Ultrasound-guided continuous retroclavicular brachial plexus block

Sir,
Although the retroclavicular technique of infraclavicular brachial plexus block targets the cords, the needle insertion point lies above the clavicle: 2 cm cephalad to the clavicle, medial to the trapezius insertion. The advantages of this block include better visualization of the needle, and no need to abduct the arm during the block.[1] We have tried the placement of catheters with this technique [Figure 1]. Continuous peripheral nerve blocks (CPNB) provide surgical anesthesia and analgesia during the postoperative period and treatment of chronic pain conditions.[2] The major advantage of this technique for continuous catheter technique includes the dressing to be in the supraclavicular region. This enables us to easily keep the probe and visualize the spread of the local anesthetic during subsequent top ups. This is especially useful if we are not using a stimulating catheter.

Financial support and sponsorship
Nil.

Conflicts of interest
There are no conflicts of interest.

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Submitted: 13-Apr-2020, Revised: 13-Apr-2020,
Accepted: 20-Apr-2020, Published: 24-Sep-2020
Letters to Editor

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Sir,

Lung isolation for one lung ventilation (OLV) in thoracic surgeries is achieved through several methods which include Double Lumen Tube (DLT) and Bronchial blocker (BB). In our elderly patient with an anticipated difficult airway, both DLT and BB were viable options as pointed out. In current practice, DLTs are considered to be the standard of reference for achieving lung isolation. The reasons for this are manifold and most of them are pertinent in our case.

DLTs are quicker to place with a lower incidence of mal-positioning. Placement requires fewer laryngoscopy attempts than when a Single Lumen Tube (SLT) is used with a BB. DLTs can be placed without fibre optic bronchoscope (FOB) assistance, which becomes important in the context of a narrowed airway where the passage of an appropriately sized Endotracheal tube with a FOB might be challenging. Absolute isolation of the lungs from each other, ease of suctioning from each lung, rapidity of lung collapse, rapid switching from OLV to two-lung ventilation are all advantages of DLTs.

BBs are emerging as another method of lung isolation in recent times especially for the pediatric population where appropriately sized DLTs are unavailable, whereas DLTs remain the gold standard in the adult population. The use of BBs, however, is riddled with complications. BBs require frequent FOB examinations, produce unsatisfactory deflation of the operative lung, might migrate into the trachea. Accidental breaking of the BB and distal migration may also cause airway obstruction.

In the context of a difficult airway requiring OLV, both DLTs and BBs have a place. BBs can be used once the airway has been secured using an SLT. Another proposition is the use of Airway Exchange Catheter (AEC) to change from an SLT to a DLT or to directly use a DLT over the AEC.

In this anticipated difficult airway, arrangements for both methods were made. Upon direct laryngoscopy, Cormack-Lehane Grade 4 was noted and AEC was used before attempting intubation to ensure that airway patency was not lost.

We preferred a DLT for several reasons. In our elderly patient with multiple comorbidities and reduced cardiovascular reserve, the stress of laryngoscopy would be poorly tolerated. We intended to limit the duration and number of attempts at airway manipulation using a DLT. Since an AEC was already placed, the recommended method of OLV, that is, DLT was attempted first. Owing to neck irradiation, glottic chink was reduced allowing snug passage of 7.0 mm ID SLT. This is smaller than...