Effect of Dexmedetomidine on The Neuroglobin Expression in Elderly Patients With Minimally Invasive Coronary Artery Bypass Graft Surgery

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ABSTRACT

Background: To study the effect of dexmedetomidine (Dex) on the expression of Neuroglobin (Ngb) and postoperative cognitive function in elderly patients undergoing minimally invasive coronary artery bypass surgery.

Methods: Forty patients, who underwent elective minimally invasive off-pump coronary artery bypass grafting in our hospital from January 2018 to December 2019, were randomly divided into the Dex group (N = 20) and control group (N = 20). Venous blood samples were taken to determine the expression level of Ngb in both groups. Mini mental status examination (MMSE) was used to detect the cognitive function of patients.

Results: The expression level of Ngb in the Dex group was significantly higher than that in the control group after one-lung ventilation and postoperative 24 h (P < .01). The MMSE score of the Dex group was significantly higher than the control group at postoperative 7 days and postoperative 30 days (P < .01). Although with no statistical significance, the MMSE score of the Dex group was higher than the control group at postoperative 90 days (P > .05). The incidence of postoperative cognitive dysfunction (POCD) in the Dex group was significantly lower than that in the control group at postoperative 7 days and postoperative 30 days (P < .05).

Conclusion: Dex used in elderly patients undergoing minimally invasive coronary artery bypass graft surgery can effectively increase the expression level of Ngb and reduce the incidence of POCD.

INTRODUCTION

Postoperative cognitive dysfunction (POCD) refers to the condition of neurocognitive decline following surgery in a cognitive and sensory manner [Evered 2018]. POCD has been considered in the anesthetic and surgical literature in isolation of cognitive decline, which is common in the elderly within the community and where it is labeled as mild cognitive impairment, neurocognitive disorder, or dementia [Yazit 2020].

Dexmedetomidine (Dex) is a highly selective α2 receptor agonist with analgesic, sedative, and anti-inflammatory effects that has been shown to reduce the incidence of POCD [Mohite 2019]. Minimally invasive coronary artery bypass graft surgery requires single-lung ventilation, which can cause hypoxemia and affect postoperative cognitive function [Kammerer 2016; Lopez 2017].

Neuroglobin (Ngb) is a globulin that exists in vertebrates and is abundantly expressed in neurons [Gao 2020; Zhang 2019]. It has a high affinity for oxygen, thus increasing the oxygen supply to brain tissue [Zhu 2017]. Ngb is a recently discovered hypoxia-inducible protein, which has a cytoprotective effect in animal models of Alzheimer’s disease, stroke, myocardial infarction, and other related diseases [Khan 2006]. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to observe the effect of Dex on the expression of Ngb and postoperative cognitive function in elderly patients with minimally invasive coronary artery bypass graft surgery and to provide clinical references.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Patients

Forty patients, who underwent elective minimally invasive off-pump coronary artery bypass grafting (OPCABG) in our hospital from January 2018 to December 2019, were enrolled. Patients were aged 65-77 years, with weight of 56-75 kg.

Inclusion criteria were patients with 1) ASA II or III, and 2) HYHA II or III. Exclusion criteria were patients with 1) dementia and mental history, 2) severe cerebrovascular disease, 3) history of multiple operations, 4) history of severe infection of various systems during the perioperative period, 5) severe perioperative blood loss, severe acid-base balance and electrolyte disturbance, 6) severe abnormal liver and kidney function, 7) no acute myocardial infarction, 8) no history of brain trauma or cerebrovascular accident, 9) no history of diabetes, and 10) no history of mental illness.

With random number tables, the patients were randomly divided into the Dex group (N = 20) and control group (N = 20). This study was approved by the Medical Ethics Committee of the First Affiliated Hospital of Hebei North University (No. K2017001), and all patients signed informed consent forms.
Effect of Dexmedetomidine on The Neuroglobin Expression in Elderly Patients With Minimally Invasive Coronary Artery Bypass Graft Surgery—Gao et al

Anesthesia method

The two groups of patients routinely abstained from drinking and fasted for 8 hours before surgery, and no preoperative medication was used. NIBP, ECG and SpO2 were monitored continuously after entry. The left radial artery was punctured and catheterized under local anesthesia to monitor arterial blood pressure. Anesthesia induction: midazolam 0.04mg/kg, sufentanil 3μg/kg, etomidate 0.2mg/kg, cisatracurium 0.3mg/kg.

After induction, double-lumen endobronchial intubation was performed. During bilateral lung ventilation, tidal volume VT was 7~8mL/kg, respiratory rate RR was 10-12 beats/min, and inspiratory-expiratory ratio I:E=1:2. During one-lung ventilation, VT=6mL/kg, RR=12-16 times/min, other ventilation parameters remain unchanged, and PETCO2 is maintained at 35-45mmHg. A four-cavity central venous catheter was inserted into the right internal jugular vein puncture for fluid infusion, CVP monitoring and pumping of vasoactive drugs. 4-6mg/(kg·h) of propofol and 0.8-1μg/(kg·h) of sufentanil were continuously infused for anesthesia maintenance.

According to the length of operation, 10mg cis-atracurium was injected intermittently to maintain BIS at 40-60. Patients in the Dex group were injected with a loading dose of 0.6μg/kg Dex within 15 minutes before induction of anesthesia, followed by continuous pump injection at a rate of 0.2μg/(kg·h) until the end of the operation; the control group was given the same dose of 0.9% normal saline.

Intraoperative infusion of Ringer’s lactate solution, volume, and autologous blood was performed according to the situation, and vasoactive drugs were used to maintain stable circulation when necessary. At the end of the operation, the infusion of anesthesia was stopped, and the tracheal catheter was returned to the ICU ward. All operations were performed by the same surgeon. After the patient woke up, the postoperative analgesia pump (formula: sufentanil 200μg+ tolansetron 4mg+ normal saline 100ml) was administered at 2ml/h for continuous analgesia for 50h.

Observation indexes

The primary endpoint is the incidence of POCD. The mini mental status examination (MMSE) was used to detect the cognitive function of patients in the two groups at preoperative 1 day, postoperative 7 days, postoperative 30 days and postoperative 90 days, and the criteria were as follows: a total score of 30, 27-30 as normal, and < 27 as POCD [Yang 2020].

Table 1. General intraoperative information of the two groups

|                  | Dex group (N = 20) | Control group (N = 20) | P   |
|------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-----|
| Male, n (%)      | 9 (45)            | 10 (50)                | .752|
| Age, years       | 70.5 ± 4.1        | 71.4 ± 4.5             | .513|
| Height           | 166.2 ± 5.3       | 167.3 ± 5.4            | .518|
| Weight (kg)      | 68.3 ± 10.1       | 69.1 ± 9.6             | .811|
| ASA grades, n (%)|                   |                        |     |
| II               | 10 (50)           | 11 (55)                | .752|
| III              | 10 (50)           | 9 (45)                 |     |
| HYHA grades, n (%)|                 |                        |     |
| II               | 8 (40)            | 9 (45)                 | .749|
| III              | 12 (60)           | 11 (55)                |     |
| Number of bypass grafts, n (%) | 1 (5) | 1 (5) |     |
| Hypertension, n (%) | 15 (75) | 14 (70) | .732|

Table 2. Incidence of POCD in the two groups

|                  | Dex group (N = 20) | Control group (N = 20) | P   |
|------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-----|
| Postoperative 7 days | 2 (10)            | 8 (40)                 | .028|
| Postoperative 30 days | 0                | 4 (20)                 | .027|
| Postoperative 90 days | 0                | 2 (10)                 | .468|

POCD, postoperative cognitive dysfunction. Incidence of POCD was compared using χ2 test.

Table 3. The hospital stay and postoperative delirium rate in the two groups

|                  | Dex group (N = 20) | Control group (N = 20) | P   |
|------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-----|
| ICU stay (h)     | 35 ± 11           | 46 ± 12                | <.001|
| Hospital stay (d) | 10 ± 1            | 13 ± 2                 | <.001|
| Postoperative 7 days | 3 (15)           | 10 (50)                | <.001|
| Postoperative 30 days | 0                | 5 (25)                 | <.001|
| Postoperative 90 days | 0                | 2 (10)                 | .468|

ICU stay and hospital stay were compared using independent sample t-test. Postoperative delirium rate was compared using χ² test.

Table 4. Comparison of Ngb between the two groups

|                  | Dex group (N = 20) | Control group (N = 20) | P   |
|------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-----|
| Preoperative 24h (ng/ml) | 0.15 ± 0.03       | 0.16 ± 0.02            | .08 |
| 6h after one-lung ventilation (ng/ml) | 0.28 ± 0.04*     | 0.19 ± 0.04            | <.001|
| Postoperative 24h (ng/ml) | 0.25 ± 0.05*     | 0.17 ± 0.03            | <.001|

*<.01, compared with preoperative 24h. Ngb, neuroglobin. Ngb was compared using independent sample t-test.
The definition of delirium is based on the "Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders" (DSM IV) criteria: (1) consciousness disorder with reduced ability to focus, sustain, or shift attention; (2) cognitive changes or development of perceptual disorders; (3) acute onset and fluctuating course, and (4) evidence of organic ethological factors. Venous blood samples were taken preoperative 24h, 6h after one-lung ventilation, and postoperative 24h to determine the expression level of serum Ngb in both groups. The incidence of postoperative complications was compared between the two groups.

**Statistical analysis**

The trial was powered for tests for two proportions of Dex against normal saline on the incidence of POCD. The sample size calculation was based on the assumption of the incidence of POCD of 0.01% in the Dex group and 16.70% in the control group [Gao 2020]. We estimated that the assignment of 40 patients in a 1:1 ratio to the Dex group versus the control group would provide a power of 64% with a one-sided alpha level of 0.10.

All analyses were performed using SPSS 20.0 software (SPSS, Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). Quantitative data were described as mean ± standard deviation (SD). Normally distributed data, including age, height, weight, ICU stay, hospital stay, Ngb, and MMSE were compared using independent sample t-test. Categorical variables, including gender, ASA grades, HYHA grades, number of bypass grafts, incidence of POCD and postoperative complications were presented as numbers (percentage) and compared using χ² test. Two-tailed probability value of P < .05 was considered as statistically significant.

### RESULTS

There were no significant differences in the general intraoperative information, including gender, age, height, weight, ASA grades, HYHA grades, operation time, number of bypass grafts, and hypertension (P > .05) (Table 1).

**POCD**

The incidence of POCD in the Dex group was significantly lower than that in the control group at postoperative 7 days and postoperative 30 days (P < .05) (Table 2).

### DISCUSSION

Minimally invasive surgery has the advantage of small trauma and quick recovery, which is favored by patients with coronary heart disease. However, bypass of the anterior descending and diagonal branches is suitable for beating-heart coronary artery bypass surgery due to the limited surgical field. In this study, all 40 patients underwent anterior descending coronary artery bypass graft. Beating-heart coronary artery bypass surgery requires single-lung ventilation
Effect of Dexmedetomidine on The Neuroglobin Expression in Elderly Patients With Minimally Invasive Coronary Artery Bypass Graft Surgery—Gao et al

Dexmedetomidine is a sedative and anxiolytic drug that is commonly used in the perioperative period. The current evidence suggests that it may have a role in reducing the incidence of postoperative delirium and improving cognitive function in elderly patients undergoing minimally invasive coronary artery bypass graft surgery.

**CONCLUSION**

Dex used in elderly patients undergoing minimally invasive coronary artery bypass graft surgery can effectively increase the expression level of Ngb and reduce the incidence of POCD.

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