
Morphologic Variation of Posterior Part of the Circle of Willis Based on Studies Using Magnetic Resonance Angiography

Department of Neurology, Yonsei University College of Medicine, Seoul, Korea.

**Hye-Yeon Choi, M.D., Jae Hoon Yang, M.D., Sang Won Han, M.D.,
Seo Hyun Kim, M.D., Ji Hoe Heo, M.D., Ph.D.**

Background: The arterial circle of Willis at the base of the brain serves as a potential collateral pathway, which enables to maintain adequate cerebral perfusion in case of diminished afferent blood supply through the internal carotid artery (ICA) or the basilar artery. While its function depends on the continuity of its circular configuration, it is known to vary. The anatomic variants of circle of Willis have been studied based on conventional angiographic or autopsy studies. With the advent of magnetic resonance angiography (MRA), the anatomic variation of the posterior part of circle of Willis can be easily demonstrated in a physiologic state. **Methods:** Among the subjects who underwent both brain magnetic resonance imaging and MRA in the Yonsei Medical Center from 2000 to 2003, those without a brain parenchymal lesion and without abnormalities of intracranial and neck vessels were included in the present study. The anatomic variants of the posterior part of the circle were determined by the presence of the posterior communicating artery (PcomA) or the precommunicating segment of the posterior cerebral artery (PCA). The variants were categorized into six groups: type A, bilateral PcomA; type B, unilateral PcomA and fetal type PCA; type C, unilateral PcomA; type D, unilateral fetal type PCA; type E, bilateral fetal type PCA; and type F, no continuity between the ICA and PCA. **Results:** Of 1884 subjects, 324 who met the inclusion criteria, were finally included for analyses. They were 152 males and 172 females, and the mean age was 54.2 years (range, 3/12~87 years). Type F was most common (171 subjects, 54.8 %), followed by type C (51, 15.6 %), type D (40, 12.4 %), type A (22, 6.8 %), type B (22, 6.8 %), and type E (5.6 %). In summary, while about a half of the subjects had no continuity between anterior and posterior circulations, the PCA was supplied only from the anterior circulation through the fetal-type PCA in a significant portion of subjects. **Conclusion:** We investigated normal reference values for morphologic variants of the posterior part of the circle of Willis based on MRA in Korean. These results would be helpful for consideration of the mechanism and pathogenesis in stroke patients.

(Korean Journal of Stroke 2004;6(1): 46~49)

Key Words: Circle of Willis, Variation, Magnetic resonance angiography

(fluid attenuated inversion recovery, FLAIR, 6000 ~ 10000 msec, 120 ~ 125 msec)
 (time-of-flight 3D)
 (posterior (23 ~ 25 msec, 2.5 ~ 6.9
 (posterior msec, 2, 20°; 115.5
 cerebral artery) mm, 512x192).
 communicating artery) (axial)

가 [1]

가

P1 ()
 가
 P1 가
 가
 (fetal type) 가
 (fig. 1). A,
 B,
 C
 D, E,
 F

1.
 2000 1 2003 5

2.
 1.5 Tesla(GE medical system, Philips medical system)
 , Fast-Spin-Echo
 (3500 ~ 6000 msec,
 60 ~ 100 msec), T1 (400 msec.
 8 ~ 10 msec), T2 (4000 msec,
 100 msec),

Table 1. Age and sex distribution of subjects

Age, yr	Male, n	Female, n
<10	3	3
10-19	3	2
20-29	5	8
30-39	11	9
40-49	32	30
50-59	35	49
60-69	39	46
70-79	17	21
>80	6	2
Total	152	172

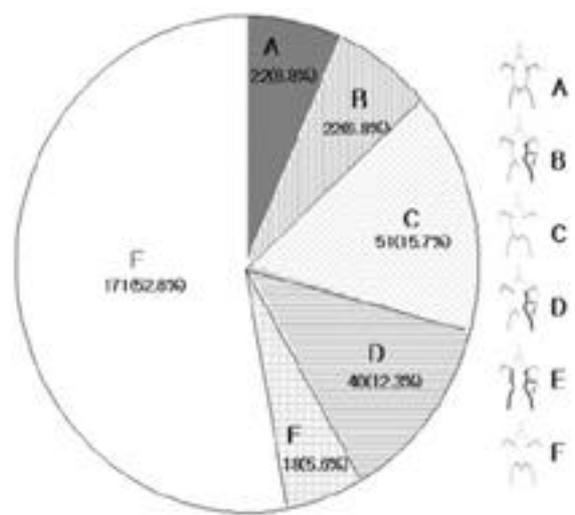


Figure 1. Type and frequency of variations of the posterior part of the circle of Willis. There was no continuity between anterior and posterior circulations in about a half. Type A, complete circle; B, fetal type posterior cerebral artery (PCA) in one side and posterior communicating artery (P-com) in the other side; C, P-com in one side; D, fetal type PCA in one side; E, bilateral fetal type PCA; F, no continuity.

1884 , 391 가 . . P1 가

324 가 172 54.2 (가 152, P1 가 가
 3/12-87)(table 1).
 F 54.8% 가 , 24.8%

. F C E 가 가 , 10.9%, 11%
 (fig. 1). 6.8% 가 24.8%

5.6% 13%~32 % [2, 5]

가 52% ,
 가 가 37% [7,8]. 가

가 11%, 21%
 [9,10], 가
 60%가 가
 74% 가
 [11].

가 가 (38%,
 63%)[12].

가 , 54.8%
 6.8%
 가

[5,6]. 24.8%

가 가

57.3%[3],
 18%[1] ,
 (;

52%[7]). 가 가
 가 6.8%

가 , 가

REFERENCES

1. Lee O, Chung GS, Kim SS, Huh JD, Kim HJ, Joh YD. Variation and anomalies of the circle of Willis in Korean. *J Kor Radiol Soc* 1989;25:353-361.
2. Hartkamp K, Van der Grond J, De Leeuw FE, De Groot JC, Algra A, Hillen B, Breteler M, Mali W. Circle of Willis: morphologic variation on three dementional time-of-flight MR angiogram. *Radiology* 1998;207:103-111.
3. . 2nd. ;1996:196
4. Symonds C. The circle of Willis. *Br Med J* 1955;1: 119-124.
5. Van Overbeeke JJ, Hillen B, Tulleken CA. A comparative study of the circle of Willis in fetal and adult life. The configuration of the posterior bifurcation of the posterior communicating artery. *J Anat* 1991;176:45-54.
6. Hillen B, Hoogstraten HW, Van Overbeeke JJ, Van der Zwan A. Functional anatomy of the circulus arteriosus cerebri. *Bull Asso Anat* 1991;75:123-126.
7. Alpers BJ, Berry RG, Paddison RM. Anatomical studies of the circle of Willis in normal brain. *Arch Neurol Psychiatr* 1959;81:409-418.
8. Alpers BJ, Berry RG. Circle of Willis in cerebral vascular disorders. *Arch Neurol* 1963;8:398-402.
9. Riggs HE, Rupp C. Variation in form of circle of Willis. *Arch Neurol* 1963;8:8-14.
10. Brunereau L, Levy C, Arrive L. Anatomie du polygone de Willis en ARM 3D temps de vol avec analyse des partitions. *J Radiol* 1995;76:573-577.
11. Miralles M, Dolz JL, Cotillas J. The role of the circle of Willis in carotid occlusion: assessment with phase contrast MR angiography and transcranial duplex. *Eur J Vasc Endovasc Surg* 1995;10:424-430.
12. Lee EH, Suh DC, Choi CG, Lee HK, Lim TH, Auh YH. Angiographic analysis of the circle of Willis: comparison between atherosclerosis and normal group. *J Korean Radiol Soc* 1999;41:651-656.