Sanguineous Cerebrospinal Fluid in Recanalized Cerebral Infarction

TADAYOSHI IRINO, M.D., MAMORU TANEDA, M.D., AND TAKAO MINAMI, M.D.

SUMMARY To clarify the causal relationship between spontaneous recanalization of the occluded cerebral artery and development of hemorrhagic infarction, 15 patients with internal carotid or middle cerebral arterial axis occlusion were submitted to consecutive lumbar punctures and follow-up cerebral angiography. Consequently, six of seven recanalized patients had sanguineous cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) on the second or third day after ictus, while only one of eight non-recanalized patients had bloody CSF.

It was strongly suggested that recanalization might have an intimate relationship with the development of hemorrhagic infarction.

Atrial fibrillation was present on the ECG in six patients (table 1). Fifteen patients who had no previous stroke had sudden onset of severe hemiplegia and disturbance of consciousness. Fibrinolytic agents were not used in the treatment of these patients.

Angiography was first performed within 24 hours after the onset, using 7 ml of 60% Amidotrizoate. Angiography also was performed on the second or third day in order to study the occluded artery. When recanalization was not demonstrated, additional angiography was performed between the fourth and seventh day. CSF was obtained by lumbar puncture on admission and then at one to three-day intervals in the first week; the appearance and pressure of the CSF were noted. When the CSF was bloody, it was placed in three test tubes and the red cell counts were compared with each other to eliminate a traumatic tap. Sanguineous CSF always contained more than 1,500 red blood cells per cubic millimeter. The appearance of the CSF was classified as clear, xanthochromic or sanguineous. The results were compared in two groups: recanalized and non-recanalized patients.

Results

In two patients (Cases 1 and 2) with internal carotid arterial occlusion and five patients (Cases 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8) with middle cerebral arterial axis occlusion, follow-up angiography showed clearing of the carotid arterial tree within three days after the stroke. In one patient (Case 3) with internal carotid arterial occlusion, the angiograms demonstrated middle cerebral arterial occlusion on the third day and no occlusion on the fifth day. In the remaining seven patients recanalization did not occur (table 1).

The CSF was bloody or xanthochromic between the second and fourth day after the onset in seven patients. Six of them were recanalized within a week after the onset, while...
the remaining patient was not recanalized. Five patients (Cases 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7) of the recanalized group died within a month and were autopsied. The angiograms of Case 1 are demonstrated in figure 1. Among the fatal cases, sanguineous or xanthochromic CSF occurred between the second and fourth day in four patients (Cases 3, 4, 5 and 6); in the remaining patient (Case 7), the CSF was constantly clear (fig. 2). These five cases had infarction pathologically.

None of the patients with non-recanalized vessels died within one month of onset.

Five (three with bloody CSF) of six patients with atrial fibrillation showed recanalization angiographically. Three (all with bloody or xanthochromic CSF) of nine patients without atrial fibrillation had recanalization.

The CSF pressure reached the highest level between the second and fourth day in the non-recanalized group. In the recanalized group, the CSF pressure continued to increase until death occurred in three patients (Cases 3, 4 and 5), while the CSF pressure remained low in two patients (Cases 6 and 7) who died of heart failure accompanying atrial fibrillation.

### Table 1 Case Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case no./age/sex</th>
<th>First Angiography</th>
<th>Second Angiography</th>
<th>CSF Xanthochromic or Sanguineous</th>
<th>Outcome within a month</th>
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<tr>
<td>1/47/F*</td>
<td>R ICA</td>
<td>Recanalized</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>15/72/F</td>
<td>R MCA</td>
<td>R MCA</td>
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<td>Alive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Patients with atrial fibrillation. ICA = internal carotid artery, MCA = middle cerebral artery axis, L = left, R = right, M = male, F = female.

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**Figure 1.** Right carotid angiograms of Case 1. AP views on the first (a) and third (b) day after ictus. Arterial displacement was demonstrated after recanalization of the occluded internal carotid. Arrow (a) shows the site of occlusion.
The clinical course of such patients has not been thoroughly investigated. In the many cases reported as recanalized infarction, the restoration of circulation did not produce significant clinical improvement. Some of the cases, as described in the papers reported by Dalai, had hemorrhagic infarction at autopsy examination. In our present study, six of seven patients with recanalization showed sanguineous or xanthochromic CSF and five of them had hemorrhagic infarction at autopsy, while the CSF of the non-recanalized patients became sanguineous less frequently, i.e., only one of seven non-recanalized patients. The development of hemorrhagic infarction correlated well with the occurrence of spontaneous recanalization.

Although it is well recognized that spontaneous recanalization of the occluded arteries frequently occurs in cerebral infarction, as first reported by Lehrer in 1958, the clinical course of such patients has not been thoroughly investigated. In the many cases reported as recanalized infarction, the restoration of circulation did not produce significant clinical improvement. Some of the cases, as described in the papers reported by Dalai, had hemorrhagic infarction at autopsy examination. In our present study, six of seven patients with recanalization showed sanguineous or xanthochromic CSF and five of them had hemorrhagic infarction at autopsy, while the CSF of the non-recanalized patients became sanguineous less frequently, i.e., only one of seven non-recanalized patients. The development of hemorrhagic infarction correlated well with the occurrence of spontaneous recanalization.

Discussion

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Harvey and Rasmussen reported that hemorrhagic cerebral infarction was often observed at autopsy while occluded arteries were rarely found. They suggested that hemorrhagic infarction was caused by the restoration of blood flow through the recanalized arteries. The patients did not have consecutive cerebral angiograms during life, and it was not certain whether the affected arteries recanalized or not. The present observations support the hypothesis suggested by Fisher et al. that the absence of an occluded artery in hemorrhagic infarction is probably the result of spontaneous recanalization.

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However, some differences have been noted. Similar problems have been encountered after thrombo-embolectomy in stroke patients with acute major cerebral arterial occlusion. This therapeutic procedure has been discarded by some neurosurgeons. A definite conclusion concerning CSF pressure is not certain because there was no special direction of change in the recanalized and non-recanalized groups.

We suspect that the frequency of development of abnormal CSF appearance might depend on whether the patients had cerebral thrombosis or embolism, since embolism is frequently accompanied by hemorrhagic infarction. Although atrial fibrillation is considered to be diagnostic for embolism, the definite differentiation between embolism and thrombosis is difficult clinically. However, there may be few exceptions. We considered that the cerebral arterial occlusions with sudden onset in the present study were all embolism, whether accompanied by atrial fibrillation or not. We presume that since sanguineous CSF appeared especially in patients with recanalized occlusion that spontaneous recanalization of the occluded artery had an important relationship to the occurrence of hemorrhagic infarction and caused a change in CSF appearance. Spontaneous recanalization was associated with a poor prognosis in those patients with cerebral infarction.

References

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