

# **The role of white matter tractography imaging in predicting the outcome of stroke patients.**

*A Thesis*

*Submitted for fulfillment of doctorate degree  
in Neurology*

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**2015**

# CONTENTS

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b><i>..ii</i></b>
<b>Acknowledgments .....</b>	<b><i>..iii</i></b>
<b>List of Abbreviations .....</b>	<b><i>..iv</i></b>
<b>List of Tables .....</b>	<b><i>..vi</i></b>
<b>List of Figures .....</b>	<b><i>..viii</i></b>
<b>Introduction and aim of work .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Review of literature</b>	
<b><i>Chapter (1): Vascular anatomy and Pathophysiology of ischemic stroke.....</i></b>	<b><i>3</i></b>
<b><i>Chapter (2): Neuro-imaging In Stroke.....</i></b>	<b><i>32</i></b>
<b><i>Chapter (3): Management of Acute Ischemic Stroke.....</i></b>	<b><i>52</i></b>
<b>Patients and Methods.....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Results.....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Illustrative cases.....</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>Discussion.....</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>Summary.....</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>Conclusions.....</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>Recommendations.....</b>	<b>144</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>Appendix</b>	
<b>Arabic Summary</b>	

# Abstract

**Background:** Stroke can affect any part of the CNS leading to a wide variety of symptoms depending on the area that is involved. Diffusion Tensor tractography (DTI) is an emerging neuroimaging technique that allows us to measure the integrity of white matter tracts. . **Objectives:** to find out if brain imaging using DTI technique could help in predicting the functional outcome following stroke. **Subjects and methods:** Forty patients with acute ischemic stroke and another ten normal subjects were studied with DTI. Corticospinal tracts (CST) and fractional anisotropy (FA) of region of interest (ROI) were identified. Patients were assessed on admission and after 3 months with both NIHSS and MRC scales. We categorized our patients according to the pattern of CST involvement, degree of FA reduction and according to the clinical scales. **Results:** FA reduction was correlated with both (MRC & NIHSS) on admission and after 3 months ( $p < 0.001$  &  $p = 0.004$ ) ( $p < 0.001$  &  $p = 0.013$ ), respectively. The pattern of CST involvement was associated with NIHSS and MRC after 3 months ( $p = 0.035$  &  $0.001$ ) respectively. **Conclusion:** DTI could be used as a useful tool for predicting long term post stroke disability.

**(Key Words:** Stroke, infarct, DTI, FA, MRC, prognosis, and weakness).

# Acknowledgement

*First and for most, I am always indebted to GOD, the most gracious; the most merciful.*

*To my dear supervisors,*

*These written words are a small thank you for all of the hard work that you did to keep things in perspective.*

*To Prof. Mervat Mostafa without her reliable advice and consistent guidance in addition to the kind supervision, this work would not have been successful.*

*To Prof. Maged Abdel Naseer, I'm deeply grateful for giving me the best support and trust, many thanks for his kind supervision that I really needed, his perspective and knowledge enhanced my experience.*

*To Dr. Dalia Labib, whose help was immeasurable, My profound thanks for making the time and having the patience and generosity to teach me more than I ever imagined. I appreciate the long discussions and constant review of my work.*

*To Dr. Ramy Edward, for your accuracy and professionalism that offered us reliable results, and for your generosity in time and effort.*

*Deepest gratitude to my family, my mother and my father for always being there for me through every step in my life.*

*Last but not least, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my wife and my son for their patience, kind support, immense understanding and encouragement, They really have been through a lot with me.*

**Mohammad Edrees**

**2015**

# List of Abbreviations

**ACA:** Anterior Cerebral Artery  
**ADC:** Apparent Diffusion Coefficient  
**BA:** Basilar Artery  
**CBF:** Cerebral Blood Flow  
**CBF:** Cerebral Blood Flow  
**CBV:** Cerebral Blood Volume  
**CHD:** Coronary Heart Disease  
**CHF:** Congestive Heart Failure  
**NMDA:** N methyl D aspartate  
**cm<sup>2</sup> :** centimeter squared  
**CRP :**C reactive protein  
**CST:** Corticospinal tract  
**CT:** Computerized Tomography  
**CTA:** CT Angiography  
**DBP:** Diastolic Blood Pressure  
**DTI:** Diffusion Tensor Imaging  
**DWI :**Diffusion Weighted Imaging  
**FA map:** Fractional Anisotropy map  
**FT:** Fiber Tractography  
**HbA1c:** Glycated Hemoglobin  
**Hcy:** Homocysteine  
**HDL:** High Density Lipoprotein  
**ICA:** Internal Carotid Artery  
**IFOF:** inferior fronto occipital fasciculus  
**LDL :** Low Density Lipoprotein  
**MCA:** Middle Cerebral Artery  
**MC:** Motor cortex  
**MELAS:** Mitochondrial Encephalopathy, Lactic Acidosis, and Stroke like episodes  
**MI:** Myocardial Infarction  
**MRA:** Magnetic Resonance Angiography  
**MRC:** Medical Research Council  
**MRI :**Magnetic Resonance Imaging  
**MTT:** the mean transit time  
**NIHSS:** National Institute of Health Stroke Scale  
**PCAs:** Posterior Cerebral Arteries  
**PICA:** Posterior Inferior Cerebellar Artery

**PLIC:** Posterior limb of internal capsule  
**PSH :** Post stroke hyperglycemia  
**PWI:** Perfusion Weighted Imaging  
**ROI:** Region Of Interest  
**rTPA:** recombinant tissue plasminogen activator  
**SBP:** Systolic Blood Pressure  
**tHcy:** Homocysteine  
**TIA:** Transient Ischemic Attacks  
**TOF:** Time of Flight  
**TTP:** time-to- peak  
**WD:** Wallerian degeneration

# *List of Tables*

<b>Table</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b><i>Table (1)</i></b>	Risk factors of cerebral infarction	<b>17</b>
<b><i>Table (2)</i></b>	Differential Diagnosis of stroke	<b>53</b>
<b><i>Table (3)</i></b>	NINDS* and ACLS** Recommended Stroke Evaluation Time Benchmarks for Potential Thrombolysis Candidate	<b>54</b>
<b><i>Table(4)</i></b>	Acute stroke syndrome according to vascular territory and mechanisms.	<b>57</b>
<b><i>Table (5)</i></b>	Potential approaches to arterial hypertension	<b>65</b>
<b><i>Table (6)</i></b>	r-tPA inclusion and exclusion criteria	<b>67</b>
<b><i>Table (7)</i></b>	Medical Research Council (MRC) scale	<b>75</b>
<b><i>Table (8)</i></b>	Age and sex distribution of the study groups	<b>80</b>
<b><i>Table (9)</i></b>	Clinical and laboratory risk factors in patients and control groups	<b>82</b>
<b><i>Table (10)</i></b>	Summary of the results of routine laboratory investigations in patients and control groups	<b>83</b>
<b><i>Table (11)</i></b>	NIHSS on admission in the studied group.	<b>84</b>
<b><i>Table (12)</i></b>	NIHSS after 3 months of admission in the studied group.	<b>85</b>
<b><i>Table (13)</i></b>	Degree of weakness (MRC) on admission in the studied group	<b>86</b>
<b><i>Table (14)</i></b>	Degree of weakness (MRC) after 3 months of admission in patients.	<b>87</b>
<b><i>Table (15):</i></b>	Summary of NIHSS and MRC of patients.	<b>88</b>
<b><i>Table (16):</i></b>	Size of lesion in the studied group.	<b>89</b>
<b><i>Table (17):</i></b>	Degree of FA reduction at the site of lesion (ROI ) in patients	<b>90</b>
<b><i>Table (18):</i></b>	Comparison between FA at (ROI) & FA at contralateral side of patients.	<b>90</b>
<b><i>Table (19):</i></b>	Comparison between FA of (ROI) & FA of control group.	<b>91</b>
<b><i>Table (20):</i></b>	CST affection in patients.	<b>91</b>
<b><i>Table (21):</i></b>	Summary of radiological findings in all patients.	<b>92</b>
<b><i>Table (22):</i></b>	Association between the pattern of CST affection and the FA of (ROI).	<b>93</b>

<b>Table (23):</b>	Association between patterns of CST tracts involvement detected by FT and at the size of the lesion in the studied group.	<b>95</b>
<b>Table (24):</b>	Association between NIHSS on admission and size of lesion in patients.	<b>96</b>
<b>Table (25):</b>	Association between NIHSS after 3 months and size of lesion.	<b>98</b>
<b>Table (26):</b>	Association between degree of weakness (MRC) on admission and size of lesion in the studied group.	<b>100</b>
<b>Table (27):</b>	Association between degree of weakness (MRC) after 3 months of admission and the size of lesion in the studied group.	<b>101</b>
<b>Table (28):</b>	Association between FA of (ROI) and NIHSS on admission.	<b>103</b>
<b>Table (29):</b>	Association between FA (ROI) and NIHSS after 3 months.	<b>104</b>
<b>Table (30):</b>	Association between FA of (ROI) and MRC on admission.	<b>105</b>
<b>Table (31):</b>	Association between FA (ROI) and MRC after 3 months.	<b>106</b>
<b>Table (32):</b>	Correlation between FA (ROI) and (NIHSS on admission, NIHSS after 3months, MRC on admission and MRC after 3months	<b>107</b>
<b>Table (33):</b>	Association between degree of weakness (MRC) on admission and pattern of CST involvement as measured by FT in the studied group.	<b>108</b>
<b>Table (34):</b>	Association between degree of weakness (MRC) after 3 months of admission and pattern of CST involvement as measured by FT in the studied group	<b>109</b>
<b>Table (35):</b>	Association between NIHSS on admission and pattern of CST involvement as detected by FT in the studied group.	<b>111</b>
<b>Table (36):</b>	Association between NIHSS after 3 months of admission and pattern of CST involvement in the studied group.	<b>112</b>



# List of Figures

<b>Figure</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
<i>Figure (1)</i>	Coronal section of the cerebrum illustrating arterial territories	<b>6</b>
<i>Figure (2)</i>	Circle of Willis.	<b>8</b>
<i>Figure (3)</i>	Arterial thrombosis and clot formation	<b>10</b>
<i>Figure (4)</i>	Cascade of events in cell death	<b>12</b>
<i>Figure (5)</i>	Macroscopic picture of brain infarcts	<b>13</b>
<i>Figure (6)</i>	Microscopic picture of brain infarcts	<b>14</b>
<i>Figure (7)</i>	(a) DWI shows a large chronic infarction cerebral artery distribution. (b) MR tractography shows complete disruption of left corticospinal tract	<b>34</b>
<i>Figure (8)</i>	CTA reveals segmental narrowing of the left middle cerebral artery	<b>35</b>
<i>Figure (9)</i>	Left middle cerebral artery infarct	<b>36</b>
<i>Figure (10)</i>	MRI of the brain demonstrates increased T2 in the left MCA territory Diffusion weighted images show restricted diffusion in that territory.	<b>39</b>
<i>Figure (11)</i>	A case of Left MCA branch occlusion	<b>41</b>
<i>Figure (12)</i>	Mismatch between the diffusion-weighted imaging (DWI) abnormal signal and perfusion deficit on perfusion-weighted imaging (PWI).	<b>42</b>
<i>Figure (13):</i>	Diffusion-weighted imaging (DWI)-fluid-attenuated inversion recovery (FLAIR) mismatch and perfusion-weighted imaging (PWI)-DWI mismatch.	<b>43</b>
<i>Figure (14):</i>	MRA brain axial cut	<b>44</b>
<i>Figure (15):</i>	DWI showing a large chronic infarction in the left middle cerebral artery distribution.	<b>47</b>
<i>Figure (16):</i>	Acute infarct in a 52 years old woman	<b>48</b>
<i>Figure (17):</i>	Images in 55-yearold man who complained of sudden onset of left-sided weakness.	<b>49</b>
<i>Figure (18):</i>	DWI shows left cortical and subcortical chronic infarction	<b>50</b>
<i>Figure (19):</i>	Axial T2-W image shows a large parenchymal haematoma at the level of left basal ganglia.	<b>50</b>
<i>Figure (20):</i>	National Institutes of Health Stroke Scale (NIHSS)	<b>74</b>
<i>Figure (21):</i>	NIHSS on admission in the studied group.	<b>84</b>
<i>Figure (22):</i>	NIHSS after 3 months of admission in the studied group.	<b>85</b>
<i>Figure (23):</i>	MRC on admission in the studied group.	<b>86</b>
<i>Figure (24):</i>	MRC after 3 months of admission in the studied group.	<b>87</b>
<i>Figure (25):</i>	Size of lesion in the studied group.	<b>89</b>

<b>Figure (26):</b>	Pattern of involvement of CST detected by fiber tractography ( FT ) in patients.	<b>92</b>
<b>Figure (27):</b>	Association between patterns of CST tracts involvement detected by FT and the size of the lesion in the studied group.	<b>95</b>
<b>Figure (28):</b>	Association between NIHSS on admission and size of lesion in patients.	<b>97</b>
<b>Figure (29):</b>	Association between NIHSS after 3 months and size of lesion.	<b>98</b>
<b>Figure (30):</b>	Association between degree of weakness (MRC) on admission and size of lesion in the studied group.	<b>100</b>
<b>Figure (31):</b>	Association between degree of weakness (MRC) after 3 months of admission and the size of lesion in the studied group.	<b>102</b>
<b>Figure (32):</b>	Association between degree of weakness (MRC) on admission and pattern of CST involvement as measured by FT in the studied group.	<b>108</b>
<b>Figure (33):</b>	Association between degree of weakness (MRC) after 3 months of admission and pattern of CST involvement as measured by FT in the studied group.	<b>110</b>
<b>Figure (34):</b>	Association between NIHSS on admission and pattern of CST involvement as detected by FT in the studied group.	<b>111</b>
<b>Figure (35):</b>	Association between NIHSS after 3 months of admission and pattern of CST involvement in the studied group.	<b>113</b>
<b>Figure (36):</b>	Case 1: MRI diffusion	<b>114</b>
<b>Figure (37) :</b>	Case 1: DTI	<b>115</b>
<b>Figure (38) :</b>	Case 2: MRI diffusion	<b>116</b>
<b>Figure (39) :</b>	Case 2: DTI	<b>117</b>
<b>Figure (40) :</b>	Case 3: MRI diffusion	<b>118</b>
<b>Figure (41) :</b>	Case 3: DTI	<b>119</b>
<b>Figure (42) :</b>	Case 4: MRI diffusion	<b>120</b>
<b>Figure (43) :</b>	Case 4: DTI	<b>121</b>
<b>Figure (44) :</b>	Case 5: MRI diffusion	<b>122</b>
<b>Figure (45) :</b>	Case 5: DTI	<b>123</b>
<b>Figure (46) :</b>	Case 5: DTI	<b>124</b>
<b>Figure (47) :</b>	Case 5: DTI	<b>124</b>

## **Introduction**

Stroke is one of the leading causes of death worldwide. It can be further divided into ischemic or hemorrhagic (*Neil and Hakan, 2010*). There are multiple risk factors that may lead to stroke these risk factors include age, sex, smoking, hypertension, hyperlipidemia, DM, genetics and hereditary blood disorders (*Jacqueline et al., 2005*). Stroke can affect any portion of the CNS leading to a wide variety of symptoms depending on the part that is involved (*Virginia et al., 2006*).

Disability affects many of stroke survivors enough to decrease their employability. Stroke can affect people physically, mentally, emotionally, or a combination of the three. The results of stroke vary widely depending on size and location of the lesion. Dysfunctions correspond to areas in the brain that have been damaged (*Caroline et al., 2006*).

Being the importance to predict the outcome following stroke, many authors were relying on the size of the infarction on MRI but recently with the emergence of MRI tractography many suggest the location of infarction rather than its size to predict the prognosis following stroke (*Maija et al., 2010*).

Diffusion tensor imaging (DTI) is an MRI technique for evaluating brain structure by measuring tissue water diffusion in 3-dimensional (3-D) space. Diffusion tensor tractography (DTT) noninvasively visualizes the course of major white matter tracts which normally shows anisotropic diffusion in contrast to the grey matter thus DTI technique can be used to detect long patterns of orientation as well as integrity of white matter tracts (*Paulo et al., 2007*). In addition, it

provides information about the course, the compression, displacement or interruption of white matter tracts in three dimensions thus it can be used to detect the prognosis following stroke (*Jingsong et al., 2011*).

## **Aim of work**

To find out if brain imaging using diffusion tensor tractography technique could help in predicting the functional outcome following stroke.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Vascular anatomy and Pathophysiology of ischemic stroke**

Stroke is an abrupt disruption in cerebral circulation causing neurological deficits. It is mostly due to ischemia or intracranial hemorrhage (*Frizzell, 2005*).

Stroke is classically defined as rapidly developing clinical signs of focal disturbance of brain function lasting more than 24 hours or leading to death with no apparent cause other than that of vascular origin (*Elkind, 2006*). Eighty per cent of strokes are ischemic, 15% are due to intracerebral haemorrhage, and 5% to subarachnoid hemorrhage (*Wardlaw & Farrall, 2004; Van der Worp & Van Gijn, 2007*).

Stroke ranks second after ischemic heart disease as a cause of lost disability in high-income countries and as a cause of death worldwide (*Lopez et al., 2006*).

Acute stroke is typically characterized by the sudden onset of a focal neurologic deficit, though some patients have a stepwise or gradual progression of symptoms. Common deficits include dysphasia, dysarthria, hemianopia, weakness, ataxia, sensory loss, and neglect (*Van der Worp & Van Gijn, 2007*).

Cerebral infarction is focal brain necrosis due to complete and prolonged ischemia that affects all tissue elements, neurons, glia, and vessels (*Agamanolis, 2006*). However, clinically the term infarction describes a clinical diagnosis of observed loss of neurologic function due to ischemia following acute loss of circulation (*Jauch et al., 2007*).

Lacunar infarction results from occlusion of the small penetrating arteries at the base of the brain, including the lenticulo- striate and thalamo perforating arteries. They are smaller infarcts (less than 1 cm) and are found in the basal ganglia, thalamus and brainstem (*Hesselink, 2006*).

### **Vascular anatomy:**

The anterior circulation of the brain describes the areas of the brain supplied by the right and left internal carotid arteries and their branches. The internal carotid arteries supply the majority of both cerebral hemispheres, except the occipital and medial temporal lobes, which are supplied from the posterior circulation. Ischemic strokes occurring in the anterior circulation are the most common of all ischemic strokes, accounting for approximately 70% of all cases (*Baird, 2006*) (*Fig. 1*).

The bifurcation of the common carotid artery leads to the internal and external carotids. The internal carotid artery (ICA) further branches into the ophthalmic artery, posterior communicating artery, and anterior choroidal artery. The internal carotid ends by dividing the middle cerebral artery (MCA) and the anterior cerebral artery (ACA). The MCA is the largest intracerebral vessel, supplying the lateral aspect of frontal, parietal, and temporal lobes and the basal ganglia. The ACA supplies the medial part of the frontal and parietal lobes, most of the corpus callosum, the frontobasal cerebral cortex, deep structures, and the anterior diencephalon. The anterior choroidal artery supplies the part of the thalamus not supplied by the posterior circulation and the posterior limb of the internal capsule (*Baird, 2006*).

The posterior circulation is comprised of the vertebral arteries which arise from the subclavian arteries, and as they course in the neck, they enter deep to the transverse process of the level of the 6th cervical vertebrae (C6). Then they ascend in the transverse foramen of each cervical vertebra the vertebral arteries travel across the posterior arch of C1 and through the suboccipital triangle before entering the foramen magnum. They enter the skull through the foramen magnum and merge at the pontomedullary junction to form the basilar artery (BA). Each vertebral artery usually gives off the posterior inferior cerebellar artery (PICA). At the top of the pons, the basilar artery divides into the posterior cerebral arteries ( PCA ) and the superior cerebellar arteries just inferior to the pituitary stalk. From the basilar artery arises the anterior inferior cerebellar artery (supplying the superior and inferior aspects of the cerebellum), as well as smaller branches for the supply of the pons (the pontine branches). (*Kaye & Brandstater, 2008*).

The PCA supplies the occipital and medial temporal lobes of the cerebral hemispheres and parts of the midbrain, subthalamic nucleus, basal nucleus, thalamus, mesial inferior temporal lobe, and occipitoparietal cortices. The two main branches of the PCA are connected by the posterior communicating artery (*Hewko, 2004*).

The anterior and posterior circulation at the base of the brain are connected by the circle of Willis (*Hewko, 2004*).

The circle of Willis consists of a vascular communication of blood vessels at the base of the brain connecting the anterior and posterior circulations. The vessels of the anterior circulation are connected via the posterior communicating arteries to the posterior circulation (*Baird, 2006*) (*Fig. 1*).