Background Factors and Clinical Symptoms of Major Depression With Silent Cerebral Infarction

To the Editor:

In their recent article, "Background factors and clinical symptoms of major depression with silent cerebral infarction," Fujikawa et al used magnetic resonance imaging to determine whether depressed patients had or did not have silent cerebral infarction and then compared the two groups in terms of a variety of risk factors for stroke and depression. It is surprising that the authors do not relate their findings to a large body of literature reporting similar results but using different terminologies, i.e., leukoencephalopathy, leukoaraiosis, deep-white-matter hyperintensity, or subcortical hyperintensity. These terms are essentially used to describe hyperintensities on T₂-weighted spin-echo magnetic resonance images of the brain.

Small hyperintensities are related to perivascular spaces; larger hyperintensities (maximum linear dimension, >5 mm) are usually seen on pathological examination to consist of areas of myelin pallor, infarcts, or lacunes. These large signal hyperintensities are the basis seen on magnetic resonance imaging: a comparison of normal and depressed elderly subjects. Zubenko et al noted a higher frequency and severity of these hyperintensities in elderly depressed patients, compared with control subjects. Numerous researchers have noted the high frequency and severity of these hyperintensities in elderly depressed patients compared with control subjects. Coffey et al also reported that lesions of the basal ganglia were frequent in depressed patients compared with control subjects. Zubiensko et al noted a higher incidence of cortical infarctions and leukoencephalopathy in depressed patients, and Figiel et al reported that the frequencies of large deep white-matter hyperintensities and lesions of the basal ganglia were greater in late-onset depressed patients than in those with early-onset depressed patients of similar age. Basal-ganglia hyperintensities have also been linked to an increased likelihood of delirium induced by antidepressants or electroconvulsive treatment. This fairly extensive literature and the report by Fujikawa et al suggest that cerebrovascular damage may indeed be important in the pathophysiology of major depression in the elderly and worthy of further study.

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References

Response

We thank Drs Krishnan, Tupler, and McDonald for their comments on our article. In our study, we observed that cerebrovascular damage plays an important role in the pathophysiology of major depression in the elderly and that risk factors for cerebrovascular disease (eg, hypertension) are related to the onset of senile major depression. It was reported that severe major depression often persisted despite antidepressant therapy and has a poor prognosis. Figiel et al reported that basal-ganglia hyperintensities are linked to an increased likelihood of delirium with antidepressants.

We suspect that major depression with silent cerebral infarction (especially mixed artery infarction with broad obstruction) persist despite administration of antidepressants and is related to refractory depression in old age. Subsequently, we suspect that major depression with mixed artery silent cerebral infarction can progress to vascular dementia. We would like to study further the response in the elderly to antidepressant therapy and the long-term prognosis for major depression with silent cerebral infarction.

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References

Normal Tc-HmPAO Distribution in Large Subcortical Middle Cerebral Artery Infarct

The term “luxury perfusion” is used to describe situations of paradoxical cerebral blood flow (CBF) increase or flow values that are high in comparison with metabolic demand. The idea prevailed until 1993 that the Tc-HmPAO hyperfixation observed in the subcortical stage after cerebral infarct was due to luxury perfusion. However, recent observations have shown that in these circumstances, hyperfixation with Tc-HmPAO does not always correspond with CBF increase. In the following case, single-photon computed tomography (SPECT) was clearly abnormal with ¹₁²₅Xe and Tc-ethylcysteinate dimer (Tc-ECD) but paradoxically normal with Tc-HmPAO in the subcortical stage of middle cerebral artery (MCA) infarct.

A 34-year-old man came to our hospital on May 21, 1991, with meningeal hemorrhage consequent to rupture of a left carotid artery aneurysm. He underwent surgery 3 days later without...
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