

CARDIAC ARRHYTHMIA UPDATE

Hybrid Approach to Atrial Fibrillation Ablation

Luca Bontempi, MD,¹ Manuel Cerini, MD,¹ Gianluigi Bisleri, MD,²
Alessandro Lipari, MD,¹ Lorenza Inama, MD,¹ Francesca Salghetti, MD,¹
Marco Belotti, MD,¹ Francesca Vassanelli, MD,¹ Claudio Munaretto, MD,²
Antonio Curnis, MD¹

INTRODUCTION

Sequential surgical thoracoscopic and electrophysiological (EP) ablation is gaining popularity as a novel approach for the treatment of patients with stand-alone, persistent and long standing persistent atrial fibrillation (AF). We therefore sought to investigate the safety, efficacy and durability of such combined, hybrid surgical-transcatheter approach.

¹Division and Chair of Cardiology,
Spedali Civili Hospital, Brescia, Italy,
²Division and Chair of Cardiosurgery,
Spedali Civili Hospital, Brescia, Ital

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METHODS

Seventy-five (75) patients with persistent (n=10) and long standing persistent (n=65) stand-alone AF were prospectively enrolled; the hybrid strategy consisted of a surgical endoscopic ablation followed by a transcatheter procedure.

Patients underwent first a monolateral closed-chest epicardial ablation with isolation of the pulmonary veins and posterior left atrium (“box” lesion set); at least 30 days after surgery, an EP evaluation was performed to investigate the maintenance of surgical isolation and additional lesions were performed in case of documented AF recurrence.

Mean age was 63.3 ± 9.2 years, mean left atrial (LA) dimension as 49.2 ± 5.6 mm and median duration of AF was 48 months. Rhythm outcomes were monitored by means of a continuous loop recorder implanted at the time of surgery.

RESULTS

Thoracoscopic ablation was successfully completed in all cases except in 1 patient, in whom conversion to sternotomy was required because of bleeding. No complications occurred during the post-operative stay. At the end of surgical ablation, exit block was documented in all cases, while entrance block was achieved in 93.3% of cases (70/75). At mean interval of 44 ± 2 days after surgery, EP evaluation confirmed persistence of bidirectional block in 90.7% (68/75) of cases and occurrence of pulmonary vein reconstructions in 9.3% (7/75) of patients. Additional lesions were performed in 44% of cases (33/75). Early and late incidence of left atrial flutter was 0%.

At median follow-up time of 28 months, 91.1% of patients are in stable sinus rhythm.

Correspondence to:
Luca Bontempi, MD
E-mail: bontempiluca@libero.it

CONCLUSIONS

The sequential staged hybrid approach proved to be safe and effective in patients with persistent and long standing per-

sistent AF with excellent and durable clinical outcomes. The implantable loop recorder documented incremental benefits in sinus rhythm restoration up to 28 months post-operatively.