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## Clinical Characteristics of Patients with Aortic Plaques In Acute Ischemic Stroke

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**Background:** Transesophageal echocardiography (TEE) is a useful tool for evaluating aortic plaques. Several investigators have reported that the aortic arch atherosclerosis is a potential source of systemic emboli and an independent risk factor for ischemic stroke. But the clinical characteristics and neuroimaging findings of the stroke patients with aortic plaques remain unknown. **Methods:** From Yonsei Stroke Registry, we reviewed 333 consecutive patients with acute ischemic stroke, who underwent both TEE and vascular imaging studies. We analyzed the risk factor profiles, clinical features, neuroimaging findings, and TEE data of these patients. Based on the TEE findings, the plaques protruding into the lumen  $\geq 4$  mm, mobile or ulcerated lesions in the proximal aorta were defined as complex aortic plaques (CAP). The possible etiologies of stroke were classified into four groups; CAP only group, potential cardiac sources of embolism (PCSE) only group, relevant artery atherosclerosis (RAA) only group, and more than two etiologies or cryptogenic group (uncertain group). **Results:** Among the 333 patients, aortic plaques were found in 105 (31.5%) patients, Fifty nine patients (17.7%) had the CAP. The patients with CAP were older ( $p < 0.01$ ) and had more frequent history of cigarette smoking ( $p = 0.01$ ) and ischemic stroke ( $p = 0.04$ ) than those without. Total cholesterol level was also higher ( $p = 0.02$ ). The etiologic evaluations revealed CAP only in 31 (9.3%), PCSE only in 68 (20.4%), RAA only in 59 (17.7%), uncertain mechanism in 175 (52.6%) patients. The CAP only group less often had cortical dysfunctions (9.7%,  $p < 0.05$ ), but more likely to have a classic lacunar syndrome (54.8%,  $< 0.01$ ). Less than 1 cm sized lesions were frequently found in CAP only group (55.6%), when compared with PCSE only (19.4%,  $p < 0.01$ ), RAA only (29.8%,  $p = 0.03$ ), or uncertain group (25.0%,  $p < 0.01$ ). **Conclusions:** Aortic plaques were frequently found in acute stroke patients. The CAPs were closely related with old age, smoking, previous stroke, and hypercholesterolemia. The clinical presentations of CAP patients were characterized by minor stroke symptoms and small lesion sizes.

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**Key Words:** Aortic plaques, Transesophageal echocardiography, Acute ischemic stroke

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20% [1]. 40% [2,3]. (transesophageal echocardiography, TEE) [4] 10% [5]. 5-MHz (multiplane probe) Hewlett-Packard 5500 가 [6,7], [8]. 4 mm 가 11.9 /100 가 4 mm 가 2.9 /100 [9], 4 mm 가 4 mm (protruding plaques <4 mm), Grade 4 mm (protruding plaques 4 mm), Grade 가 (mobile or ulcerated plaques) [12]. (complex aortic plaques, CAP) 가 Grade Grade [10]. (278 ) (314 )

1. 1994 10 2000 3 1 cm, (digital subtraction angiography, 231 ) (151 ) North American Symptomatic Carotid Endarterectomy Trial (NASCET) Warfarin-Aspirin Symptomatic Intracranial Disease (WASID) cholesterol 220 mg/dl), (total 50% Trial of Org 10172 in Acute Stroke Treatment (TOAST) 가 [13].

(pure motor stroke, pure sensory stroke, sensory motor stroke, ataxic hemiparesis, dysarthria clumsy hand syndrome).

lacunar stroke(22.8%), cardioembolism (17.4%), undetermined due to negative evaluation(17.4%), undetermined two or more cause (10.2%), other determined(2.1%)

(complex aortic plaque, CAP only), 가 (potential cardiac sources of embolism only, PCSE only), (relevant artery atherosclerosis only, RAA only), 가 (uncertain)

1. 105 (31.5%) 가 15 , 84 , 45 , 36 가

가. 333 59.1±10.8 가 105 Grade 3 227 , 106 (2.9%), Grade 22 (21.0%), Grade 17 62.5% 가 , 43.2%, (16.2%), Grade 46 (43.8%), Grade 26.4%, 23.7%, 17 (16.2%) Grade 22.8%, 13.2% . Grade 3.2±0.6 mm, 6.0 ±2.0 mm . Grade 17 7 , 9 , 가 1 .

50 (15.0%) 44 , 16 , 7 , 3 , 2 . Grade 92 . 92 Grade 59 (17.7%)

61 (18.3%) 가 42 가 31 , 8 가 59 가 (62.3±7.3 vs. 58.4±11.4 , p=0.001), 가 (57.6% vs. 40.1%, p=0.014), 가 (206.5 ± 46.9mg/dl vs. 192.0±41.4 mg/dl, p=0.02), (33.9% vs. 21.5%, p =

. TOAST 333 18 (5.4 %). TOAST large artery atherosclerosis 24.6% 가

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of patients with CAP compared without

	CAP (N=59)	No CAP (N=274)	P value
Age, mean ± SD, years	62.3 ± 7.3	58.4 ± 11.4	<0.01
Sex, male	44(74.6)	183(66.8)	0.24
Hypertension	41(69.5)	167(60.9)	0.21
Diabetes mellitus	20(33.9)	68(24.8)	0.15
Smoking	34(57.6)	110(40.1)	0.01
T-Chol, mean ± SD, mg/dL	206.5 ± 46.9	192.0 ± 41.4	0.02
Atrial fibrillation	1(1.7)	43(15.7)	<0.01
Previous stroke	20(33.9)	59(21.5)	0.04
Coronary artery disease	5(8.5)	32(11.7)	0.47

Numbers in parentheses are percentages.

CAP indicates complex aortic plaques; T-Chol, total cholesterol.

**Table 2.** Neurological findings of the study group

	CAP only (N=31)	PCSE only (N=68)	RAA only (N=59)	Uncertain (N=175)	Total (N=333)
Motor weakness	24(77.4)	54(79.4)	40(67.8)	135(77.1)	253(76.0)
Sensory loss	11(35.5)	25(36.8)	17(28.8)	59(33.7)	112(33.6)
Ataxia	7(22.6)	9(13.2)	14(23.7)	36(20.6)	66(19.8)
Cortical sign	3(9.7)	29(42.6)*	24(40.7)*	47(26.9)* <sup>‡</sup>	103(30.9)
Brainstem sign	3(9.7)	4(5.9)	9(15.3)	12(6.9)	28(8.4)
Classic lacunar syndrome	17(54.8)	12(17.6)*	12(20.3)*	66(37.7)	107(32.1)

\* p <0.05 when each group compared with CAP only group by <sup>2</sup> test.

<sup>‡</sup> p <0.05 when each group compared with RAA only group by <sup>2</sup> test.

CAP indicates complex aortic plaques; PCSE, potential cardiac sources of embolism; RAA, relevant artery atherosclerosis.

**Table 3.** Lesion size of cerebral infarctions

	CAP only (N=27)	PCSE only (N=67)	RAA only (N=57)	Uncertain (N=164)	Total (N=315)
<1 cm	15(55.6)	13(19.4)*	17(29.8)*	41(25.0)*	86(27.3)
1 cm to 1/2 lobe	11(40.7)	30(44.8)	29(50.9)	105(64.0)	175(55.6)
1/2 lobe to 1 lobe	1(3.7)	19(28.4)	9(15.8)	15(9.1)	44(14.0)
More than 1 lobe	0(0)	5(7.5)	2(3.5)	3(1.8)	10(3.2)

\* p <0.05 when each group compared with CAP only group by <sup>2</sup> test.

0.043). (1.7% vs. 15.3%, p=0.002), 가 CAP only 가 (Table 1). CAP only 55.6% 가 1 cm (40.7%), (3.7%) (CAP only) 1 cm PCSE only (19.4%, p<0.01), RAA only (29.8%, p=0.03), uncertain (25.0%, p<0.01) (Table 3). (52.6%) 292 (92.7%), (1) 17 (5.4%), 6 (1.9%) 가 59.4%(187 ) 가 CAP only 가 9.7% PCSE only 42.6%(p<0.01), RAA only 40.7%(p<0.01), uncertain 26.9%(p=0.04) CAP only 54.8% PCSE only 17.6%(p<0.01), RAA only 20.3%(p<0.01), uncertain 32.1%(p=0.07) (Table 2). (2) 18 315 (p<0.05). RAA only uncer- , CAP only PCSE only

**Table 4.** Topographic distribution of cerebral infarctions

	CAP only (N=27)	PCSE only (N=67)	RAA only (N=57)	Uncertain (N=164)	Total (N=315)
. Single territory	23(85.2)	60(89.6)	49(86.0)	155(94.5)	287(91.1)
a. Carotid	13(48.1)	46(68.7)	33(57.9)	104(63.4)	196(62.2)
AchA	1(3.7)	0(0)	0(0)	2(1.2)	3(1.0)
AchAACA	0(0)	1(1.5)	0(0)	3(1.8)	4(1.3)
AchAMCA	12(44.4)	44(65.7)	33(57.9)	98(59.8)	187(59.4)
AchASuperficial	2(7.4)	17(25.4)	10(17.5)	14(8.5) <sup>†</sup>	43(13.7)
AchADeep	8(29.6)	13(19.4)	11(19.3)	55(33.5) <sup>†‡</sup>	87(27.6)
AchASuperficial+ Deep	2(7.4)	14(20.9)	12(21.1)	29(17.7)	57(18.1)
AchAMultiple anterior	0(0)	1(1.5)	0(0)	1(0.6)	2(0.6)
b. Vertebrobasilar	10(37.0)	16(23.9)	19(33.3)	51(31.1)	96(30.5)
AchAPCA	6(22.2)	5(7.5)*	5(8.8)	16(9.8)	32(10.2)
AchABasilar	3(11.1)	7(10.4)	3(5.3)	14(8.5)	27(8.6)
AchAVA/PICA	1(3.7)	1(1.5)	5(8.8)	14(8.5)	21(6.7)
AchAMultiple posterior	0(0)	3(4.5)	6(10.5)	7(4.3)	16(5.1)
. Multiple territory	4(14.8)	5(7.5)	2(3.5)	6(3.7)*	17(5.4)
Bilateral anterior	2(7.4)	2(3.0)	0(0)	4(2.4)	8(2.5)
Bilateral PICA	0(0)	0(0)	2(3.5)	0(0)	2(0.6)
Bilateral anterior and posterior	1(3.7)	2(3.0)	0(0)	1(0.6)	4(1.3)
Unilateral anterior and posterior	1(3.7)	1(1.5)	0(0)	1(0.6)	3(1.0)
. Borderzone	0(0)	0(0)	3(5.3)	3(1.8)	6(1.9)

\* p <0.05 when each group compared with CAP only group by <sup>2</sup> test.

† p <0.05 when each group compared with PCSE only group by <sup>2</sup> test.

‡ p <0.05 when each group compared with RAA only group by <sup>2</sup> test.

AchA indicates anterior choroidal artery; ACA, anterior cerebral artery; MCA, middle cerebral artery; PCA, posterior cerebral artery; VA, vertebral artery; PICA, posterior inferior cerebellar artery.

(Table 4).  
 47.9%, 45.4%, [16],  
 6.7% . CAP only 48.1%,  
 40.7%, 11.1% 가  
 9.2% PCSE only 가  
 19.4% 가 , CAP only 가  
 3.7% 가 가  
 가 가  
 가 [17]  
 1950 가  
 가 가[14], [10].  
 가 54.8%  
 [15]. 9.7%  
 333 105 (31.5%) 가  
 가 59 가  
 (17.7%) 가  
 21-55% [8,15], 가  
 가 55.6% 1 cm 가



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