Acute Basilar Artery Occlusion: Need for an Early Diagnosis in a Devastating Disease

To the Editor:

We read the recent article by Nagel et al about intraarterial thrombolysis compared to a combined therapy with abciximab in basilar artery occlusion (BAO) with great interest. They showed a significant increase of recanalization, survival and functional outcome using a combined bridging therapy in their study.

We have to bear in mind, though, that many patients with BAO are primarily admitted in community hospitals without a specialized stroke unit or neurologists on-call. These patients show an extremely high mortality rate if they are secondarily transferred to a stroke center with anticoagulation but without early start of a sufficient treatment. Thus, bridging therapies have been started by some stroke centers but adequate results were missing. An early start of intravenous thrombolysis seems justified relating to data from Lindsberg and Mattle. The current results also support a bridging attempt using a GP IIb/IIIa antagonist.

Nevertheless, we need to achieve an early diagnosis in BAO patients admitted to community hospitals. This can be achieved by means of telemedicine with transmission of neuroradiological scans to a stroke center, most suitable with a telemedical patient examination. These networks represent an important and feasible option but are not often used in treatment of BAO yet. This might become a future option combined with bridging therapies as new strategies are indeed needed. In hospitals without the possibility of CT angiography, a hyperdense basilar artery sign points to a BAO in patients with posterior circulation stroke symptoms.

Thus, the current results are encouraging in this important battle against an otherwise devastating disease, but our infrastructure needs to be improved to achieve a rapid diagnosis and start of treatment.

Disclosures

None.

Bijan Vatankhah, MD
Tabea Gringel, MD
Henning Stolze, MD
Department of Neurology
DIAKO
Flensburg, Germany

Acute Basilar Artery Occlusion: Need for an Early Diagnosis in a Devastating Disease
Bijan Vatankhah, Tabea Gringel and Henning Stolze

Stroke. 2009;40:e501; originally published online May 21, 2009;
doi: 10.1161/STROKEAHA.109.551648
Stroke is published by the American Heart Association, 7272 Greenville Avenue, Dallas, TX 75231
Copyright © 2009 American Heart Association, Inc. All rights reserved.
Print ISSN: 0039-2499. Online ISSN: 1524-4628

The online version of this article, along with updated information and services, is located on the
World Wide Web at:
http://stroke.ahajournals.org/content/40/7/e501

Permissions: Requests for permissions to reproduce figures, tables, or portions of articles originally published in Stroke can be obtained via RightsLink, a service of the Copyright Clearance Center, not the Editorial Office. Once the online version of the published article for which permission is being requested is located, click Request Permissions in the middle column of the Web page under Services. Further information about this process is available in the Permissions and Rights Question and Answer document.

Reprints: Information about reprints can be found online at:
http://www.lww.com/reprints

Subscriptions: Information about subscribing to Stroke is online at:
http://stroke.ahajournals.org/subscriptions/