White Matter Lesions Predispose to Falls in Older People

To the Editor:

We read with interest the study by Srikanth et al. Their findings agree with the findings of our cross-sectional study of 40 subjects.\(^2\)

In our study, we found measurements of balance to correlate more tightly with white matter lesion load (Spearman \( r = 0.43 \)) than gait measurements (\( r = 0.37, P < 0.01 \)). We would be interested in knowing whether, in addition to gait, balance was evaluated in their large sample and what was the impact of white matter lesion load on balance.

As with Srikanth et al.,\(^1\) we also found a threshold effect. Two independent observers (agreement: \( r = 0.94, P < 0.001 \)) grouped the scans into 8 levels of white matter damage, with level 8 being the most affected. Levels 7 and 8 were only represented among the fallers. In addition to supporting causality, this finding may have prognostic and therapeutic implications. As Srikanth et al indicate,\(^1\) the prevention of additional white matter damage by careful control of cerebrovascular risk factors may yield a decrease in falls, one of the most pernicious plagues afflicting older persons.

Disclosures

None.

Joseph C. Masdeu, MD, PhD
National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, Md

Leslie Wolfson, MD
Department of Neurology
University of Connecticut Health Center
Farmington, Conn


White Matter Lesions Predispose to Falls in Older People
Joseph C. Masdeu and Leslie Wolfson

Stroke. published online July 23, 2009;
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/early/2009/07/23/STROKEAHA.109.558122.citation

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/