

Approaches of Brachial Plexus Block

Essay

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قالوا

سبحانك لا علم لنا
إلا ما علمتنا إنك أنت
العليم العليم

صدق الله العظيم

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Contents

List of Abbreviations	i
List of Tables	iii
List of Figures	iv
Introduction and Aim of the Work.....	1
Anatomy of brachial plexus	5
Local Anesthetics.....	18
Approaches of brachial plexus block	39
Complications of Brachial Plexus Block.....	96
Advantages of Brachial Plexus Block over	108
Summary	118
References	122
Arabic Summary	--

List of Abbreviations

AA	: Axillary artery
ACLS	: Advanced Cardiac Life Support
AS	: Muscle, anterior scalene
AV	: Axillary vein
BM	: Biceps muscle
BP	: Brachial plexus
CB	: Coracobrachialis muscle
CNS	: Central nervous system
CVS	: Cardiovascular system
GA	: General anesthesia
IX	: Cranial nerve
LA	: Local anesthetic
LAST	: Local Anesthetic Systemic Toxicity
M	: Median nerve
MC	: Musculocutaneous nerve
MS	: Middle scalene
N	: Brachial plexus in cross-section

List of Abbreviations (Cont.)

OR	: Operating room
PACU	: Postanesthesia care unit
Pka	: Acid dissociation constant
PMa	: Pectoralis major muscle
PMi	: Pectoralis minor muscle
PNB	: Peripheral nerve block
PONV	: Postoperative nausea and vomiting
R	: Rib
RB	: Regional block
SA	: Subclavian artery
SCA	: Subclavian artery
SDSU	: Same-day surgery unit
TM	: Triceps muscle
U	: Ulnar nerve

List of tables

<i>Table</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Page</i>
1	Branches of the brachial plexus	15
2	Different local anesthetic agents	26

List of Figures

<i>Fig.</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Page</i>
1	Roots, trunks and cords of the brachial plexus	6
2	Relation-ship between scalene muscles and the brachial plexus	10
3	The course of brachial plexus cords	12
4	Branches of the brachial plexus	14
5	Algorithm for the management of local anesthetic systemic toxicity	32
6	A nerve stimulator delivers a small amount of electric current to the block needle to facilitate nerve localization	43
7	In-plane (A) and out-of-plane (B) ultrasound approaches	46
8	Interscalene nerve block	55
9	The brachial plexus passes between the anterior and middle scalene muscles at the level of the cricoid cartilage, or C6	57
10	Interscalene block using nerve stimulation	58
11	The brachial plexus (BP) and subclavian artery (SCA)	61
12	The middle scalene (MS) muscle, anterior scalene (AS) muscle, and brachial plexus (BP)	62
13	The in-plane approach to ultrasound-guided interscalene block	63

List of Figures (Cont.)

<i>Fig.</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Page</i>
14	Needle is adjacent to lateral aspect of the brachial plexus (BP). Local anesthetic (LA) is seen surrounding the plexus	64
15	The out-of-plane approach to ultrasound-guided interscalene block	65
16	(A) Supraclavicular block. The needle is systematically walked anteriorly and posteriorly along the rib until the plexus is located. (B) The three trunks are compactly arranged at the level of the first rib	70
17	Supraclavicular block. The needle is inserted while mimicking a plumb-bob suspended over the needle entry site	72
18	Supraclavicular block using nerve stimulator	74
19	Ultrasound probe placement for supraclavicular block (in-plane technique)	75
20	Ultrasound image of the brachial plexus in the supraclavicular fossa. (SA): subclavian artery (R): rib (N): brachial plexus in cross-section	76
21	Use a small curvilinear probe in a parasagittal plane to visualize the brachial plexus	81

List of Figures (Cont.)

<i>Fig.</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Page</i>
22	Ultrasound image of the brachial plexus surrounding the axillary artery (AA) axillary artery (N) medial, lateral, and posterior cords of the brachial plexus (AV) axillary vein (PMa) pectoralis major muscle (PMi) pectoralis minor muscle. The red dot indicates the location of local anesthetic deposition	8
23	A multiple injection technique is more effective because of fascial separation between nerves	84
24	Patient positioning and needle angle for axillary brachial plexus block	86
25	Computed tomogram after an axillary block with 0.5% bupivacaine combined with iodothalamate. Separate 10-mL injections of solution were performed after obtaining median and radial nerve paresthesias transarterially. The contrast medium appears to remain in three separate compartments	87

List of Figures (Cont.)

<i>Fig.</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Page</i>
26	Axillary block. The arm is abducted at right angles to the body. Distal digital pressure is maintained during needle placement and injection of the local anesthetic	88
27	Positioning of terminal nerves about the axillary artery (variations are common) Positioning of terminal nerves about the axillary artery (variations are common)	93
28	Ultrasound image of axillary brachial plexus block. (AA) Axillary artery (AV) Axillary vein (U) Ulnar nerve (M) Median nerve (MC) Musculocutaneous nerve (R) Radial nerve (CB) Coracobrachialis muscle (TM) Triceps muscle (BM) Biceps muscle	95
29	The mean morphine equivalents in mg. GA indicates general anesthesia, RB indicates regional block, PACU indicates postanesthesia care unit, SDSU indicates same-day surgery unit	113
30	The mean hospital stay in min. GA indicates general anesthesia, RB indicates regional block, PACU indicates postanesthesia care unit, SDSU indicates same-day surgery unit	115

Introduction

Brachial plexus blocks are regional anesthesia techniques that are sometimes employed as an alternative to general anesthesia for surgery of the shoulder, arm, forearm, wrist and hand. These techniques involve the injection of local anesthetic agents in close proximity to the brachial plexus, temporarily blocking the sensation and ability to move the upper extremity. The subject can remain awake during the ensuing surgical procedure, or s/he can be sedated or even fully anesthetized if necessary (*Fisher et al., 2011*).

In addition to potent analgesia, regional anesthesia may lead to reductions in the stress response, systemic analgesic requirements, opioid-related side effects, general anesthesia requirements and possibly the incidence of chronic pain.

Regional anesthetics should be administered in an area where standard hemodynamic monitors, supplemental oxygen and resuscitative medications and equipments are readily available (*Ilfed et al., 2010*).

There are several techniques for blocking the nerves of the brachial plexus. These techniques are classified by the level at which the needle or catheter is inserted for injecting the local anesthetic: interscalene block on the neck, supraclavicular block immediately above the clavicle, infraclavicular block below the clavicle and axillary block in the axilla (*Fisher et al., 2011*).

An understanding of regional anesthesia anatomy and techniques is required for the well rounded anesthesiologist. Although anatomic relationships have not changed over time, our ability to identify them has evolved. From the paresthesia-seeking techniques described by Winnie in the mid-twentieth century, to the popularization of the nerve stimulator, to the introduction of ultrasound guidance, anesthesiologists and their patients have benefitted from technology evolution (*Ilfed et al., 2010*).

There is as yet no clear evidence to support the assertion that one method of nerve localization is better than another. There are however numerous case reports documenting cases in which use of a portable ultrasound scanning device has detected abnormal anatomy that would

otherwise not have been evident using a "blind" approach. On the other hand, use of ultrasound may create a false sense of security in the operator, which may lead to errors, especially if the needle tip is not adequately visualized at all times (*Macfarlane & Brull, 2009*).

Anatomic variation can be a source of frustration when nerve stimulation or surface landmarks are used for regional block. Even experienced clinicians cannot anticipate anatomic variation when these techniques are used. Ultrasound imaging not only provides a means of recognizing anatomic variation but also modifies the approach to regional block based on the findings (*Miller et al., 2012*).

Aim of the Work

This work aims to describe the different approaches and techniques of blocking the brachial plexus, the advantages of brachial plexus block over general anesthesia for upper limb surgeries and the complications of brachial plexus block.