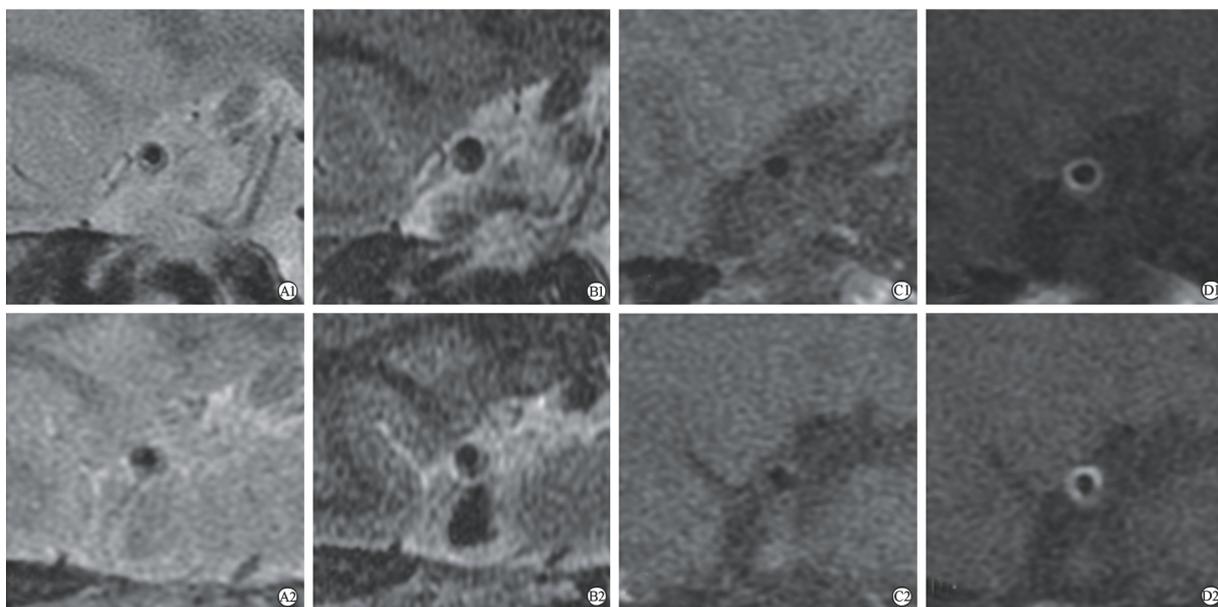


图2 左侧大脑中动脉中度狭窄患者高分辨率MRI图像

Fig 2 Multicontrast high-resolution MR imaging of a moderate stenosis within the left middle cerebral artery (MCA)

Sagittal high-resolution MR imaging of the MCA in a patient demonstrates the ability of multiple sequences to depict the arterial wall and lumen in detail. A1, A2: T₂WI; B1, B2: T₂-STIR; C1, C2: T₁WI; D1, D2: T₁WI+C

在假定MCA粥样硬化病理生理学改变与颈动脉粥样硬化一致的前提下,检测MCA斑块特征有助于确定斑块是否有破裂的风险,即是否为稳定性斑块^[55],有利于预防急性中风并指导临床治疗。MCA粥样硬化的FC在T₂WI上表现为邻近管壁的带状高信号^[43,48],薄的不完整FC容易破裂,厚的FC不易破裂^[55]。动脉管壁在非强化的FLAIR-T₁WI上呈现高信号可能提示急性出血,也可能提示为MCA夹层^[56]。在对比增强扫描中,斑块强化可能提示为出血性斑块,但是在一项小型研究中发现只有大约15%的患者斑块会出现强化现象,管壁的环形强化提示疾病的炎性进展^[56]。病变强化可以潜在地提示斑块引起临床症状的危险性,无症状和有症状患者的斑块均会出现强化^[50]。至今还没有有效的影像学方法来检测MCA斑块的成分,用于斑块成分分析的高分辨率MRI正处于实验阶段。

4 展望

随着MCA管壁高分辨率MRI技术的广泛应

用,MCA粥样硬化斑块更加容易被检出,并可能与评估有症状的MCA狭窄风险的大型前瞻性研究相关联。不同MR技术的交替应用(如针对斑块的靶向对比剂、动态对比增强显示新生血管)可对粥样硬化斑块的成分进行更加详细的描述。所有这些研究MCA斑块成分的方法都将会被证实^[57-58]。此外,关于MCA高分辨率成像的可重复性研究确保ICAD的进展能够随着时间的增加被客观显示,从而监测疾病的发展及预后随访。虽然在有症状的患者中发现MCA改变并不意味着这两者之间存在因果关系,但进行前瞻性研究探索MCA改变可以揭示高分辨率MRI与临床风险之间的重要联系。

综上所述,MCA粥样硬化正日益被研究者认为是引起卒中发生的重要因素之一。MRA与DSA一样,能够精确地评估MCA狭窄,但是只能提供血管是否通畅的简单信息。高分辨率MRI能够以独特的视角来显示动脉管壁及斑块的组成成分。目前的研究方向主要是通过提高设备场强和开发新序列来改进磁共振图像的空间分辨率。更多的研究工作即

是将图像信息与后续事件的风险评估联系起来,为临床医生针对特定患者给予特定治疗方案提供更大的帮助。

5 利益冲突

所有作者声明本文不涉及任何利益冲突。

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