

Washington University School of Medicine

Digital Commons@Becker

2020-Current year OA Pubs

Open Access Publications

1-1-2022

Neonatal motor functional connectivity and motor outcomes at age two years in very preterm children with and without high-grade brain injury

Peppar E P Cyr

Rachel E Lean

Jeanette K Kenley

Sydney Kaplan

Dominique E Meyer

See next page for additional authors

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.wustl.edu/oa_4



Part of the [Medicine and Health Sciences Commons](#)

Please let us know how this document benefits you.

Authors

Peppar E P Cyr, Rachel E Lean, Jeanette K Kenley, Sydney Kaplan, Dominique E Meyer, Jeffery J Neil, Dimitrios Alexopoulos, Rebecca G Brady, Joshua S Shimony, Thomas L Rodebaugh, Cynthia E Rogers, and Christopher D Smyser



Neonatal motor functional connectivity and motor outcomes at age two years in very preterm children with and without high-grade brain injury

Peppar E.P. Cyr^{a,*}, Rachel E. Lean^b, Jeanette K. Kenley^a, Sydney Kaplan^a,
Dominique E. Meyer^a, Jeffery J. Neil^a, Dimitrios Alexopoulos^a, Rebecca G. Brady^a, Joshua
S. Shimony^c, Thomas L. Rodebaugh^d, Cynthia E. Rogers^{b,e}, Christopher D. Smyser^{a,c,e}

^a Washington University School of Medicine, Department of Neurology, United States

^b Washington University School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry, United States

^c Washington University School of Medicine, Mallinckrodt Institute of Radiology, United States

^d Washington University in St. Louis, Department of Psychology, United States

^e Washington University School of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Preterm birth
Brain injury
Functional connectivity
Cerebral palsy
Motor cortex

ABSTRACT

Preterm-born children have high rates of motor impairments, but mechanisms for early identification remain limited. We hypothesized that neonatal motor system functional connectivity (FC) would relate to motor outcomes at age two years; currently, this relationship is not yet well-described in very preterm (VPT; born <32 weeks' gestation) infants with and without brain injury.

We recruited 107 VPT infants – including 55 with brain injury (grade III–IV intraventricular hemorrhage, cystic periventricular leukomalacia, post-hemorrhagic hydrocephalus) – and collected FC data at/near term-equivalent age (35–45 weeks postmenstrual age). Correlation coefficients were used to calculate the FC between bilateral motor and visual cortices and thalami. At two years corrected-age, motor outcomes were assessed with the Bayley Scales of Infant and Toddler Development, 3rd edition. Multiple imputation was used to estimate missing data, and regression models related FC measures to motor outcomes.

Within the brain-injured group only, interhemispheric motor cortex FC was positively related to gross motor outcomes. Thalamocortical and visual FC were not related to motor scores. This suggests neonatal alterations in motor system FC may provide prognostic information about impairments in children with brain injury.

1. Introduction

Preterm birth (<37 weeks' gestation) is the most common cause of motor disability in children. In the United States alone, approximately 500,000 infants are born preterm each year, representing about 10% of all live births (Frey and Klebanoff, 2016). Importantly, despite advances in neonatal care, a wide range of motor outcomes, including lifelong disability, still occur in surviving very preterm (VPT, <32 weeks' gestation) children (Balakrishnan et al., 2020; Dewan et al., 2019; Evensen et al., 2020; Johnson and Marlow, 2017), with high rates of cerebral palsy (CP, ~5–15%) and other forms of motor impairment (up

to 70%) (Evensen et al., 2020). Further, children with motor disability, even when that disability is mild, experience increased rates of obesity, mental health problems, and decreased health-related quality of life that persist into adulthood (Cairney et al., 2010; Karras et al., 2019). Improved mechanisms for the identification of VPT children most likely to develop motor disabilities would allow for earlier and more targeted referrals to specialized clinical and therapy services and integration into the disability community.

Among VPT children, motor disability occurs most frequently in those who experience brain injury. This injury typically consists of high-grade intraventricular hemorrhage (IVH) and cystic periventricular

Abbreviations: FC, functional connectivity; VPT, very preterm; CP, cerebral palsy; IVH, intraventricular hemorrhage; cPVL, cystic periventricular leukomalacia; rs-fMRI, resting state functional magnetic resonance imaging; NICU, neonatal intensive care unit; BI, brain-injured; ROI, region of interest; MICE, multiple imputation with chained equations; UPT, uninjured preterm; L/RMC, left-right motor cortex; L/RVIS, left-right primary visual cortex; TC, thalamocortical; V1, primary visual cortex.

* Corresponding author at: 4525 Scott Ave, St. Louis, MO 63110, United States.

E-mail address: pcyr@wustl.edu (P.E.P. Cyr).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nicl.2022.103260>

Received 27 June 2022; Received in revised form 9 October 2022; Accepted 2 November 2022

Available online 6 November 2022

2213-1582/© 2022 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Inc. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

leukomalacia (cPVL), which occur at a combined rate of ~15% in VPT infants (Stoll et al., 2015). Further, CP has been reported in up to 61% of VPT children with cPVL and 50% of children with intraparenchymal hemorrhage, as compared to 8% of VPT children with low-grade IVH and 4% of VPT children without brain injury (Beaino et al., 2010). Importantly, while there is some specificity regarding type of brain injury and specific forms of CP (Al Rifai and Al Tawil, 2015; Arnfield et al., 2013; Hayakawa et al., 1996; Lee et al., 2011; Okumura et al., 1997; Yoshida et al., 2011), there remains a wide range of motor outcomes (i.e., independently ambulatory, ambulatory with aids, non-ambulatory) even among brain-injured VPT children (Beaino et al., 2010), indicating that the appearance of injury on structural imaging studies only accounts for a relatively modest portion of this variance.

Resting-state functional MRI (rs-fMRI) affords unique potential to more precisely identify VPT children at greatest risk for motor disability. Using rs-fMRI data, measures of functional connectivity (FC) are calculated from the temporal correlations in low-frequency fluctuations in blood oxygen level dependent signal driven by intrinsic activity across the brain as measured when the subject is resting and not performing a task (Fox et al., 2005; Lowe et al., 1998). Because it requires no active participation and can assess the whole brain in a matter of minutes, this approach is ideal for use in neonates. Prior research has shown differences in FC across areas important for motor function in infants born preterm as compared to full term controls (Eyre et al., 2021; Gozdas et al., 2018; Smyser et al., 2016b), and differences in FC involving motor cortex have been linked to poorer motor function at age two years in uninjured VPT children (Toulmin et al., 2021). Further, cross-sectional research has found altered FC relationships involving somatomotor cortex in uninjured VPT adolescents (Wehrle et al., 2018) and thalamocortical FC (between somatomotor cortex and thalamus) in young adults with brain injury and CP (Burton et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2011). Finally, FC alterations have been associated with poorer motor outcomes in VPT preadolescents (Wheelock et al., 2018). However, these existing studies, which have been predominantly cross-sectional and/or not included both children with and without brain injury and/or not separated fine and gross motor domains (which are often treated by different professionals and may be affected to different degrees depending on the anatomic distribution of impairment), have not well characterized the full range of associations between neonatal FC and motor development in VPT children.

This study aims to address these gaps by examining the extent to which neonatal FC may improve understanding of early neural correlates of motor outcomes in early childhood above and beyond the presence/absence of perinatal brain injury among VPT infants. We hypothesized that stronger FC (i.e., higher correlation coefficients) within the motor system in the neonatal period will correlate with better motor outcomes at corrected-age two years in VPT children with and without brain injury. These associations were expected to be present across fine and gross motor domains.

2. Materials & methods

2.1. Participants

VPT infants (birth gestational age ≤ 30 weeks, $n = 107$) were recruited from the St. Louis Children's Hospital Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit from 2007 to 2016. The brain-injured (BI, $n = 55$) group included VPT children with grade III–IV IVH (Papile, 1978), cPVL, and/or post-hemorrhagic hydrocephalus based upon interpretation of clinical ultrasound studies obtained in the first weeks of life and MRI scans at/near term-equivalent postmenstrual age reviewed by a neuro-radiologist (J.S.S.) and pediatric neurologist (C.D.S.), as defined by expert clinical opinion. VPT infants with brain injury were collapsed into a single BI group, as the sample size was too small to test the effects of specific injury types. The uninjured preterm (UPT, $n = 52$) group included infants with no injury or low-grade injury (grade I/II IVH [$n =$

5], non-cystic white matter injury [$n = 10$]). Exclusion criteria for both groups included parent unable to give informed consent, chromosomal/genetic abnormalities, and/or proven congenital infections. This study was approved by the Washington University Human Studies Committee. Parental written informed consent was obtained for all participants. The study was conducted in accordance with *The Code of Ethics of the World Medical Association (Declaration of Helsinki, 2008)*.

2.2. Medical risk scores

Infant medical records were prospectively reviewed and a medical risk index score (range: 0–10) was created from summing dichotomized (present = 1, absent = 0) factors: intrauterine growth restriction, did not receive antenatal steroids, received dexamethasone, oxygen supplementation at 36 weeks, necrotizing enterocolitis, confirmed sepsis, patent ductus arteriosus requiring medical or surgical treatment, retinopathy of prematurity requiring surgery, ≥ 3 SD decrease in weight-for-length from birth to term-equivalent age, and >75 th percentile for duration of parenteral nutrition (Lean et al., 2018).

2.3. Demographic stressor index

To describe the socioeconomic and life circumstances that may increase stress for the child's primary caregiver, a cumulative maternal demographic stressor index was assessed at NICU discharge and calculated using five demographic factors that were dichotomized (present = 1, absent = 0) and summed (0–5). Factors included age ≤ 18 years at time of delivery, Black race, no high school degree, public health insurance, and single-parent household (Hack et al., 1994; Mangin et al., 2017; Manley et al., 2015). Black race was included in the demographic stressor index to account for social and health inequities that result from experiencing structural and individual racism in America, particularly as the region of recruitment is heavily stratified by race (Bureau, 2010; Subramanian et al., 2005).

2.4. Neonatal MRI scanning and processing

UPT and BI neonates underwent MRI scanning at/near term-equivalent age (35–45 weeks postmenstrual age, mean 38.4 weeks). All neonates were scanned during natural sleep or quiet rest (Mathur et al., 2008). MRI scans were performed on a Siemens 3T Trio scanner (Erlangen, Germany) using an infant-specific head coil (Advanced Imaging Research, Cleveland, OH). Structural images were collected using a T2-weighted sequence (TR = 8600 ms; TE = 161 ms; voxel size 1 mm isotropic). The rs-fMRI data were collected using a gradient echo, echo planar image (EPI) sequence sensitized to T2* blood oxygen level-dependent (BOLD) contrast (TR = 2910 ms; TE = 28 ms; voxel size 2.4 mm isotropic; flip angle 90°; field of view 151 mm; matrix size 64 × 64). Each rs-fMRI run included 200 volumes (frames). A minimum of one run (9.6 min) was obtained in each infant, with additional runs acquired in a subset of participants depending upon tolerance, with a maximum of four runs.

The data were pre-processed using in-house software as described in prior work (Smyser et al., 2010, 2013). Magnetization inhomogeneity-related distortions were corrected using a mean field map technique (Gholipour et al., 2008). The tools used to perform image registration were a combination of in house 4dfp suite tools (4dfp.readthedocs.io) and FSL's (Jenkinson et al., 2012) applywarp. The T2-weighted image was affine registered to the cohort specific template (Smyser et al., 2016a) and the transformation matrix was saved. This transformation matrix (T2 → cohort template) was multiplied with the transformation matrix from cohort template to atlas space to create a one-step resample from subject specific T2 to atlas space. The rs-fMRI registration was performed in a similar fashion, creating volumetric time series with 3-mm isotropic voxels, combining motion correction and atlas transformation in a single resampling step. The rs-fMRI data were registered

to the subject-specific T2 and the transformation matrix was saved. This transformation matrix (rs-fMRI \rightarrow subject T2) was multiplied with the T2 \rightarrow atlas transformation matrix to generate a single step resample to atlas space. Additional preprocessing included regression of nuisance waveforms derived from rigid body motion correction, cerebrospinal fluid, and white matter regions, plus whole brain global signal. The data were high-pass filtered at 0.08 with a second-order Butterworth filter and spatially smoothed with a 6 mm kernel. Frames affected by sudden changes in head position (volume-to-volume head displacement ≥ 0.5 mm) were excluded from the rs-fMRI computations (“scrubbing”) (Power et al., 2014). A minimum of five minutes of rs-fMRI data, excluding censored frames, was required for inclusion in the analysis.

Regions of Interest (ROIs) (Fig. 1) were selected to include key areas of the motor system, including bilateral motor cortex (Smyser et al., 2016b) and an area of the thalamus chosen specifically to maximize functional connectivity with motor cortex (Smyser et al., 2010). In the BI group, ROIs for the same brain areas were initially placed according to atlas coordinates and then adjusted to align with each infant’s anatomy (Smyser et al., 2013). In order to check for widespread FC effects, a negative control was included. Because most other ROIs used in the BI group had known relationships to motor FC, ROIs in the bilateral primary visual cortex were used, as prior work had shown the visual network to have a lower magnitude correlation (positive or negative) with the motor network as compared to other functional networks in preterm infants (Smyser et al., 2016b). Any ROIs with mean BOLD fMRI intensities outside the typical range for gray matter, either due to individual differences in susceptibility inhomogeneity-related signal voids or incomplete coverage, were excluded from further analyses (Herzmann et al., 2018). ROI-ROI correlation coefficients were computed

between the left and right motor cortex (L/R MC), thalamus and motor cortex (thalamocortical, TC – the mean of both pairs of ipsilateral thalamus-motor cortex ROI FC), and left and right visual cortex (L/R VIS), and Fisher z-transformed (Smyser et al., 2016b).

2.5. Motor outcomes

Motor outcomes were assessed at two years corrected-age using the Bayley Scales of Infant and Toddler Development, 3rd edition (Bayley-III) (Bayley, 2006), which includes a standardized overall Motor Composite score ($m = 100$, $SD = 15$), as well as Fine Motor and Gross Motor subscale scores ($m = 10$, $SD = 3$). Assessments were conducted by highly trained members of the Washington University Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Center or as part of clinical care. Psychometricians were blinded to each infant’s birth history and injury status. At the assessment visit, a subset of children was also examined by a physician for cerebral palsy.

2.6. Statistical analysis

All statistical analyses were conducted in R. To estimate missing data, we used MICE (Multiple Imputation with Chained Equations) (van Buuren and Groothuis-Oudshoorn, 2011), with 100 imputations, well above the minimum number recommended for this analysis (von Hippel, 2020). Among the included participants for regression analyses, the number of originally missing values that were substituted with values obtained by multiple imputation ranged from 2% to 43% per variable, which was considered acceptable (Dong and Peng, 2013; Madley-Dowd et al., 2019) as they were not suspected of being Missing Not at Random.

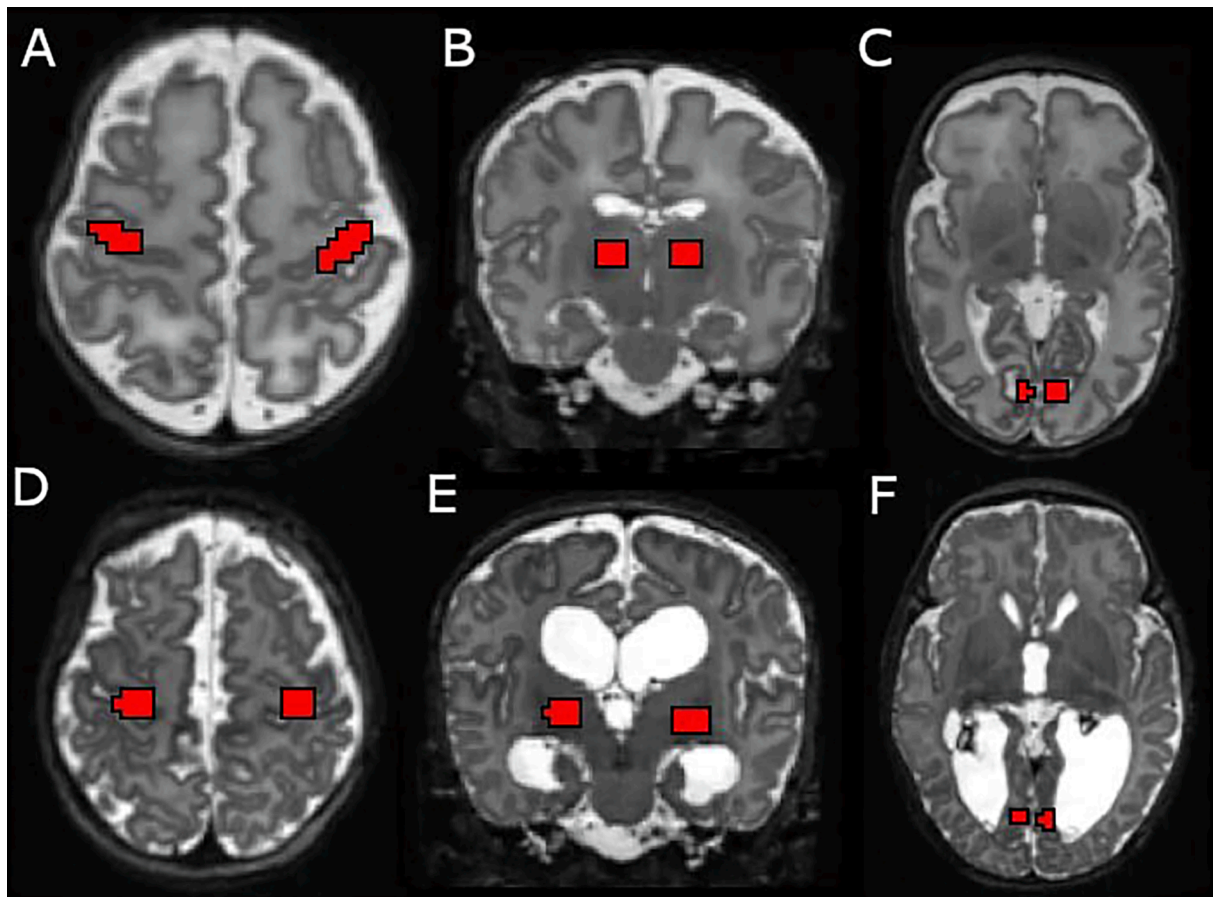


Fig. 1. Regions of interest. Representative images of the motor cortex (A, D), thalamus (B, E), and visual cortex (C, F) ROIs in an uninjured VPT infant brain (A, -C) and an injured VPT infant brain (D-F).

While only children with FC data were used in the final reported analyses, a larger pool of VPT children with data for any of the key variables (e.g., Bayley-III scores, medical risk scores) were used to inform the imputation, which also included additional measures of brain injury, more detailed medical risk information, and additional outcome measures.

Between-groups differences in demographics, FC values, and motor outcome scores were assessed using Mann-Whitney *U* tests for continuous variables due to non-normal distributions and Fisher exact tests for categorical data. Regression models robust to outliers related FC values to Bayley-III Gross Motor and Fine Motor scores. To address a floor effect in the Bayley-III scaled scores due to very poor performance in a subset of BI infants, raw scores were used with age at assessment included as a covariate in regression models. To account for twins/triplets, we ran the analyses both with all children and with only including one child from each set of multiples. Results did not differ, so those presented here are for the full cohort. FC values and Bayley raw scores were grand-mean z-scored to yield more interpretable model intercepts and slopes.

The analyses first examined which components of the motor system were most related to motor outcomes across domains in the whole cohort. Next, a dichotomous brain injury categorical variable (representing the two groups) and a group \times FC interaction term were added to allow regression models to examine within-group brain-behavior relationships (thereby assessing effects of FC above and beyond injury grouping) and interaction effects. Finally, analyses were run with birth gestational age and medical risk scores added as covariates to assess whether FC was adding information beyond these two measures.

The demographic stressor index was not independently associated with FC or motor outcome measures in this cohort and so was not included in any analyses (all p 's > 0.05). Postmenstrual age at scan was not significantly associated with any of the FC measures and so was also not included in the analyses. Finally, the amount of low-motion FC data was not used as a covariate in the models. While the injured group was allowed longer scan times, often resulting in a higher absolute number of low-motion frames, within each group there was no relationship between number or percent of low-motion frames and Bayley scores across all domains.

Data and analysis scripts are available upon request.

3. Results

3.1. Sample demographics

Of the 107 VPT infants with high-quality, low-motion FC data, 87 (40 UPT, 47 BI) completed follow-up assessment at corrected-age two years. The BI children had lower gestational age at birth, higher medical risk composites, were older at scan and two-year assessment, and had lower Bayley-III Fine, Gross, and Composite Motor Scores, as well as Cognitive and Language Composite Scores than the UPT group (Table 1). There were no differences in Bayley-III scores between psychometricians. Fine and gross motor scaled scores were significantly correlated ($r = 0.66$, $p < .01$). Among the children included in the main analyses, neither brain injury status, gestational age at birth, medical risk index, nor demographic stressor index were related to loss to follow-up at age 2 years.

3.2. Between-groups differences in neonatal functional connectivity

At term-equivalent age, the BI group showed lower left-right motor cortex ($p < .01$) and left-right visual cortex ($p < .01$) FC values relative to the UPT group (Table 2).

3.3. Whole cohort analysis

In whole-cohort models, none of the FC measures were significantly related to motor outcomes.

Table 1
Demographic and clinical description of the cohort.

	Uninjured Group Mean (SD)	Brain-injured Group Mean (SD)
Total N	52	55
Sex Assigned at Birth	20 M, 32 F	31 M, 24 F
Race (parent-report)	24 Black 3 Asian 2 Biracial 23 White	29 Black 1 Asian 1 Biracial 24 White
Gestational Age at Birth (weeks) **	26.7 (1.6)	25.4 (1.9)
Postmenstrual Age at Scan**	37.6 (1.3)	39.1 (2.5)
Medical Risk Composite**	1.6 (1.5)	3.0 (2.0)
Brain Injury		30 Grade III/IV IVH 16 IVH surgery 9 Cystic PVL
Demographic Stressor Index	2.7 (1.5)	2.7 (1.6)
Age at 2-year Assessment (months)**	29.0 (3.9)	30.6 (3.4)
Bayley-III Cognitive Composite Score**	89.0 (10.4)	79.4 (14.1)
Bayley-III Receptive Language Scaled Score	8.1 (2.4)	6.8 (3.1)
Bayley-III Expressive Language Scaled Score*	8.8 (2.4)	6.9 (3.3)
Bayley-III Language Composite Score*	91.3 (13.5)	81.7 (17.8)
Bayley-III Fine Motor Scaled Score**	8.3 (2.0)	5.8 (2.7)
Bayley-III Gross Motor Scaled Score**	7.5 (2.0)	4.0 (2.5)
Bayley-III Motor Composite Score**	87.6 (10.3)	69.7 (13.6)
Definite or Probable CP at age 2 years**	2/35 (6%)	26/36 (72%)

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Table 2
Fisher Z-transformed correlations.

	Uninjured group mean (SD)	Brain-injured group mean (SD)	p- value
L/R MC	0.81 (0.30)	0.69 (0.20)	<0.01
TC	0.24 (0.17)	0.29 (0.14)	0.08
L/R VIS	0.78 (0.23)	0.50 (0.25)	<0.01

Group differences tested with Mann-Whitney *U* test.

3.4. Within-group effects analysis

Within the BI group, L/R MC FC was positively related to Bayley-III Gross Motor raw scores ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < .05$), but not Bayley-III Fine Motor raw scores. Unlike in the BI group, L/R MC FC was not related to either gross or fine motor scores in the UPT group. There was a significant FC \times Injury group interaction effect in the gross motor model ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < .05$) (Table 3, Fig. 2). Neither the TC nor the negative control L/R VIS FC demonstrated a relationship with motor scores. The L/R MC FC effect on gross motor outcomes and the interaction effect persisted when birth gestational age and medical risk scores were added to the models. For results with Bayley Cognitive and Language scales, see [Supplementary Materials](#) and [Supplementary Table S1](#).

4. Discussion

The current study findings show that within the BI group, higher magnitude positive neonatal L/RMC FC values were uniquely related to improved gross motor outcomes at two years corrected-age. There were more children with low gross motor than fine motor scores, which may have allowed the models to better capture deficits in this area. This was different from the uninjured group in which there was no relationship

Table 3
Regression models with injury groups.

ROI group	Outcome measure	Parameter	Est (SE)
Left/Right Motor Cortex	Bayley-III Gross Motor Raw Score	L/R MC FC (BI)	0.36* (0.17)
		L/R MC FC (UPT)	-0.03 (0.11)
		Age at Assessment	0.18* (0.09)
		Brain Injury	0.65** (0.18)
		Brain Injury × FC	0.41* (0.20)
	Bayley-III Fine Motor Raw Score	L/R MC FC (BI)	0.34 (0.17)
		L/R MC FC (UPT)	-0.05 (0.10)
		Age at Assessment	0.24* (0.10)
		Brain Injury	0.54** (0.19)
		Brain Injury × FC	0.37 (0.21)

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, both are in bold

between neonatal FC and motor outcome. Additionally, this difference across BI and uninjured groups was statistically significant, as evidenced by the interaction effect. Similar to prior work in this cohort (Lean et al., 2018), social adversity was not related to motor outcomes, and therefore, it was unsurprising that it was found to also be unrelated to motor system FC. These findings provide longitudinal evidence that differences in motor system FC in infants with brain injury may reflect neuropathological processes underlying the development of motor problems in early childhood.

Prior literature has shown that FC in the motor system is affected, both in its strength and distribution, by early brain injury. Previous work has indicated that individuals with perinatal brain injury have reduced magnitude of FC in the motor system as shown in children with CP (Qin et al., 2018), and more diffuse motor FC (i.e., somatotopic organization) both in neonates (Duerden et al., 2019) and in adults with PVL and spastic diplegic CP (Burton et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2011). While the current study did not assess the distribution of the motor system FC, we did find that injured children who had a stronger correlation between left and right motor cortex activity in the neonatal period had higher motor scores at follow-up. These children may have had less severe injury, as there is variation even within the category of high-grade brain injury (there were too few children with each injury type to assess this directly), and/or may have compensated for their injury. Indeed, prior human and animal model work on stroke has shown increased interhemispheric sensorimotor FC in the months immediately after injury to be a potential marker of compensation and/or associated with improved motor outcomes (van Meer et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2016). Stronger functional measures of correlated activity between left and right motor cortex may, therefore, be capturing a

combination of reduced injury severity and early compensation that then lead to better motor development.

We did not find relationships between thalamocortical FC and motor outcomes. While the extant literature is limited, earlier work suggests that thalamocortical FC is more related to outcomes in children with better motor function and/or to performance on more difficult tasks. For example, neonatal thalamocortical FC was found to be related to 2-year Bayley motor scores in a VPT cohort that included few ($n = 7$) children with brain injury and whose mean Bayley motor scores were similar to the general population (Toulmin et al., 2021). In contrast, the current study cohort had mean scores ~ 1 SD below the population average even in the uninjured children, and the injured children averaged ~ 1 SD lower still. This distinction is particularly relevant when using the Bayley-III, as the assessment tasks change to meet the child's ability, so our cohort would have been performing different tasks with potentially lower demands on higher-order motor function from a cohort of 2-year-olds with typical motor abilities. In another study comparing motor outcomes of VPT and term-born control children at age 12 years, not only did term-born children have significantly higher scores for all of the motor measures, but thalamocortical FC was only associated with performance in the term-born group (Wheeler et al., 2018). Therefore, TC FC may be more related to outcomes in children with typically developing motor abilities.

Interestingly, motor cortex FC was not correlated with motor outcomes in the uninjured children. This absence of a relationship may be due to the relatively narrow range of motor outcomes in the uninjured group. Children with milder motor impairments, as are more common in uninjured VPT children, are often not identified on assessments early in life. It may also be that the key brain disruptions affecting motor development in these children lie elsewhere. Nevertheless, it suggests

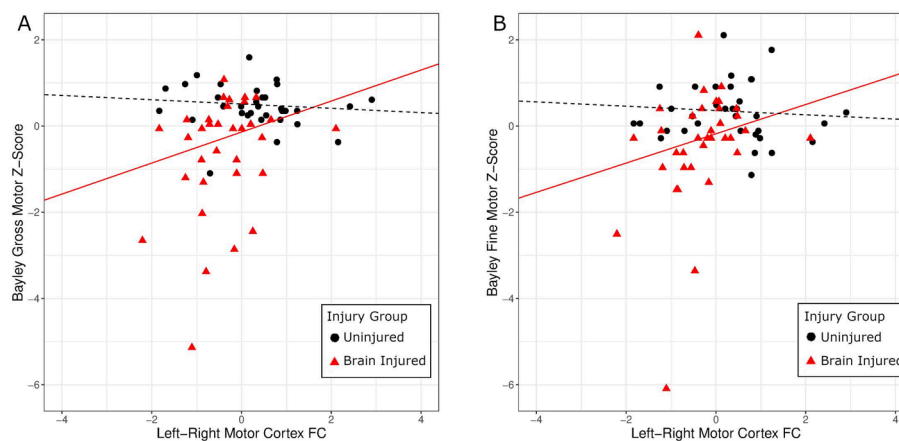


Fig. 2. Motor cortex FC and motor outcomes. Regression models of effects of Left/Right Motor Cortex FC (A, B) on Bayley-III Gross (A) and Fine (B) Motor scores. Lines are from the pooled regression models, while points are from the observed data set. For gross motor, the injured group shows a significant relationship ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < .05$), while the uninjured group does not. The FC \times Injury Group interaction is also significant ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < .05$) for gross motor.

that our findings in the BI group may not generalize to uninjured infants and that motor cortex FC may be a less reliable predictor of two-year motor outcome in uninjured infants. In a study using a meta-analysis approach, motor scores at age two years were found to only account for 12% of variance in later motor scores in VPT children without CP (Luttikhuisen dos Santos et al., 2013), suggesting that longer follow-up is needed to better identify children with emerging motor difficulties that may become more prominent and/or stable in later childhood. Future work may include additional brain areas, such as the basal ganglia and/or cerebellum, greater specificity of types and degrees of brain injury in larger samples, and longer-term follow-up into school-age.

4.1. Strengths & limitations

Strengths of this study included its high-quality imaging data with stringent motion correction and a unique cohort of VPT children, including a large proportion with brain injury, with detailed clinical information and standardized motor assessment. Limitations of this study included its modest sample size (though comparable to other similar studies in this population) and an insufficient ability to assess for effects of additional factors, such as the type and intensity of early intervention therapies which may alter relationships between neonatal measures and later outcomes, due to the extent of data collected.

4.2. Conclusion

Stronger FC within the motor system is associated with better early childhood motor outcomes in VPT children with brain injury. The developmental processes linking early brain function and later motor outcomes may differ in children with and without brain injury. This may lead to better tools to help parents set expectations for their child, access appropriate therapies, and integrate into the disability community, as appropriate. Additional work is needed to extend these findings into middle childhood and further examine motor system developmental trajectories in both typically and atypically developing populations.

Funding

This work was supported by the National Institutes of Health (Grant No. K02 NS089852 to C.D.S., K23 MH105179 to C.E.R., F30 HD105336 to P.E.P.C., R01 MH113570 to C.D.S. and C.E.R., K01 MH122735 to R.E.L., P30 NS098577, R01 HD061619, R01 HD057098, P50 HD103525 (to J.S.S., C.D.S. and C.E.R.), GM07200); the Child Neurology Foundation, Lexington, KY (to C.D.S.); Cerebral Palsy International Research Foundation, Princeton Junction, NJ (to C.D.S.); and March of Dimes, Arlington, VA (to C.D.S.). The funding sources had no involvement in the design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, writing of the report or decision to submit this article for publication.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Peppar E.P. Cyr: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Funding acquisition. **Rachel E. Lean:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Funding acquisition, Data curation, Writing – review & editing, Supervision. **Jeanette K. Kenley:** Software, Data curation, Visualization, Writing – review & editing. **Sydney Kaplan:** Software, Data curation. **Dominique E. Meyer:** Software, Data curation, Writing – review & editing. **Jeffery J. Neil:** Conceptualization, Supervision, Writing – review & editing. **Dimitrios Alexopoulos:** Data curation. **Rebecca G. Brady:** Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing. **Joshua S. Shimony:** Resources, Funding acquisition, Data curation, Writing – review & editing. **Thomas L. Rodebaugh:** Formal analysis, Supervision. **Cynthia E. Rogers:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Funding acquisition, Resources, Writing – review & editing, Supervision.

Christopher D. Smyser: Conceptualization, Methodology, Funding acquisition, Resources, Writing – review & editing, Supervision.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Abraham Snyder, Karen Lukas, Karen Lob, Anthony Barton, Rachel Paul, and Jessica Perkins for study coordination, and the children and families for participating in the study. Research reported in this publication was supported by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health & Human Development of the National Institutes of Health under Award Number P50 HD103525 to the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Center at Washington University.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nicl.2022.103260>.

References

- Al Rifai, M.T., Al Tawil, K.I., 2015. The neurological outcome of isolated PVL and severe IVH in preterm infants: is it fair to compare? *Pediatr. Neurol.* 53, 427–433.
- Arnfield, E., Guzzetta, A., Boyd, R., 2013. Relationship between brain structure on magnetic resonance imaging and motor outcomes in children with cerebral palsy: a systematic review. *Res. Dev. Disabil.* 34, 2234–2250.
- Balakrishnan, U., Amboiram, P., Ninan, B., Chandrasekharan, A., Rangaswamy, R., Subramanian, L., 2020. MRI at term equivalent age for predicting long-term neurodevelopmental outcome in preterm infants – a cohort study. *J. Matern. Fetal Neonatal Med.* 33, 1867–1873.
- Bayley, N., 2006. The Bayley Scales of Infant and Toddler Development. The Psychological Corporation, San Antonio, TX.
- Beaino, G., Khoshnood, B., Kaminski, M., Peirrat, V., Marret, S., Matis, J., Ledesert, B., Thiriez, G., Fresson, J., Roze, J.-C., Zupan-Simunek, V., Arnaud, C., Burguet, A., Larroque, B., Breart, G., Ancel, P.-Y., Group, f.t.E.S., 2010. Predictors of cerebral palsy in very preterm infants: the EPIPAGE prospective population-based cohort study. *Dev. Med. Child Neurol.* 52, e119–e125.
- Bureau, U.S.C., 2010. QuickFacts. St. Louis City, Missouri (County).
- Burton, H., Dixit, S., Litkowski, P., Wingert, J.R., 2009. Functional connectivity for somatosensory and motor cortex in spastic diplegia. *Somatosens. Mot. Res.* 26, 90–104.
- Cairney, J., Hay, J., Veldhuizen, S., Missiuna, C., Mahlberg, N., Faight, B.E., 2010. Trajectories of relative weight and waist circumference among children with and without developmental coordination disorder. *Can. Med. Assoc. J.* 182, 1167–1172.
- Dewan, M.V., Herrmann, R., Schweiger, B., Sirin, S., Muller, H., Storbeck, T., Dransfeld, F., Felderhoff-Muser, U., Huning, B., 2019. Are simple magnetic resonance imaging biomarkers predictive of neurodevelopmental outcome at two years in very preterm infants? *Neonatology* 116, 331–340.
- Dong, Y., Peng, C.-Y.-J., 2013. Principled missing data methods for researchers. *SpringerPlus* 2, 222.
- Duerden, E.G., Halani, S., Ng, K., Guo, T., Foong, J., Glass, T.J.A., Chau, V., Branson, H. M., Sled, J.G., Whyte, H.E., Kelly, E.N., Miller, S.P., 2019. White matter injury predicts disrupted functional connectivity and microstructure in very preterm born neonates. *NeuroImage: Clinical* 21, 101596.
- Evensen, K.A.L., Ustad, T., Tikanmaki, M., Haaramo, P., Kajantie, E., 2020. Long-term motor outcomes of very preterm and/or very low birth weight individuals without cerebral palsy: a review of the current evidence. *Semin. Fetal Neonatal Med.* 101116.
- Eyre, M., Fitzgibbon, S.P., Ciarrusta, J., Cordero-Grande, L., Price, A.N., Poppe, T., Schuh, A., Hughes, E., O'Keefe, C., Brandon, J., Cromb, D., Vecchiato, K., Andersson, J., Duff, E.P., Counsell, S.J., Smith, S.M., Rueckert, D., Hajnal, J.V., Arichi, T., O'Muircheartaigh, J., Batallea, D., Edwards, A.D., 2021. The developing human connectome project: typical and disrupted perinatal functional connectivity. *Brain*.
- Fox, M.D., Snyder, A.Z., Vincent, J.L., Corbetta, M., Van Essen, D.C., Raichle, M.E., 2005. The human brain is intrinsically organized into dynamic, anticorrelated functional networks. *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A.* 102, 9673–9678.

- Frey, H.A., Klebanoff, M.A., 2016. The epidemiology, etiology, and costs of preterm birth. *Semin. Fetal Neonatal Med.* 21, 68–73.
- Gholipour, A., Kehtarnavaz, N., Gopinath, K., Briggs, R., Panahi, I., 2008. Average field map image template for echo-planar image analysis. In: *Conference Proceedings of the Annual International Conference of the IEEE Engineering in Medicine and Biology Society 2008*, pp. 94–97.
- Gozdas, E., Parikh, N.A., Merhar, S.L., Tkach, J.A., He, L., Holland, S.K., 2018. Altered functional network connectivity in preterm infants: antecedents of cognitive and motor impairments? *Brain Struct. Funct.*
- Hack, M., Taylor, H.G., Klein, N., Eiben, R., Schatschneider, C., Mercuri-Minich, N., 1994. School-age outcomes in children with birth weights under 750 g. *N. Engl. J. Med.* 331, 753–759.
- Hayakawa, K., Kanda, T., Hashimoto, K., Okuno, Y., Yamori, Y., Yuge, M., Ando, R., Ozaki, N., Tamamoto, A., 1996. Mr imaging of spastic diplegia: the importance of corpus callosum. *Acta Radiol.* 37, 830–836.
- Herzmann, C.S., Snyder, A.Z., Kenley, J.K., Rogers, C.E., Shimony, J.S., Smyser, C.D., 2018. Cerebellar functional connectivity in term- and very preterm-born infants. *Cereb. Cortex.*
- Jenkinson, M., Beckmann, C.F., Behrens, T.E.J., Woolrich, M.W., Smith, S.M., 2012. FSL. *Neuroimage* 62, 782–790.
- Johnson, S., Marlow, N., 2017. Early and long-term outcome of infants born extremely preterm. *Arch. Dis. Child.* 102, 97–102.
- Karras, H.C., Morin, D.N., Gill, K., Izadi-Najafabadi, S., Zwicker, J.G., 2019. Health-related quality of life of children with developmental coordination disorder. *Res. Dev. Disabil.* 84, 85–95.
- Lean, R.E., Paul, R.A., Smyser, T.A., Smyser, C.D., Rogers, C.E., 2018. Social adversity and cognitive, language, and motor development of very preterm children from 2 to 5 years of age. *J. Pediatr.*
- Lee, J.D., Park, H.-J., Park, E.S., Oh, M.-K., Park, B., Rha, D.-W., Cho, S.-R., Kim, E.Y., Park, J.Y., Kim, C.H., Kim, D.G., Park, C.I., 2011. Motor pathway injury in patients with periventricular leucomalacia and spastic diplegia. *Brain* 134, 1199–1210.
- Lowe, M.J., Mock, B.J., Sorenson, J.A., 1998. Functional connectivity in single and multislice echoplanar imaging using resting-state fluctuations. *Neuroimage* 7, 119–132.
- Luttikhuisen dos Santos, E.S., de Kieviet, J.F., Königs, M., van Elburg, R.M., Oosterlaan, J., 2013. Predictive value of the Bayley scales of infant development on development of very preterm/very low birth weight children: a meta-analysis. *Early Human Dev.* 89, 487–496.
- Madley-Dowd, P., Hughes, R., Tilling, K., Heron, J., 2019. The proportion of missing data should not be used to guide decisions on multiple imputation. *J. Clin. Epidemiol.* 110, 63–73.
- Mangin, K.S., Horwood, L.J., Woodward, L.J., 2017. Cognitive development trajectories of very preterm and typically developing children. *Child Dev.* 88, 282–298.
- Manley, B.J., Roberts, R.S., Doyle, L.W., van Wassenaer-Leemhuis, A.G., Davis, P.G., Investigators, t.C.F.A.o.P.C., 2015. Social variables predict gains in cognitive scores across the preschool years in children with birth weights 500 to 1250 grams. *J. Pediatr.* 166, 870–876.
- Mathur, A.M., Neil, J.J., McKinstry, R.C., Inder, T.E., 2008. Transport, monitoring, and successful brain MR imaging in unsedated neonates. *Pediatr. Radiol.* 38, 260–264.
- Okumura, A., Kato, T., Kuno, K., Hayakawa, F., Watanabe, K., 1997. MRI findings in patients with spastic cerebral palsy. II: correlation with type of cerebral palsy. *Dev. Med. Child Neurol.* 39, 369–372.
- Papile, L., 1978. IVH: diagnosis and classification. *J. Pediatr.* 92, 522–529.
- Power, J.D., Mitra, A., Laumann, T.O., Snyder, A.Z., Schlaggar, B.L., Petersen, S.E., 2014. Methods to detect, characterize, and remove motion artifact in resting state fMRI. *Neuroimage* 84, 320–341.
- Qin, Y., Li, Y., Sun, B., He, H., Peng, R., Zhang, T., Li, J., Luo, C., Sun, C., Yao, D., 2018. Functional connectivity alterations in children with spastic and dyskinetic cerebral palsy. *Neural Plast.* 2018, 7058953.
- Smyser, C.D., Inder, T.E., Shimony, J.S., Hill, J.E., Degnan, A.J., Snyder, A.Z., Neil, J.J., 2010. Longitudinal analysis of neural network development in preterm infants. *Cereb. Cortex* 20, 2852–2862.
- Smyser, C.D., Dosenbach, N.U.F., Blazey, T.M., Inder, T.E., Neil, J.J., 2013. Effects of white matter injury on resting state fMRI measures in prematurely born infants. *PLoS One* 8, e68098.
- Smyser, C.D., Snyder, A.Z., Shimony, J.S., Blazey, T.M., Inder, T.E., Neil, J.J., 2013. Effects of white matter injury on resting state fMRI measures in prematurely born infants. *PLoS One* 8, e68098.
- Smyser, C.D., Dosenbach, N.U.F., Smyser, T.A., Snyder, A.Z., Rogers, C.E., Inder, T.E., Schlaggar, B.L., Neil, J.J., 2016a. Prediction of brain maturity in infants using machine-learning algorithms. *Neuroimage* 136, 1–9.
- Smyser, C.D., Snyder, A.Z., Shimony, J.S., Mitra, A., Inder, T.E., Neil, J.J., 2016b. Resting-state network complexity and magnitude are reduced in prematurely born infants. *Cereb. Cortex* 26, 322–333.
- Stoll, B.J., Hansen, N.I., Bell, E.F., Walsh, M.C., Carlo, W.A., Shankaran, S., Laptook, A.R., Sanchez, P.J., Van Meurs, K.P., Wyckoff, M., Das, A., Hale, E.C., Ball, M.B., Newman, N.S., Schibler, K., Poindexter, B.B., Kennedy, K.A., Cotten, C.M., Watterberg, K.L., D'Angio, C.T., DeMauro, S.B., Truog, W.E., Devaskar, U., Higgins, R.D., Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child, H., Human Development Neonatal Research, N., 2015. Trends in care practices, morbidity, and mortality of extremely preterm neonates, 1993–2012. *JAMA* 314, 1039–1051.
- Subramanian, S.V., Acevedo-Garcia, D., Osypuk, T.L., 2005. Racial residential segregation and geographic heterogeneity in black/white disparity in poor self-rated health in the US: a multilevel statistical analysis. *Soc. Sci. Med.* 60, 1667–1679.
- Toulmin, H., O'Muircheartaigh, J., Counsell, S.J., Falconer, S., Chew, A., Beckmann, C.F., Edwards, A.D., 2021. Functional thalamocortical connectivity at term equivalent age and outcome at 2 years in infants born preterm. *Cortex* 135, 17–29.
- van Buuren, S., Groothuis-Oudshoorn, K., 2011. mice: Multivariate imputation by chained equations in R. *J. Stat. Software* 45, 1–67.
- van Meer, M.P.A., van der Marel, K., Wang, K., Otte, W.M., el Bouazati, S., Roeling, T.A.P., Viergever, M.A., Berkelbach van der Sprenkel, J.W., Dijkhuizen, R.M., 2010. Recovery of sensorimotor function after experimental stroke correlates with restoration of resting-state interhemispheric functional connectivity. *J. Neurosci.* 30, 3964–3972.
- von Hippel, P., 2020. How many imputations do you need? A two-stage calculation using a quadratic rule. *Sociol. Methods Res.* 49, 699–718.
- Wehrle, F.M., Michels, L., Guggenberger, R., Huber, R., Latal, B., O'Gorman, R.L., Hagmann, C.F., 2018. Altered resting-state functional connectivity in children and adolescents born very preterm short title. *NeuroImage: Clinical* 20, 1148–1156.
- Wheelock, M.D., Austin, N.C., Bora, S., Eggebrecht, A.T., Melzer, T.R., Woodward, L.J., Smyser, C.D., 2018. Altered functional network connectivity relates to motor development in children born very preterm. *Neuroimage* 183, 574–583.
- Yoshida, S., Hayakawa, K., Oishi, K., Mori, S., Kanda, T., Yamori, Y., Yoshida, N., Hirota, H., Iwami, M., Okano, S., Matsushita, H., 2011. Athetotic and spastic cerebral palsy: anatomic characterization based on diffusion-tensor imaging. *Radiology* 260, 511–520.
- Zhang, Y., Liu, H., Wang, L., Yang, J., Yan, R., Zhang, J., Sang, L., Li, P., Wang, J., Qiu, M., 2016. Relationship between functional connectivity and motor function assessment in stroke patients with hemiplegia: a resting-state functional MRI study. *Neuroradiology* 58, 503–511.