Research Article

Cognitive Function Differences based on Hemispheric Lesions of First-Ever Ischemic Stroke Patients

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Abstract: Ischemic stroke is one of stroke subtype often correlated with disturbance of cognitive function. We conduct an observational study with cross-sectional design of 70 ischemic stroke patients. Objective of this study is to evaluate cognitive differences based on hemispheric lateralization lesions. We used Montreal Cognitive Assessment – Indonesian version (MoCA-Ina) to assess cognitive function resulting on 70 patients, consist of 48 subjects (68.57 %) of left hemispheric stroke and 22 subjects (31.43%) of right hemispheric stroke. As much as 68 subjects (97.14 %) are categorized as having cognitive disturbance. Mean differences of MoCA-Ina was assessed using Mann-Whitney test resulting no significant differences between left vs right hemisphere groups (18.94 ± 3.26 vs 19.82 ± 3.13; p= 0.320). Further study would warrant lesions lateralizations could affects cognitive performance of ischemic stroke patients.

Keyword: ischemic stroke, cognitive, hemisphere, lateralization

Introduction

Stroke, especially ischemic stroke is one of the most disabling cerebrovascular disease and could interfere with the subject cognitive function. While for first stroke it usually happened in one of the carotid circulation of cerebral hemispheric region, excepts for vertobasilar circulation stroke, even first stroke could result in permanent cognitive deficits. While it has been conservatively recognized that cognitive performance was dominated by left hemisphere and any disturbance of it would interfere one’s cognitive ability, recent study shows that several cognitive domain, such verbal and visuospatial task and less confounder bias such subject's educational background and visuospatial task and less confounder bias such subject’s educational background although there are still debatable that MoCA's high sensitivity followed by low specificity of the test.² Our study try to elaborate if there is any differences in cognitive performance of first ever stroke side lesion using MoCA-Ina tool.

Materials and Methods

Ethical approval received from the Health Research Ethical Committee, Faculty of Medicine Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan-Indonesia. From July to November 2017, we acquired 70 consecutive samples of first ever hemispheric ischemic stroke outpatients on Neurology Clinic of Adam Malik General Hospital proved by previous head CT expertise. Exclusion criteria of this study including patients with history of dementia pre cerebrovascular accident, patients with posterior circulation stroke, patients that cannot speak Bahasa Indonesia, partial or total blindness, severe deafness and patient with major psychiatric liabilities, including psychotic and depression. Informed consent was asked from the patients (or their legal responders by any means the patient cannot give consent).

Firstly we note site of the infarct by evaluating Head CT result and right hemispheric stroke. Characteristic of subjects is that they had been conservatively recognized that cognitive performance was dominated by left hemisphere and any disturbance of it would interfere one’s cognitive ability. Recent study shows that several cognitive domain, such verbal and visuospatial task and less confounder bias such subject’s educational background although there are still debatable that MoCA's high sensitivity followed by low specificity of the test.² Our study try to elaborate if there is any differences in cognitive performance of first ever stroke side lesion using MoCA-Ina tool.

Results

This study has recruited for as much as 70 patients of first-ever ischemic stroke patients of carotid circulation which cause either left or right hemispheric infarcts. Furthermore, the sample divided overall subjects onto 2 main groups, the left and right hemispheric stroke. Characteristic of subjects is shown in table 1.
Post stroke cognitive impairment has been recognized as one of contributing condition caused by vascular remodelling, also known on term as vascular cognitive impairment and has been a burden in brain degeneration nowadays.\(^6\) While we aware that many previous study have manage to correlate and compare cognitive disturbance in post stroke patients, we also think that this study is important in our society as quoted from research by Narasimhalu et al which stated that post stroke cognitive impairment could be predictor of post stroke severity and mortality.\(^7\)

From the cross-tabulation of the data using MoCA-Ina with cutoff score of 26, we found that 68 subjects (97.14\%) of the sample are diagnosed with post stroke cognitive impairment. The high number percentage somehow comparable with study done by Lestari et al in Jakarta, that found 72.41\% of the post stroke sample subject has cognitive problems regarding other confounding factor such as ischemic stroke risk factor dan ethnic biodiversity of the subjects between these studies.\(^10\)

Using Mann-Whitney test, we compared MoCA-Ina score’s mean differences in between left and right hemispheric stroke, resulting in 18.94 ± 3.26 vs 19.82 ± 3.13, respectively, unfortunately not statistically significant (\(p = 0.320\)). This left-lateralization-associated deterioration is in line with previous study done by Chan et al, which also compared left sided vs right sided stroke resulting in MoCA-Ina raw score of 15.17 ± 6.89 vs 18.80 ± 7.38.\(^11\) These two study results are understandable considering left brain damage would causing general cognitive impairment unless exclusive cognitive domain impairment such visuospatial and attentional domain.\(^2\)\(^11\) This is considered as a weakness of this study that did not elaborate as per domain score. Another confounding factor also found on undocumented risk factor of the subject, as any vascular compromise could also become bias in cognitive performance.

**CONCLUSION**

Left-sided first ischemic stroke resulting in lower MoCA-Ina score’s mean differences compared to right-sided ones, but not statistically significant (18.94 ± 3.26 vs 19.82 ± 3.13, \(p =\) ...
0.320). Further study with risk factor estimation and larger sample is encouraged to provide better viewpoint regarding other confounding variables.

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