INTRACRANIAL COMPARTMENT VOLUMES AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION AMONG CLINICALLY DIAGNOSED PATIENTS WITH NORMAL PRESSURE HYDROCEPHALUS AND BRAIN ATROPHY IN A NIGERIAN POPULATION

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ABSTRACT
Normal pressure hydrocephalus is a form of non-obstructive hydrocephalus characterized by the triad of symptoms. These symptoms are typical or atypical. Because of its potential reversibility, researchers have paid attention to its diagnosis and in differentiating it with other forms of dementia such as brain atrophy. To determine the intracranial compartment volumes and their differences among patients with NPH and Brain Atrophy (BA). This was a cross-sectional study involving consenting patients diagnosed with NPH and BA who were referred for routine brain CT. Medical conditions known to influence intracranial volume were excluded. Age -matched normal control were clinically and radiologically confirmed normal and were also recruited. Intracranial volumes and CSF distribution determination was based on Cavalieri test point computation principle. Test point summation was on a locally developed software for this purpose. Overall, the values of BA recorded higher mean values for most of the intracranial compartment volumes. Intraventricular volume was consistently higher in NPH groups. Statistical difference exists among intraventricular and total intracranial CSF volume across patients with BA, NPH and control. A post hoc test revealed control-NPH comparison across these variables. Control-BA comparison was evident in total intracranial CSF volume only. Higher mean values of intracranial compartment volumes were observed in patients with BA than among patients with NPH and their control. Anthropometric indices did not show any difference between patients with BA, NPH and their control. These indices can be used as basis in objectively differentiating NPH from BA

KEY WORDS: Brain atrophy, Diagnosis, Intracranial volume, Normal pressure hydrocephalus

INTRODUCTION
The term Normal Pressure Hydrocephalus (NPH) was first presented by Adams Hakim in 1965 as a form of non-obstructive hydrocephalus with enlargement of ventricles, normal CSF pressure and a triad of symptoms that is potentially reversible (Damasceno 2015, Nassar & Lippa 2016). These symptoms include gait disturbance, mental retardation and urinary incontinence (Damasceno 2015, Nassar & Lippa 2016). A pathologic history to the central nervous system such as subarachnoid injury, hemorrhage and meningitis usually explains the onset of NPH. However, idiopathic NPH (INPH), is a more common clinical syndrome affecting older people (De-Vis et al., 2016). Presently, there is no clear pathological diagnosis for idiopathic NPH and diagnosis is based on patient's response to shunt surgery (Qin 2011, Jack et al., 2010).

Similarly, the similarities between NPH and Brain Atrophy (BA) are justified by the range of diagnostic tests for differentiating them (Damasceno 2015). However, most of these tests are invasive and presents with varying degree of potential complications. Advanced neuroimaging modalities are another complementary diagnostic test used in improving the diagnosis and management of NPH and BA. Unfortunately, the number of neuroimaging features that aids diagnosis of NPH are usually subjective and in most cases have overlapping features similar to...
Pathologically, patients with BA have generalized loss in volume and density of the cerebral tissue. This leads to increased spaces which will obviously be filled with CSF. The ventricles are disproportionately dilated than the cortical sulci which are narrower or obliterated at the high convexity and midline in patients with NPH (Damasceno 2015, Lee et al., 2010), while CSF is significantly elaborated in the peripheral intracranial region and sub-arachnoid spaces in patients diagnosed with BA, thus making the cortical sulci prominent (Szczepek et al., 2015).

The cavaliere method is one outstanding method which provides quantitative volumetric estimates regarding 3D structures using 2D sectional images (Roberts et al., 2000, Akdogan et al., 2010, Sahin & Elaki, 2012). Volumetric estimates from this method on Computed Tomography (CT) images is reported to be reliable, objective and easily reproducible (Akdogan et al., 2010, Sahin & Elaki, 2012, Akosman 2013). Therefore, the present study aims to report a non-invasive, objective and easily reproducible ante-mortem method of diagnosing NPH and BA using volumetric intracranial differences from a resource limited population where the availability of MRI scanners and sophisticated medical image processing/analysis software is near nonexistent.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This was a descriptive, cross-sectional and age-matched study which was carried out in the CT suite of the Department of Radiology, Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital, Kano, Nigeria from March 2018 to November 2020. It involves consenting patients that reported to the neurosurgery and neurology specialty clinics who were clinically diagnosed with NPH and BA and were routinely sent for brain CT. The CT images were acquired with a 160-slice Toshiba Acquilion (Prime) CT-scanner (model CG CT-0321, manufactured in Dec. 2013 and installed in 2015) under standard protocol. Using purposive sampling, true samples that met inclusion criteria were all recruited. Patients with any medical history known to influence intracranial and cerebral structures were excluded (Szczepek et al., 2015). Approval to carry out the study was sort from the National human research and ethics committee (NHREC/21/08/2008/AKTH/EC/2666). Similarly, normal CT brain examinations that were radiologically and clinically confirmed normal were recruited into the study as healthy age-matched control.

Volume estimation was based on the Cavalieri’s principle (Akdogan et al., 2010, Mazonakis et al., 2004). This was facilitated by the use of a locally developed software which was developed specifically for this study. The software, named voXas_2018 has abilities to read DICOM images and are applied for visual analysis of 3D tissue density matrix, a characteristic similar to CT images (VisNow 2011). Selected CT slices were staked and displayed and a determined graduated grid is randomly superimposed on loaded images. Each area of interest is delineated using stereological planimetry –cursor aided method and total test points were recorded (Fig. 1). Total test points of Cerebral tissue (CRBL), Intra-ventricular CSF (InVen) and extra-ventricular CSF (ExVen) were recorded for each patient.

Figure 1: Test point computing by voXas_2018
Recorded data from the software were then automatically transferred to Microsoft Excel sheet version 2009 for Windows 8 for volumetric estimation using the Cavalieri formula (Akdogan et al., 2010, Mazonakis et al., 2004). The formula is given as

\[ V = (Q) \times (a) \times (t) \]

Where:
- \( V \) = Volume (cm\(^3\))
- \( Q \) = Sum of test points hitting object (target structure) = \((q_1 + q_2 + q_3 + \ldots + q_n)\)
- \( a \) = The Unit area represented by each grid point (cm\(^2\))
- \( t \) = Slice thickness (cm)

The accuracy of volumetric outcome from this method was compared with other stereological techniques of volume estimation (Akdogan et al., 2010, Mazonakis et al., 2004). Similarly, strength of measurement \((r)\) was computed between the two methods. Intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC) was used for this purpose and showed perfect reliability with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.89. Data was analyzed using SPSS v20 (IBM corp. 2015). A \( p \) value of ≤0.05 was regarded as statistically different.

**RESULTS**

A total of twenty-nine (29) CT series that met all inclusion criteria were recruited into the study. This comprised 7 (24.1%), 8 (27.6%) and 14 (48.3%) clinically established cases of Brain Atrophy (BA), Normal Pressure Hydrocephalus (NPH) and Control groups, respectively. Majority of the CT series were males 59% individuals. The age range of participants from 0.33 years – 40 years with an overall mean age of 13.62 ± 14.29 years. Participants were grouped into age categories. Majority of the CT series were from 1-5 years age group (27.6%). Age group <1years accounted for the CT series with the least frequency (10.3%) (Table 1).

**Table 1: Distribution of participants according to age categories**

| Age Group (years) | BA   | NPH  | Control | Frequency (%) | Mean Age ± SD | Min | Max |
|-------------------|------|------|---------|---------------|---------------|-----|-----|
| <1                | 1    | 1    | 1       | 3 (10.3)      | 0.42 ± 0.09   | 0.33| 0.5 |
| 1-5               | 2    | 2    | 2       | 4 (17.2)      | 0.50 ± 1.31   | 1   | 4   |
| 6-10              | 1    | 3    | 3       | 7 (24.1)      | 7.43 ± 1.5    | 6   | 9   |
| 16-20             | 2    | 1    | 2       | 5 (17.2)      | 18.20 ± 1.1   | 17  | 20  |
| 36-40             | 1    | 1    | 4       | 6 (20.7)      | 38.67 ± 0.82  | 38  | 40  |
| **TOTAL**         | **7 (24.1%)** | **8 (27.6%)** | **14 (48.3%)** | **29 (100%)** | **13.62 ± 14.29** | **0.33** | **40** |

**Key:** BA: Brain Atrophy, NPH: Normal Pressure Hydrocephalus, Freq: Frequency, Min: Minimum, Max: Maximum

The descriptive statistics of the overall intracranial compartment volumes according to the groups (BA, NPH and control) and independent of age-grouping is presented in table 2. Overall, the values of BA recorded higher mean values for most of the intracranial compartment volumes.
Based on age grouping, the intracranial compartment volumes and some anthropometric variables were presented for each age group. Table 3-5 presents the values for the 3rd, 4th and 5th age categories. Similarly, BA series recorded higher mean values for most of the intracranial compartment volumes while anthropometric variables were within similar range.

### Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Intracranial volumes according to Group

| Variables          | BA (n=7) | NPH (n=8) | CONTROL (n=14) |
|--------------------|----------|-----------|----------------|
|                    | Mean±SD  | Min.      | Max.           | Mean±SD  | Min.      | Max.           | Mean±SD  | Min.      | Max.           |
| Age                | 11.90±14.49 | 0.33     | 40.00          | 10.80±12.64 | 0.42     | 38.00          | 16.18±15.52 | 0.50      | 39.00          |
| Br_vol(cm³)        | 1031.95±399.12 | 664.85   | 1881.70        | 817.92±432.41 | 134.85   | 1350.70        | 948.04±260.01 | 345.85    | 1269.50        |
| InV_vol(cm³)       | 31.99±17.90 | 14.10    | 63.40          | 72.48±51.52  | 25.75    | 189.00         | 18.75±9.73   | 6.50      | 35.70          |
| Ex_ven_vol(cm³)    | 89.22±68.91 | 22.90    | 230.00         | 45.80±30.88  | 6.45     | 97.00          | 35.94±17.30  | 4.00      | 70.50          |
| Tcsf_vol(cm³)      | 121.21±76.19 | 37.00    | 275.70         | 118.28±50.45 | 46.90    | 214.45         | 54.69±23.20  | 10.50     | 101.80         |
| TICrV_vol(cm³)     | 1153.16±409.32 | 701.85   | 1990.70        | 183.70±417.95 | 283.70   | 1485.60        | 1002.73±277.91 | 356.35    | 1332.30        |

Key: \( \text{Br_vol} \): Brain/cerebral Volume, \( \text{InV_vol} \): Intraventricular volume, \( \text{Ex_ven_vol} \): Extraventricular volume, \( \text{Tcsf_vol} \): Total cerebrospinal fluid volume, \( \text{TICrV_vol} \): Total intracranial volume.

### Table 3:

| Variables          | BA (n=1) | NPH (n=3) | CONTROL (n=3) | Overall (n=7) |
|--------------------|----------|-----------|----------------|---------------|
|                    | Mean±SD  | Min.      | Max.           | Mean±SD  | Min.      | Max.           | Mean±SD  | Min.      | Max.           |
| Age                | 6        | 6         | 6              | 7.33±1.53 | 6         | 9              | 7.43±1.5 | 6         | 9              |
| Weight(kg)         | 24       | 24        | 24             | 27.67±3.22 | 24        | 30             | 28.14±4.49 | 24        | 36             |
| Br_vol(cm³)        | 779      | 779       | 779            | 764.67±362.59 | 346      | 977            | 813.26±1.81 | 346       | 1164           |
| InV_vol(cm³)       | 21       | 21        | 21             | 11.33±6.11  | 6         | 18             | 44.29±64.77 | 6         | 189            |
| Ex_ven_vol(cm³)    | 42       | 42        | 42             | 30.67±23.29 | 4         | 47             | 31.71±20.57 | 4         | 57             |
| Tcsf_vol(cm³)      | 63       | 63        | 63             | 42±27.79   | 10        | 60             | 76.14±64.7  | 10        | 214            |
| TICrV_vol(cm³)     | 842      | 842       | 842            | 807±390.58 | 356       | 1034           | 889.29±274.15 | 356       | 1211           |

Key: \( \text{Br_vol} \): Brain/cerebral Volume, \( \text{InV_vol} \): Intraventricular volume, \( \text{Ex_ven_vol} \): Extraventricular volume, \( \text{Tcsf_vol} \): Total cerebrospinal fluid volume, \( \text{TICrV_vol} \): Total intracranial volume.
**Key:** Br_vol: Brain/cerebral Volume, InV_vol: Intraventricular volume, Ex_ven_vol: Extraventricular volume, Tcsf_vol: Total cerebrospinal fluid volume, TICrV_vol: Total intracranial volume.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Intracranial volumetric indices for age group 5

| Variables | BA (n=1) | NPH (n=1) | CONTROL (n=4) | Overall (n=6) |
|-----------|----------|-----------|---------------|---------------|
| Mean±SD   | Min.     | Max.      | Mean±SD       | Min.         | Max.       | Mean±SD         | Min.     | Max.      |
| **Age**   | 40±40    | 40±40     | 38±38         | 38±38        | 38±39      | 38±0.82         | 38±0.82 | 40±40     |
| **Weight(kg)** | 84±84    | 84±84     | 72±72         | 72±72       | 72±77      | 75.67±4.59      | 72±77   | 80.48     |
| **Br_vol(cm^3)** | 854±854  | 854±854  | 1322±1322     | 1322±1322   | 1157.5±79.87 | 1094±1270       | 1134.33±164.37 | 854±1322 |
| **InV_vol(cm^3)** | 46±46    | 46±46    | 56±56         | 56±56       | 27.5±7.33  | 20±36            | 35.33±13.77 | 20±56     |
| **Ex_ven_vol(cm^3)** | 230±230  | 230±230  | 31±31         | 31±31       | 49.25±14.43 | 37±70           | 76.33±76.46 | 31±230    |
| **Tcsf_vol(cm^3)** | 276±276  | 276±276  | 87±87         | 87±87       | 77±17.19  | 63±102           | 111.83±81.62 | 63±276    |
| **TICrV_vol(cm^3)** | 1130±1130| 1130±1130| 1408±1408     | 1408±1408   | 1234.25±70.61 | 1165±1346.6    | 1245.83±105.08 | 1130±1408 |

Explanatory variables were tested for normality using Shapira-Wilk’s test and most variables were not normally distributed (p < 0.05). Kruskal-Wallis (non-parametric) statistics that assessed the differences in intracranial compartment volumes across age groups (BA, NPH, Control) indicated significant difference in intraventricular and total intracranial CSF volumes only (p ≤ 0.05). A one-way non-parametric (pairwise comparison) post hoc analysis was conducted on InV_vol and Tcsf_vol. Significant difference was consistent in Control-NPH comparison across the two variables while Control -BA comparison was evident in Tcsf_vol only (Table 6).
Table 6: Post-hoc Kruskal-Wallis (pairwise comparison) analysis

| Statistic | Median (IQR) | Group Comparison | Chi Square | Std. Error | Std. Statistic | Test | p value |
|-----------|--------------|------------------|------------|------------|----------------|------|---------|
| InV_vol   | 26(29)       | Control-BA       | 6.11       | 3.94       | 1.55           | 0.364|         |
|           |              | Control-NPH      | 14.46      | 3.77       | 3.83           | 0.001|         |
|           |              | BA-NPH           | -8.36      | 4.41       | -1.90          | 0.17 |         |
| Tcsf_vol  | 70(62)       | Control-BA       | 9.89       | 3.94       | 2.51           | 0.036|         |
|           |              | Control-NPH      | 11.41      | 3.77       | 3.02           | 0.007|         |
|           |              | BA-NPH           | -1.52      | 4.41       | -0.35          | 1.00 |         |

Key: InV_vol: Intraventricular volume, Tcsf_vol: Total cerebrospinal fluid volume,

DISCUSSION

Overall brain volume (BV) of age-matched control subjects in this study was 948.04±260.01cm³. Luders et al., (2009) in Los Angeles reported BV of normal sample as 1406.57±101.69cm³ and 1406.62±101.41cm³ in men and women respectively. Akdogan et al., (2010) in Turkey reported BV of 1343.01±179.62cm³ and 1177.55±184.95cm³ for male and female respectively. Similarly, Resnick et al., (2000), reported BV of 1017.6±80.3cm³ and 915.9±81.7cm³ in men and women, respectively. The mean ages of participants from Akdogan et al., (2010), Ludas et al., (2009) and Resnick et al., (2000) studies were higher than that of the present study which was just 16.18years as against 41.2years (Akdogan et al., 2010), 42.96 years (Luders et al., 2009) and 70.4years (Resnick et al., 2000) from the 3 cited studies. Its established, brain development continues to increase even beyond the age of 16 years (Matsuzawa et al., 2001. Karacan et al., 2013) while at 40 years it is believed that neuronal loss begins to set in (Karacan et al., 2013, De-Vis et al., 2016). Thus, this explains the variation in of BV in the present study. Furthermore, about 71% of the distribution from the control group were children below the ages of 20 years. Since 75% of the brain is developed at the age of 2 years, synaptic pruning and cell death are most active during these early years and changes in brain structure continue throughout life (Karacan et al., 2013, Giedd et al., 1996). Omer et al., (2014) further supported this by stating that cranial, cortical and sub cortical volume continue to increase by age up to 21-30 years then become steady till subsequent decades of life. The brain volume for patients with BA and NPH in the present study was 1031±399.12cm³ and 817±432cm³, respectively. Szczepk et al., (2015) reported brain volume of 1130±14cm³ and 1258±39cm³ among patients with BA and NPH, respectively (Szczepk et al., 2015). This highlights similarities between the two studies. However, differences were observed in NPH between the two studies. An obvious reason may be attributed to differences in research designs and age distribution between the two studies. The distribution of NPH had far lower mean age of 10.8years against 56.7 years reported by Szczepk et al., (2015). Similarly, Blatter et al., (1995) reported a 5-decade normative study on volumetric analysis of brain using MRI. However, Blatter et al., (1995) faulted his results and cautioned the reliability of generalizing their findings in a number ways ranging from non-calibration of the equipment to not controlling for effect of age. However, these factors were addressed by the present study and may suggest the reliability of our findings. However, there was no significant differences in brain volume between BA, NPH and control across the 3-decades reported.

Result of this study revealed total intraventricular (InV_vol) CSF volume for the control, BA and NPH as 18.75±9.73cm³, 31.99±17.9cm³ and 72.48±51.52cm³, respectively. Slightly higher values were reported by Akdogan et al., (2010) in keeping with age differences due to participants distribution. However, Szczepk et al., (2015) who conducted a relevant study, highlighted that a higher value of CSF in the intraventricular cranial compartment was obtained in patients with NPH than in BA group. This is supporting the present study in which higher value of intraventricular CSF volume was observed among patients with NPH. Furthermore, the present study established significant difference in InV_vol between NPH and Control groups. This could possibly be due the estimated intraventricular CSF volume in patients with NPH was about 3-fold when compared to that of age-matched control in the present study. However, no significant difference was observed between control-BA and BA-NPH comparisons.
This study revealed total extra-ventricular (Ex_ven) CSF volume of 35.94±17.3cm$^3$, 89.22±68.91cm$^3$ and 45.80±30.88cm$^3$ among Control, BA and NPH groups, respectively. Extra-ventricular (Ex_ven) CSF compartment may be a good marker differentiating NPH and BA. Under normal conditions, BA has been attributed with normal aging which replaces normal cerebral tissue with CSF (Gur et al., 1999, Akdogan et al., 2010,). The obvious intracranial compartment that is emphasized is the cerebral cortex which is anatomically related with the sub-arachnoid spaces is the Ex_ven. This claim is supported by Szczepek et al., (2015) whereby they stated higher values of CSF volume was noticed in the sub-arachnoid spaces and basal cisterns among their patients with BA than in those with NPH. However, despite the obvious numerical differences in extra-ventricular CSF volume across the groups (BA, NPH and Control), the difference was not statistically significant. An attributable factor in this respect may be the smaller sample size for patients with BA in the current study. This study found a total CSF volume (Tcsf) of 119.92±33.63cm$^3$ and 89.22±68.91cm$^3$ whereas patients with BA and NPH were found to 251±24cm$^3$ and 227±17cm$^3$, respectively. However, they did not include control group into their study. A general finding indicates Tcsf volume of patients with BA and NPH from the works of Szczepek et al., (2015) and this study were far above the normal range of age-matched controls reported in the present study and also the work of Blatter et al., (2015) that reported a mean total intracranial CSF volume of 119.92±33.63cm$^3$ and 124.03±38.1cm$^3$ for females and males, respectively. The distribution of CSF between BA, NPH and age-matched control groups were obviously different. Statistically significant differences exist in total CSF volume among patients with BA and their age-matched control. This is because the continuous loss of neural tissues with the gradual replacement with CSF overtime among patients with BA (Akdogan et al., 2010, Szczepek et al., 2015).However statistical difference between patients with BA and NPH could not be established in the present study. Mean value of total intracranial volume (TicrV) in patients with NPH and control in the present study was found to be 936.20±417.95cm$^3$ and 1002.73±277.91cm$^3$, respectively. A relevant study conducted by Bradley in (2004) in the United States (US) assessed the intracranial volume of 51 patients with clinically suspected NPH (mean age 75years for men & 77years for women) and compared with control subjects (n=55; mean age men 71yrs, women 74years). Findings from the present study appeared to be in disagreement with the work of Bradley (2004). Thus, the reason for the variation in this study could be due to the smaller sample size in NPH (n=8), lower mean age of 10.8years and the large standard deviation (SD = ±417.95cm$^3$) could have accounted for this variation when compared with the sample size (n=14), mean age 16.18years and SD (±277.91cm$^3$) from our control. Furthermore, there was no differences between BA, NPH and Control across all the age categories studied. There are some potential limitations to this study that needs to be considered when interpreting the data. The low number of participants witnessed across all the three conditions was limited our study. This is largely due to the study design to control effect of age. This action grossly excluded a significant number of available potential participants from the groups of BA and normal healthy control.

**CONCLUSION**

Higher mean values of intracranial compartment volumes were observed in patients with BA than among patients with NPH and their age matched control. Hence, intracranial compartment volumes can be a reliable non-invasive index in differentiating these common but difficult to diagnose medical conditions. Anthropometric indices did not show any difference between patients with BA, NPH and their control.

**Conflict of Interest.**

We (authors) exclusively declare that there is no conflict of interest in this work.
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