



Apport des technologies d'imagerie non invasives dans l'évaluation du pronostic des pathologies cardiovasculaires.

Romain Chopard Dit Jean

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EQUIPE D'ACCUEIL 3920
Marqueurs pronostiques et facteurs de régulation
des pathologies cardiaques et vasculaires



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Par **Romain CHOPARD dit JEAN**

**Apport des technologies d'imagerie non invasive dans
l'évaluation du pronostic des pathologies cardiovasculaires**

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Introduction générale

Les progrès réalisés dans la prise en charge des pathologies cardio-vasculaires ces deux dernières décennies sont pour une part liés aux avancées technologiques en imagerie.

Dans ce travail de thèse, nous avons évalué trois techniques d'imagerie cardiovasculaire non-invasive, le scanner coronaire, l'IRM cardiaque et l'échocardiographie avec analyse en Speckle Tracking, à l'origine de cinq études originales qui ont été publiées dans des revues scientifiques avec comité de lecture.

Suite à d'importants développements techniques, il est possible, depuis une dizaine d'années, de visualiser le réseau coronaire en scanner. Pour notre premier travail de recherche, nous avons utilisé cet examen afin de voir s'il était capable de fournir des informations précises sur les plaques d'athérosclérose coronaires, notamment celles responsables des syndromes coronaires aigus. Pour cela, nous avons réalisé une étude ex-vivo sur des artères冠状动脉 humaines et nous avons comparé les résultats du scanner, à la référence histo-pathologique, ainsi qu'à l'échographie endocoronaire, qui a longtemps été considérée comme le mode d'imagerie de référence pour l'étude des plaques.

L'IRM est devenue un examen clé en cardiologie, permettant, notamment, de mettre en évidence de façon précise le retentissement myocardique de plusieurs pathologies. Nous avons, tout d'abord, utilisé l'IRM pour étudier l'efficacité de la thrombo-aspiration dans le traitement des syndromes coronaires aigus avec sus-décalage du segment ST. Les objectifs de ce travail étaient de voir si le fait d'extraire effectivement du matériel thrombotique avait un impact sur la reperfusion myocardique, évaluée en IRM par la taille de l'infarctus et la taille de l'obstruction microvasculaire. Pour notre deuxième travail de recherche sur l'IRM, nous avons étudié l'intérêt de cet examen pour le diagnostic étiologique des syndromes coronaires aigus à coronaires angiographiquement normales et observé l'évolution des patients présentant une IRM normale. Nous avons récemment publié un troisième travail sur l'IRM. L'objectif de ce travail était d'analyser la relation entre la troponine dans les suites d'un STEMI et la présence d'un no-reflow.

Enfin, nos travaux ont conduit à évaluer la technique échocardiographique de Speckle Tracking, qui permet d'analyser les déformations myocardiques régionales. Dans ce cadre, nous nous

sommes intéressés à l'analyse de la fonction systolique du ventricule droit dans les embolies pulmonaires, en fonction de leur stade de gravité.

I. Scanner Coronaire

"How reliable are 40 MHz IVUS and 64-slice MDCT in characterizing coronary plaque composition? An ex vivo study with histopathological comparison"

Chopard R, Boussel L, Motreff P, Rioufol G, Tabib A, Douek P, Meyronet D, Revel D, Finet G.
Int J Cardiovasc Imaging. 2010 Apr;26(4):373-83.

I.A. Introduction

La cardiopathie ischémique représente l'une des principales causes de morbi-mortalité dans les pays industrialisés, liée principalement au développement de syndromes coronaires aigus.¹⁻² Actuellement, l'identification des patients à haut risque cardio-vasculaire repose sur l'estimation de la probabilité de survenue à 10 ans d'un événement aigu ou d'un décès à partir de scores de risque, comme celui de Framingham³ ou le SCORE⁴ (the Sytemic Coronary Risk Evaluation). Ces scores évaluent correctement le risque cardiovasculaire des hommes d'âge moyen mais apparaissent imprécis chez les sujets plus jeunes et les femmes.⁵ Parallèlement à cela, les tests non invasifs de recherche d'ischémie myocardique (épreuve d'effort, scintigraphie myocardique, échographie de stress,...) ont pu être utilisés afin d'essayer d'améliorer l'estimation du risque cardiovasculaire individuel. Mais ces tests permettent seulement de mettre en évidence le retentissement hémodynamique de sténoses coronariennes serrées selon les principes initialement décrits par Gould, avec une réduction du flux de réserve coronaire proportionnelle, à la fois, au degré de sténose et au débit coronaire (Figure 1).⁶ Or les plaques d'athérosclérose responsables d'événements aigus n'ont pas de retentissement hémodynamique dans la majorité des cas (probablement 7 fois sur 10), du fait notamment du remodelage positif de ces plaques.⁷ La valeur des tests non invasifs de recherche d'ischémie pour prédire la survenue d'un syndrome coronaire est donc très faible et l'utilisation de ces tests n'est plus recommandée chez le patient asymptomatique.⁸

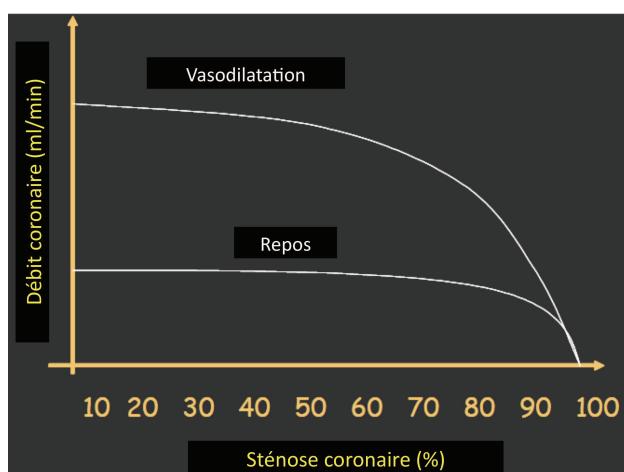


Figure 1 : Relation entre le débit coronaire et le degré de sténose coronaire au repos et à l'effort (d'après Gould et al.⁶).

La relative imprécision des scores de risque et la quasi inutilité des tests de recherche d'ischémie pour l'évaluation individuelle du risque d'événement coronarien ont conduit à développer le concept d'imagerie de la "plaqué vulnérable".

Les plaques vulnérables

Les plaques vulnérables sont les plaques d'athérosclérose coronariennes à partir desquelles se développent les syndromes coronaires aigus. Elles présentent des caractéristiques morphologiques, cellulaires et fonctionnelles bien définies avec un large noyau excentré, composé de cellules nécrosées (cellules endothéliales, cellules musculaires lisses, macrophages) ainsi que de lipides.⁹ Ce noyau lipido-nécrotique occupe environ 1/3 de la surface de la plaque.¹⁰ Il est recouvert d'une fine chape fibreuse, de moins de 65 µm d'épaisseur.¹¹ Les plaques vulnérables sont également le siège d'une importante infiltration de macrophages et de cellules inflammatoires ainsi que des calcifications localisées.¹² Elles présentent enfin une prolifération de néo-vaisseaux, à partir des vasa-vasorum de l'aventice. Ces néo-vaisseaux se développent pour compenser l'hypoxie cellulaire au sein de la plaque et peuvent entraîner des hémorragies intra-plaques^{13, 14} (Figure 2).

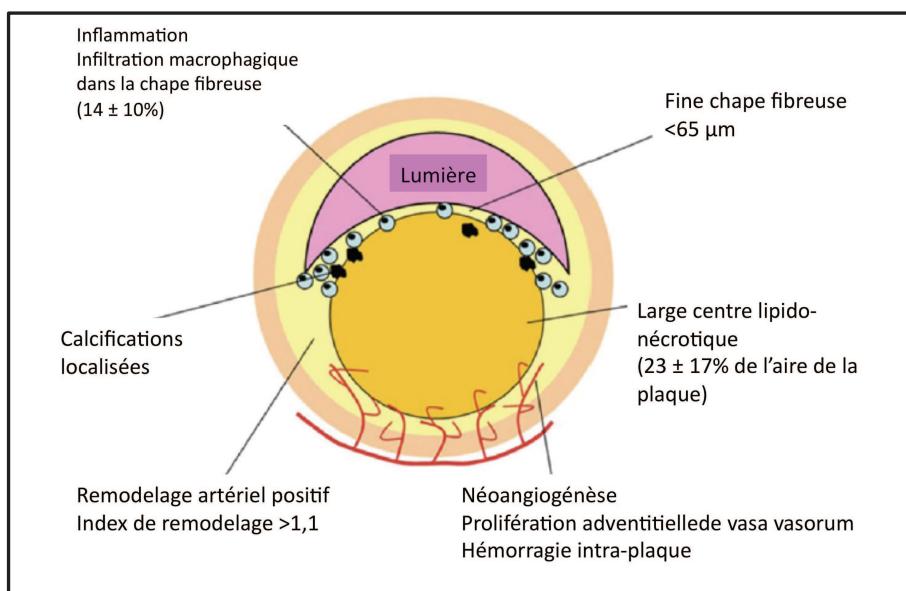


Figure 2 : caractéristiques d'une plaque vulnérable (d'après Vancraeynest et al.¹⁵).

L'élément déclencheur clé des syndromes coronaires aigus est la rupture de la fine chape fibreuse d'une plaque vulnérable, mettant en contact des éléments du sous-endothélium (facteur tissulaire principalement) avec les plaquettes circulantes et aboutissant à la génération de thrombine, l'activation et l'agrégation plaquette et la cascade thrombotique.¹⁶ A noter que le phénomène de rupture de plaque siégerait préférentiellement au niveau de "l'épaule" de la plaque vulnérable, qui correspond à la zone de transition entre la plaque et la partie saine du vaisseau.¹⁷ Des études autopsiques et en tomographie par cohérence optique (OCT) ont par ailleurs montré que les syndromes coronaires pouvaient être provoqués dans 20 à 25% des cas, non pas par une rupture de plaque, mais par une simple érosion de celle-ci.^{12, 18} Dans ces cas-là,

la plaque est moins volumineuse et présente moins de calcifications et d'infiltrats inflammatoires et moins de néo-angiogénèse.¹⁹

Les plaques vulnérables présentent ainsi des caractéristiques potentiellement accessibles à différentes méthodes d'imageries morphologiques ou fonctionnelles. L'objectif final étant d'essayer d'identifier les "patients vulnérables", c'est à dire à haut-risque d'événements coronariens.²⁰

Dans le travail de recherche abordé dans ce chapitre, nous avons étudié la capacité du scanner coronaire à différencier les composants histo-pathologiques des plaques d'athérosclérose coronaires (lipides, fibrose, calcifications) afin de voir si cet outil était capable d'identifier certaines caractéristiques des plaques vulnérables.

Le scanner coronaire

L'imagerie du massif cardiaque en scanner est, en effet, possible depuis une quinzaine d'années grâce à plusieurs avancées technologiques, qui ont permis notamment de s'affranchir du flou cinétique lié aux mouvements permanents de cet organe. Tout d'abord la multiplication des détecteurs dans l'axe Z du statif (scanner multi-détecteurs ou multi-barrettes) associé à un mode d'acquisition hélicoïdal continu ont augmenté la vitesse de rotation du tube à rayon X et donc la résolution temporelle.²¹⁻²³ La résolution temporelle correspond au nombre d'images acquises, et donc à la distance parcourue au cours d'une seule rotation du tube. Le temps de rotation pour les scanners 64 détecteurs est de 350-400 ms pour une résolution temporelle de 150 à 200 ms, permettant d'acquérir l'ensemble des structures cardiaques sur une apnée de 15 à 20 secondes. Parallèlement à l'amélioration de la résolution temporelle, la résolution spatiale des détecteurs a augmenté, pour devenir isotropique et de l'ordre de 500 à 625 µm pour les scanners 64 détecteurs.²⁴ Enfin, la dernière innovation technologique clé pour la réalisation d'un scanner cardiaque est la synchronisation à l'ECG qui permet, lors d'une acquisition rétrospective, de sélectionner, à posteriori, la meilleure phase en diastole du cycle cardiaque pour l'analyse des segments coronaires. Idéalement, la réalisation d'un scanner coronaire avec un appareil 64 détecteurs, nécessite une fréquence cardiaque basse et régulière, vers 50-60/min, afin d'avoir une diastole longue de l'ordre de 750 ms, qui va permettre de limiter au maximum les artefacts de mouvements.²⁵ Ces dernières années, des améliorations technologiques ont été apportées aux scanners coronaires avec la multiplication des détecteurs (jusqu'à 320)^{26, 27} ou le développement du scanner à double source de rayons X.^{28, 29} Ces innovations ont permis d'améliorer la résolution temporelle des scanners (jusqu'à 80 ms) mais sans augmentation de la résolution

spatiale. Il est désormais possible d'acquérir l'ensemble du cœur en une rotation, ce qui rend l'examen moins sensible à la fréquence cardiaque ou aux arythmies.^{30,31}

Le scanner permet donc désormais de réaliser de véritables angiographies coronaires non invasives mais sa capacité à mettre en évidence des sténoses coronariennes significatives (>50%) reste limitée avec une sensibilité de 85 à 99% et une spécificité de 86 à 96%.³²⁻³⁵ Ces limites sont liées, d'une part à la résolution spatiale encore faible des détecteurs, comparativement à la coronarographie notamment³⁶ et d'autre part, aux artefacts inhérents à la présence de calcifications coronaires avec des effets de volumes partiels (Figure 3).³⁷ L'intérêt principal du scanner coronaire réside actuellement dans sa capacité à exclure une coronaropathie sous-jacente avec des valeurs prédictives négatives élevées, entre 97-99% pour les scanners 64 détecteurs^{33-35, 37, 38} et jusqu'à 100% pour les technologies à 320 détecteurs.³⁹ Il a par ailleurs été démontré qu'un scanner coronaire normal avait un impact pronostic important avec un faible taux d'évènements cardiovasculaires (0.5%) au cours d'un suivi de 21 mois dans une méta-analyse regroupant 5675 patients.⁴⁰ Dans ce cadre, les dernières recommandations de la société Européenne de Cardiologie (ESC) précisent que le scanner coronaire pourrait être utilisé comme une alternative aux tests non invasifs de recherche d'ischémie ou si ceux-ci se sont révélés non concluants pour exclure une pathologie coronarienne, chez les patients symptomatiques avec une probabilité pré-test faible ou intermédiaire (Recommandations de classe IIa avec un niveau d'évidence C).⁸ A noter, enfin, que les performances du scanner pour exclure l'existence de lésions coronaires significatives se sont montrées beaucoup moins bonnes chez les patients présentant des antécédents de coronaropathie ou dans l'évaluation des resténoses intra-stents.^{41, 42}

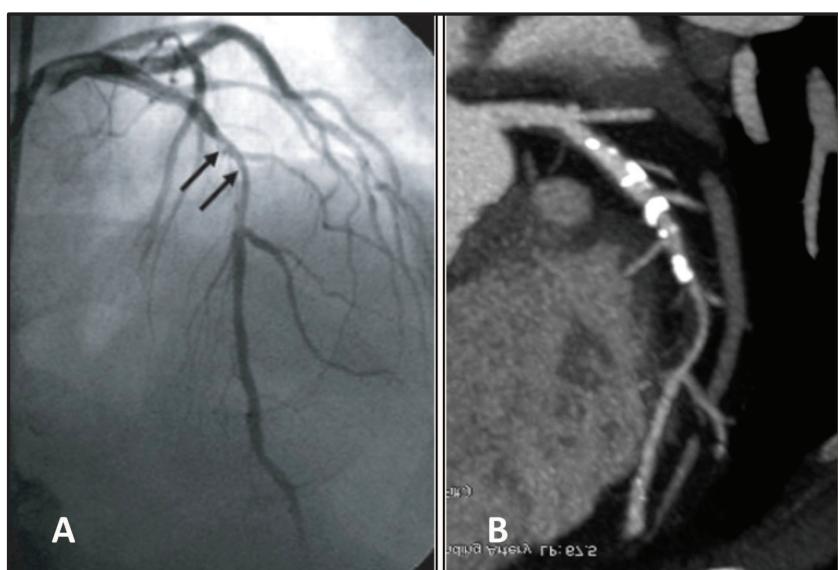


Figure 3 : Exemple de sur-estimation du degré de sténose de lésions coronariennes en scanner (B) en cas de calcifications comparativement à l'angiographie (A).

I.B. Travail de recherche

How reliable are 40 MHz IVUS and 64-slice MDCT in characterizing coronary plaque composition? An ex vivo study with histopathological comparison.

L'idée de base de ce travail reposait sur le fait que, peu de temps après le développement et la généralisation des scanners coronaires de plus de 16 détecteurs, plusieurs études ont établi une bonne corrélation entre les données du scanner et ceux de l'IVUS, notamment en ce qui concerne la caractérisation histologique de la plaque⁴³⁻⁴⁸, alors même que les signaux ultra-sonores étaient connus comme peu spécifiques de ces différents composants^{49, 50} et qu'aucune validation anatomopathologique n'avait été réalisée avec les nouveaux scanners (>16 détecteurs).

Les objectifs de cette étude étaient, tout d'abord, de reprendre le travail de validation du scanner au début, c'est à dire comparativement à la référence anatomo-pathologique et ensuite d'analyser les performances du scanner et de l'échographie endocoronaire (IVUS) pour l'évaluation quantitative et qualitative des plaques, afin de déterminer si cette dernière pouvait être utilisé comme "gold standard" dans les études cliniques du scanner.

I.B.a. Matériels et méthodes

Nous avons donc réalisé une étude ex-vivo sur des artères coronaires droites humaines nécropsiques. Les spécimens étaient fixés sur un banc d'essai pour la réalisation d'acquisitions avec un scanner 64 détecteurs (Philipps Medical System, Best, Pays-bas) et avec un IVUS (iLab, Boston Scientific, Maple Grove, Minnesota, USA) (Figure 4). Les paramètres d'acquisitions scannographiques étaient optimisés afin d'obtenir la meilleure qualité d'image possible (tension et charge du tube à rayon X maximale, 120 kV et 1500 mAs/coupe, respectivement). A noter que ces réglages ne peuvent être envisagés chez l'homme du fait d'un taux d'irradiation trop important. Secondairement, les zones présentant des plaques d'athérosclérose étaient découpées en tranches de section et préparées pour analyse histologique sous microscopie optique.

Deux types d'analyses étaient effectuées au niveau des images obtenues en scanner, en IVUS et en histologie : une analyse quantitative des plaques et une analyse qualitative des différents composants histologiques de ces plaques. Pour l'analyse quantitative, seuls les paramètres indépendants de la pression artérielle étaient mesurés ; la fixation histologique n'étant pas réalisée sous tension (épaisseurs des parois, surface de la lumière artérielle et surface du vaisseau). Pour l'étude qualitative des plaques en scanner, deux types d'analyse étaient

réalisées, l'une visuelle, par deux opérateurs et l'autre à partir de la mesure directe de la densité de la plaque, en unité Hounsfield. Les plaques étaient classées par l'histologie en trois catégories : calcifiées, fibreuses ou lipidiques.

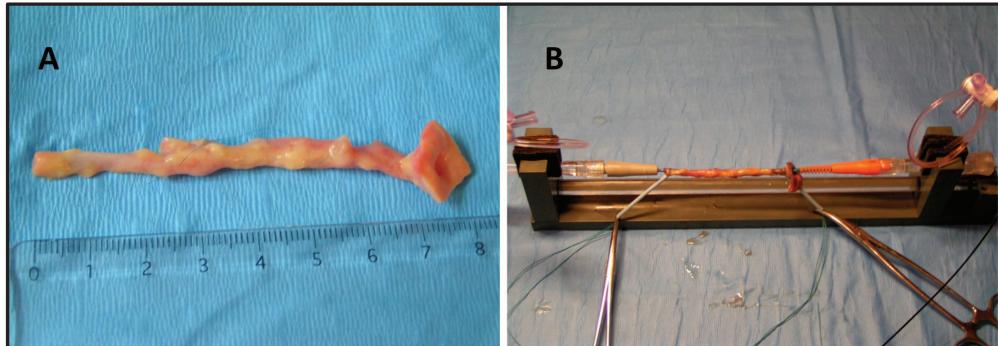


Figure 4: artère coronaire disséquée, avec l'ensemble des branches collatérales liées (A). Spécimen fixé sur le banc d'essai au niveau de cathéter de 6 frenchs (B)

I.B.b. Résultats

Analyse quantitative

Nos résultats montrent une bonne corrélation entre les mesures obtenues en histologie et celles en IVUS. En revanche, le scanner surestime systématiquement les mesures quantitatives, comparativement à l'histologie et à l'IVUS. Les différences entre les mesures observées en scanner et en IVUS sont liées, d'une part à la résolution spatiale plus faible du scanner avec des effets de volume partiel, et d'autre part, au fait que la limite externe du vaisseau visualisée n'est pas la même entre les deux techniques (la limitante élastique externe pour l'IVUS et l'aventice pour le scanner).

Analyse qualitative

-IVUS vs. Histologie : La caractérisation des plaques d'athérosclérose en IVUS est imparfaite. La sensibilité de détection des plaques calcifiées est de 100% mais la spécificité n'est que de 88%. En effet, un type particulier de fibrose, la fibrose hyaline, qui présente un réseau très dense de fibres de collagène, a la même signature acoustique que le calcium, sous la forme d'un croissant hyper-échogène. Par ailleurs, la distinction des plaques fibreuses des plaques lipidiques en IVUS est rendue difficile par l'échogénicité des tissus adjacents avec des valeurs de sensibilité et de spécificité relativement basses.

-Scanner vs. Histologie : La détection des plaques calcifiées en scanner est excellente que ce soit par l'analyse visuelle (Sensibilité : 95% ; spécificité : 100%) que par l'analyse de la mesure de la densité intra-plaque ($p <0,05$ entre la densité des plaques calcifiées et des plaques non

calcifiées) (figure 5). Par contre, la distinction entre les plaques fibreuses et les plaques lipidiques est impossible en scanner dans notre étude, que ce soit en analyse visuelle ou par la mesure de la densité des plaques ($p = 0,276$) (Figure 5).

-Scanner vs. IVUS: La comparaison des performances du scanner pour la caractérisation des plaques, en prenant comme référence l'IVUS est encore moins bonne que par rapport à l'histologie. La sensibilité de détection en scanner des plaques calcifiées diminue à 72%, liée à la mauvaise classification par l'IVUS des fibroses hyalines. Pour la distinction visuelle des plaques fibreuses et des plaques calcifiées, les valeurs de sensibilité et de spécificité retrouvées sont basses (plaques fibreuses, Se : 78%, Sp : 74% ; plaques lipidiques, Se : 32%, Sp : 82%). Enfin, dans notre étude ex-vivo, l'analyse de la densité de la plaque ne retrouve pas de différence de densité entre ces deux types de plaques ($p = 0,118$) (Figure 5), contrairement à ce qui avait pu être retrouvé dans des études cliniques.^{47,48}

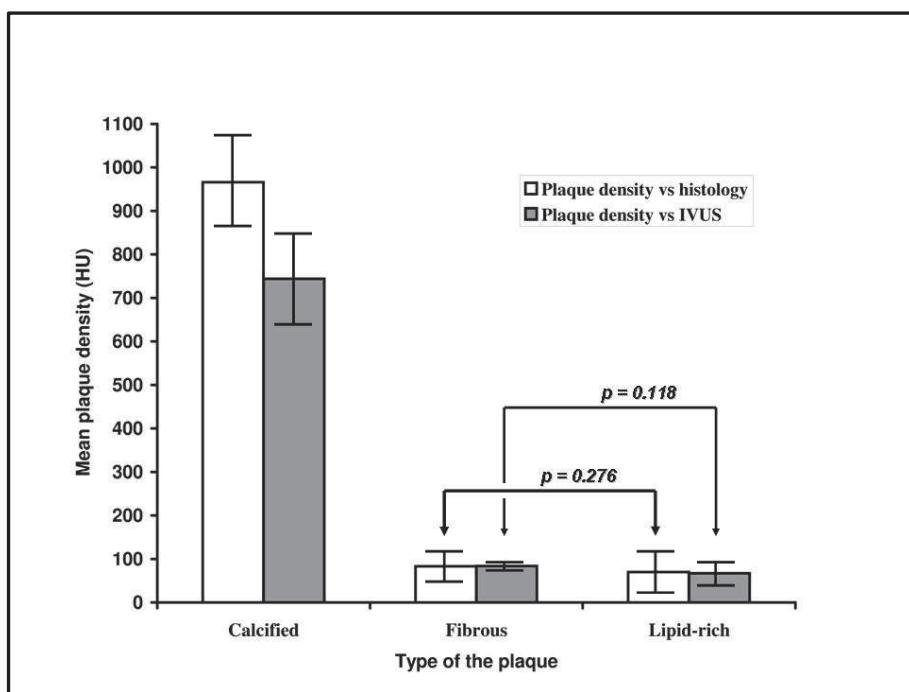


Figure 5: Valeurs de densité intra-plaque mesurées en scanner pour les plaques calcifiées, fibreuses et lipidiques, comparativement à la classification des plaques en histologie et en IVUS

I.B.c. Conclusion

Le scanner 64 détecteurs surestime systématiquement les mesures quantitatives des plaques, du fait principalement d'une résolution spatiale encore trop limitée. En ce qui concerne l'analyse qualitative des différents composants de la plaque, le scanner met précisément en évidence les calcifications coronaires mais ne permet pas de distinguer les plaques fibreuses des plaques

lipidiques, et ce même en utilisant la mesure de densité intra-plaque. Enfin, utiliser l'IVUS comme référence pour valider les performances du scanner in-vivo apparaît inapproprié, l'IVUS étant également imprécis pour la caractérisation des différents composants de la plaque coronaire.

Le tiré-à-part de la publication de ce travail dans *l'International Journal of Cardiovascular Imaging* (Int J Cardiovasc Imaging. 2010 Apr;26(4):373-83) est fourni ci-après. Par ailleurs, cette étude a fait l'objet d'une communication orale au congrès de l'*American Heart Association* en 2008.

How reliable are 40 MHz IVUS and 64-slice MDCT in characterizing coronary plaque composition? An ex vivo study with histopathological comparison

Romain Chopard · Loïc Boussel · Pascal Motreff ·
Gilles Rioufol · Alain Tabib · Philippe Douek ·
David Meyronet · Didier Revel · Gérard Finet

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Abstract The present study investigated whether IVUS could serve as a reliable reference in validating MDCT characterization of coronary plaque against a histological gold standard. Twenty-one specimens were postmortem human coronary arteries. Coronary cross-sections were imaged by 40 MHz IVUS and by 64-slice MDCT and characterized histologically as presenting calcified, fibrous or lipid-rich plaques. Plaque composition was analyzed visually and intra-plaque MDCT attenuation was measured in Hounsfield Units (HU). 83 atherosclerotic plaques were identified. IVUS failed to characterize calcified plaque accurately, with a positive predictive value (ppv) of 75% versus 100% for MDCT. Lipid-rich plaque was even

less accurately characterized, with ppv of 60 and 68% for IVUS and MDCT respectively. Mean MDCT attenuation was 966 ± 473 HU for calcified plaque, 83 ± 35 HU for fibrous plaque and 70.92 ± 41 HU for lipid-rich plaque. No significant difference in mean MDCT attenuation was found between fibrous and lipid-rich plaques ($P = 0.276$). In vivo validation of MDCT against an IVUS reference thus appears to be an unsuitable and unreliable approach: 40 MHz IVUS suffers from acoustic ambiguities in plaque characterization, and 64-slice MDCT fails to analyze plaque morphology and components accurately.

Keywords Atherosclerosis · Intravascular ultrasound · Multidetector computed tomography

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Introduction

It is well-established that acute coronary events have a common physiopathological substrate, which is plaque rupture triggering a more or less complete cascade of thrombotic phenomena [1]. Plaque that is vulnerable to rupture displays a large lipid-rich core and thin fibrous cap, inflammatory infiltration [2] and positive remodeling of the arterial wall [3]. Reliable quantitative and qualitative characterization of coronary lesions would constitute an important step forward in risk stratification. Intravascular ultrasound (IVUS), an invasive catheter-based technique, is the current reference method in the study of coronary

atherosclerotic plaque [4]. Validation studies were performed in the 1990s, with 20–30 MHz transducers (axial resolution: 200 μm). These transducers achieved appropriate definition of plaque morphology, but imaging of details such as lipid pools or fibrous proliferation remained poorly defined [5–8]. There is at present no full characterization of plaque morphology or plaque components using high frequency (40 MHz) transducers which enhance spatial resolution to 90 μm . Multidetector computed tomography (MDCT) now allows nearly non-invasive motion-free visualization of the coronary arteries and accurate detection of non-significant coronary lesions, with a good negative predictive value [9, 10].

Many *in vivo* studies, using IVUS as a reference for comparison, have shown MDCT to be able to analyze coronary atherosclerotic plaque quantitatively and qualitatively, especially by assessing intra-plaque density [11–17]. On the other hand, the few validations using histology as reference were performed with 16-slice MDCT at most [18–22].

The present study investigated whether 40 MHz IVUS could serve as a reliable reference in validating 64-slice MDCT qualitative and quantitative characterization of coronary atherosclerotic plaque against a histological gold standard. This was an *ex vivo* study with histopathological comparison.

Methods

Specimen preparation

Right coronary arteries were chosen, as being easier to dissect, and were excised from human heart at autopsy. Specimens (mean length: 42 ± 9 mm) were stored at 4°C and studied within 48 h to avoid alteration in tissue structure. All side branches of the artery were ligated and the proximal and distal ends mounted on modified 6-F guide catheters within a closed-loop perfusion system in an isotonic saline serum tank maintained at 37°C.

Intravascular ultrasound investigations

For IVUS investigation, the coronary segment was perfused in room-temperature saline at a constant 60–80 mmHg pressure. A commercially available IVUS insight system (iLab[®], Boston Scientific

Corporation[®], Maple Grove, MN, USA) was used with 3.8-F, 40 MHz mechanical catheter transducer (Atlantis SR Pro[®], Boston Scientific Corporation[®], Maple Grove, MN, USA; axial resolution of 90 μm). The catheter was passed through the specimen. Images of the various atherosclerotic sections were recorded with automatic pullback (05 mm/sec) for offline analysis (Echoplaque[®], Indec Medical Systems[®], Santa Clara, CA, USA).

Multidetector CT investigations

Coronary samples for scan acquisition were fixed on the test bench and plunged in a container of water at room temperature; the coronary segment was perfused with contrast agent diluted to 1/25 at constant pressure (60–80 mmHg). All investigations were performed on a Brilliance 64[®] scanner (Philips Medical Systems[®], Best, The Netherlands). Acquisition parameters were: number of detectors, 64; individual detector width, 0.625 mm; gantry rotation time, 420 ms; matrix, 768×768 ; FOV, 50 mm. Tube current was set at 120 kV and 1,500 mAs/slice. Axial slice reconstruction parameters were: 625 μm effective section thickness; 330 μm increment; standard intermediate reconstruction filter (kernel B); and adapted field of view. MDCT images were assessed on a work-station using a version of DicomWorks[®].

Histological analysis

When an atherosclerotic plaque was detected by IVUS, this arterial section was tattooed using a fine periadventitial needle for facilitating the registration between IVUS, MDCT, and histology. Specimens were frozen for the histopathological analysis to avoid the risk of $\pm 20\%$ size reduction due to the paraffin fixation procedure. Each coronary cross section was processed for histological analysis (coloration with hematoxillin-eosin and elastic Van Giesen stains) and was analyzed under light microscopy by a pathologist (A.T.) blinded to IVUS and MDCT image interpretation. Lipid-rich plaque was defined by lipid pools (with necrotic core or not) taking up >50% of the plaque area as calculated by planimetry, fibrous plaque by collagen taking up >50%, and calcified plaque by calcification taking up >40% (histological resolution: 5 μm).

Image data analysis

Quantitative assessment

Only dimensional measurements independent of pressure loading were taken, as sections for histology were fixed without ensuring constant pressure. Minimal (W_{min}) and maximal wall thickness (W_{max}) were determined under IVUS, MDCT and histology. Lumen area (LA) and external elastic membrane area (EEAM) were determined under IVUS so as to calculate P+M area (=EEMA – LA; 4). In case of calcific nodes, external vessel limits were traced by the method previously described [4]. Lumen area and vessel area (VA), which includes the adventitia, were determined under MDCT so as to calculate P+M+A area (=VA – LA). LA, EEMA and VA were measurable on the histological sections.

Qualitative assessment

Multidetector computed tomography (MDCT) and IVUS qualitative data were analyzed by 2 independent experienced observers (G.F. and G.R. for IVUS, and G.F. and L.B. for MDCT), blinded to all other results (inter-observer variability), twice (intra-observer variability). In case of divergent classifications, the plaques were re-evaluated until consensus between the two observers was achieved. For MDCT analysis, qualitative characterization consisted in visual comparison between the density of the plaque and the adjacent healthy arterial wall, using a three-point scale: each plaque was rated as hyperdense, isodense or hypodense. Intraplaque density was assessed in Hounsfield units (HU), using an adapted region of interest (diameter: 1 to 3 mm) centered on the plaque. Under IVUS, plaque composition was classified according to IVUS criteria (4): calcified plaques were defined as plaque tissue containing any tissue with echogenicity as bright as or brighter than the adventitia causing acoustic shadows. Lipid-rich plaques were defined by plaque tissue revealing an echogenicity less than the adventitia and with no detectable calcification. Fibrous plaques were defined by plaque tissue producing echoes as bright as or brighter than the adventitia, with no detectable calcification. For each cross section, the more prevalent appearance (hypo- vs. hyper-echogenic) was used for classification.

Statistical analysis

Results are expressed as mean \pm standard deviation (SD) unless specified otherwise. Bland Altman representation [23], linear regression and paired *t*-test were performed for each pair of modalities. A *P* value of <0.05 was taken as indicating a significant difference. For lesion composition analysis, sensitivity, specificity and positive and negative predictive values were calculated. For qualitative analysis, inter- and intra-observer reproducibility for each technique was calculated using Cohen's kappa.

Results

Twenty one human post-mortem right coronary arteries were sampled. All these deceased patients had had coronary artery disease. Their mean age was 64 ± 10 years. Smoking, diabetes mellitus, hypercholesterolemia and hypertension were present in 46, 14, 57, and 64%, respectively. A total of 83 atherosclerotic cross-sections were imaged under IVUS and MDCT and processed for light microscopy histological analysis.

Quantitative analysis

Correlations between quantitative measurements on IVUS, MDCT and histology are shown in Table 1. The correlation coefficient determined by IVUS and histology for minimal wall thickness (W_{min}) was $r^2 = 0.70$, $P < 0.01$. Bland and Altman analysis showed that quantitative measurements on IVUS were precise: i.e., close to those on histology (Fig. 1a). With MDCT, overestimation with respect to histology was observed on Bland and Altman analysis for all dimensions (Fig. 1b). The correlation coefficient r^2 was 0.49 ($P < 0.01$) between P+M+A area on MDCT ($0.75 \pm 0.35 \text{ mm}^2$) and on histology ($0.43 \pm 0.23 \text{ mm}^2$). Comparing IVUS directly to MDCT, Bland and Altman analysis clearly revealed overestimation of quantitative measurements on 64-slice MDCT, in comparison to 40 MHz IVUS (Fig. 1c). The r^2 correlation coefficients between IVUS and MDCT for W_{max} , P+M area and P+M+A area were 0.52, 0.45 and 0.42 respectively ($P < 0.001$ for all).

Table 1 Quantitative measurements on images from intravascular ultrasound (IVUS), multidetector computed tomography (MDCT) and histology

	P+M area (mm^2)	P+M+A area (mm^2)	Wmax (mm)	Wmin (mm)
Histology	6.60 ± 2.40	8.78 ± 2.46	1.25 ± 0.51	0.43 ± 0.23
MDCT	NA	12.46 ± 8.49	1.78 ± 0.60	0.75 ± 0.35
IVUS	7.47 ± 2.94	NA	1.26 ± 0.46	0.44 ± 0.28

Values are mean \pm standard deviation

P+M area = external elastic membrane area–lumen area; P+M+A area = vessel area–lumen area; Wmax = maximal wall thickness; Wmin = minimal wall thickness; NA = non-applicable

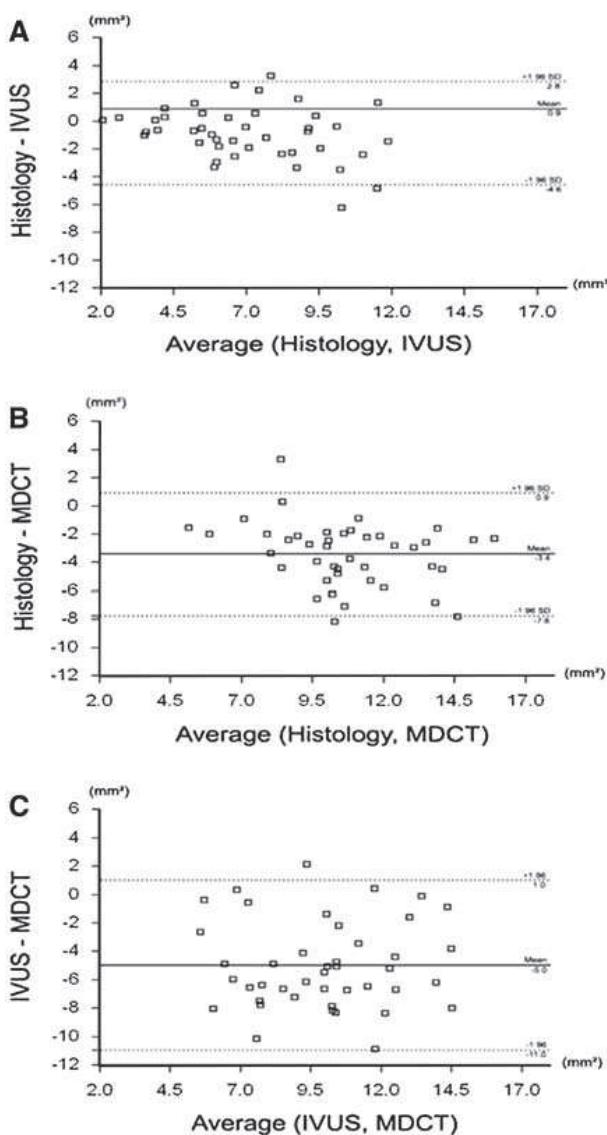


Fig. 1 Bland and Altman analysis of agreement between IVUS and histology in measurements of P+M area (a), between MDCT and histology in measurements of P+M+A area (b) and between IVUS and MDCT in measurements of P+M area and P+M+A area (c). The dashed lines correspond to $d \pm 1.96 \text{ SD}$

Qualitative assessment of plaque composition

83 different atherosclerotic plaques were identified by histopathology: 21 calcified plaques (21%), 42 fibrous plaques (50.60%) and 20 lipid-rich plaques (24.40%). Plaque burden (%), defined as P+M area divided by EEM was not significantly different between calcified (64.34 ± 13.23) and non-calcified plaques (71.56 ± 8.92), with $P = 0.394$. Correlations between IVUS and MDCT assessments of plaque components on the one hand and histology on the other are summarized in Table 2. High intra-observer agreement was obtained for IVUS (Cohen's kappa = 0.96 and 0.83 for readers 1 and 2, respectively) and MDCT (Cohen's kappa = 0.88 and 0.83, respectively). Inter-observer agreement on IVUS interpretation was moderate (Cohen's kappa = 0.68), but better than with MDCT (Cohen's kappa = 0.61). IVUS sensitivity in detecting calcified plaque was perfect, but specificity was only 88%. False positives ($n = 7$) all showed the same acoustic signature (lesion echogenicity greater than that of the surrounding adventitia, with acoustic shadowing), histological analysis finding no calcification but rather a particular type of tissue, with a very dense network of old collagen fibers, known as hyaline fibrosis (Figs. 2, 3). IVUS sensitivity in distinguishing fibrous and lipid-rich plaque was respectively 66 and 70%; some lipid-rich plaques were misclassified as fibrous ($n = 6$) due to failure to visualize a hypo-echogenic intra-plaque area (Figs. 4, 5). 64-slice MDCT enabled correct plaque detection in 20 out of 21 sections containing calcified plaque (Fig. 2). The distinction between fibrous and lipid-rich non-calcified plaques, on the other hand, was poorly visualized. In 9 plaques, lipid pools failed to be identified, with the lesions being classified as fibrous (sensitivity: 55%; Fig. 4). Direct

Table 2 Correlation of intravascular ultrasound (IVUS) and multidetector computed tomography (MDCT) images with histology for characterization of plaque components ($n = 83$ sites)

Plaques	IVUS vs histology			MDCT vs histology		
	Calcified	Fibrous	Lipid-rich	Calcified	Fibrous	Lipid-rich
Se (%)	100	66	70	95	73	55
Sp (%)	88	78	85	100	85	90
ppv (%)	75	75	60	100	83	68
npv (%)	100	69	90	98	75	85
κ	0.89	0.61	0.70	0.98	0.73	0.59

Se sensitivity, Sp specificity, ppv positive predictive value, npv negative predictive value. κ Kappa's Cohen value for inter-observer agreement

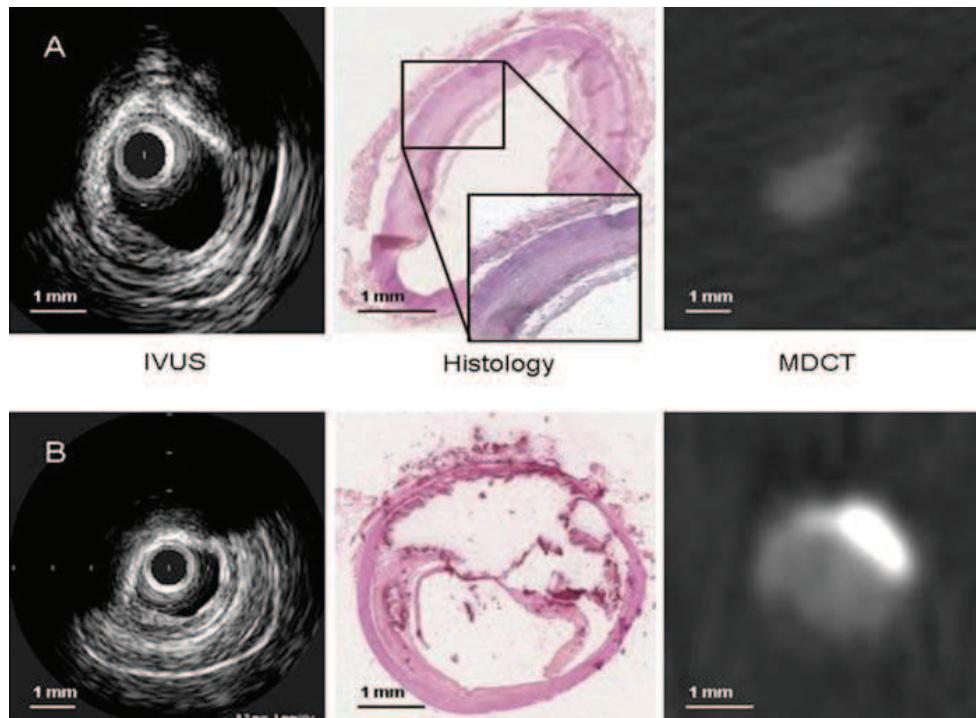


Fig. 2 Corresponding IVUS, histology and MDCT images. The IVUS aspect of plaques (a) and (b) is identical, with a hyperechogenic crescent with acoustic shadowing. Histology

revealed 2 different plaques: dense hyaline fibrosis in (a) and calcifications in (b). MDCT accurately distinguished hyperdense calcification (b) from fibrosis (a)

comparisons of MDCT against an IVUS reference are detailed in Table 3. Eight plaques were classified as fibrous on MDCT but as calcified on IVUS (sensitivity: 72%; specificity: 100%). Positive predictive values for fibrous and lipid-rich plaque detection were low, at 58 and 52% respectively.

MDCT density measurements

Multidetector computed tomography (MDCT) attenuation was measured in 83 atherosclerotic plaques. In

relation to histological diagnosis, the mean value was 966 ± 473 HU in calcified, 83 ± 35 HU in fibrous and 70 ± 41 HU in lipid-rich plaques. Non-parametric *t*-test revealed a significant difference in plaque density between calcified and non-calcified (fibrous and lipid-rich) plaques ($P < 0.05$), whereas no difference emerged between fibrous and lipid-rich plaques ($P = 0.276$; Fig. 6). Taking IVUS as reference, 29 calcified (35%), 32 fibrous (39%) and 22 lipid-rich plaques (26%) were detected. Plaque density in plaques diagnosed as calcified by IVUS was

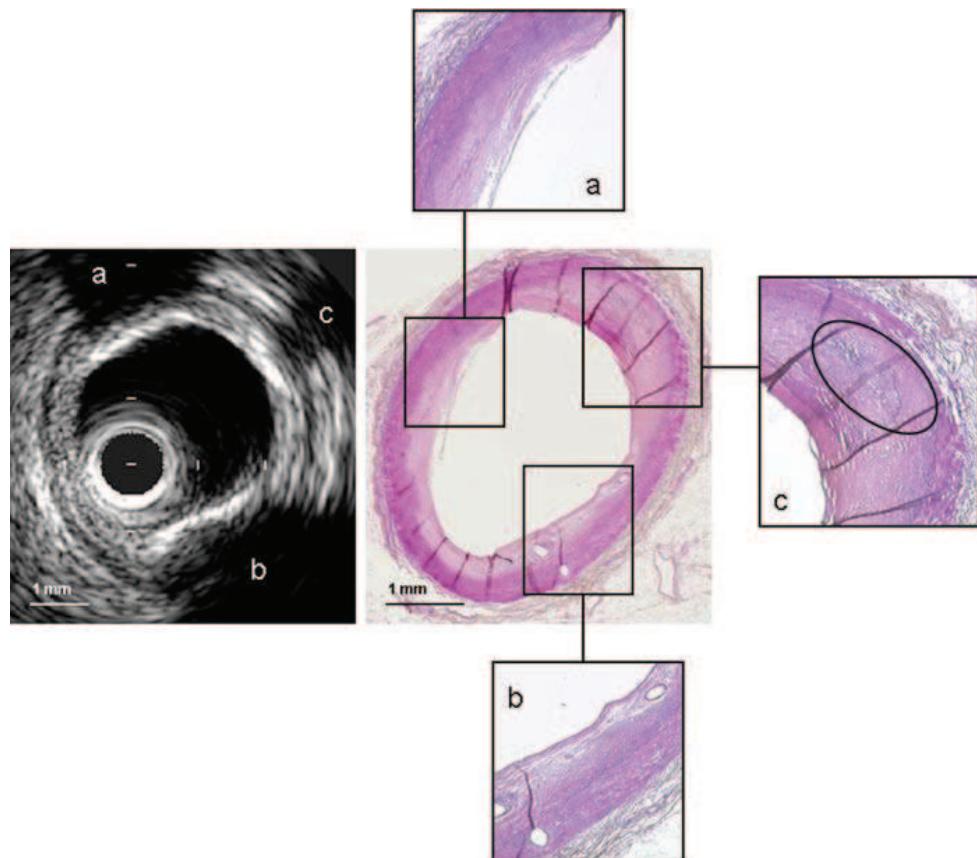


Fig. 3 IVUS image and the corresponding histological sections. The IVUS image presents 3 distinct hyperechogenic zones (**a**), (**b**) and (**c**) with acoustic shadowing suggestive of

calcification. Histology revealed calcifications only in zone (**c**). Zones (**a**) and (**b**) comprise very dense non-cellular fibrous tissue known as hyaline fibrosis

significantly elevated (724 ± 564 HU; $P < 0.05$). Mean MDCT attenuation in IVUS-diagnosed lipid-rich and fibrous plaques did not differ significantly (67 ± 31 HU vs. 84 ± 40 HU; $P = 0.118$; Fig. 6).

Discussion

Quantitative and qualitative 40 MHz IVUS accuracy

Intravascular ultrasound (IVUS) imaging provides precise analysis of atherosclerotic plaque and vessel appearance, with good correlations to histology. Correlations on dimensional measurements were identical to those previously reported with 20–30 MHz IVUS [5, 6]. Plaque component analysis, however, remained no better. As reported by Rasheed et al. [7], calcified and dense fibrotic tissue can both show the same acoustic signature, with strong echo-reflection and

lateral shadowing, inducing errors in interpretation. Differentiation between fibrous and lipid-rich plaques remained limited, close to values reported in previous studies [6, 8] with detection sensitivity at 70% for lipid-rich and 66% for fibrous plaque in the present study. Prati et al. [24] reported 65% sensitivity for 40 MHz IVUS characterization of lipid structures. Lipid pools may be masked by shadowing from fibrotic or calcified tissue. Failure to visualize lipid pools is independent of lipid-core area: both large lipid cores ($n = 2$) and heterogeneous plaques with diffuse lipid proliferation within fibrotic tissue ($n = 4$) were misclassified. Misinterpretation is mainly due to the intrinsic ultrasound properties of certain types of tissue, and thus relatively independent of the axial resolution of the transducer. These limitations in gray-scale analysis may be partly resolved by the development of Virtual Histology-IVUS[®] (Volcano Corporation[®], Rancho Cordova, CA, USA) using spectral analysis of the radiofrequency ultrasound backscatter signals. An

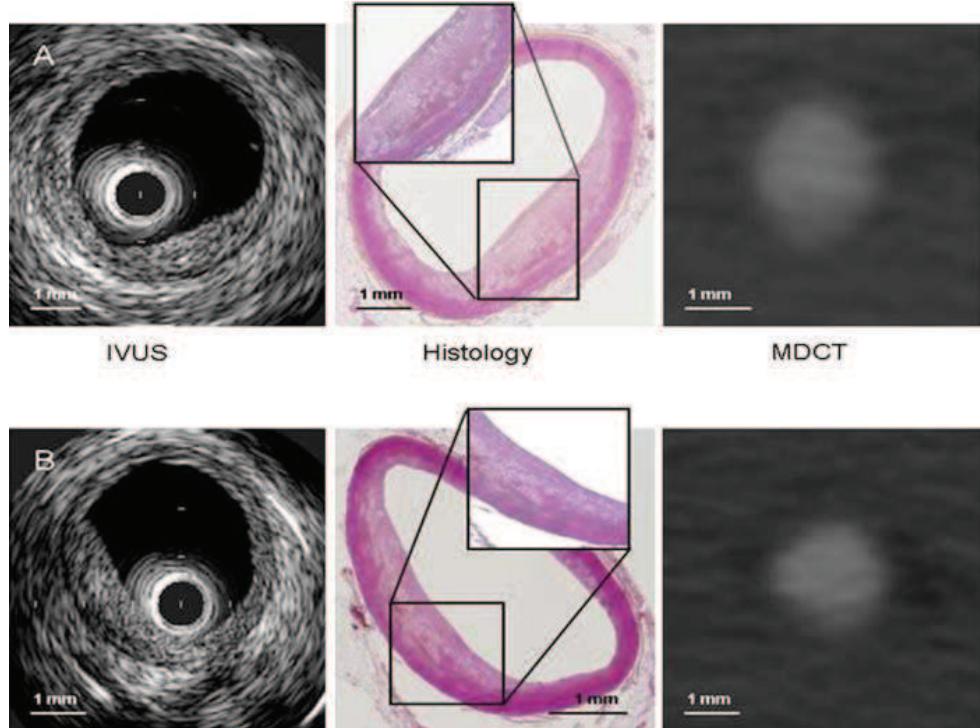


Fig. 4 IVUS, histology and MDCT images for lipid-rich (line A) and fibrous plaques (line B). The two IVUS images show plaque with the same isoechogenic aspect. The lipid pool

cannot be distinguished under MDCT (a) with a hypodense plaque as in the MDCT image (b)

initial ex-vivo study reported good accuracy for the classification of plaque components [25].

Quantitative and qualitative 64-slice MDCT accuracy

Our 64-slice MDCT ex-vivo study found all dimensional measurements (P+M+A area, W_{max} and W_{min}) to be significantly overestimated by MDCT against our histologic gold-standard. This is in agreement with Ferencik et al.'s findings for blood vessel phantoms [22]. The key factor in this quantitative imprecision is the absence of in-plane spatial resolution, resulting in a partial volume effect. The ability of MDCT to distinguish calcified from non-calcified plaques was excellent, both visually (sensitivity, 95%; specificity, 100%) and in terms of intra-plaque density measurement, as has been known for several years now with the development of coronary calcification scoring [26]. MDCT's ability to distinguish between fibrous and lipid-rich non-calcified plaques, on the other hand, was less clear, with fairly low sensitivity values for visual identification. Plaque density measurement did not

improve MDCT performance, HU values not being significantly different between the two types ($P = 0.276$). This finding contrasts with previous ex-vivo studies [18–21], which were, however, conducted using low spatial-resolution MDCT (e.g., $>1,500 \mu\text{m}$ for 4-slice MDCT), reducing location precision. Moreover, the number of coronary plaques studied was small (only 7 lipid-rich plaques out of 33 for Becker et al. [18]). Several factors may influence the accuracy of attenuation measurements by MDCT. Spatial resolution remains insufficient, even with thin 64-section scanners ($625 \mu\text{m}$), resulting in partial volume effects and interpolation artifacts [27]. In a blood vessel phantom study [22], 16-slice MDCT detected lipid cores proportionally to their diameter. The detection sensitivity for lipid pools between 0.4 mm and 4.0 mm in diameter was only 44%, compared to 74% for lesions with diameters between 1.5 mm and 4.0 mm. In the present study, 12 out of 20 lipid-rich plaques presented a significantly systematized lipid core with a mean $2.9 \pm 0.9 \text{ mm}$ diameter. The measured attenuation in small structures can be strongly influenced by attenuation in the surrounding tissue or contrast material in the

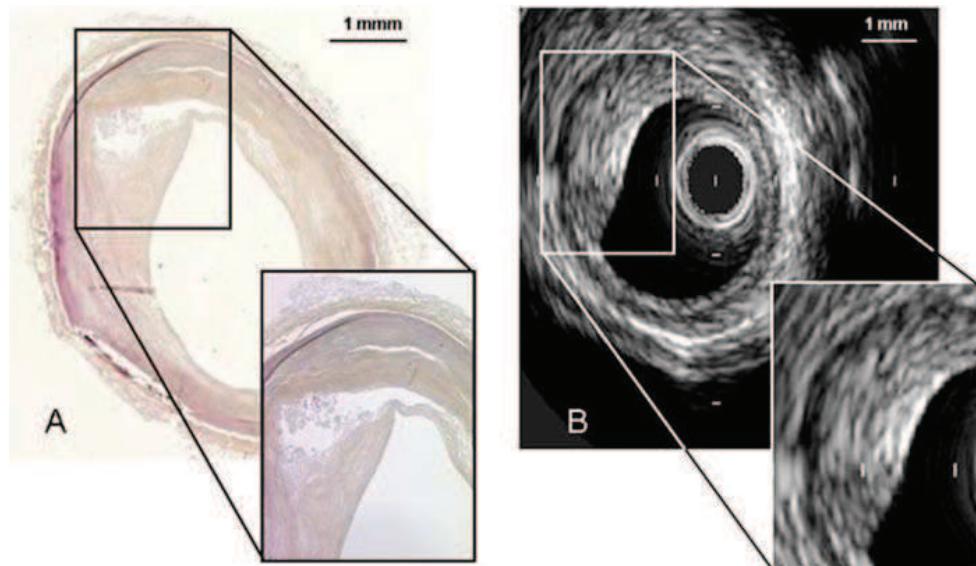


Fig. 5 Photomicrograph of histological (a) and corresponding IVUS cross section (b). The histological sections show a lipid area at 9 and 12 o'clock. In the corresponding IVUS cross-

section the lipid pool cannot be identified because of echo signal attenuation caused by the presence of highly echogenic superficial dense fibrous cap

Table 3 Correlation of multidetector computed tomography (MDCT) with intravascular ultrasound (IVUS) images for coronary atherosclerotic plaque type ($n = 83$ sites)

Plaques	MDCT vs. IVUS		
	Calcified	Fibrous	Lipid-rich
Se (%)	72	78	32
Sp (%)	100	74	82
ppv (%)	100	58	52
npv (%)	86	88	66
κ	0.94	0.52	0.60

Se sensitivity, Sp specificity, ppv positive predictive value, npv negative predictive value, κ : Kappa's Cohen value for inter-observer agreement

lumen. Beam-hardening artifacts may cause low attenuation measurements in pixels surrounding calcified nodules and the intravascular contrast material solution influences plaque attenuation. Two experimental studies reported that increased contrast medium concentration, and thus increased intracoronary attenuation, led to increased plaque attenuation [28, 29]. Schroeder et al. [28] reported that standardized contrast attenuation of about 200–250 HU was required to assure meaningful results. In the present study, the intravascular attenuation achieved with a 1/25 contrast agent concentration was similar (276 ± 42 HU). The intracoronary attenuation effect is particularly strong when structures are

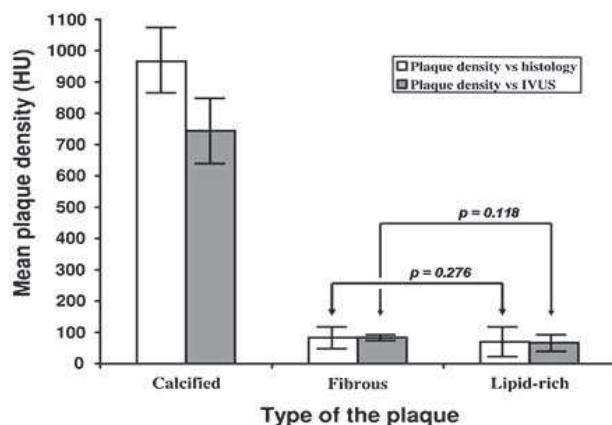


Fig. 6 MDCT density values for calcified, fibrous and lipid-rich plaques compared to histology (white box) and IVUS (gray box). Each box describes the mean plaque density in Hounsfield units. The whiskers above and below each box describe the standard error of the mean. Plaque density values differed significantly between calcified and non-calcified plaques; fibrous and lipid-rich plaques ($P < 0.01$). No significant difference in plaque density value emerged between fibrous and lipid-rich plaques as characterized by histology ($P = 0.276$) or by IVUS ($P = 0.118$)

near to the lumen, as is the case with lipid cores in vulnerable plaques, which only a thin fibrous cap separates from the lumen [2]. Thus in the present study, comprising a reasonable number of atherosclerotic plaques ($n = 83$), it did not seem feasible to try to distinguish fibrous from lipid-rich lesions by MDCT,

however state-of-the-art. Moreover, the acquisition parameters employed (1,500 mAs/slice) so as to optimize imaging entailed stronger radiation doses than human *in vivo* imaging tolerates. Future developments in MDCT imaging may enhance its ability to analyze coronary atherosclerotic plaque [29–31], notably with dual-source computed tomography [32].

Validation of MDCT against IVUS

Many *in vivo* validation studies of MDCT for coronary atherosclerotic plaque analysis have been made against an IVUS reference [11–17]. The present study found quantitative IVUS data to be reliable with respect to histology, justifying IVUS as reference in this regard.

Quantitative measures

Direct comparison of IVUS and MDCT quantitative measurements disclose systematic overestimation on MDCT for all area and thickness parameters, whether *ex vivo* [21] or *in vivo* [12–14, 17]. Moselewski et al. [12] compared *in vivo* plaque area measurements between 16-slice MDCT and 40 MHz IVUS. Plaque area was estimated by subtracting lumen area from vessel area: findings on MDCT were higher than on IVUS ($8.3 \pm 4.8 \text{ mm}^2$ vs. $7.3 \pm 3.1 \text{ mm}^2$; $P = 0.01$). Quantitative measurement imprecision relates to both partial volume effects and the great difficulty of visualizing external vessel contours. Iriart et al. [16] reported similar difficulties, which may largely account for the low inter-observer correlations on, for example, plaque area ($r^2 = 30$, $P < 0.01$ for Moselewski et al. [12]). Quantitative measurements, such as plaque area and remodeling index assessed *in vivo* [12–14, 17], require measuring the external vessel contour and do not fit the same parameters assessed from MDCT or IVUS images. In IVUS, the external elastic membrane acts as external contour, while it is non-visualizable on MDCT. MDCT vessel area includes the adventitia, with a mean thickness of 300 μm in a normal coronary artery, and more in case of atherosclerosis [33]. Otsuka et al. [34] showed that quantification of coronary plaque with 64-slice CT was moderately accurate with respect to IVUS. This is why MDCT measurements cannot help being greater than under IVUS.

Qualitative analysis

In *vivo* validation also assesses the ability of MDCT to characterize plaque components. Our MDCT-IVUS correlations show that fibrous and lipid-rich lesions fail to be distinguished. Visual analysis of MDCT images shows low detection sensitivity (32%) for lipid-rich plaques compared to IVUS, with a positive predictive value of 55%, as against 55% and 68% respectively comparing MDCT to histology. For example, the plaque in Fig. 4a was classified as fibrous on both IVUS and MDCT, whereas histology revealed it to be lipid-rich. Moreover, intra-plaque density values did not significantly differ between plaques diagnosed by IVUS as fibrous or lipid-rich ($P = 0.118$), whereas *in vivo* studies showed correlation between lesion echogenicity on IVUS and MDCT density measurements [15–17]. These 3 studies used MDCT of at least 16 slices, thus with spatial resolution not less than 1 mm, with 20–40 MHz IVUS as reference. Thus, comparing MDCT to IVUS alters the diagnostic performance of MDCT, cumulating the errors inherent to both techniques. IVUS cannot serve as the reference for plaque characterization, and histology remains the sole gold standard.

Conclusions

About 40 MHz IVUS is currently the routine means of studying atherosclerotic coronary plaque. It provides precise morphological analysis thanks to its good resolution, but performs less well in characterizing plaque composition due to ambiguities in the acoustic signatures of each component. 64-slice MDCT overestimates quantitative measurements and fails to differentiate between non-calciified plaques, be it visually or in terms of measured plaque density. Thus validating MDCT against IVUS as reference is an unsuitable approach, being imprecise and cumulating the intrinsic limitations of both methods. Histology alone can stand as gold-standard for imagery assessment, whether invasive or not.

Conflict of interest statement No conflict of interest exists regarding this manuscript.

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I.C. Mise à jour

I.C.a. Scanner coronaire et plaque

Ce travail de recherche représente actuellement la seule étude de "validation" in-vitro ayant comparé les performances du scanner dans l'analyse de la plaque à la référence histopathologique.

Parallèlement à cela, après plusieurs études négatives sur l'intérêt de la mesure de la densité de la plaque pour distinguer les plaques fibreuses des plaques lipidiques, comparativement à l'IVUS ou à l'histologie virtuelle,⁵¹⁻⁵³ les concepts d'imagerie de la plaque en scanner ont évolué. La recherche clinique s'est ainsi orientée vers la mise en évidence de paramètres scannographiques communs aux plaques vulnérables par rapport aux plaques dites "stables", c'est à dire non responsables d'un événement aigu et ce, presque indépendamment de la réalité anatomopathologique. Ainsi, les plaques vulnérables sont définies en scanner par l'association : d'un important volume de plaque, d'un remodelage positif (index de remodelage $\geq 1,1$), de plaques préférentiellement hypo-denses avec quelques calcifications mouchetées intra-plaque $\leq 3\text{mm}$, le tout entouré d'un anneau plus ou moins complet de produit de contraste (Figure 6).¹ Motoyama et al. ont montré que la mise en évidence de ce type de plaque en scanner était significativement liée à un sur-risque d'événement coronarien chez 1059 patients au cours d'un suivi de 27 ± 10 mois (Hazard ratio : 22,8, 95%CI : 6,9-75,2, P < 0,001).⁵⁴

Enfin, à côté de l'étude morphologique de la plaque vulnérable en scanner, se développe l'analyse fonctionnelle en essayant de cibler l'inflammation intra-plaque représentée principalement par les macrophages. Les macrophages jouent en effet un rôle important dans la déstabilisation des plaques. Ils sécrètent une protéase qui digère la matrice extracellulaire et affaiblit la chape fibreuse pouvant aboutir à sa rupture.⁵⁵ Deux méthodes sont dans ce cadre actuellement en cours d'évaluation. La première repose sur l'utilisation d'un produit de contraste composé de nanoparticules qui s'accumulent dans les macrophages des plaques d'athérosclérose. Les premiers résultats chez l'animal montrent une bonne concordance avec l'activité inflammatoire objectivée en tomographie par émission de positon au ^{18}FDG (TEP) et la densité en macrophage mesurée en immunohistochimie.^{56, 57} La seconde méthode consiste en la fusion entre les données morphologiques fournies par le scanner et l'analyse métabolique du TEP au cours d'une seule acquisition.⁵⁸



Figure 6: aspect typique d'une plaque vulnérable en scanner avec un remodelage positif, une volumineuse plaque hypo-dense, des petites calcifications intra-plaque entourées de produit de contraste (flèche) (d'après Pfleiderer et al.¹).

I.C.b. Autres technologies d'imagerie de la plaque vulnérable

A côté du scanner, plusieurs autres technologies, invasives et non invasives, sont utilisées dans l'étude des plaques d'athérosclérose coronaires. Dans ce paragraphe, nous décrirons brièvement les principes et les intérêts de chacune de ces technologies.

Technologies Invasives

-L'échographie endocoronaire (IVUS)

Pour les raisons que nous avons déjà exposées, l'IVUS était la seconde technique d'imagerie de la plaque étudiée dans notre travail de recherche.

Il s'agit là d'une des premières méthodes d'étude de la plaque d'athérosclérose coronaire qui permet une visualisation en temps réel de la lumière et de la paroi vasculaire, avec une résolution spatiale de 90 µm.⁵⁹ L'IVUS fournit ainsi une analyse morphologique fiable (remodelage positif, longueur et degré de sténose, dissection).⁶⁰⁻⁶² Une surface lumineuse minimale < 4 mm² (6 mm² pour le tronc commun) est en faveur d'une lésion significative, comparativement à des données de la FFR notamment.^{63, 64}

En ce qui concerne l'analyse des différents composants de la plaque, notre étude, comme d'autres^{65, 66} ont bien montré les faiblesses de cette technique avec un signal ultrasonore peu spécifique de chacun des éléments histo-pathologiques. Classiquement, l'aspect d'une plaque vulnérable en IVUS se compose d'un volumineux centre anéchogène associé à un remodelage positif.^{67, 68} A noter que la chape fibreuse ne peut être visualisée directement du fait d'une résolution spatiale insuffisante mais une rupture peut être suspectée devant un décollement partiel de la paroi mobile dans la lumière.⁶⁹

-L'histologie virtuelle

L'histologie virtuelle (VH) repose sur l'analyse du signal ultrasonore brut (signal de radiofréquence) avant sa démodulation et sa conversion en signal d'enveloppe.⁷⁰ Sur la base de comparaisons avec l'histologie, quatre types de signaux ont été reconnus comme caractéristiques de quatre constituants de la plaque d'athérome.⁷¹ A chaque endroit de la paroi artérielle, la présence d'un type tissulaire particulier est déterminée par la comparaison des probabilités de chaque type de signal de radiofréquence, le résultat étant finalement présenté sous la forme d'un code couleur appliqué sur l'image en niveaux de gris de l'IVUS (Figure 7).

Une étude in-vivo avec comparaison histologique sur des prélèvements après athérectomie retrouvait une sensibilité de 67,3%, une spécificité de 92,9% et une valeur prédictive de 88,3% pour la détection des centres lipido-nécrotiques.⁷² Dans l'étude PROSPECT (Providing Regional Observations to Study Predictors of events in the Coronary Tree), la présence d'une plaque considérée comme vulnérable en VH était statistiquement corrélée à un risque d'évènement cardiovasculaire (Hazard ratio: 3,35; 95% CI : 1,77 to 6,36; P <0,001).⁷³

Cependant, certaines données ont contredit les capacités du VH dans la caractérisation des composants de la plaque. Sumerly et al. ont paradoxalement trouvé plus de plaques fibreuses et moins de plaques lipido-nécrotiques en VH chez 28 patients en syndrome coronaire aigu comparativement à 57 patients stables. L'explication avancée serait que le VH est incapable de fournir un codage correct du thrombus par rapport aux structures de plaque.⁷⁴ Par ailleurs, une étude animale récente n'a montré aucune corrélation entre le VH et l'histologie pour la détection des centres lipido-nécrotiques.⁷⁵ Depuis la publication de ces résultats, le VH a été abandonné.

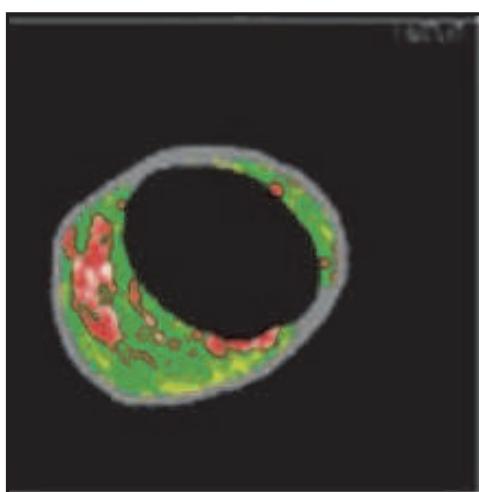


Figure 7: aspect évocateur d'une plaque vulnérable en histologie virtuelle avec un centre lipido-nécrotique (en rouge) recouvert d'une chape fibreuse (en vert).

-Tomographie par cohérence optique

Le principe de la tomographie par cohérence optique (optical coherence tomography ou OCT) est analogue à l'échographie, à la différence que les ondes ultrasonores sont remplacées par des ondes optiques émises dans le proche infrarouge. L'imagerie est réalisée en focalisant un faisceau laser dans l'échantillon et en mesurant le temps de parcours et l'amplitude de la lumière rétrodiffusée par les microstructures à différentes profondeurs. L'OCT fournit des images de la lumière vasculaire et de la paroi artérielle d'une grande précision avec une résolution spatiale de 10 à 15 µm. Par contre, la profondeur accessible est limitée à 2 à 3 mm dans les tissus non transparents. En effet, les photons lumineux, même ceux émis dans le proche infra-rouge, ne peuvent pénétrer largement en profondeur du fait de phénomènes d'absorption et de diffusion par les tissus biologiques.⁷⁶⁻⁷⁸

Les signaux lumineux des différentes structures de la plaque semblent très spécifiques. Dans une étude expérimentale, l'OCT permettait d'identifier les plaques fibro-calcifiées avec une sensibilité et une spécificité de 96 et 97% et les plaques lipido-nécrotiques avec une sensibilité et une spécificité de 92 et 94%.⁷⁹ De plus, du fait de son importante résolution spatiale, l'OCT est actuellement la seule technique capable de mettre en évidence les principaux éléments morphologiques caractéristiques des plaques vulnérables. L'OCT est ainsi capable de visualiser directement les ruptures de plaques et même les érosions de plaque.⁸⁰⁻⁸² L'OCT visualise également les petites calcifications localisées directement sous la chape fibreuse⁸¹ et des études préliminaires ont montré les capacités de l'OCT à détecter l'infiltration macrophagique intra-plaque (Figure 8).^{83, 84} Des études cliniques sont nécessaires pour valider l'impact pronostique des ces critères OCT.

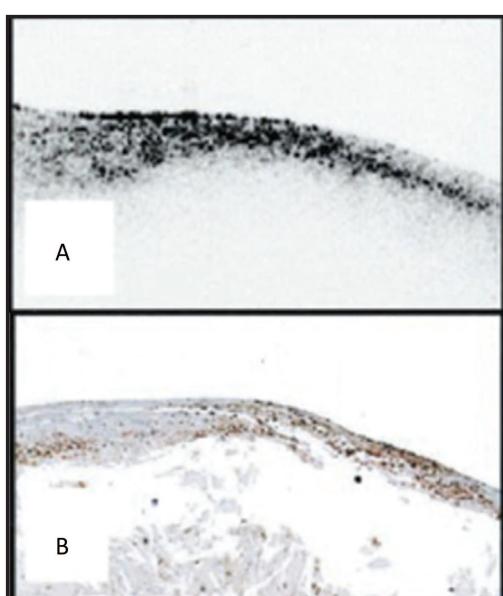


Figure 8: image en OCT d'une chape fibreuse siège d'une infiltration macrophagique (A) avec la correspondance histologique (B) (d'après tearney et al. ⁸³)

-Elastographie intravasculaire ou palpographie

L'élastographie étudie les propriétés mécaniques d'un tissu, en analysant, à partir de signaux de radiofréquence ses capacités de déformation sous différents niveaux de pression.^{85, 86} L'élastographie intravasculaire ou palpographie mesure le taux de déformation des plaques (Strain), qui est fonction du module d'élasticité (ou module de Young) de chacun de ses composants, à partir de faibles variations de pression intra-coronaire (3-4 mmHg) (Figure 9).

Les résultats préliminaires de la palpographie concernant l'analyse de la plaque coronaire apparaissent encourageants. Cette méthode a été validée comparativement à l'histo-pathologie à partir d'études ex-vivo sur des artères fémorales et coronaires humaines,⁸⁷ et in-vivo sur des modèles animaux⁸⁸ et sur un petit groupe de patients bénéficiant d'angioplasties coronaires.⁸⁹ Une étude in-vivo chez l'animal a retrouvé une sensibilité de 100% et une spécificité de 80% pour la détection des plaques vulnérables, définies en palpographie par une zone de Strain élevée recouverte d'une zone avec des valeurs de Strain basses.⁸⁸ Par ailleurs, il était noté, dans une étude ex-vivo sur des artères coronaires humaines, une forte corrélation entre les valeurs de Strain local et la présence d'une fine chape fibreuse, ainsi que la présence d'une infiltration macrophagique.⁹⁰ Enfin, des valeurs de Strain élevées étaient plus fréquemment retrouvées chez des sujets présentant un syndrome coronaire aigu comparativement à des patients en angor stable, avec également une corrélation statistiquement significative avec le niveau de CRP.⁹¹

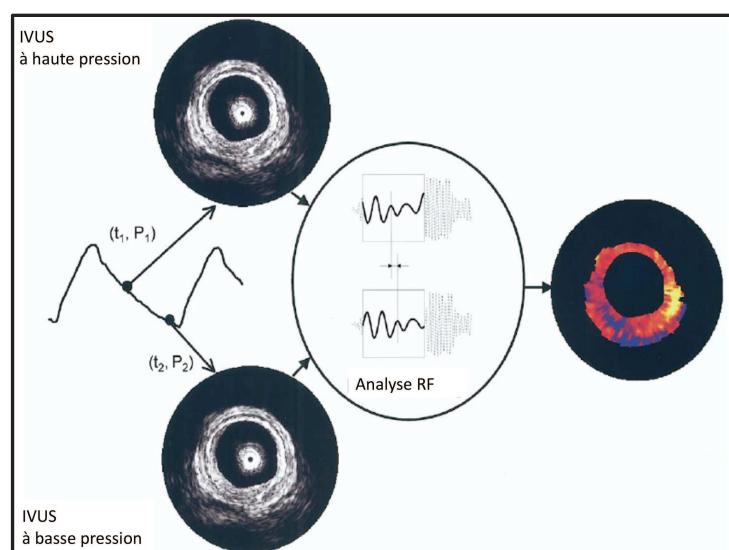


Figure 9: principes de l'élastographie intravasculaire.

Une image d'échographie endovasculaire est acquise à 2 niveaux de pressions différents. La déformation radiale (Strain) de la plaque est déterminée à partir de l'analyse des ondes ultra-sonores à haute fréquence et le résultat est rendu en codage couleur sur l'image d'échographie.

-L'angioscopie coronaire

L'angioscopie permet une visualisation directe de la lumière artérielle et de la face endoluminale de la paroi vasculaire. Les plaques lipidiques apparaissent classiquement en jaune.⁹² Il a été montré que la présence de plaques jaunes visualisées en angioscopie était un prédicteur de survenue d'événements coronariens (Hazard ratio : 1,23 ; 95%CI : 1,03-1,45 ; P=0,002).⁹³

-La thermographie

La thermographie repose sur l'hypothèse que l'inflammation de la plaque vulnérable produit de la chaleur, qui peut être mesurée à la surface de la plaque par un cathéter.⁹⁴

Des expérimentations ex-vivo sur des artères carotidiennes ont montré que la température de la plaque était corrélée avec la densité en macrophages et était inversement proportionnelle avec l'épaisseur de la chape fibreuse.⁹⁵ Chez l'homme, une différence de température de plaque de 1,5°C a été mise en évidence entre les plaques et des segments coronariens sains avec, par ailleurs, une corrélation entre la température et le remodelage positif des plaques évalué en IVUS.⁹⁶ L'écueil principal de cette technique est lié au flux sanguin qui refroidit la partie externe des plaques et rend moins fiable les mesures in vivo. Cette technique a désormais été abandonnée.⁹⁷

-L'IRM intravasculaire

La réalisation d'IRM intravasculaire est désormais envisageable en utilisant une séquence particulière ("Pulsed Field Gradient") qui calcule le coefficient de diffusion de l'eau dans les plaques (Figure 10). Le principe de base repose sur le fait que la diffusion de l'eau est plus faible dans les tissus lipidiques que dans les tissus fibreux. La résolution spatiale de l'IRM intra-vasculaire est de 100 µm.⁹⁸

Une étude préliminaire ex-vivo retrouve une bonne corrélation avec les données histologiques pour la mise en évidence de structures lipidiques. Par contre, l'IRM intra-vasculaire ne permet pas de différencier la plaque de la paroi artérielle normale ni les autres éléments non lipidiques entre eux.⁹⁹

-NIRS ("Spectroscopie dans le proche infra-rouge")

La NIRS est basée sur les capacités d'absorption et de diffusion de la lumière proche de l'infra-rouge, de différentes molécules organiques.¹⁰⁰

Quelques travaux préliminaires ont étudié les performances de cette technique pour l'analyse du contenu en lipides et en protides des plaques d'athérosclérose. Une étude ex-vivo sur des aortes humaines autopsiques a montré que la NIRS permettait de mettre en évidence les structures lipidiques, des fines chapes fibreuses et des cellules inflammatoires avec une sensibilité entre 77 et 90% et une spécificité entre 89 et 90%.¹⁰¹ Les données de l'étude SPECTACL (SPECTroscopic Assessment of Coronary Lipid) ont montré que la NIRS endocoronaire était faisable in-vivo chez l'homme malgré le flux sanguin coronaire et les mouvements cardiaques.¹⁰² Pour le reste, aucune donnée n'est actuellement disponible concernant les capacités de cette technique pour l'analyse de la plaque.

Technologies non invasives

-L'imagerie par résonnance magnétique :

L'IRM permet actuellement d'obtenir une caractérisation quantitative et qualitative précise des plaques d'athérosclérose au niveau d'artères de gros calibre et immobiles comme les artères carotides (Figure 10).

Les séquences T2 et T1 permettent de distinguer les plaques lipidiques et fibreuses sur des modèles animaux¹⁰³ et chez l'homme.¹⁰⁴ Il est également possible sur ces séquences de mesurer l'épaisseur de la chape fibreuse,¹⁰⁵ d'identifier une rupture de plaque¹⁰⁶ et une hémorragie intra-plaque.¹⁰⁷ Des séquences d'acquisitions alternatives, comme les séquences en gradient de diffusion ou après injection de gadofluorine ont été développées pour détecter la néoangiogénèse intra-plaque et l'infiltration inflammatoire.^{108, 109} De plus, différents agents de contraste spécifiques ont été développés afin de cibler des composants des plaques d'athérosclérose. L'inflammation de la plaque peut être détectée après l'injection de microparticules de fer supermagnétiques qui s'accumulent dans les macrophages.¹¹⁰ La néoangiogénèse peut-être visualisée avec des agents magnétiques spécifiques de protéines endothéliales comme les intégrines ou les VCAM-1 par exemple.^{111, 112}

L'IRM apparaît donc comme étant très performante pour analyser les parois des artères de gros calibres mais des améliorations technologiques seront nécessaires pour envisager l'accès aux artères coronaires, du fait de leurs plus petites tailles et de leurs mouvements quasi-permanents.

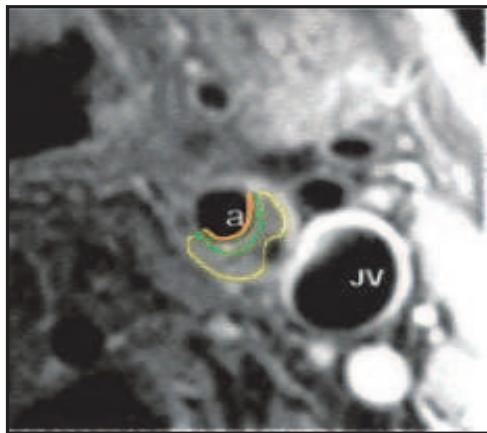


Figure 10: Visualisation d'une plaque d'athérosclérose carotidienne en IRM (séquence T1 après injection de Gadolinium) avec une fine chape fibreuse(en vert) recouvrant un centre lipido-nécrotique (en jaune) (d'après Cai et al.¹⁰⁵)

-Tomographie par émission de positons :

Le 18-Fluorodeoxyglucose (FDG) est actuellement le traceur radioactif le plus validé pour l'étude de l'inflammation de la plaque en TEP.¹¹³ Le 18-FDG se comporte comme le glucose pour l'absorption dans les cellules mais la présence de l'atome de Fluor bloque la poursuite de l'utilisation du glucose dans la glycolyse. Ainsi, il s'accumule dans les cellules, notamment les macrophages, après avoir été phosphorolysé en FDG-6 phosphate et peut donc être repéré par la TEP.

Des études sur des modèles expérimentaux d'athérosclérose¹¹⁴ et sur des artères carotides humaines¹¹⁵, ont montré que les zones de fortes concentrations en 18-FDG présentaient d'importantes accumulations de macrophages. Par ailleurs, le degré d'accumulation en FDG dans les plaques est corrélé à des marqueurs circulants d'inflammation comme les metaloprotéinases.¹¹⁶ Enfin, dans une série de patients atteints d'un cancer et soumis à une TEP, la fixation du 18-FDG dans des artères de gros calibres (artères iliaques, carotides et aorte) était corrélée à la survenue d'événements cardio-vasculaires.¹¹⁷

La limite actuelle de la TEP pour l'étude de la plaque coronaire est le bruit réalisé par la fixation du FDG dans le myocarde adjacent ainsi que sa résolution spatiale (3 mm).

I.D. Conclusions

Les plaques vulnérables présentent des caractéristiques morphologiques, cellulaires et fonctionnelles qui peuvent être accessibles à différentes modalités d'imagerie.

Dans notre travail de recherche, nous avons montré que le scanner coronaire ne permettait pas d'identifier certaines caractéristiques histologiques des plaques vulnérables. En effet, il n'est pas possible, avec les technologies actuelles de scanner, de distinguer les plaques lipidiques des plaques fibreuses, que ce soit à partir d'une analyse visuelle, ou à partir de la mesure de la densité intra-plaque. Par ailleurs, l'IVUS ne peut-être considéré comme une référence dans les études cliniques, du fait d'imprécisions des signaux ultrasonores pour la caractérisation des différents composants de la plaque. De manière générale, les validations des différentes méthodes d'imagerie de la plaque doivent probablement se faire comparativement à la seule référence actuelle, l'étude histo-pathologique.

Le but ultime de l'imagerie de la plaque est d'identifier les patients "vulnérables", afin de prédire la survenue des syndromes coronaires aigüs. Mais est-ce que le fait d'identifier précisément une plaque vulnérable, par quelque moyen que ce soit, permettra de prédire ces événements?¹¹⁸

Tout d'abord, la prévalence des plaques vulnérables chez un même patient est variable au cours du temps. Kubo et al. ont montré, sur des examens VH réalisés à 12 mois d'intervalle, que 75% des plaques classées comme vulnérables "guérissaient" et que d'autres apparaissaient.¹¹⁹ Par ailleurs, la capacité de prédiction des événements coronariens à partir des données d'imagerie de plaques semble aléatoire. Dans l'étude PROSPECT (The Providing Regional Observations to Study Predictors of Events in the Coronary Tree), les récidives après un syndrome coronaire aigu siégeaient au niveau de la même artère pour la moitié des cas et à un autre endroit de l'arbre coronaire pour l'autre moitié.⁷³

L'étude BioImage apportera peut-être des éléments de réponses. Il s'agit d'une étude prospective, observationnelle, actuellement en cours qui va évaluer l'apport de différentes techniques d'imagerie de la plaque pour l'estimation du risque cardiovasculaire chez des patients asymptomatiques.¹²⁰

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II.1. IRM cardiaque

"Effect of macroscopic-positive thrombus retrieval during primary percutaneous coronary intervention with thrombus aspiration on myocardial infarct size and microvascular obstruction."

Chopard R, Plastaras P, Jehl J, Janin S, Descotes Genon V, Seronde MF, Davani S, Kastler B, Schiele F, Meneveau N.

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II.1.A. Introduction

L'incidence des syndromes coronaires aigus avec sus-décalage du segment ST (ST-segment elevation Myocardial Infarction ou STEMI) est actuellement de 70 à 100 cas pour 100 000 habitants^{1, 2}, avec un taux de mortalité hospitalière d'environ 6% et de 12% à 1 an.³⁻⁵ L'angioplastie coronaire avec stenting est devenue le traitement de choix des STEMI⁶, avec une supériorité très nette en terme de bénéfices cliniques et de risques de survenue de complications, comparativement au traitement thrombolytique ou à l'angioplastie au ballon seul.^{7, 8} L'angioplastie coronaire, associée aux traitements anti-thrombotiques (anticoagulants et anti-agrégants plaquettaires), permet ainsi de restaurer un flux coronaire épicardique normal, évalué par le score TIMI (Thrombolysis In Myocardial Infarction), chez une majorité de patients. Cependant, il est noté dans environ 15 à 35% des cas, un échec de la reperfusion myocardique et ce malgré le traitement adéquat de la lésion coupable. Ce phénomène est appelé obstruction microvasculaire ou "no-reflow" et est associé à une plus grande taille d'infarctus, à une moins bonne fraction d'éjection ventriculaire gauche, à un taux plus important de récidive d'infarctus et de survenu d'épisodes d'insuffisance cardiaque.⁹⁻¹⁴ Le no-reflow est enfin associé à une mortalité plus élevée dans les suites d'un STEMI, de plus 75% à 1 mois⁹, plus 67% à 1 an¹⁵ et plus 50% à 5 ans.¹⁶

Obstruction microvasculaire ou no-reflow

Le no-reflow résulte de la combinaison de 4 processus physiopathologiques : (1) l'embolisation distale de thrombus ou de débris de la plaque d'athérosclérose responsable du STEMI (ces embolies ont pu être objectivées au cours d'angioplasties coronaires grâce à l'utilisation de dopplers endocoronaires¹⁷); (2) des lésions liées à l'ischémie avec des modifications de la morphologie des cellules endothéliales, des cellules myocardiques et de l'extravasation interstitielle d'erythrocytes, qui concourent à réduire la lumière des microcapillaires¹⁸; (3) des lésions liées à la reperfusion, avec l'activation des polynucléaires neutrophiles qui adhèrent à l'endothélium et libèrent des radicaux libres, des enzymes protéolytiques et des médiateurs pro-inflammatoires qui ont une toxicité directe pour les cellules myocardiques et endothéliales et favorisent la vasoconstriction^{19, 20}; (4) enfin, la susceptibilité individuelle aux lésions microvasculaires. Il a dans ce cadre été montré une moins bonne réponse à la reperfusion microvasculaire chez les sujets diabétiques et en cas d'hypercholestérolémie chez l'animal.^{21, 22} A noter que le no-reflow est un phénomène dynamique au cours du temps. Dans une étude en échographie de contraste, le no-reflow

persistait à un mois chez 40% des patients, avec un impact en termes de fonction systolique ventriculaire gauche comparativement aux patients chez qui le no-reflow avait disparu.²³

Thrombo-aspiration

C'est dans le but d'améliorer la reperfusion myocardique, en essayant de réduire les phénomènes d'embolisation distale de thrombus et de débris de plaques, que les systèmes de thrombo-aspiration, à la fois non manuels et manuels, ont été développés. En ce qui concerne les thrombo-aspirations non manuelles, plusieurs appareils sont actuellement disponibles. L'Angiojet® (Medrad, Warrendale, Pennsylvania, USA) produit une pression négative à l'extrémité du cathéter d'aspiration semblant favoriser l'aspiration du thrombus, qui est ensuite fragmenté par une perfusion de sérum salé. Les résultats de ce système restent controversés. Dans l'étude AiMI, l'utilisation de l'Angiojet® n'a pas permis de réduire le critère primaire, à savoir la taille de l'infarctus à 30 jours mesuré en scintigraphie, comparativement à l'angioplastie seule et l'un des critères secondaires, événements cardiovasculaires majeurs (MACE), était augmenté dans le groupe thrombo-aspiration (6,7 vs. 1,7% ; P =0,01)²⁴. Par contre, dans l'essai JETSTENT, les critères primaires, régression du segment ST et taille d'infarctus, n'étaient pas atteints mais le taux de MACE à 6 et 12 mois étaient significativement plus bas en cas de thrombo-aspiration.²⁵ Le système X-sizer® (eV3, White Bear Lake, Minnesota, USA) propose quant à lui une hélice qui coupe le thrombus au moment de l'aspiration. L'efficacité de ce dispositif a été testée dans 3 études randomisées qui ont montré une amélioration de la régression du segment ST, du flux TIMI et de l'incidence du no-reflow comparativement à l'angioplastie seule, mais sans bénéfice clinique à 1 et 6 mois.²⁶⁻²⁸ Trois autres systèmes, le Ringaspirator® (eV3, White Bear Lake, Minnesota, USA), le TVAC (Nipro, Maharashtra, Japan) et le RESCU (Boston Scientific, Natick, Massachusetts, USA), proposent la réalisation de thrombo-aspirations mécaniques mais sans fragmentation du thrombus. Leurs performances semblent également mitigées.²⁹⁻³¹ Finalement, une méta-analyse publiée récemment n'a pas mis en évidence de bénéfice clinique à l'utilisation de ces dispositifs de thrombo-aspiration non manuels comparativement à l'angioplastie coronaire conventionnelle avec même un taux de mortalité à 30 jours légèrement supérieur en cas de thrombo-aspiration non manuelle (2.3% vs 1.9% respectivement ; OR [95% CI]=1.27 [0.72-2.26], p=0,41).³²

Les dispositifs de thrombo-aspiration manuels reposent sur des principes beaucoup plus simples, l'aspiration du thrombus se faisant grâce à une pression négative fournie par une seringue. De nombreux systèmes existent et ils ne diffèrent entre eux, pratiquement, que par le diamètre de la lumière interne d'aspiration, un élément essentiel dans la capacité d'aspiration

du thrombus.³³ L'efficacité de ces cathéters de thrombo-aspiration manuels apparaît plus importante que celle des systèmes d'aspiration non manuels avec plusieurs études positives en termes de bénéfice clinique. L'étude TAPAS (Thrombus Aspiration during Percutaneus coronary intervention in Acute myocardial infarction Study) est la principale.³⁴ Il s'agit d'une étude monocentrique qui a inclus 1071 patients, randomisés 1:1 entre thrombo-aspiration systématique et angioplastie conventionnelle. Les critères d'inclusion étaient les STEMI de moins de 12 heures d'évolution, quels que soient la charge thrombotique ou le flux TIMI objectivé en angiographie. La thrombo-aspiration était réalisée avec le cathéter Export® (Mercktronic, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA). Les résultats montrent un taux de décès toutes causes à 1 an inférieur dans le groupe thrombo-aspiration comparativement au groupe angioplastie seule (3,6 vs. 6,7% ; HR 1,93 ; 95%CI 1,11-3,37 ; P =0,20). Le critère combiné décès cardiovasculaire ou réinfarctus était également diminué en cas de thrombo-aspiration (5,6 vs. 9,9 % ; HR 1,81; 95%CI 1,16-2,84; P =0,009) (Figure 1).

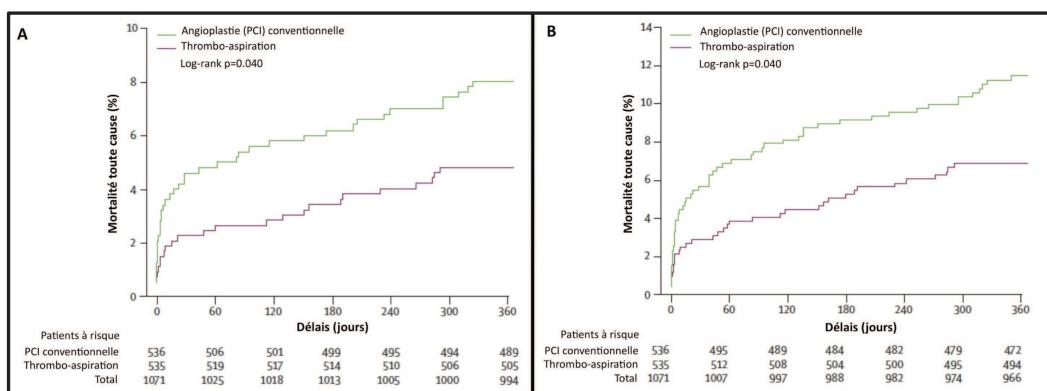


Figure 1: courbes Kaplan-Meier pour les décès toute cause (A) et le critère combiné décès cardiovasculaire, réinfarctus (B) à 1 an entre les groupes thrombo-aspiration et angioplastie conventionnelle dans l'étude TAPAS³³.

D'autres études randomisées de plus petite taille (de 99 à 175 patients)³⁵⁻³⁸ ainsi que deux méta-analyses^{39, 40} ont également montré une supériorité de la thrombo-aspiration sur l'angioplastie seule dans le traitement des STEMI, avec une réduction des événements cardiovasculaires et un meilleur résultat en termes de régression du segment ST, du score angiographique Blush et de l'incidence du no-reflow. L'ensemble de ces résultats a fait apparaître la thrombo-aspiration comme l'un des traitements possibles à la phase aiguë des STEMI avec un niveau de recommandation de classe IIa et un niveau d'évidence B dans les dernières recommandations de l'ESC.⁴¹ Le bénéfice de la thrombo-aspiration a cependant récemment été remis en cause dans une étude multicentrique, randomisée.⁴² Nous y reviendrons dans le chapitre "II.1.C. Mise à jour". A noter, enfin, que dans l'ensemble de ces études sur la thrombo-aspiration, l'efficacité de celle-

ci était jugée indépendamment de sa capacité à aspirer effectivement du matériel athéro-thrombotique.

Méthodes d'évaluation du no-reflow

L'obstruction microvasculaire ou no-reflow ainsi que l'efficacité des systèmes de thrombo-aspiration à la phase aigüe des STEMI peuvent être appréciées au moyen de différents paramètres:

-L'angiographie coronaire :

Le no-reflow peut être évalué à la fin de l'angioplastie, lors des dernières incidences angiographiques, par les scores TIMI et de Blush (ou Myocardial Blush Grade ; MBG). Le score TIMI correspond au degré d'opacification du vaisseau coronaire en aval de la lésion ou de l'occlusion et est classé en 4 grades, du grade 0, correspondant à l'absence d'opacification, au grade TIMI 3 avec une opacification complète de l'artère coupable se faisant avec une vitesse normale comparativement aux artères coronaires adjacentes.⁴³ L'évaluation du score TIMI peut se faire plus précisément en calculant le nombre d'images nécessaires pour visualiser l'opacification d'aval du segment artériel ("TIMI frame count").⁴⁴ La mise en évidence d'un flux TIMI entre 0 et 2 est prédictive de l'existence d'un no-reflow mais celui-ci est également présent dans une grande proportion de patients avec un flux TIMI 3 en fin de procédure avec une artère épicardique bien reperméabilisée. La sensibilité du score TIMI pour la détection du no-reflow est donc plutôt faible. Le second score angiographique est le Blush, qui évalue le degré et la vitesse d'opacification du tissu myocardique en aval de l'artère coupable. Le score de Blush est également classé en 4 grades de 0 à 3. Il a été montré une forte corrélation entre ces différents grades et les enzymes cardiaques, la fraction d'éjection ventriculaire gauche et le taux de mortalité à 1 an.⁴⁵ Par ailleurs, dans cette étude ayant inclus 777 patients, un blush 0-1 a été constaté chez 50% des patients présentant un flux TIMI 3.

-L'électrocardiogramme (ECG) :

L'ECG permet d'analyser le degré de régression du sus-décalage du segment ST (STR), exprimé en pourcentage, 90 minutes après l'angioplastie coronaire. Une valeur de réduction du STR de 70% est en faveur d'un succès de la reperfusion myocardique et représente un critère indépendant de mortalité après un STEMI.⁴⁶

Les scores TIMI et Blush ainsi que l'ECG s'obtiennent facilement mais ils ne permettent pas d'évaluer directement la reperfusion myocardique. Pour ce faire, deux techniques sont actuellement disponibles, l'échocardiographie de contraste et l'IRM.

-Echocardiographie de contraste myocardique:

L'échocardiographie de contraste permet d'objectiver, après injection périphérique de microbulles, l'absence de fixation de celles-ci au niveau des zones myocardiques qui sont le siège d'une obstruction microvasculaire. Dans l'étude AMICI, l'extension du no-reflow, évaluée par cette technique, était le meilleur prédicteur d'un mauvais remodelage ventriculaire après un STEMI, supérieur au STR et au Blush, chez les patients présentant un flux TIMI 3 en fin de procédure.²³

-L'IRM cardiaque :

L'IRM cardiaque représente actuellement la méthode de référence pour l'étude du no-reflow et permet également d'évaluer directement la taille de l'infarctus.^{47, 48} Le no-reflow est visualisé comme un hypo-signal après injection de gadolinium sur les séquences de premier passage et surtout sur les séquences tardives (entre 3 et 15 minutes) en T1 avec inversion récupération.⁴⁹ Cet hypo-signal est localisé au niveau du sous-endocarde, au sein d'une zone d'hyper-signal correspondant à la nécrose myocardique plus ou moins associée à de l'œdème (Figure 2). Des études animales ont validé précisément ces constatations.^{50, 51} La présence et l'extension d'un no-reflow en IRM sont liées de manière indépendante à un remodelage ventriculaire négatif^{52, 53} et à la survenue d'événements cardiovasculaires majeurs.^{52, 54, 55} Par ailleurs, la taille de l'infarctus est plus précisément évaluée à distance de l'épisode aigu (3 à 6 mois)⁵⁶, une fois les phénomènes d'œdème et de sidération disparus, et est très bien corrélée au niveau de troponine⁵⁷, à la fraction d'éjection⁵⁸ et à la survenue de MACE.^{48, 59}



Figure 2: zone de no-reflow (flèche) apparaissant en hypo-signal au sein d'une zone d'hyper-signal, correspondant à l'infarctus, dans les suites d'un STEMI antérieur

L'IRM est également un examen très performant pour l'estimation des volumes et des masses ventriculaires ainsi que pour l'analyse des fonctions systoliques globales et segmentaires du ventricule gauche et du ventricule droit.⁶⁰ Cela permet notamment d'apprécier le remodelage ventriculaire, défini par la variation des volumes télé-diastoliques VG entre la phase aiguë et le moyen terme, ainsi que l'évolution de la fonction systolique dans les suites d'un STEMI.⁶¹ Ainsi, l'ensemble de ces paramètres analysables en IRM font de cet examen un outil très intéressant pour les études cliniques concernant les STEMI.⁴⁸

II.1.B. Travail de recherche

Effect of macroscopic-positive thrombus retrieval during primary percutaneous coronary intervention with thrombus aspiration on myocardial infarct size and microvascular obstruction

Les paramètres IRM ont été utilisés comme critères de jugement dans 2 études ayant évaluées l'intérêt de la thrombo-aspiration, avec des résultats discordants. Sardella et al. ont retrouvé, dans une étude randomisée incluant 75 STEMI antérieurs (EXPIRA; Thrombectomy With Export Catheter in Infarct-Related Artery During Primary Percutaneous Coronary Intervention), une réduction de la taille du no-reflow à la phase aiguë ($P < 0,01$) ainsi qu'une réduction de la taille de l'infarctus finale, calculé à 3 mois ($P < 0,001$).⁶² Par contre, l'étude INFUSE-AMI a inclus 452 patients, randomisés en 4 groupes, pour recevoir soit un anti-gpIIbIIIa (abciximab) ou un placebo, soit de la thrombo-aspiration ou une angioplastie conventionnelle. A 30 jours, le critère primaire, taille de l'infarctus, était significativement diminué chez les patients recevant de l'abciximab comparativement au placebo (15,1% dans le groupe abciximab contre 17,9% dans le groupe angioplastie seule ; $P = 0,03$), alors que la taille de l'infarctus était identique entre les patients randomisés thrombo-aspiration ou angioplastie conventionnelle (17,0% dans le groupe thrombo-aspiration contre 17,3% dans le groupe angioplastie conventionnelle ; $P = 0,51$).⁶³

De plus, comme nous l'avons déjà indiqué, ces 2 études, comme toutes celles publiées sur la thrombo-aspiration (à l'exception d'une⁶⁴) ont évalué cette technique indépendamment du fait que du thrombus ait ou non, réellement, pu être aspiré. Nous savions depuis l'étude TAPAS que du matériel thrombotique peut être récupéré dans 73% des cas en cas d'analyse histologique et dans 53% des cas visuellement⁶⁵ mais aucune donnée n'était disponible concernant l'intérêt d'extraire effectivement du thrombus, qui est un indice facilement évaluable en salle de cathétérisme.

Dans ce travail de recherche, nos objectifs ont donc été de déterminer si le fait d'avoir une thrombo-aspiration positive visuellement avait une influence après un STEMI, sur la taille du no-reflow et la taille de l'infarctus, calculées en IRM (critères primaires).

II.1.B.a. Matériels et méthodes

Notre étude était une étude monocentrique qui a inclus, entre Janvier 2010 et Juillet 2011, 88 patients. Les critères d'inclusion étaient un premier épisode de STEMI datant de moins de 12 heures, avec un diamètre de l'artère coupable $\geq 2,5$ mm et un thrombus score ≥ 3 (taille du

thrombus >0,5 fois le diamètre normal de l'artère).⁶⁶ Les critères d'exclusion étaient des antécédents de pathologie cardiaque, un échec de passage du cathéter de thrombo-aspiration, une atteinte du tronc commun, un choc cardiogénique, un traitement thrombolytique avant l'angioplastie, et une contre-indication à l'IRM. Les sujets diabétiques, qui présentent une perturbation de la circulation microvasculaire, étaient également exclus.⁶⁷ Le caractère positif ou non de la thrombo-aspiration était jugé à l'œil nu. Tous les patients ont bénéficié d'une IRM dans les jours suivant l'épisode coronarien et 6 mois plus tard.

II.1.B.b Résultats

Trente-huit patients (43%) présentaient une thrombo-aspiration positive (TA+) et 50 (57%) une thrombo-aspiration négative (TA-). Les deux groupes étaient comparables pour l'âge, le sexe, l'exposition aux facteurs de risque cardio-vasculaire et le délai de prise en charge du STEMI. Le taux de succès de la revascularisation était identique entre les deux groupes, tout comme le taux d'utilisation d'anti-thrombotiques, d'anticoagulants et le taux de directs stentings. Deux paramètres ont été retrouvés comme indépendamment liés, en analyse multivariée, à l'extraction effective de thrombus : l'artère coronaire droite comme artère coupable (OR : 4,11 ; 95%CI : 1,45-11,6 ; P =0,007) et le diamètre de référence de l'artère coupable (OR : 1,52 ; 95%CI : 0,94-2,85 ; P =0,05).

L'analyse des données IRM a montré que les patients du groupe TA+ avaient une taille de no-reflow précoce (évalué à 3 min post gadolinium) et tardif (à 15 min post gadolinium) significativement plus basse comparativement aux patients du groupe TA- (P =0,003 et P =0,006, respectivement). De plus la taille de l'infarctus évaluée à la phase aiguë, ainsi que la taille finale de l'infarctus à 6 mois étaient diminuées en cas de thrombo-aspiration positive (P =0,004 et P =0,002, respectivement) (Figure 3). Ces réductions de taille de no-reflow et d'infarctus étaient observées aussi bien dans les infarctus antérieurs que dans les infarctus d'autres localisations. Par ailleurs, une thrombo-aspiration positive était, avec la taille de l'infarctus à la phase aiguë et la taille du no-reflow tardif, un facteur indépendant significativement lié à la taille finale de l'infarctus (OR : 0,34 ; 95%CI : 0,03-0,71 ; P =0,01). Par contre, aucune différence n'a été retrouvée, entre les 2 groupes, en ce qui concerne le taux de régression du segment ST, le score de Blush et le remodelage ventriculaire.

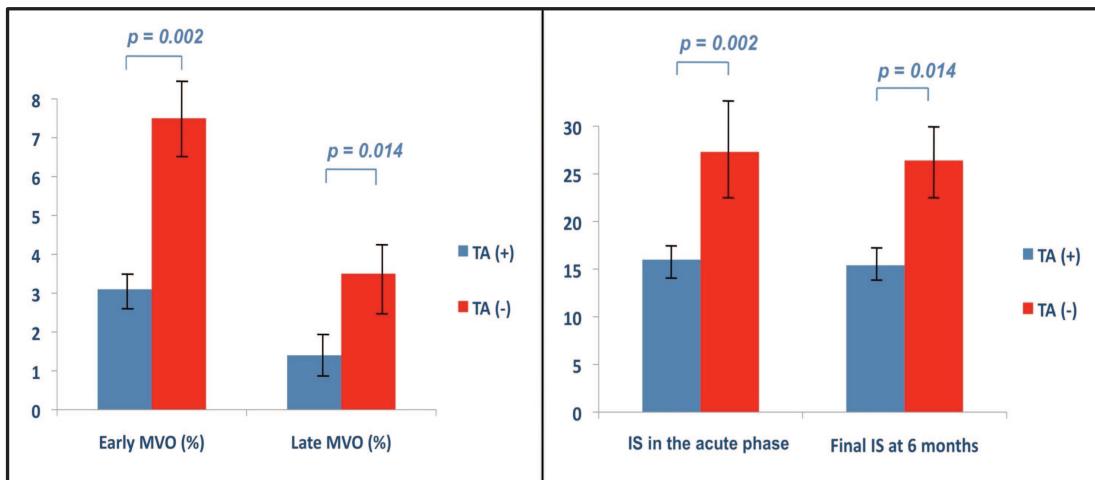


Figure 3: taille du no-reflow (MVO) (A) et de l'infarctus (IS) (B) entre le groupe de patients avec une thrombo-aspiration positive (TA+) et celui avec une thrombo-aspiration négative (TA-)

II.1.B.c. Conclusions

En conclusion, notre travail a montré que le fait d'extraire du thrombus macroscopiquement visible à la phase aigüe des STEMI permettait d'améliorer la reperfusion myocardique, objectivée par une nette réduction de la taille du no-reflow et de l'infarctus en IRM. L'extraction effective de thrombus représente, par ailleurs, un puissant facteur relié à la taille finale de l'infarctus.

Le tiré-à-part de la publication de ce travail dans *l'American Journal of Cardiology* (*Am J Cardiol*. 2013 Jan 15;111(2):159-65.) est fourni ci-après. Cette étude a fait l'objet d'une communication orale au congrès de l '*American Heart Association* en 2012.

Effect of Macroscopic-Positive Thrombus Retrieval During Primary Percutaneous Coronary Intervention With Thrombus Aspiration on Myocardial Infarct Size and Microvascular Obstruction

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Adjunctive thrombus aspiration (TA) during primary percutaneous coronary intervention improves myocardial perfusion and survival; however, the effect of effective thrombus retrieval remains unclear. We evaluated whether macroscopic-positive TA in patients with ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction would reduce the infarct size (IS) and microvascular obstruction (MVO), as assessed by contrast-enhanced magnetic resonance imaging. A total of 88 patients with ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction were prospectively recruited and assigned to the TA-positive group ($n = 38$) or TA-negative group ($n = 50$) according to whether macroscopic aspirate thrombus was visible to the naked eye. The primary end points were the extent of early and late MVO as assessed by contrast-enhanced magnetic resonance imaging performed during in-hospital stay and IS evaluated in the acute phase and at 6 months of follow-up. The incidence of early and late MVO and IS in the acute phase was lower in the TA-positive group than in the TA-negative group (early MVO $3.8 \pm 1.1\%$ vs $7.6 \pm 2.1\%$, respectively, $p = 0.003$; late MVO $2.1 \pm 0.9\%$ vs $5.4 \pm 2.9\%$, $p = 0.006$; and IS $14.9 \pm 8.7\%$ vs $28.2 \pm 15.8\%$, $p = 0.004$). At the 6-month contrast-enhanced magnetic resonance imaging study, the final IS was significantly lower in the TA-positive group ($12.0 \pm 8.3\%$ vs $22.3 \pm 14.3\%$, respectively) than in the TA-negative group ($p = 0.002$). After multivariate adjustment, macroscopic-positive TA represented an independent predictor of final IS (odds ratio 0.34 , 95% confidence interval 0.03 to 0.71 , $p = 0.01$). In conclusion, effective macroscopic thrombus retrieval before stenting during percutaneous coronary intervention for ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction is associated with an improvement in myocardial reperfusion, as documented by a clear reduction in the MVO extent and IS. © 2013 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. (Am J Cardiol 2013;111:159–165)

Primary percutaneous coronary intervention has emerged as the preferred treatment of acute ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI).¹ However, despite adequate epicardial reperfusion in the infarct-related artery, spontaneous or primary percutaneous coronary intervention-induced embolization of atherothrombotic material from the culprit lesion into the distal vasculature can occur and can induce persistent impairment of microvascular blood flow in a significant proportion of patients.² Microvascular dysfunction has been reported to be associated with larger infarct size (IS), reduced recovery of ventricular function, and increased mortality.^{2,3} To date, scientific evidence has been presented to suggest that adjunctive manual thrombus aspiration (TA) during primary percutaneous coronary intervention improves myocardial reperfusion^{4–6} and

decreases mortality in patients with STEMI,^{7–10} potentially by reducing microvascular damage. In the Thrombus Aspiration during Percutaneous coronary intervention in Acute myocardial infarction Study (TAPAS), the largest randomized study of a thrombectomy device, macroscopic aspirate thrombotic material was observed in $>1/2$ of the cases.⁵ However, the effect of effective thrombus retrieval on myocardial reperfusion remains poorly described.¹¹ Therefore, we performed a prospective study to evaluate whether positive macroscopic TA in patients with STEMI would reduce the IS and microvascular obstruction (MVO), as assessed by contrast-enhanced magnetic resonance imaging (CE-MRI).

Methods

Patients aged <75 years who had undergone primary percutaneous coronary intervention with manual TA for a first STEMI were recruited. The inclusion criteria were as follows: a diagnosis of STEMI with evidence of ischemic chest pain for >30 minutes and new ST-segment elevation of ≥ 2 mm in ≥ 2 contiguous electrocardiographic leads within 12 hours of symptom onset,¹² infarct-related artery ≥ 2.5 mm in diameter, and angiographically identifiable thrombus with a thrombus

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See page 164 for disclosure information.

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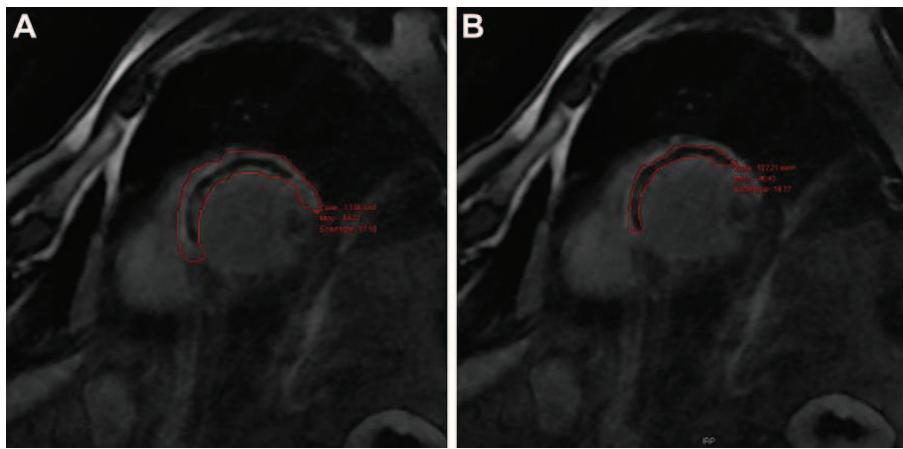


Figure 1. CE-MRI (15 minutes after contrast injection) scans from patient with acute anteroseptal myocardial infarction. IS was quantified by manual planimetry of hyperenhancement myocardium (A, red contour). For all slices, the absolute mass in grams of infarcted myocardium was measured according to the following formula: infarct mass (g) = Σ hyperenhanced area (cm^2) \times slice thickness (cm) \times myocardial specific density (1.05 g/ cm^3). Relative IS (percentage) was obtained by the ratio of infarct absolute mass (g)/left ventricular myocardial mass. The microvascular obstruction (B, red contour; hypoenhanced myocardium surrounded by hyperenhanced myocardium) was manually quantified using the same method.

Table 1
Baseline clinical and pre-procedural angiographic characteristics

Variable	Total (n = 88)	TA		p Value
		No (n = 50)	Yes (n = 38)	
Age (yrs)	55 ± 10	56 ± 11	54 ± 10	0.459
Men	73 (83%)	45 (90%)	28 (74%)	0.098
Hypertension	29 (33%)	16 (32%)	13 (34%)	0.176
Diabetes mellitus	6 (7%)	3 (6%)	3 (8%)	0.305
Smokers	50 (56%)	34 (68%)	26 (68%)	0.182
Obesity*	8 (9%)	2 (4%)	6 (15%)	0.071
Dyslipidemia†	31 (35%)	18 (36%)	13 (34%)	0.175
Total ischemic time (min)	349 ± 270	325 ± 227	412 ± 364	0.216
Systolic blood pressure (mm Hg)	122 ± 23	121 ± 23	124 ± 23	0.524
Diastolic blood pressure (mm Hg)	77 ± 14	75 ± 14	79 ± 14	0.131
Diseased coronary arteries (n)				
1	58 (66%)	31 (62%)	27 (71%)	0.496
2	23 (26%)	14 (28%)	9 (23%)	0.807
3	7 (8%)	5 (10%)	2 (5%)	0.457
Infarct-related coronary artery				
Left anterior descending artery	30 (34%)	17 (34%)	13 (34%)	0.179
Left circumflex artery	13 (15%)	11 (22%)	2 (5%)	0.035
Right	34 (39%)	13 (26%)	21 (55%)	0.007
Other	11 (12%)	9 (18%)	2 (5%)	0.055
Preprocedural Thrombolysis In Myocardial Infarction flow grade				
0 or 1	59 (67%)	29 (58%)	30 (79%)	0.062
2	7 (8%)	3 (6%)	4 (10%)	0.227
3	22 (25%)	18 (36%)	4 (10%)	0.004
Bifurcation				
Lesion length (mm)	24 ± 11	12 ± 5	12 ± 6	0.610
Vessel reference diameter (mm)	3.1 ± 0.4	2.9 ± 0.4	3.1 ± 0.3	0.003
Preprocedural minimum lumen diameter (mm)	0.26 ± 0.4	0.37 ± 0.4	0.19 ± 0.4	0.060
Preprocedural thrombus score				
3	29 (33%)	17 (34%)	12 (31%)	0.068
4	28 (32%)	15 (30%)	13 (34%)	0.457
5	31 (35%)	18 (36%)	13 (34%)	0.259

Data are presented as mean ± SD or n (%).

* Defined as body mass index $\geq 30 \text{ kg/m}^2$.

† Receiving medical treatment.

score of ≥ 3 .¹³ The exclusion criteria were a history of cardiac disease, technical failure of nontraumatic passage of an aspiration catheter owing to severe tortuosity and/or

calcification, left main disease, cardiogenic shock, thrombolytic therapy before percutaneous coronary intervention, and a contraindication to CE-MRI. We also excluded patients with

Table 2
Postprocedural angiographic characteristics

Variable	Total (n = 88)	TA		p Value
		No (n = 50)	Yes (n = 38)	
Duration of fluoroscopy (min)	13 ± 1	11 ± 7	17 ± 19	0.069
Administration of glycoprotein IIb/IIIa inhibitor	53 (60%)	32 (64%)	19 (55%)	0.359
Anticoagulant therapy (%)				
Unfractionated heparin	58 (72%)	29 (58%)	19 (50%)	0.756
Low-molecular-weight heparin	13 (14%)	6 (12%)	7 (18%)	0.458
Bivalirudin	17 (19%)	10 (12%)	7 (29%)	0.058
“Direct” stenting	54 (61%)	29 (59%)	25 (65%)	0.512
Stent type				
Bare metal stent	67 (76%)	36 (72%)	31 (82%)	0.325
Drug-eluting stent	8 (9%)	4 (8%)	4 (10%)	0.721
Minimum lumen diameter after stenting (mm)	2.9 ± 0.4	2.8 ± 0.4	3.0 ± 0.4	0.003
Postprocedural Thrombolysis In Myocardial Infarction flow grade				
0 or 1	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	2 (5%)	0.183
2	3 (3%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	0.424
3	83 (93%)	48 (96%)	35 (92%)	0.648
Post-stenting myocardial blush grade				
0 or 1	6 (7%)	2 (4%)	4 (13%)	0.391
≥2	82 (95%)	48 (96%)	34 (89%)	0.721
Intraprocedural complications				
Side branch occlusion	3 (3%)	3 (6%)	0 (0%)	0.255
Flow-limiting dissection	2 (2%)	1 (2%)	1 (3%)	1.000
Distal embolization	6 (7%)	4 (8%)	2 (5%)	0.694
No-reflow	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	2 (5%)	0.183
Emergency coronary artery bypass grafting	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1.000
≥1 Previous criteria	12 (14%)	7 (14%)	5 (13%)	0.856
90-minute ST-segment resolution >70%	74 (84%)	40 (80%)	34 (89%)	0.257
Cardiac troponin peak (ng/ml)	99 ± 82	92 ± 76	98 ± 90	0.742

Table 3
Contrast-enhanced magnetic resonance imaging results

Variable	Acute Phase TA			6-Mo Follow-up TA		
	No (n = 50)	Yes (n = 38)	p Value	No (n = 50)	Yes (n = 38)	p Value
Interval to scan (days)			0.657			0.423
Median	5.2	5.4		195	188	
Range	3–7	3–8		171–215	166–204	
Left ventricular end-diastolic volume (ml)	114 ± 27	108 ± 22	0.332	115 ± 27	108 ± 25	0.159
Left ventricular end-systolic volume (ml)	55 ± 22	58 ± 15	0.460	55 ± 25	54 ± 17	0.750
Change in left ventricular end-diastolic volume (%)	—	—	—	-0.3 ± 16	-3.7 ± 16	0.328
Change in left ventricular end systolic volume (>20%)	—	—	—	4 (8.0)	2 (5.2)	0.298
Left ventricular mass (g)	13 ± 2	144 ± 35	0.103	131 ± 19	141 ± 36	0.201
Left ventricular ejection fraction	52 ± 11%	50 ± 10%	0.362	52 ± 12%	49 ± 10%	0.301
Infarct size transmurality	29 (58%)	18 (47%)	0.423	28 (56%)	18 (47%)	0.556
Infarct size (g)	37 ± 21	22 ± 11	0.001	29 ± 19	17 ± 10	0.005
Infarct size (%)	28 ± 15	15 ± 9	0.004	22 ± 14	12 ± 8	0.002
Microvascular obstruction	31 (62%)	19 (50%)	0.284	—	—	—
Early microvascular obstruction (g)	10.3 ± 3.7	5.6 ± 3.1	0.007	—	—	—
Early microvascular obstruction	7.6 ± 2.1%	3.8 ± 1.1%	0.003	—	—	—
Late microvascular obstruction (g)	5.4 ± 2.9	2.1 ± 0.9	0.007	—	—	—
Late microvascular obstruction	5.4 ± 2.9%	2.1 ± 0.6%	0.006	—	—	—

Data are presented as mean ± SD, n (%).

Change in left ventricular end-diastolic volume = (left ventricular end-diastolic volume – left ventricular end-systolic volume)/left ventricular end-diastolic volume.

diabetes mellitus to limit microvascular dysfunction related to glycemic dysregulation.¹⁴ The local ethics committee approved the study protocol, and all enrolled patients provided informed consent.

All interventions were performed according to the current guidelines.¹ TA was performed with ≥2 passages across the lesion with a 6F Export Aspiration Catheter (Medtronic Vascular, Santa Rosa, California) before balloon dilation

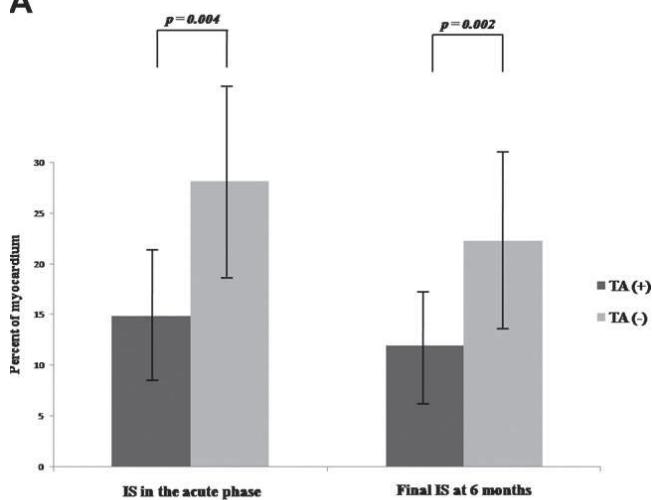
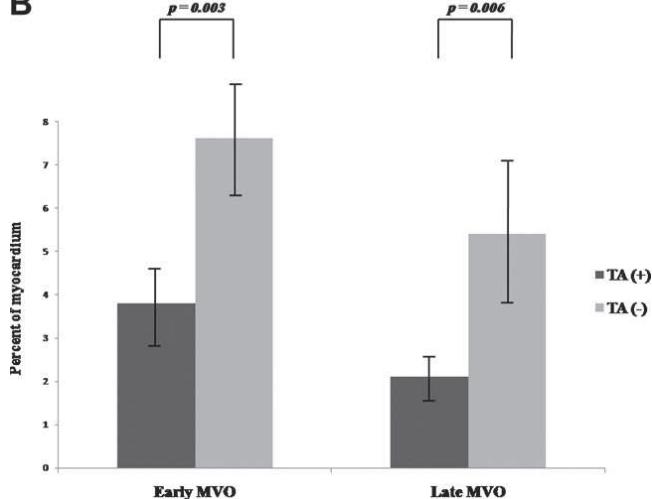
A**B**

Figure 2. IS (A) and MVO (B) in group with effective (TA-positive) and noneffective (TA-negative) thrombus aspiration.

and/or stent implantation. The patients were divided into 2 groups. TA was considered effective if macroscopic aspirate thrombus was visible to the naked eye in the dedicated filter basket, and patients were assigned to the TA-positive group. However, if the TA procedure did not retrieve visible atherothrombotic material, the patients were assigned to the TA-negative group. The pre- and postprimary percutaneous coronary intervention Thrombolysis In Myocardial Infarction flow, myocardial blush grade, and thrombus score were estimated visually by 1 experienced observer (R.C.), as previously described.^{13,15} All patients underwent 12-lead electrocardiography at baseline and 90 minutes after revascularization. ST-segment resolution was also measured.¹⁶ Standard therapy was prescribed after primary percutaneous coronary intervention according to current guidelines.¹

All CE-MRI studies were conducted at 3.0 field strength (Signa HD, General Electric Healthcare, Milwaukee, Wisconsin) and performed in the acute phase and repeated at 6 months. Left ventricular function was assessed by electrocardiographic-gated cine steady-state free precession breath-hold sequences in the 2-chamber and 4-chamber views and

the short cardiac axis from the base to the apex (30 phases/cardiac cycle, repetition time 3.5 ms, echo time 1.2 ms, flip angle 45°, typical voxel size 1.92 × 1.25 × 8.0 mm).

CE-MRI was performed at 3 and 15 minutes with a breath-hold electrocardiographic-gated T₁-weighted sequence after the injection of a bolus of gadolinium (Dota-Gd, Guerbet, Roissy, France) at a single dose of 0.1 mmol/kg (Echo time = minimum full, field of view = 440 mm, inversion time = optimized to obtain an optimal myocardial nulling, matrix 256 × 224, interpolated 256 × 256, slice thickness = 8 mm, gap, 1 mm). The number and position of slices were the same as used for functional imaging.

Image analysis was performed in a blinded fashion by 2 operators (R.C., P.P.) using an off-line dedicated workstation (General Electric Healthcare, Milwaukee, Wisconsin). The left ventricular ejection fraction, end-diastolic and end-systolic volumes, and mass were calculated from the steady-state free precession short-axis views. The left ventricular volume changes were assessed as the percentage of increase or decrease in the left ventricular end-diastolic volume from the baseline to 6-month follow-up examination in each patient (percentage of change in left ventricular end-diastolic volume). Left ventricular remodeling was defined as an increase in the percentage of change in the end-diastolic volume >20%.¹⁷ Early and late MVO was assessed in the initial CE-MRI study performed during the in-hospital stay. IS was assessed from the same initial CE-MRI and at 6 months of follow-up. IS and MVO (if present) were manually traced from the CE-MRI short-axis images.¹⁸ Myocardial regions were considered infarcted if the IS signal intensity was >2 SDs above the remote myocardium. The MVO was defined as a dark zone within the infarcted segments, usually located in the subendocardium (Figure 1). Early MVO was estimated in the sequences at 3 minutes, as previously described,¹⁹ and late MVO at 15 minutes. MVO and IS are expressed in grams (assuming 1.05 g/ml as the specific gravity of the myocardium) and as a percentage of the left ventricular mass.

The primary end points were the relation between effective TA and the presence and extent of early and late MVO at the acute phase and IS as evaluated at the acute phase and at 6 months. The secondary end points were the association between positive TA and myocardial blush grade, 90-minute ST-segment resolution, and left ventricular remodeling.

Quantitative variables are presented as the mean ± SD and were analyzed using a 2-tailed Student's *t* test or Mann-Whitney *U* test for non-normally distributed variables. Categorical variables are expressed as the number and percentage and were compared using the chi-square test or Fisher's exact test. The sample size was calculated as follows: on the basis of an expected absolute difference between groups of 5% in the final IS, with a SD of 3%, at an α risk of 5% and a β risk of 10%, 38 patients were needed to be enrolled in each group. Univariate and multivariate logistic regression analyses were used to identify the predictors of effective TA and final IS at 6 months. The variables that were significantly related to the primary end point on univariate analysis ($p < 0.1$) were included in the multivariate model, and the results are expressed as odds ratios (ORs), with 95% confidence intervals (CIs). A *p* value

Table 4
Univariate and multivariate logistic regression analyses identifying factors significantly related to infarct size

Variable	Univariate Analysis		Multivariate Analysis	
	OR (95% CI)	p Value	OR (95% CI)	p Value
Effective thrombus aspiration	0.26 (0.15–0.75)	0.0007	0.34 (0.03–0.71)	0.01
Infarct size in acute phase	2.23 (1.16–3.31)	<0.0001	2.06 (1.87–3.32)	0.001
Presence of microvascular obstruction	7.14 (3.03–16.78)	<0.0001	—	—
Early microvascular obstruction	1.37 (1.16–1.60)	0.0001	—	—
Late microvascular obstruction	1.79 (1.32–2.41)	<0.0001	1.75 (1.28–2.38)	0.002
Cardiac troponin peak	1.01 (1.0–1.02)	0.005	—	—
Right infarct-related artery	0.33 (0.15–0.73)	0.006	—	—
Left anterior descending infarct-related artery	2.11 (0.94–4.71)	0.068	—	—
Total ischemic time (min)	0.99 (0.98–1.00)	0.059	—	—

<0.05 was considered statistically significant. Statistical analyses were performed with SAS, version 9.2 (SAS Institute, Cary, North Carolina).

Results

From January 2010 to July 2011, 256 patients were admitted to our department because of STEMI. Of these 256 patients, 90 met the inclusion criteria and were screened for the present study. Two patients refused the initial CE-MRI because of severe claustrophobia and were thus excluded. The remaining 88 patients were included in the present study: 38 (43%) in the TA-positive group and 50 (57%) in the TA-negative group.

The baseline clinical and preprocedural angiographic characteristics of the study population are listed in Table 1. The 2 groups were comparable in age, gender, and risk factors of coronary disease. Six patients (7%) had diabetes mellitus that was diagnosed after in-hospital admission. No significant difference was seen in the delay between the onset of symptoms and urgent revascularization.

The infarct-related artery was the right coronary artery in 39%, left anterior descending artery in 34%, and left circumflex artery in 15%. The right coronary artery was significantly more often responsible for infarction in the TA-positive group, and the left circumflex artery was significantly less often the infarct-related artery in the same group. The vessel diameter was different between the 2 groups and was significantly greater in the TA-positive group.

The postprocedural angiographic results are listed in Table 2. The duration of revascularization did not differ significantly between the 2 groups. The post-stenting minimum lumen diameter was wider in the TA-positive group compared with the TA-negative group ($p = 0.003$). The rate of angiographic procedural success assessed by the postprocedural Thrombolysis In Myocardial Infarction flow of 3 and myocardial blush grade of ≥ 2 was 94.3% and 94.6%, respectively, and did not differ between the 2 groups. Similarly, the 90-minute ST-segment resolution, peak cardiac troponin level, administration of glycoprotein IIb/IIIa inhibitors or bivalirudine, and the use of direct stenting did not differ significantly between the 2 groups. The rate of intraprocedural complications was also similar.

The preprocedural clinical and angiographic parameters were tested for their univariate and multivariate predictive

value for the success of thrombus retrieval after TA. The variables included were preprocedural Thrombolysis In Myocardial Infarction flow grade, vessel reference diameter, minimum lumen diameter, right coronary artery, and left circumflex artery. On multivariate analysis, the significant predictors of successful thrombus retrieval were right coronary artery and vessel reference diameter, with an OR of 4.11 (95% CI 1.45 to 11.6, $p = 0.007$) and 1.52 (95% CI 0.94 to 2.85, $p = 0.05$), respectively.

The CE-MRI results are summarized in Table 3. Initial and follow-up CE-MRI studies were available for all patients. The median interval between STEMI presentation and CE-MRI scans performed in the acute phase and at follow-up were similar in the 2 groups. No difference in acute phase left ventricular ejection fraction, volumes, or mass was observed between the 2 groups. We found a favorable, but not significant, trend toward reduced left ventricular remodeling in the TA-positive group.

Concerning the primary end points, the extent of early and late MVO and IS in the acute phase was significantly lower in the TA-positive group than in the TA-negative group (early MVO, $p = 0.003$; late MVO, $p = 0.006$; IS at the acute phase, $p = 0.004$). On the 6-month follow-up CE-MRI study, the final IS was also significantly lower in the TA-positive group ($p = 0.002$; Figure 2). A reduction in both MVO (both early and late) and IS (both acute phase and at 6 months) was observed in both anterior and non-anterior STEMI.

The variables included in the final multivariate model to identify the predictors of final IS are listed in Table 4. The independent predictors of final IS were effective TA (OR 0.34, 95% CI 0.03 to 0.71, $p = 0.01$), late MVO (OR 1.75, 95% CI 1.28 to 0.71, $p = 0.002$), and IS assessed in the acute phase (OR 2.06, 95% CI 1.87 to 3.32, $p = 0.001$).

Discussion

The main finding of the present study was that effective macroscopic thrombus retrieval before stenting during primary percutaneous coronary intervention in selected patients in the acute phase of STEMI with evidence of a large thrombotic burden is associated with an improvement in myocardial reperfusion. This was documented by a clear reduction in the extent of early and late MVO and decreased IS at the acute phase and the 6-month follow-up

point, as assessed by CE-MRI. In addition, effective TA represents 1 of the most powerful predictors of final IS identified on multivariate analysis.

It has been established by 2 randomized trials^{9,10} and 2 meta-analyses^{7,8} that manual TA as adjunctive therapy during primary percutaneous coronary intervention improves the clinical outcome after STEMI. In the TAPAS, the largest randomized study currently available, the rate of all-cause death at 1 year was significantly reduced after TA (4.7%) compared to conventional primary percutaneous coronary intervention (7.6%; hazard ratio 1.67, 95% CI 1.02 to 2.75, p = 0.042).¹⁰

In the TAPAS, TA allowed thrombus retrieval in 72.9% after histopathologic analysis and 53% macroscopically.⁵ In contrast, very few specific data exist to date in this area regarding the effect of successful, visually observable aspirate thrombotic material after TA in primary percutaneous coronary intervention for STEMI. Only 1 non-randomized study to date has reported that survival at 1 year was not influenced by positive TA (hazard ratio 0.98, 95% CI 0.49 to 1.95, p = 0.95).¹¹ However, several different manual TA devices were used, and the performance levels of these devices have been reported to be heterogeneous.¹¹ An increase in final IS has been reported with 1 of the devices used.^{20,21} The catheter used in our study was the same as that used in the TAPAS^{5,10} and the thrombectomy with export catheter in infarct-related artery during primary percutaneous coronary intervention (EXPIRA)⁹ trial, both of which demonstrated a reduction in mortality.

CE-MRI is a noninvasive, high-resolution imaging modality that identifies myocyte necrosis and microvascular injury and currently represents the reference standard for the quantification of MVO and IS.¹⁸ It was used in 2 earlier studies comparing the effect of TA and conventional primary percutaneous coronary intervention, but the results were conflicting. A CE-MRI substudy of the EXPIRA trial reported infarct shrinkage at 3 months after TA in 75 selected patients with anterior STEMI.⁶ However, Stone et al²² recently reported a similar IS between groups in a comparable anterior STEMI population in the Intracoronary Abciximab Infusion and Aspiration Thrombectomy in Patients Undergoing Percutaneous Coronary Intervention for Anterior ST-Segment Elevation Myocardial Infarction (INFUSE-AMI) trial. In our study, we observed a reduction in the extent of both MVO and IS, despite including both anterior and nonanterior STEMI. Among the nonanterior infarctions, a low rate of left circumflex artery STEMI met the inclusion criteria (14.7%). In accordance with our study design, patients were only enrolled if the coronary anatomy was amenable to TA. It has been shown that when the left circumflex artery is the infarct-related artery, passage of the aspiration catheter across the lesion is often unsuccessful, mainly because of proximal tortuosity.¹¹ Furthermore, in our selected population, factors related to effective thrombus retrieval included wide vessel diameter and right coronary artery, and these results are in line with those reported by Vink et al¹¹ in a large, unselected population.

The extent of both early and late MVO was greater in the TA-negative group. Effective thrombus retrieval probably represents the main cause of these findings, but it is nonetheless possible that fragmentation and embolization of the

thrombus in the culprit lesion occurred before TA. This hypothesis might be supported by the finding that in the TA-negative group, epicardial flow before primary percutaneous coronary intervention was more often already restored, with 36% Thrombolysis In Myocardial Infarction flow grade 3 versus 10% in the TA-positive group (p = 0.04).

Surprisingly, late MVO, analyzed at 15 minutes after injection of gadolinium, represented an independent predictor of final IS, but early MVO, measured at 3 minutes, was not a predictor. No definite consensus has yet been reached as to whether it is preferable to measure MVO earlier or later. On the one hand, the spatial extent and location of early MVO correlates closely with the histopathologic analysis findings and is also an independent prognostic indicator of adverse events, even after normalization of IS.^{23–25} On the other hand, however, recent studies have suggested that late MVO “better predicts left ventricular remodeling” than early MVO, providing additional prognostic information beyond that of IS.^{26,27}

In addition, in our study, surrogate markers of myocardial reperfusion (i.e., 90-minute ST-segment resolution and myocardial blush grade) were similar between the 2 groups and were not influenced by effective thrombus retrieval. These parameters have been reported to be strongly associated with death and major adverse cardiac events after reperfusion therapy^{15,16} but are indirect indexes. In this context, CE-MRI currently represents the most powerful and accurate tool to assess directly myocardial reperfusion and is closely related to clinical events.¹⁸

Finally, we did not observe significant left ventricular remodeling at 6 months, although IS and extent of MVO have been demonstrated to be linked to postinfarct left ventricular dilation and remodeling.¹⁷ We observed only a trend toward a reduction in left ventricular remodeling in the TA-positive group, which did not reach statistical significance. However, in our study population, IS was relatively small; prompt revascularization, selected patients with both anterior and nonanterior STEMI, and the use of the state-of-the-art pharmacologic therapy could partially account for this.

Disclosures

The authors have disclosed no conflicts of interest.

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II.1.C. Mise à jour

II.1.C.a. La thrombo-aspiration

L'intérêt de l'utilisation systématique de la thrombo-aspiration à la phase aigüe des STEMI a récemment été mis en doute. Comme nous l'avons déjà indiqué, il n'a pas été retrouvé de réduction de la taille de l'infarctus à 30 jours après thrombo-aspiration de STEMI antérieurs, dans l'étude INFUSE-AMI.⁶³

De plus, l'étude TASTE (The Thrombus Aspiration in ST-Elevation Myocardial Infarction in Scandinavia), publiée récemment, a présenté des résultats négatifs.⁶⁸ Il s'agissait d'une étude prospective, multicentrique, qui a inclus 7244 patients randomisés 1 : 1, thrombo-aspiration + angioplastie coronaire ou angioplastie conventionnelle. Les critères d'inclusion étaient des STEMI évoluant depuis de moins de 24 heures et ne justifiant pas d'une revascularisation coronarienne chirurgicale en urgence. Les dispositifs de thrombo-aspiration étaient des cathéters manuels. Le choix des stents et de l'environnement pharmacologique péri-procédural était laissé à la discrétion de l'opérateur. Le critère primaire de jugement était la mortalité toutes causes à 30 jours. Les critères de jugement secondaires étaient les récidives d'infarctus et les thromboses de stents. Les résultats montrent une absence de bénéfice à l'utilisation de la thrombo-aspiration sur le critère primaire, mortalité à 30 jours (2,8% dans le groupe thrombo-aspiration contre 3,0% dans le groupe angioplastie conventionnelle ; $P = 0,63$) (Figure 4). Le taux de ré-infarctus et de thromboses de stents n'étaient également pas statistiquement différents entre les groupes ($P = 0,09$ et $P = 0,06$ respectivement). Ces résultats étaient constants dans tous les sous-groupes analysés.

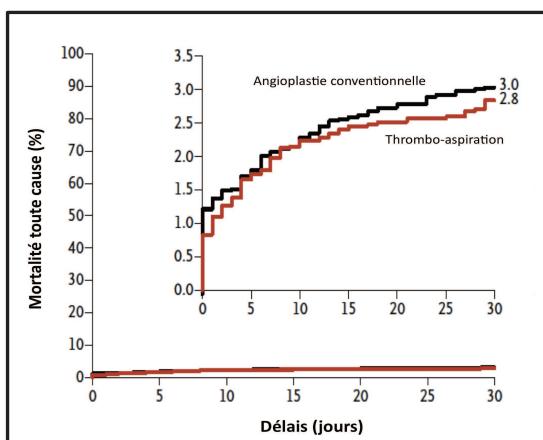


Figure 4: courbe Kaplan-Meier pour les décès toute cause à 30 jours entre les groupes thrombo-aspiration et angioplastie seule dans l'étude TASTE⁴⁰

Il conviendra certainement d'attendre, comme pour l'étude TAPAS, les résultats à 1 an avant de remettre en question l'intérêt de la thrombo-aspiration systématique dans les STEMI.

Par ailleurs, l'étude TOTAL (routine aspiration ThrOmbecTomy with PCI versus PCI ALone in patients with ST-elevation myocardial infarction) espère palier au manque relatif de puissance de l'étude TASTE, avec 213 évènement constatés contre 456 initialement attendus (Puissance de 80% pour détecter une diminution de 30% du critère primaire) et apportera des informations complémentaires sur le sujet. L'étude TOTAL, avec un design proche de celui de TASTE, a prévu d'inclure 10700 STEMI (<12 heures) randomisés entre thrombo-aspiration et angioplastie conventionnelle. Le critère primaire de jugement est un critère composite à 180 jours incluant décès cardiovasculaire, récidive d'infarctus, choc cardiogénique, et insuffisance cardiaque stade IV NYHA. A noter qu'une analyse IRM, incluant 63 patients par groupe, est prévue ainsi qu'une analyse en sous-groupe en fonction de la charge thrombotique des lésions notamment (thrombus score < ou > 3). Les inclusions sont en cours avec au mois de Décembre 2013 déjà plus de 7000 patients recrutés.⁶⁹

II.1.C.b. IRM cardiaque

Par rapport à notre travail de recherche, une seule nouveauté est à noter concernant l'utilisation de l'IRM dans les STEMI, avec l'analyse de la *zone à risque* et l'évaluation du myocarde "sauvable" (*salvage myocardium*).

Juste après une occlusion coronaire, le déséquilibre de la balance besoin/demande en oxygène des cellules myocardiques aboutit à une ischémie caractérisée par des modifications métaboliques (interruption de la phosphorylation oxydative des mitochondries, accumulation d'hydrogènes, de lactates de potassium...) et des altérations ultrastructurales cellulaires (dilatation des mitochondries, du reticulum sarcoplasmique, du cytoplasme...).⁷⁰ Si l'ischémie persiste, les dégâts myocardiques deviennent irréversibles et la nécrose s'étend de l'endocardie vers l'épicarde ("wavefront phenomenon").⁷¹ La zone à risque correspond à la taille maximale de l'infarctus sans revascularisation de l'artère coupable ni reperfusion par des branches collatérales.⁷² La zone à risque a été étudiée initialement à partir de la scintigraphie myocardique et de l'échocardiographie de contraste et peut désormais être analysée précisément en IRM avec l'utilisation de séquences T2. Les séquences T2 sont très sensibles aux mouvements des ions hydrogènes de l'eau et permettent de mettre en évidence un œdème myocardique qui correspond expérimentalement à la zone à risque.⁷³ Le calcul du salvage myocardium (en%) se fait alors en soustrayant la taille de la zone à risque à la taille finale de

l'infarctus, obtenue sur les séquences tardives après injection de gadolinium sur une IRM à 3-6 mois. On peut également calculer le salvage myocardium index en divisant le salvage myocardium par la taille de la zone à risque.⁷⁴ Francone et coll. ont été les premiers à utiliser ces nouveaux paramètres IRM dans une étude clinique et ils ont montré que la taille du salvage myocardium était liée aux délais de reperfusion.⁷⁵ Désormais, la majorité des études IRM sur les STEMI intègrent ces paramètres dans leurs évaluations.^{76, 77} Dans notre travail de recherche, nous n'avons malheureusement pas pu étudier la taille de la zone à risque et le salvage myocardium en fonction de la récupération ou non de matériel thrombotique, du fait de la qualité très moyenne des séquences T2 sur l'IRM 3-Tesla du CHU de Besançon.

II.1.D. Conclusions

Le développement d'une obstruction microvasculaire ou no-reflow, malgré le traitement adéquat de l'artère coupable, est un phénomène fréquent à la phase aiguë des STEMI, avec un réel impact en termes pronostique. La réalisation de thrombo-aspirations avant l'angioplastie coronaire a pour but théorique de limiter la survenue d'embols thrombotiques ou de débris de plaque et son efficacité est, parallèlement aux critères cliniques, parfaitement évaluable par IRM cardiaque.

Dans notre travail de recherche, nous avons montré, tout d'abord, que la thrombo-aspiration permettait d'extraire du matériel dans les artères de gros calibres et préférentiellement l'artère coronaire droite. Ensuite, nous avons retrouvé un bénéfice net à ramener effectivement du thrombus après une thrombo-aspiration, avec une réduction de la taille du no-reflow et de l'infarctus, comparativement aux groupes de patients chez qui la thrombo-aspiration n'était pas productive.

Toutes les études actuelles ont analysé l'intérêt d'effectuer systématiquement une thrombo-aspiration dans le traitement des STEMI, quelque soit l'artère coupable, la charge thrombotique ou la capacité à extraire effectivement du thrombus. En fonction des résultats de l'étude TOTAL, et surtout si ceux-ci sont négatifs, comme INFUSE-AMI ou TASTE, il conviendra peut-être d'étudier les performances de la thrombo-aspiration dans ces différents sous-groupes qui, comme le suggère notre étude, pourraient potentiellement bénéficier de la thrombo-aspiration.

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II.2. IRM cardiaque

“Evolution of acute coronary syndrome with normal coronary arteries and normal cardiac magnetic resonance imaging.”

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II.2.A. Introduction

D'après la 3^{ème} définition publiée en 2012, le diagnostic d'infarctus du myocarde repose sur l'association (1) de symptômes cliniques, avec généralement un syndrome douloureux thoracique, (2) d'une augmentation de la troponine au-delà du 99^{ème} percentile de sa valeur normale, (3) plus ou moins associé à des modifications électrocardiographiques avec ou sans sus-décalage du segment ST.¹ Dans la grande majorité des cas, cette présentation clinique correspond à une ou plusieurs lésions coronariennes objectivées à la coronarographie mais dans 3-4% des cas, le réseau coronarien est considéré comme "angiographiquement normal".^{2, 3} Le diagnostic étiologique de ces syndromes coronaires aigus (SCA) à coronaires "normales" pose alors un problème dans leur prise en charge ultérieure et leur pronostic actuellement n'est pas connu. Cette situation est très peu abordée dans les recommandations des sociétés savantes qui n'indiquent pas la stratégie diagnostique et thérapeutique à adopter dans ce contexte (recommandations de l'ESC 2010, page 37).⁴

Diagnostics étiologiques

Il existe de nombreuses causes d'augmentation de la troponine en dehors des SCA, qui définissent les infarctus de type 2 (Tableau 1) mais peu d'entre elles associent, dans leur présentation initiale, des signes cliniques douloureux thoraciques et des modifications électrocardiographiques.¹

Tableau 1 : Causes d'augmentation de la troponine.

Injury related to primary myocardial ischemia
Plaque rupture
Intraluminal coronary artery thrombus formation
Injury related to supply/demand imbalance of myocardial ischemia
Tachy-/brady-arrhythmias
Aortic dissection or severe aortic valve disease
Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy
Cardiogenic, hypovolemic, or septic shock
Severe respiratory failure
Severe anemia
Hypertension with or without LVH
Coronary spasm
Coronary embolism or vasculitis
Coronary endothelial dysfunction without significant CAD
Injury not related to myocardial ischemia
Cardiac contusion, surgery, ablation, pacing, or defibrillator shocks
Rhabdomyolysis with cardiac involvement
Myocarditis
Cardiotoxic agents, e.g. anthracyclines, herceptin
Multifactorial or indeterminate myocardial injury
Heart failure
Stress (Takotsubo) cardiomyopathy
Severe pulmonary embolism or pulmonary hypertension
Sepsis and critically ill patients
Renal failure
Severe acute neurological diseases, e.g. stroke, subarachnoid hemorrhage
Infiltrative diseases, e.g. amyloidosis, sarcoidosis
Strenuous exercise

Ainsi, après avoir éliminé l'embolie pulmonaire, les troubles rythmiques rapides et un spasme coronaire, trois étiologies principales peuvent être discutées : l'infarctus du myocarde à coronaires angiographiquement normales, la myocardite aiguë et la cardiomyopathie de stress ou syndrome de Tako Tsubo.⁵⁻⁷

-Infarctus du myocarde à coronaires angiographiquement normales

Des études autopsiques et en IRM^{8, 9} ont confirmé l'existence de véritables SCA à coronaires angiographiquement normales et plusieurs hypothèses physiopathologiques ont été avancées pour expliquer leur survenue. Tout d'abord, la coronarographie correspond à une luminographie du réseau coronarien avec peu ou pas d'information sur la paroi artérielle. Comme nous l'avons déjà vu, les plaques vulnérables responsables des SCA présentent un remodelage positif sans retentissement sur la lumière artérielle dans 70 à 80% des cas.¹⁰ L'une des hypothèses pour expliquer ces véritables SCA à coronaires "saines" est une érosion de plaque, plus ou moins associée à une dysfonction endothéliale, avec une thrombose totale ou partielle du vaisseau spontanément reperfusé.^{5, 11} Par ailleurs, la résolution spatiale de la coronarographie peut ne pas permettre la mise en évidence des occlusions de petites branches collatérales. Ensuite, des phénomènes de thromboses in-situ et des tableaux d'hypercoagulabilité ont pu être retrouvés. Dans ce cadre, plusieurs études ont mis en évidence des anomalies du bilan de coagulation avec des mutations du facteur V Leiden, des mutations du gène de la prothrombine, des déficits en protéine C ou des variantes du facteur XII chez des patients ayant présenté des SCA à coronarographie normale.¹²⁻¹⁴ De plus, exposition aux oestrogènes, le tabac et un taux élevé de Lipoprotéine(a) ont été reliés à un état d'hypercoagulabilité pouvant expliquer la survenue de tels épisodes.¹⁵⁻¹⁷ Enfin, des phénomènes emboliques peuvent être retrouvés, mais de façon plus rare.⁵

-Myocardite aiguë

Les myocardites correspondent à une inflammation du myocarde d'origine virale le plus souvent (enterovirus, adénovirus...) ou auto-immune (sarcoïdose, Horton..).¹⁸ Le virus provoque une destruction directe des cellules myocardiques qui active une réponse inflammatoire (cellules NK, interferon gamma, monoxyde d'azote). Dans la majorité des cas, le processus s'interrompt spontanément à ce niveau et le myocarde retrouve son état initial après quelques semaines. Mais chez certains patients, il se développe une réaction inflammatoire chronique à partir de l'activation de lymphocytes T et la sécrétion d'auto-anticorps qui va entraîner une altération de la fonction systolique ventriculaire gauche.¹⁹ Cette évolution est constatée dans 10 à 20% des cas.²⁰ Les myocardites touchent préférentiellement les sujets jeunes (<40 ans) et la présentation clinique est variable, allant d'une dyspnée ou d'une douleur thoracique à des

tableaux de troubles du rythme ou de choc cardiogénique. Les myocardites aiguës peuvent également mimer un SCA avec une douleur thoracique, une augmentation de la troponine et des modifications électrocardiographiques.²¹ Le diagnostic de certitude repose sur les biopsies endomyocardiques, qui ne sont actuellement recommandées que dans les cas graves avec mise en jeu du pronostic vital, pour la recherche d'une étiologie justifiant d'un traitement spécifique (maladie de Horton, myocardite à éosinophile et sarcoïdose).⁶ Sinon, l'IRM est un examen de choix, non invasif et précis, qui permet de mettre en évidence les zones inflammatoires intra-myocardiques ; nous y reviendrons.²² Le pronostic des myocardites dépend de la présentation clinique initiale. Les myocardites aiguës avec une fonction systolique VG conservée ont une évolution très favorable et la gravité des myocardites de la maladie de Horton et de la sarcoïdose dépend des délais d'administration des traitements. La classe NYHA III ou IV, une dysfonction ventriculaire droite, une augmentation des pressions artérielles, la survenue d'une syncope, une hypotension et une largeur de QRS > 120 ms sont des facteurs de mauvais pronostic.^{23, 24} L'aspect immuno-histochimique sur les biopsies myocardiques pourrait également être relié au pronostic des myocardites.²⁵

-Cardiomyopathie de stress ou syndrome de Tako Tsubo

Le syndrome de Tako Tsubo a été décrit la première fois au Japon en 1990²⁶ et est inscrit depuis 2006 dans la liste des cardiomyopathies acquises.²⁷ Selon les critères de la Mayo clinic⁷, ce syndrome associe: des anomalies de la cinétique segmentaire du ventricule gauche (akinésie, hypokinésie ou dyskinésie) touchant les segments médians plus ou moins apicaux, sans rapport avec un territoire vasculaire ; un état de stress émotionnel ou physique est souvent retrouvé, mais n'est pas systématique; une absence de lésion coronarienne ou d'aspect évocateur d'une rupture de plaque à la coronarographie ; des modifications électrocardiographiques et/ou une augmentation des troponines ; ainsi que l'exclusion des diagnostics de phéochromocytome et de myocardite. Les syndromes de Tako Tsubo représenteraient 1 à 3% des SCA et touchent préférentiellement les femmes entre 55 à 75 ans (90% des cas).^{28, 29} La présentation classique initiale est celle d'un syndrome douloureux thoracique associé à des modifications ECG (sus-ST ou ondes T négatives principalement)³⁰ et une augmentation des troponines. Les autres modes de présentation comprennent un œdème pulmonaire (3 à 46% des cas)^{28, 29}, un choc cardiogénique, des troubles du rythme ventriculaire, un accident neurologique sur thrombus intra-cardiaque (visualisé dans ≈ 5%) et beaucoup plus rarement une rupture cardiaque ou une CIV.³¹ L'évolution se fait vers la récupération ad-integrum de la fonction systolique ventriculaire gauche en quelques jours ou semaines. La mortalité hospitalière varie de 0 à 8%. Par la suite, le pronostic est excellent avec cependant un risque de récidive, évalué jusqu'à 10%.³² La physiopathologie du syndrome de Tako Tsubo est,

encore actuellement, mal connue avec possiblement une dysfonction endothéliale et très certainement un rôle important joué par les catécholamines. Wittstein et al. ont en effet mis en évidence un taux important de catécholamines circulantes dans les suites d'un Tako Tsubo, qui persiste durant 7-9 jours.³³ Par ailleurs, il a été montré que le nombre de récepteurs β_2 au niveau myocardique était plus important à l'apex du VG, ceci pouvant expliquer la localisation préférentielle de la dysfonction VG constatée dans cette pathologie.³⁴

Intérêt de l'IRM cardiaque

Dans les SCA à coronaires angiographiquement normales, l'IRM permet de préciser le diagnostic étiologique entre l'infarctus du myocarde, la myocardite aigüe et le syndrome de Tako Tsubo,⁹ et ce principalement à partir des séquences tardives après injection de gadolinium.³⁵ Le chelate de gadolinium est un produit de contraste extracellulaire qui n'apparaît pas sur les séquences tardives au niveau d'un myocarde normal ; le secteur extracellulaire ne représentant alors que moins de 20% du myocarde.³⁶ Par contre, en cas de nécrose myocardique, d'inflammation ou de processus fibrotique, la membrane des myocytes est rompue, permettant la diffusion du gadolinium à l'intérieur des myocytes. Ainsi, la concentration myocardique en gadolinium va être augmentée à ce niveau, entraînant un raccourcissement de la relaxation T1 avec un aspect IRM en hyper-signal.³⁷ Des lésions jusqu'à 0,16 grammes peuvent ainsi être visualisées avec une très bonne reproductibilité ($\pm 2,4\%$).³⁸

Dans les infarctus du myocarde, le rehaussement tardif est localisé au niveau du sous-endocardie avec une extension en profondeur vers le sous-épicarde en fonction du degré de nécrose myocardique.³⁹ Pour les myocardites, l'hyper-signal en IRM respecte le sous-endocardie et se localise en intra-myocardique ou en sous-épicardique, soit sous la forme d'une zone étendue à une grande partie du ventricule gauche, soit sous la forme de quelques plages plus localisées à une ou deux parois ventriculaires.⁴⁰ Les aspects IRM de la myocardite sont très bien corrélés à l'extension de l'inflammation constatée sur des biopsies myocardiques.⁴¹ Enfin, en cas de syndrome de Tako Tsubo, les séquences en temps tardif sont normales.⁴² Parallèlement à ces séquences tardives après injection de gadolinium, les séquences T2 peuvent avoir un intérêt. Nous l'avons déjà vu pour la cardiopathie ischémique. Dans les myocardites aiguës, un hyper-signal en T2 peut être mis en évidence, correspondant à un œdème inflammatoire, mais la précision de ces séquences semble limitée comparativement aux temps tardifs.²² Iacucci et al. ont, par ailleurs, récemment montré qu'un hyper-signal T2 (T2 STIR) diffus au niveau médiо-ventriculaire et apical pouvait être la seule anomalie de signal détectable dans les syndromes de Tako Tsubo, avec une corrélation possible avec l'existence d'un œdème myocardique sur des

biopsies.⁴³ Enfin, L'IRM cardiaque permet également d'analyser les troubles de la cinétique segmentaire et notamment de mettre en évidence l'aspect typique des Tako Tsubo à la phase aiguë, sur les séquences dynamiques de ciné-IRM.⁴²

II.2.B. Travail de recherche

Evolution of acute coronary syndrome with normal coronary arteries and normal cardiac magnetic resonance imaging.

L'évolution des patients présentant un SCA à coronaires angiographiquement normales est mal connue^{2, 44, 45} et leur prise en charge ultérieure reste floue.⁴ Dans l'étude APPROACH, publiée en 2005, il était retrouvé un taux de mortalité relativement important pour ce type de présentation clinique (1,8% à 30 jours ; 4,0% à 1 an).² Mais ce tableau clinique peut correspondre à différentes étiologies, chacune avec un pronostic propre.

Assomul et al. ont montré que l'IRM était un examen clé dans le bilan des SCA à coronaires "normales", permettant de poser un diagnostic étiologique dans 2/3 des cas environ.⁹ En revanche, aucune donnée n'était disponible concernant le pronostic de ces patients en fonction des constatations IRM, notamment pour ceux ayant une IRM normale.

Nous avons donc réalisé une étude observationnelle incluant des SCA à coronaires angiographiquement normales et analysé leurs évolution clinique avec un suivi de 1 an.

II.2.B.a. Matériels et méthodes

Les critères d'inclusion étaient : (1) un tableau de SCA défini par une douleur évocatrice, prolongée (> 30 min), associée à des modifications ECG et une augmentation de la troponine ; (2) et une coronarographie jugée normale par 2 cardiologues interventionnels experts. Les critères d'exclusion étaient, un vaso-spasme coronaire objectivé par un test au méthergin, effectué systématiquement dans ce type de présentation clinique, ainsi qu'une autre cause retrouvée d'augmentation des troponines (embolie pulmonaire, sepsis, trouble du rythme..). Un score de Framingham >10% était également un critère d'exclusion, les patients justifiant alors d'un traitement de prévention secondaire de la maladie coronarienne.

Tous les patients recevaient initialement le traitement standard du SCA, comme recommandé.⁴ Une IRM était réalisée dans les suites et ce traitement était adapté en fonction des résultats de l'IRM. Si l'IRM était normale, les traitements à visée cardiovasculaire étaient interrompus.

II.2.B.b. Résultats

Entre Janvier 2008 et Septembre 2009, 87 patients ont présenté les critères d'inclusion et ont bénéficié d'une IRM cardiaque, ce qui correspond à 5,1% de l'ensemble des SCA hospitalisé au CHU de Besançon au cours de cette période. L'IRM cardiaque a mis en évidence un infarctus du myocarde chez 22 patients (22,7%), une myocardite aigüe chez 23 patients(26,4%) et un syndrome de Tako Tsubo chez 10 patients (11,5%). L'IRM était considérée comme normale pour les 32 patients restants (36,7%).

Il n'a pas été retrouvé de différence en termes d'âge, de sexe, d'exposition aux facteurs de risque cardiovasculaire ou de score de risque (Framingham et Grace score) entre les patients avec une IRM pathologique et ceux avec une IRM normale. Seul le taux de troponine était significativement différent entre ces deux groupes, plus bas chez les patients avec une IRM normale ($3,48 \pm 4,3$ vs. $11,86 \pm 11,99 \mu\text{g/L}$; $P = 0,0028$). Dans ce cadre, il n'est pas exclu que des petites anomalies myocardiques n'aient pas été détectées par l'IRM, du fait d'effets de volume partiel. Par ailleurs, la réalisation systématique d'IVUS ou d'OCT au cours de la coronarographie aurait pu permettre d'affiner le diagnostic étiologique, en mettant en évidence des plaques destabilisées.^{46, 47}

En ce qui concerne le suivi à 1 an, des événements indésirables ont été observés chez 5,7% des patients. Un patient (1,2%), diagnostiqué avec un infarctus du myocarde, a présenté un accident neurologique au cours du suivi. Dans le groupe myocardite, il a été mis en évidence un choc cardiogénique et une réhospitalisation pour insuffisance cardiaque. Par ailleurs, 9 patients (10,3%) ont reconsulté pour des récidives douloureuses thoraciques. Deux chocs cardiogéniques (2,4%) ont été observés chez des patients du groupe Tako Tsubo. Finalement, aucun événement n'est survenu chez les 32 patients qui présentaient une IRM normale, au cours du suivi de 1 an.

II.2.B.C. Conclusions

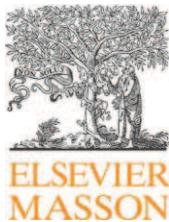
Notre travail de recherche représentait l'une des rares études ayant utilisé systématiquement l'IRM dans le bilan des SCA à coronaires angiographiquement normales.^{9, 48}

Les résultats de notre travail de recherche confirment, tout d'abord, l'intérêt de réaliser une IRM dans le bilan des SCA à coronaires angiographiquement normales avec la mise en évidence d'un diagnostic étiologique dans plus de 2/3 des cas, ce qui permet d'adapter la stratégie

thérapeutique et le suivi de ces patients. Ensuite, les patients qui avaient une IRM normale présentaient la meilleure évolution à 1 an.

D'autres études, incluant un nombre plus important de patients, seront évidemment nécessaires afin de confirmer la bonne évolution clinique retrouvée dans notre travail.

Le tiré-à-part de la publication de ce travail dans *The Archives of Cardiovascular Disease (Arch Cardiovasc Dis. 2011 Oct;104(10):509-17)* est fourni ci-après. Par ailleurs, cette étude a fait l'objet d'une communication orale au congrès de l '*American College of Cardiology* en 2011.



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CLINICAL RESEARCH

Evolution of acute coronary syndrome with normal coronary arteries and normal cardiac magnetic resonance imaging

Évolution des syndromes coronaires à coronaires angiographiquement normales et IRM cardiaque normale

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KEYWORDS

Acute coronary syndrome;
Tako-tsubo cardiomyopathy;
Myocarditis;
Cardiac magnetic resonance imaging;
Evolution

Summary

Background. — Acute coronary syndrome (ACS) with normal coronary angiography is a frequent clinical situation with an uncertain prognosis. Cardiac magnetic resonance imaging (CMRI) is a powerful tool for differential diagnosis between myocardial infarction (MI), acute myocarditis and Tako-tsubo cardiomyopathy (TTC). Data are sparse regarding the evolution of patients presenting an ACS with normal coronary arteries and normal CMRI.

Aims. — To evaluate the evolution of patients presenting an ACS with normal coronary arteries and normal CMRI, with a 1-year follow-up.

Methods. — Eighty-seven consecutive patients (mean age, 53 years; 40.2% men) presenting an ACS with troponin elevation and normal coronary arteries by angiography were prospectively included. All patients underwent CMRI at 3-Tesla. Adverse events were recorded with 1-year follow-up.

Abbreviations: ACS, acute coronary syndrome; AMI, acute myocardial infarction; CMRI, cardiac magnetic resonance imaging; cTnI, cardiac troponin I; ECG, electrocardiogram; LGE, late gadolinium enhancement; LV, left ventricular; LVENDI, left ventricular end-diastolic volume index; LVEF, left ventricular ejection fraction; LVESI, left ventricular end-systolic volume index; PE, pulmonary embolism; TTC, Tako-tsubo cardiomyopathy; TTE, transthoracic echocardiography.

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Results. — A likely aetiology for the acute clinical presentation was established by CMRI in 63.2% of patients (22.7% MI, 26.4% acute myocarditis, 11.5% TTC). During follow-up, one patient in the MI group had a stroke (1.2%). In the myocarditis group, there was one initial cardiogenic shock, one episode of congestive heart failure (1.2%) and nine patients had recurrent chest pain without troponin elevation (10.3%). Two TTC group patients initially presented with cardiogenic shock (2.4%); there were no other adverse events in this group during follow-up. In the remaining 36.7% patients, no clear diagnosis could be identified by CMRI, and no adverse events occurred during follow-up.

Conclusion. — CMRI is a useful tool for the management of ACS presenting with normal coronary angiography, as it helps to ascertain the diagnosis and adapt treatment in a large proportion of cases. Nonetheless, patients with no abnormalities identified by CMRI have an excellent evolution.

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MOTS CLÉS

Syndrome coronaire aigu ;
Syndrome de Tako-tsubo ;
Myocardite ;
IRM cardiaque ;
Évolution

Résumé

Objectifs. — Le syndrome coronaire aigu (SCA) avec des artères coronaires angiographiquement normales est une situation clinique fréquente mais avec un pronostic incertain. L'IRM cardiaque est un examen performant pour le diagnostic différentiel entre l'infarctus du myocarde (IDM), la myocardite aiguë et le syndrome de Tako-tsubo. Peu de données sont disponibles concernant l'évolution des SCA à coronaires normales et IRM cardiaque normale.

Méthode. — Quatre-vingt sept patients (âge moyen : 53 ans, 40,2 % d'hommes) présentant un SCA avec augmentation de la troponine et des artères angiographiquement normales ont été prospectivement inclus. Tous les patients ont bénéficié d'une IRM cardiaque à 3-Tesla et les événements indésirables étaient recensés avec un suivi d'un ans.

Résultats. — Un diagnostic étiologique a été établi par l'IRM chez 63,2 % des patients (22,7 % avaient un IDM, 26,4 % une myocardite aiguë, 11,5 % un Tako-tsubo). Au cours du suivi, un patient du groupe IDM a présenté un accident vasculaire cérébral (1,2%). Dans le groupe myocardite aiguë, il a été retrouvé un état de choc cardiogénique initial, un épisode de décompensation cardiaque et neuf patients ont présenté des récidives douloureuses thoraciques sans augmentation de la troponine (10,3%). Deux patients du groupe Tako-tsubo présentaient initialement un état de choc cardiogénique, puis il n'a été noté aucun autre événement indésirable au cours du suivi dans ce groupe. Finalement, pour les 36,7 % des patients restant, chez qui l'IRM ne permettait pas de poser un diagnostic final, aucun événement indésirable n'aït survenu au cours du suivi d'un ans.

Conclusion. — L'IRM cardiaque est un examen performant pour la prise en charge des SCA à coronaires angiographiquement normales qui permet d'affirmer un diagnostic et ainsi d'adapter les thérapeutiques dans une large proportion de cas. Par ailleurs, les patients qui ne présentent pas d'anomalie à l'IRM ont une excellente évolution.

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Introduction

Acute coronary syndromes (ACS) are one of the leading causes of death and morbidity in industrialized countries [1]. Typical presentation includes acute chest pain and cardiac troponin I (cTnI) elevation, possibly associated with electrocardiogram (ECG) abnormalities. Subsequent coronary angiography usually reveals flow-limiting epicardial stenoses [2]. However, coronary angiography can be normal in 1 to 12% of cases, depending on the definition of "normal" coronary arteries [3–5].

Differential diagnosis can thus be challenging and possible diagnoses include acute myocardial infarction (AMI), generally limited to the subendocardial territory [6], and two non-ischemic myocardial diseases, namely acute myocarditis [7] and transient apical ballooning syndrome, also known as Tako-tsubo cardiomyopathy (TTC) [8].

Cardiac magnetic resonance imaging (CMRI) is a highly sensitive noninvasive technique for detecting myocardial damage in ischemic [9] and non-ischemic cardiac disease, including acute myocarditis [10] and TTC [11].

Management strategy and follow-up can be thus adapted secondarily, further to the results of CMRI, with the initiation of secondary prevention treatment, including antiplatelet therapy, when CMRI confirms a diagnosis of AMI [2]. However, Assomull et al. demonstrated that CMRI can identify the basis for cTnI elevation in only 65% of patients presenting ACS symptoms and unobstructed coronary arteries [12]. Moreover, the evolution of this clinical situation, usually reported in the past as uniformly benign [4,13], might in fact be less favourable, with one recent study reporting a significantly high rate of death and major adverse events [5].

In this context, the aim of this study was to evaluate the evolution of patients presenting with ACS and normal

coronary arteries and normal CMRI, with a follow-up of 1 year. For CMRI evaluation, the latest technology available in clinical practice was used with a high field of Tesla.

Methods

Study population

Patients with clinical suspicion of ACS (ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction or non-ST-segment elevation ACS) and with strictly normal coronary arteries on coronary angiography were prospectively recruited in this observational study. Inclusion criteria were defined as: the association of new onset chest pain present at rest, lasting for longer than 30 minutes; elevated cTnI; and normal coronary angiography, performed no later than 72 hours after admission and reviewed by two experienced observers. Other initial investigations and searches for alternative causes of cTnI elevation, systematically including transthoracic echocardiography (TTE), had proved diagnostically inconclusive. Intracoronary methylergonovine testing was also systematically performed during angiography to exclude coronary vasospasm. Exclusion criteria included prior history of cardiovascular disease, previous coronary intervention, high Framingham risk score (10-year risk greater than 10%) and standard CMRI contraindications. Patients presenting with cardiac rhythm disorders, such as atrial fibrillation, which could explain cTnI elevation, were also excluded.

Data collected included baseline characteristics, medication at admission and ECG abnormalities using the Minnesota code [14]. Daily blood samples were obtained to assess peak cTnI, lipid profile, inflammatory markers including C-reactive protein, B-type natriuretic peptide, glycaemia and creatinine concentration to evaluate glomerular filtration rate. The threshold used in the core laboratory to define a positive cTnI was 0.15 ng/mL and cTnI assessment was performed every 6 hours until peak concentrations were reached. Framingham [15] and Global Registry of Acute Coronary Events (GRACE) [16] risk scores were calculated for each patient to evaluate long- and short-term risk of death. Myocardial tissue biopsy was not envisaged to establish a diagnosis.

All patients initially received standard medical therapy for ACS, including antiplatelet therapy, statins, angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors and beta-blockers, according to international guidelines [2,17]. Treatment strategy was subsequently adjusted according to the results of CMRI. In case of myocarditis, anti-inflammatory therapy was initiated if chest pain indicative of associated pericardial reaction persisted. For TTC, treatment was initiated at the physician's discretion, combining an inhibitor of the renin-angiotensin system with beta-blocker therapy. If CMRI was normal, all therapy was stopped.

Cardiac magnetic resonance imaging

CMRI scans were performed during hospital stay or within 3 weeks of initial presentation and repeated at 3 months in case of suspected TTC to evaluate improvement in left

ventricular (LV) function. CMRI studies were conducted at 3.0 field strength (General Electric Healthcare Company, Signa HD, Milwaukee, WI, USA) with a standard 40 mT/m gradient, using an eight-element phased array surface coil. Left ventricular function was assessed by ECG-gated cine steady-state free precession (SSFP) breath-hold sequences in the two-chamber and four-chamber views as well as in the short cardiac axis from base to apex (30 phases per cardiac cycle; repetition time, 3.5 ms; echo time, 1.2 ms; flip angle, 45°; typical voxel size, 1.92 × 1.25 × 8.0 mm) [18]. T2-weighted images (triple inversion recovery; TE, 60 ms; TR, 2 × R-R interval; TI, 170 ms; slice thickness, 7 mm; flip angle, 180°; pixel size, 2.3 × 1.3 mm) were acquired in the short-axis plane. First-pass perfusion imaging was performed using a T1-weighted fast gradient echo sequence (FGRE TR/TE = 3.5 ms/1.5 ms) with a notched saturation pulse, after the injection of a bolus of gadolinium (Dota-Gd; Guerbet, Roissy, France) in a brachial vein at a single dose of 0.2 mL/kg (0.1 mmol/kg). The field of view was 400 mm and the matrix size was 256 × 224 interpolated to 256 × 256. The heart was imaged in the short-axis plane with four to six slices, 8 mm thick with a gap of 1 mm. One image per slice was acquired every two cardiac cycles, leading to a temporal resolution of 2 R-R per imaging plane. Forty frames were obtained from each imaged plane within 80 R-R. For late gadolinium enhancement (LGE) imaging at 3 and 15 minutes, a breath-hold ECG-gated T1-weighted sequence was used (TE = MinFull; field of view, 440 mm; TI optimised to obtain optimal myocardial nulling; matrix size, 256 × 224 interpolated to 256 × 256; slice thickness, 8 mm; gap, 1 mm) [19]. The number and position of the slices were the same as used for the perfusion first-pass imaging.

Offline image analysis was performed on a dedicated workstation (General Electric Healthcare Company, Milwaukee, WI, USA). The endocardial border was drawn manually on each dynamic image. Left ventricular ejection fraction (LVEF), end-diastolic and end-systolic volume indexes (LVEND and LVESI, respectively) and LV mass index were calculated from the short-axis view [20]. Qualitative interpretation of CMRI scans was performed by two reviewers by consensus. Readers were blinded to the clinical situation. The portion of the heart exhibiting late enhancement and/or T2 high signal intensity was classified according to the segmentation established by the American Heart Association, which divides the left ventricle into 17 segments [21]. LGE images and corresponding T2-weighted images were assessed for subendocardial signal abnormalities in the distribution of a coronary artery, compatible with AMI [9]. Diagnosis of acute myocarditis was made according to criteria previously described by Friederich et al. with detection of oedema in T2-weighted images, hyperaemia and capillary leakage in myocardial early (3 minutes) gadolinium enhancement sequences and necrosis or fibrosis in LGE images detected in the midwall/subepicardial regions [10]. TTC was suspected on initial CMRI if there were no signs of delayed enhancement, T2 signal intensity and LV dysfunction, especially with mid/apical ballooning; TTC was confirmed by complete normalization of LVEF on the follow-up CMRI at 3 months. Scans with volumes and function within the normal range, with no LGE and T2 signal intensity abnormalities were considered normal by CMRI.

Outcomes

The subsequent progress of patients was assessed by telephone contact at 1, 3, 6 and 12 months. In case of clinical events, these were confirmed by hospital records or contact with the general practitioner. Clinical endpoints evaluated were death, recurrent ACS, congestive heart failure, stroke and recurrence of chest pain without cTnI elevation.

Statistical analysis

Continuous data are expressed as mean \pm standard deviation. Baseline characteristics were compared between the diagnostic CMRI group and the group in which CMRI was judged to be normal, using an independent sample *t* test and the Chi² test for categorical variables, as appropriate. All tests were two sided. A *P* value of less 0.05 was considered statistically significant. All statistical analyses were performed using MedCalc[®] (Mariakerke, Ghent, Belgium).

Results

Baseline characteristics

Among a total of 1687 patients admitted to our institution for ACS between January 2008 and September 2009, 87 (5.1%) had a normal coronary angiogram and met the inclusion criteria. Baseline characteristics are summarized in Table 1. The mean age was 53 ± 18.5 years and 59.8% were women ($n = 52$). No patient had pre-existing renal impairment, prior exposure to cardiotoxic drugs or prior chemotherapy. At the time of cTnI evaluation, no patient had symptoms suggestive of alternative cause of cTnI elevation, such as septicaemia, stroke, renal insufficiency, pulmonary embolism (PE) or aortic dissection. Eight patients (9.2%) described psychological stress before clinical presentation. The prevalence of cardiovascular risk factors and primary prevention therapy was moderate. No patient underwent thrombolytic therapy. Sixty-nine (75.8%) patients had an abnormal ECG on presentation. ST-segment depression was the most commonly detected abnormality (59.4%), followed by T wave changes (26.5%). One patient presented left bundle branch block (1.1%) and none had supraventricular or ventricular tachycardia. No patient with ST-segment elevation was eligible for inclusion. No criteria of right ventricle overload indicative of PE with cTnI elevation were found in the initial TTE and 32 patients (36.8%) underwent further investigation by CT pulmonary angiography ($n = 22$) and ventilation perfusion isotope scans, which did not show evidence of embolism in any patient.

Cardiac magnetic resonance imaging

The median time from presentation of ACS to CMRI was 10.3 days (range 5–22 days). One scan was repeated because the quality was suboptimal. Thus, complete CMRI images were available for all patients. CMRI dimensions were 86.7 ± 24.7 mL/m² for LVENDI and 41.7 ± 14.5 mL/m² for LVESI. LV mass index was 86.4 ± 18.6 g/m² and LVEF was

Table 1 Baseline characteristics.

Characteristics	Value (<i>n</i> =87)
Age (years)	53 ± 18.5
Men	35 (40.2)
History of smoking	35 (40.2)
Hypertension	28 (32.2)
Dyslipidaemia	30 (34.5)
Diabetes mellitus	8 (9.2)
Obesity (body mass index > 30)	10 (11.5)
Family history of ischemic heart disease	30 (34.5)
Peak cardiac troponin I	9.3 ± 10.91
Peak C-reactive protein (mg/L)	12.3 ± 7.6
Leukocytes (g/L)	8.5 ± 3.75
Fibrinogen (g/L)	4.0 ± 1.41
Glomerular filtration rate (mL/minute)	87.7 ± 30.4
Glycaemia (g/L)	1.09 ± 0.66
Framingham risk score	6.82 ± 7.46
GRACE risk score	104.67 ± 27.03
Medications on admission	
Antiplatelet therapy	2 (2.3)
Statins	27 (31)
Angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitor/angiotensin II blocker	16 (18.4)
Beta-blocker	8 (9.2)
Patient thrombolysed	0

Data are mean \pm standard deviation or number (%).

$65.1 \pm 13.6\%$. The diagnoses determined by CMRI are summarized in Table 2. CMRI provided a diagnosis in 55 patients (63.2%).

CMRI revealed subendocardial or transmural T2 high signal area and corresponding LGE in the distribution of coronary artery compatible with AMI in 22 patients (22.7%) (Fig. 1). CMRI suggestive of AMI was located in the anterior wall in two cases (9.1%), in the lateral wall in eight cases (36.6%) and in the inferior wall in 12 cases (54.4%). LGE was transmural for four patients. A diagnosis of myocarditis was established in 23 patients (26.4%) by gadolinium enhancement and T2-weighted sequences (Fig. 1). The most common midwall/epicardial high signal intensity areas were found in the lateral wall (15 patients; 65.2%). All patients had evidence of acute inflammation with increased midwall/epicardial T2 signal intensity.

A diagnosis of TTC was confirmed in ten patients (11.5%) with normalization of LV systolic function at 3 months (Fig. 2). In three patients (3.8%), LVEF at 3 months was estimated by TTE as CMRI was not available. We observed high signal intensity areas with T2-weighted imaging being suggestive of myocardial oedema in four patients.

In the 32 remaining patients (36.7%), there was no detectable myocardial necrosis or inflammation and left ventricular function was normal and no new diagnosis was made.

Table 2 Cardiac magnetic resonance imaging diagnosis.

CMRI diagnosis	Assomull et al. [12] n (%)	Current study n (%)	1-year follow-up adverse events, current study
Myocardial infarction	7 (11.6)	22 (22.7)	One stroke (1.2%)
Myocarditis	30 (50.0)	23 (26.4)	One cardiogenic shock (1.2%); one congestive heart failure (1.2%); nine recurrences of chest pains (10.3%)
TTC	1 (1.7)	10 (11.5)	Two cardiogenic shocks (2.4%)
Normal CMRI	21 (35.0)	32 (36.7)	None

CMRI: cardiac magnetic resonance imaging; TTC: Tako-tsubo cardiomyopathy.

Normal versus abnormal cardiac magnetic resonance imaging

There was no significant difference in baseline characteristics such as age, sex, cardiovascular risk factors or risk scores between the groups with and without CMRI

abnormalities. As regards biological markers, only cTnI elevation was significantly lower in the normal CMRI group (3.48 ± 4.3 vs $11.86 \pm 11.99 \mu\text{g/L}$, $P=0.0028$). ECG findings were also similar in both groups. CMRI LV dimensions and function as well as time to CMRI did not differ between groups (Table 3).

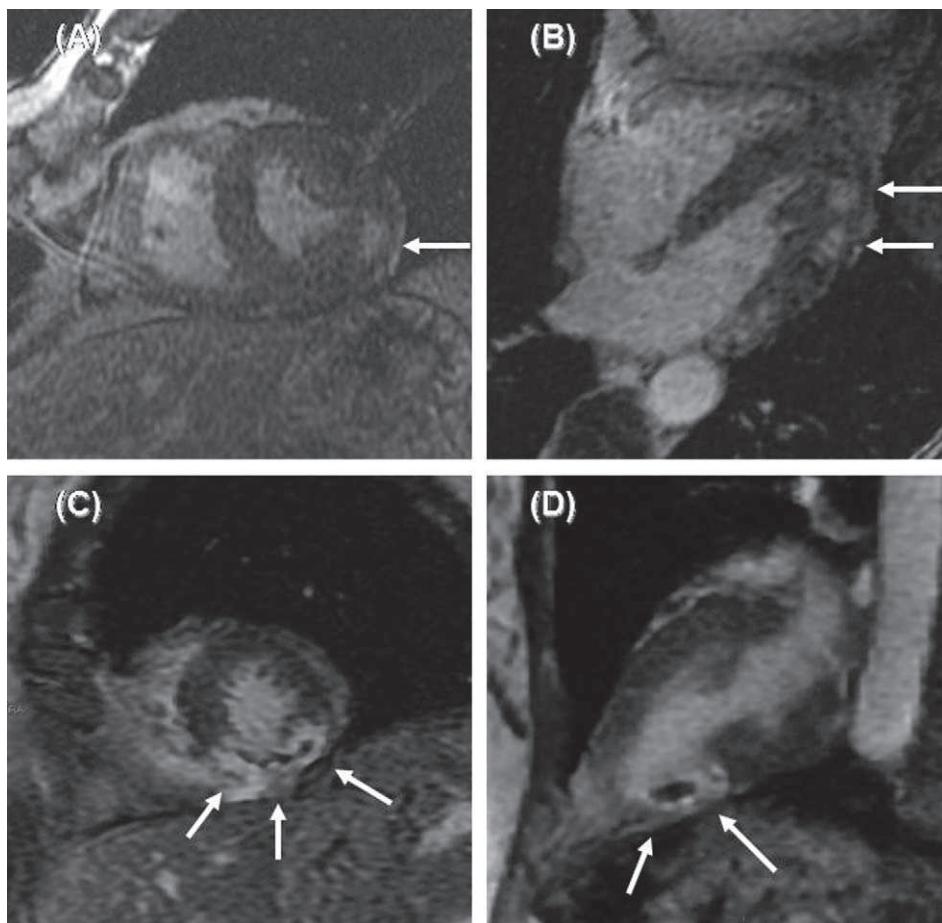


Figure 1. Cardiac magnetic resonance with late gadolinium enhancement imaging in acute myocarditis (A and B) and in acute myocardial infarction (C and D). Typical pattern of acute myocarditis with patchy mid-wall delayed enhancements localized in the lateral wall (arrows); short-axis (A) and four-chamber (B) views. Transmural delayed enhancement in the inferior wall suggestive of myocardial infarction (arrows); black regions within the white areas of late enhancement corresponding to persistent microvascular obstruction (arrows); short-axis (C) and four-chamber (D) views.

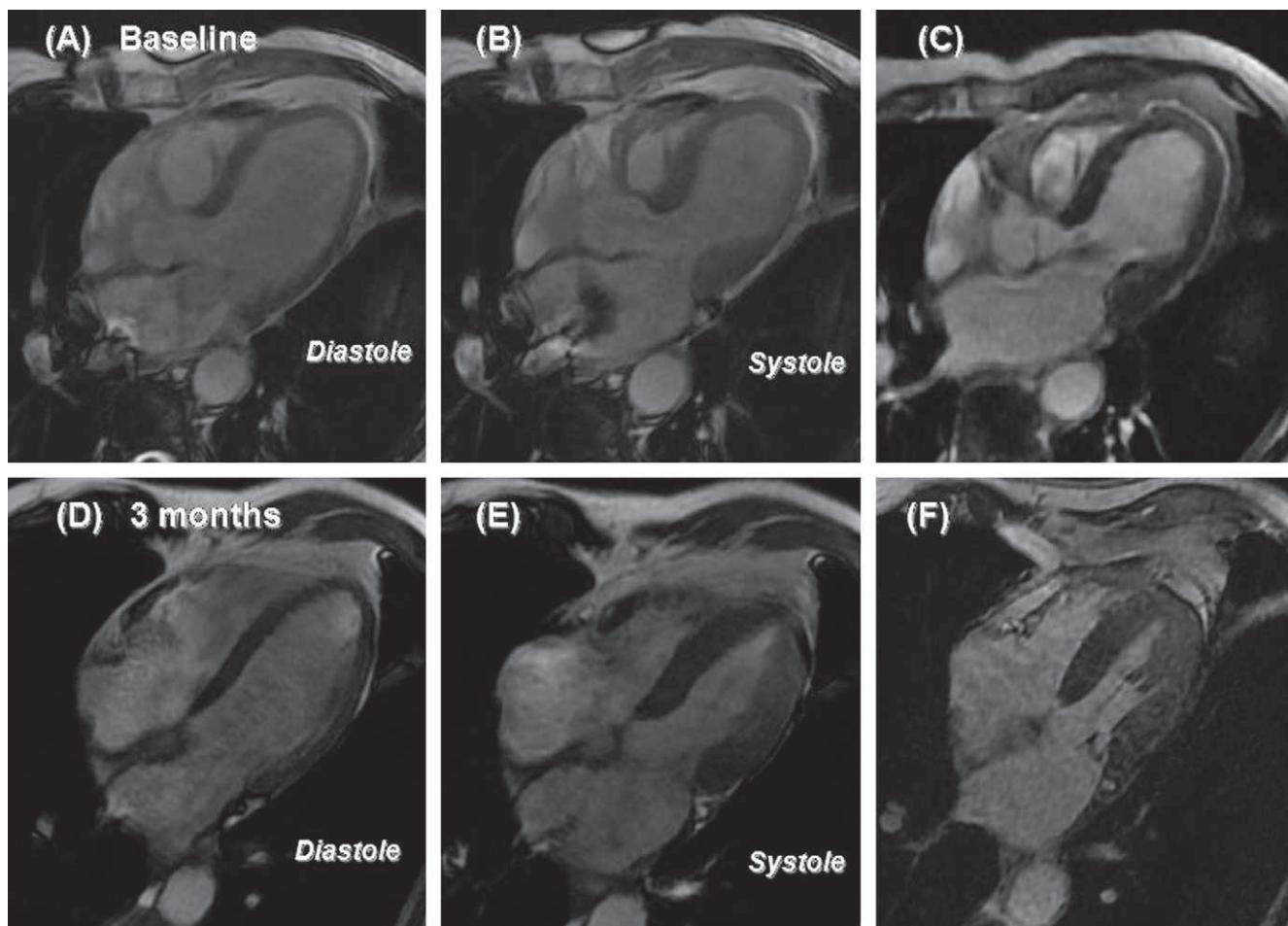


Figure 2. Serial late gadolinium enhancement cardiac magnetic resonance imaging in Tako-tsubo cardiomyopathy. Images acquired at baseline scanning demonstrate apical hypokinesia (A and B) in the absence of late gadolinium enhancement (C). A repeat scan 3 months later shows complete normalization of left ventricular function (D and E) with no late gadolinium enhancement detectable (F).

Follow-up

Follow-up information was available for all patients. No new or alternative diagnosis was made for any patient during follow-up. One-year follow-up adverse events are summarized in Table 2. No death or recurrent ACS was observed during follow-up. Three patients (3.5%) had cardiogenic shock at admission. For one patient, CMRI provided

the diagnosis of acute myocarditis and for the two others, the diagnosis of TTC was made. Two (2.4%) patients were rehospitalized during follow-up: one for stroke (1.2%), in whom AMI had been diagnosed on initial CMRI, and one for congestive heart failure at 3 months, after an initial diagnosis of myocarditis with alteration of LV systolic function. Nine patients (10.3%) from the myocarditis group presented recurrent chest pain during follow-up, without

Table 3 Cardiac magnetic resonance imaging variables in normal and abnormal groups.

CMRI variable	Normal(<i>n</i> = 32)	Abnormal(<i>n</i> = 55)	<i>P</i>
LVEDI (mL/m^2)	85.5 ± 16.3	89.6 ± 18.4	0.35
LVESI (mL/m^2)	39.5 ± 14.5	44.6 ± 12.5	0.22
LV mass index (g/m^2)	79 ± 23.7	84.7 ± 14.7	0.19
LVEF (%)	65.7 ± 10.7	58.4 ± 9.2	0.16
Interval to scan (days)	7 (1–18)	9 (4–22)	0.84

Data are mean \pm standard deviation or median (range). CMRI: cardiac magnetic resonance imaging; LV: left ventricular; LVEDI: left ventricular end-diastolic volume index; LVEF: left ventricular ejection fraction; LVESI: left ventricular end-systolic volume index.

rehospitalization or cTnI elevation. Among the patients with normal CMRI ($n=32$), no adverse events were observed during follow-up.

Discussion

Elevated cTnI concentration reflects with good sensitivity and specificity the existence of myocardial necrosis [22]. Nevertheless, there are a number of other causes of elevated cTnI in the absence of coronary artery disease, as recently summarized by Jeremias et al. [23], including cardiac arrhythmia and non-cardiac causes such as PE, sepsis or systemic inflammatory response syndrome, renal failure and neurological disorders. In our study, we excluded patients with any non-cardiac diseases that could interfere with cTnI concentration. In particular, no patient presented criteria of right ventricular overload evocative of PE, with cTnI elevation at initial TTE. Indeed, we performed further investigations in 36.8% of patients to exclude a diagnosis of PE. However, there is always the possibility that an episode of rapid cardiac rhythm disorder, undetected at admission or during follow-up, may have caused the elevation of cTnI. Furthermore, we retained only three possible aetiologies that could explain a clinical presentation associating acute chest pain, elevated cTnI and normal coronary angiography, namely AMI [24], acute myocarditis [7] and TTC [8].

AMI with normal coronary angiography is a common clinical situation and several different pathophysiological mechanisms have been proposed. Firstly, coronary angiography suffers limitations as a diagnostic technique due to its spatial resolution, which is limited to $200\text{ }\mu\text{m}$, and the fact that only arterial patency can be judged, without providing much information on the arterial wall. However, most ACSs derive from atheroma causing less than 50% diameter stenosis, which occurs more frequently than tighter stenoses [25]. Vulnerable plaques that give rise to ACS present a positive remodelling effect, with expansion towards the outer layer of the vessel rather than towards the lumen [26]. In AMI with normal coronary arteries, rupture or erosion of a vulnerable plaque can occur, causing transitory occlusion that resolves spontaneously, without leaving any residual visible intracoronary lesion [27]. The simultaneous use of coronary angiography and invasive catheter-based techniques, such as intravascular ultrasound or optical coherence tomography, could make it possible to establish an ischemic cause of ACS with normal coronary arteries, by identifying, for example, thrombus or vulnerable plaque with rupture of a thin-cap fibroatheroma [28,29]. However, these imaging techniques do not investigate distal vessels or small-calibre side branches. Furthermore, other mechanisms can also, albeit more rarely, give rise either separately or in combination, to distal embolisation [30], coronary vasospasm [31], inflammation [32] or coronary dissection [33]. It is now well established that acute myocarditis can mimic ACS [7], with elevation of cTnI in up to 49% of cases [34]. The most common aetiology of myocardial inflammation is viral infection, mainly involving adenoviruses and enteroviruses [35]. The clinical presentation of TTC is also practically indistinguishable from that of ACS, but with normal coronary angiography and initial transient LV dysfunction. The role of catecholamine-induced myocardial stunning or multivessel

epicardial or microvascular spasm have been previously suggested as possible causes of TTC [36].

Thus, establishing an accurate diagnosis in the presence of ACS with normal coronary arteries is of paramount important, particularly so that management can be appropriately adjusted. Patients with confirmed AMI need long-term follow-up and secondary prevention treatment [2]. CMRI is increasingly used to diagnose ischemic heart disease and can provide non-invasive evaluation of myocardial wall motion, global function, perfusion and viability [9]. T2-weighted and LGE sequences are currently considered as the gold standard for *in vivo* detection of scarring associated with myocardial infarction [37], as well as for identifying other non-ischemic conditions, including myocarditis [10]. In case of TTC, CMRI can identify transient LV dysfunction on cine sequences, without any visible myocardial injury after injection of gadolinium [38].

CMRI is thus a useful noninvasive imaging tool that makes it possible to identify aetiology of ACS with normal coronary arteries in up to 65% of cases, as reported by Assomull et al. [12]. In our study, a diagnosis was established in 63.2% of cases, which is very similar to the rate observed in previous reports, as shown in Table 2. In our study, CMRI brought to light mainly myocarditis (26.4%), AMI (22.7%) and, to a lesser extent, TTC (11.7%). Most importantly, CMRI was normal and led to no definitive diagnosis being established in almost one third of patients, as in the study by Assomull et al., even with the use of high field 3-Tesla CMRI, which theoretically increases spatial resolution [39]. To the best of our knowledge, the current study was the first to assess myocardial injury in case of ACS with normal coronary angiography by using this new technology, but it does not appear to improve diagnostic accuracy. In our study, as reported elsewhere, the cTnI concentration was significantly lower in the group of patients with normal CMRI compared with those with pathological CMRI ($3.48 \pm 4.3\text{ }\mu\text{g/L}$ vs $11.86 \pm 11.99\text{ }\mu\text{g/L}$, $P=0.0028$ in the current study). We hypothesize that in the group with normal CMRI, the myocardial injury, known to be correlated with cTnI [40], was probably too limited to be detected by CMRI at 1.5- or 3-Tesla, due to the limited spatial resolution with partial volume effects. It is noteworthy that a delayed contrast-enhanced cardiac computed tomography scan is also able to provide detailed information on myocardial tissue characteristics associated with myocardial infarction and myocarditis, with less contrast resolution than CMRI [41], and could be used in the clinical situation of ACS with normal coronary arteries.

Until recently, the prognosis of patients with ACS and normal coronary arteries was considered to be excellent, on the basis of several small studies showing a low recurrence rate of ACS and a high 10-year survival rate [4,5]. However, a more recent study that included 9796 patients with ACS undergoing coronary angiography showed a less favourable outcome [5]. In this study, patients with strictly normal angiograms ($n=273$) were found to have a mortality of 1.8% at 30 days and of 4.0% at 1 year. However, to date, no study has used CMRI to distinguish between the possible aetiologies of ACS in this population or to evaluate prognosis. In general, patients with myocarditis seem to have favourable evolution and in most cases, early normalization of echocardiography and ECG variables, laboratory values and functional status is observed, although up to 13%

of patients reported atypical non-limited chest discomfort [42]. In TTC, the evolution is, again, generally favourable, with a 4-year survival that was not different from that of an age- and sex-matched population in one angiographic study [43]. Etel et al. also failed to observe any major adverse events after a median follow-up of 3.3 months in patients with a diagnosis of TTC established by MRI [44]. The greatest risk exists during the initial phase, when complications such as ventricular arrhythmia or cardiogenic shock can be life threatening [43]. In our study, we observed 5.7% of major adverse cardiac events, with one stroke in the AMI group, one episode of congestive heart failure and three initial cardiogenic shocks but no death during the 1 year of follow-up. Furthermore, there was no adverse event in the group of patients who had normal coronary angiography and normal CMRI. Thus, it would appear that evolution in this population could be excellent and therapeutic strategy and follow-up could be secondarily adapted. A further study with a larger sample size and longer follow-up is necessary to provide confirmation of the positive tendency observed in our study.

Conclusion

CMRI is a useful tool for the management of ACS presenting with normal coronary angiography, as it helps to ascertain diagnosis and adapt treatment in a large proportion of cases. Nonetheless, patients with no abnormalities identified by CMRI have an excellent evolution.

Disclosure of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest concerning this article.

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II.2.C. Mise à jour

Depuis la publication de notre travail, deux autres études ont été publiées sur le même sujet. La première est une étude Suédoise multicentrique, qui est la plus importante en terme d'effectifs, incluant 152 patients.⁴⁹ Ces résultats corroborent les résultats précédents, dont les nôtres, avec un diagnostic fourni par l'IRM chez environ 2/3 des patients ayant présenté un SCA à coronaires angiographiquement normales. Nous avons fourni nos données démographiques et IRM à cette équipe Suédoise (Dr P. Tornvall), afin de participer à une méta-analyse regroupant 5 études et près de 500 patients sur les myocardites.

La seconde étude s'est intéressée au pronostic de ces patients en fonction des constatations IRM. A noter que dans ce travail, les patients étaient inclus s'ils présentaient des sténoses coronariennes <50%. Les auteurs ont constaté, sur un total de 130 sujets, la survenue d'un MACE à 6 mois chez 7% des patients ayant un diagnostic final d'infarctus, 2,4% en cas de myocardite, 1,6% en cas de syndrome de Tako Tsubo et 1,6% en cas d'IRM normale (une insuffisance cardiaque diastolique et une fibrillation atriale).⁵⁰

II.2.D. Conclusions

L'IRM cardiaque joue un rôle clé dans le diagnostic étiologique des SCA à coronaires angiographiquement normales, en permettant dans 2/3 des cas de mettre en évidence un diagnostic étiologique. L'IRM, notamment à partir des séquences tardives après injection de gadolinium, permet de distinguer les lésions myocardiques de l'infarctus de celles de la myocardite aiguë. Par ailleurs, un syndrome de Tako Tsubo peut être suspecté devant un trouble de la cinétique segmentaire sur les séquences ciné-IRM et une absence de rehaussement tardif ; le diagnostic de certitude se faisant à distance, sur la mise en évidence d'une récupération ad-integrum, de la fonction systolique VG.

Notre travail de recherche rapporte une excellente évolution pour le tiers des patients chez qui l'IRM ne décèle pas d'anomalie myocardique. Des études d'une plus grande envergure seront nécessaires afin d'apprécier plus précisément le pronostic de ces patients, et ce d'autant plus que la fréquence des SCA à coronaires angiographiquement normales devraient augmenter avec l'abaissement des seuils de détection de la troponine.⁵¹

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II.3. IRM cardiaque

"Microvascular obstruction assessed by 3-tesla magnetic resonance imaging in acute myocardial infarction is correlated with plasma troponin I levels."

Pernet K, Ecarnot F, Chopard R, Seronde MF, Plastaras P, Schiele F, Meneveau N.

BMC Cardiovascular disorders 2014. 14:71-2261/14/57

II.3.A. Travail de recherche

Microvascular obstruction assessed by 3-tesla magnetic resonance imaging in acute myocardial infarction is correlated with plasma troponin I levels

Nous avons utilisé l'IRM cardiaque dans un troisième travail de recherche qui vient d'être publié en ligne. Dans ce travail, nous nous sommes intéressés à la relation entre le niveau de troponine dans les suites d'un STEMI et la présence d'un no-reflow à l'IRM. Nous ne reviendrons pas sur le no-reflow et l'intérêt de l'IRM dans son évaluation, qui ont été détaillé précédemment dans le chapitre *II.1.A.*

Il est bien établi que le niveau de troponine après un STEMI est corrélé à la taille de l'infarctus et représente un facteur pronostique de mortalité.^{1, 2} Par contre, peu d'études ont analysé la relation entre la troponine et l'existence d'un no-reflow.³⁻⁵

L'objectif de ce travail de recherche était de déterminer une valeur seuil de troponine dans les suites d'un STEMI, prédictive de l'existence d'un no-reflow en IRM.

II.1.A.a. Matériels et méthodes

Notre étude était une étude monocentrique qui a inclus, entre 2006 et 2008, 51 patients. Les critères d'inclusion étaient des patients ≤75 ans, présentant un premier épisode de STEMI de moins de 24 heures. Les critères d'exclusion étaient des antécédents de pathologie cardiaque, une atteinte du tronc commun, un choc cardiogénique, un traitement thrombolytique avant l'angioplastie, et une contre-indication à l'IRM. Tous les patients ont bénéficié d'une IRM dans les jours suivant l'épisode coronarien et 6 mois plus tard.

II.1.B.b Résultats

38 patients (57%) présentaient un no-reflow à l'IRM effectuée à la phase aiguë.

L'analyse des données IRM a montré que la taille du no-reflow était corrélée à la taille de l'infarctus, évaluée à la phase aiguë et à 6 mois ($r =0,61$; $P <0,0001$ et $r =0,46$; $P =0,023$, respectivement). Les patients avec un no-reflow présentaient, par ailleurs, un remodelage ventriculaire plus important comparativement aux patients sans no-reflow.

Le pic de troponine était significativement plus élevé dans le groupe de patients avec no-reflow ($P = 0,0006$) et il existait une corrélation entre la taille du no-reflow et les valeurs de troponine mesurées à 6,12, 24, 48 et 72 heures.

Enfin, l'analyse des courbes ROC a permis de déterminer une valeur de troponine, à 12 heures, égale à 89 ng/ml comme valeur seuil prédictive de l'existence d'un no-reflow, avec une sensibilité de 63% et une spécificité de 88% ($P < 0,0002$) (Figure 1).

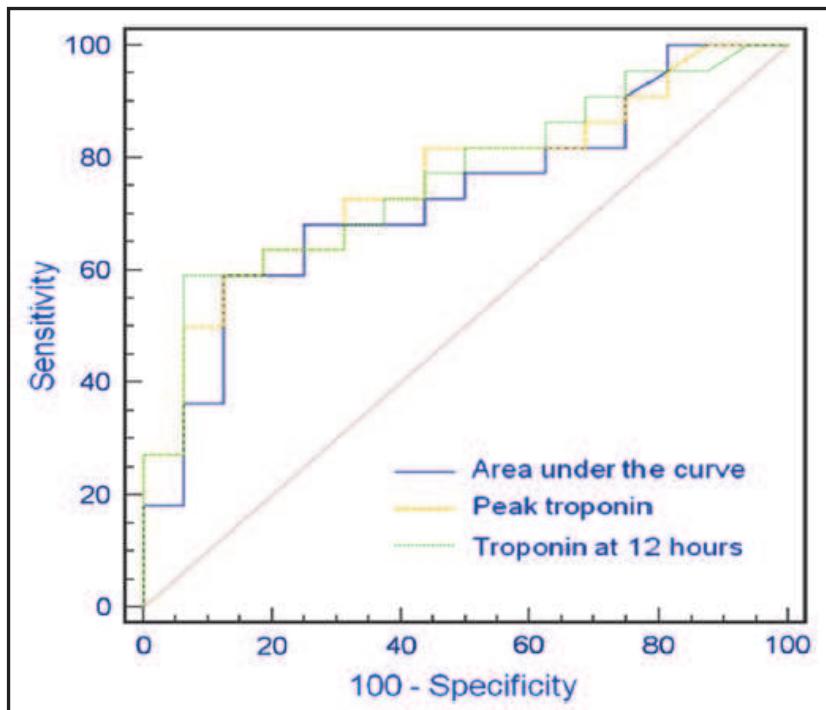


Figure 1 : courbe ROC pour la détermination d'une valeur seuil de troponine prédictive de la présence d'un no-reflow.

II.1.B.c. Conclusions

En conclusion, notre travail a montré une relation statistiquement significative entre le niveau de troponine et la présence d'un no-reflow. Une valeur de troponine de 89 ng/ml représentait la meilleure valeur seuil pour prédire l'existence d'un no-reflow.

Le tiré-à-part de la publication de ce travail dans *BMC Cardiovascular Disorders* (BMC Cardiovascular disorders 2014. 1471-2261/14/57) est fournie ci-dessous.

II.3.B. Références

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Open Access

Microvascular obstruction assessed by 3-tesla magnetic resonance imaging in acute myocardial infarction is correlated with plasma troponin I levels

Karine Pernet, Fiona Ecarnot, Romain Chopard, Marie-France Seronde, Philoktimon Plastaras, Francois Schiele and Nicolas Meneveau*

Abstract

Background: Microvascular obstruction (MVO) at the acute phase of myocardial infarction (MI) is associated with poor prognosis. We aimed to evaluate the correlation between plasma cardiac troponin I (cTnI) at the acute phase of MI and extent of no-reflow, as assessed by 3-T cardiac magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). Secondly, we defined a cut-off value for cTnI predictive of no-reflow.

Methods: 51 consecutive patients with no previous history of cardiovascular disease, presenting ST elevation MI within <12 h. Infarct size and extent of no-reflow were evaluated by 3-T MRI at day 5. Extent of no-reflow at 15 minutes (MVO) was correlated with cTnI at admission, 6, 12, 24, 48 and 72 hours. At 6 months, MRI was performed to evaluate the impact of MVO on LV remodeling.

Results: MVO was diagnosed in 29 patients (57%). Extent of MVO was significantly correlated to peak troponin, cTnI (except admission values) and area under the curve. Using Receiver-operating characteristic (ROC) curve analysis, a cut-off cTnI value >89 ng/mL at 12 h seemed to best predict presence of early MVO (sensitivity 63%, specificity 88%). At 6 months, MVO was associated with left ventricular (LV) remodeling, resulting in higher LV volumes.

Conclusion: There is a relationship between cTnI at the acute phase of AMI and extent of MVO as assessed by 3-T cardiac MRI. A cut-off cTnI value of 89 ng/mL at 12 h seems to best predict presence of MVO, which contributes to LV remodeling.

Keywords: Myocardial infarction, MRI, Troponin, Microvascular obstruction

Background

In acute ST-segment-elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI), primary percutaneous coronary intervention is the treatment of choice to restore myocardial revascularization and minimize ischemic damage to the myocardium [1]. Several studies have demonstrated that microvascular dysfunction after infarct-related artery revascularization is associated with myocardial reperfusion injury, resulting in greater infarct size [2-10], left ventricular impairment [3-5,7,11-17], recurrent MI [2-4,14], heart failure [2-4,12,14] and higher mortality [2-5,12,14,18,19].

In addition, microvascular dysfunction has a negative prognostic value, irrespective of infarct size [3]. Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) is not systematically performed in routine practice, and it would thus be useful if there was a more accessible prognostic marker that could identify patients with microvascular obstruction (MVO). Cardiac troponin levels correlate well with infarct size [20] and are of prognostic value in the short and long term [21].

The aim of our study was to evaluate the relationship between plasma levels of cardiac troponin I (cTnI) and microvascular obstruction (MVO) as assessed by magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) at day 5, and to define a cut-off value for cTnI that predicts MVO.

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Methods

Study population

This study was a prospective single-center study. Patients < 75 years old referred to our department for a first ST elevation MI (STEMI) and admitted within 12 hours of symptom onset were considered for inclusion. MI was defined by the guidelines of the joint Task Force of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC), the American College of Cardiology (ACC), the American Heart Association (AHA), and the World Heart Federation (WHF) [1,22]. MI was confirmed by detection of elevated cardiac biomarkers (at least one value above the 99th percentile of the upper reference limit (URL)), together with evidence of myocardial ischemia (i.e., new ST-T changes or new left bundle branch block, or development of pathological Q waves in the ECG).

Exclusion criteria were: previous cardiovascular or pulmonary diseases, cardiogenic shock and contraindication for MRI.

The study protocol was approved by the local ethics committee (Comité de Protection des Personnes Est II, University Hospital Besançon, France) and informed consent was obtained from all enrolled patients.

Angiographic evaluation

All patients were referred to the catheterization laboratory within the first 24 hours after admission for coronary angiogram, and received medication according to current guidelines [1].

The initial and post-procedural blood flow in the infarct-related artery was graded according to the Thrombolysis in Myocardial Infarction (TIMI) grading system [23]. A successful procedure was defined by a TIMI flow grade = 3 and residual stenosis < 20%.

Magnetic resonance imaging

All CE-MRI studies were conducted at 3.0 field strength (Signa HD, General Electric Healthcare, Milwaukee, WI, USA) and performed in the acute phase and repeated at 6 months. Left ventricular function was assessed by ECG-gated cine steady-state free precession (SSFP) breath-hold sequences in the two-chamber and four-chamber views as well as in the short cardiac axis from base to apex (30 phases per cardiac cycle; repetition time 3.5 ms, echo time 1.2 ms, flip angle 45°, typical voxel size 1.92 × 1.25 × 8.0 mm).

Contrast-enhancement imaging was performed at 3 and 15 min with a breath-hold ECG-gated T1-weighted sequence after the injection of a bolus of gadolinium (Dota-Gd; Guerbet, Roissy, France) at a single dose of 0.1 mmol/kg (TE = MinFull/field of view 440 mm/TI = optimised to obtain an optimal myocardial nulling/matrix 256 × 224, interpolated 256 × 256/slice thickness =

8 mm/gap = 1 mm). The number and position of slices were the same as used for functional imaging.

Image analysis was performed in a blind fashion by two operators using an off-line dedicated workstation (General Electric Healthcare, Milwaukee, WI, USA). Left ventricular (LV) ejection fraction (LVEF), end-diastolic (LVEDVI) and end-systolic volume index (LVESVI) and mass were calculated from SSFP short-axis views. MVO was assessed on the initial CE-MRI performed during in-hospital stay. Infarct size was assessed from the same initial CE-MRI and at 6 months follow-up. Infarct size and MVO (if present) were manually traced from the contrast-enhancement short-axis images [24]. Myocardial regions was considered infarcted if the infarct size signal intensity was >2 SDs above the remote myocardium. MVO was defined as a dark zone within the infarcted segments, usually located in the subendocardium. MVO and infarct size are expressed as a percentage of LV mass assuming 1.05 g/ml as the specific gravity of myocardium.

Enzyme measurement

Serum levels of troponin I (cTnI), creatine kinase (CK) and creatine kinase isoenzyme myocardial and brain (CK-MB) were determined on admission, and 6, 12, 24, and 48 hours after onset of MI. cTnI was measured quantitatively using sandwich immunoassay (Dimension RXL max, SIEMENS, Germany). The lower limit of detection for this assay was 0.04 ng/ml. A value of cTnI > 0.15 ng/ml was considered indicative of myocardial necrosis for the purposes of clinical care. The peak level was determined as the highest value.

Statistical analysis

Quantitative continuous variables are expressed as mean ± standard deviation, and qualitative variables as number and percent. The Student t test and Chi square or Fisher's exact tests were used for comparisons, as appropriate. We calculated the relative change at 6 months from baseline in LV end-diastolic volume index, LV end-systolic volume index, and LV ejection fraction. The model used to take initial infarct size into account was the calculation of relative change, normalized for baseline infarct size. The correlations between serum enzyme levels and MVO at day 5 were assessed using the Spearman rank test. A receiver-operating characteristic (ROC) curve was used to define the threshold value of troponin levels predictive of MVO at day 5. A p-value <0.05 was considered statistically significant. All analyses were performed using SAS version 9.2 (SAS Institute, Cary, NC, USA).

Results

Patient characteristics

Between 2006 and 2008, 51 patients were enrolled in the study. Mean age was 54 years; there were 9 women and

42 men. Baseline and angiographic characteristics of the study population are shown in Table 1. Eighteen patients (35%) had anterior MI location. All patients underwent coronary angiogram and angioplasty within the first 24 hours. Reperfusion therapy was initiated 5.3 ± 3.2 hours after the onset of symptoms, by primary PCI in 37 patients (73%) and thrombolysis in 14 patients (27%). In patients who underwent thrombolysis, rescue PCI was performed in 6 patients (12%) and the remaining 8 underwent systematic PCI within the first 24 hours after reperfusion.

Twenty-nine patients (57%) had MVO (MVO^{pos} patients) diagnosed by MRI and 22 (43%) had no MVO (MVO^{neg} patients). MVO^{pos} and MVO^{neg} patients were comparable as regards baseline characteristics. The percentage of patients with TIMI flow grade ≤ 2 before PCI was significantly higher in the MVO^{pos} group. After PCI, the rate of TIMI flow grade 3 was comparable in both groups (Figure 1).

During follow-up, there were 0 deaths, and 4 revascularisations (1 for recurrent MI due to stent thrombosis

at 12 days and 3 on arteries other than the infarct-related artery).

Magnetic resonance imaging

MRI was performed at 5.7 ± 2.7 days after symptom onset and at 6 ± 1 months follow-up. MRI was not performed in 6 patients at 6 months due to patient refusal, or intervention (PCI or CABG) during the follow-up period.

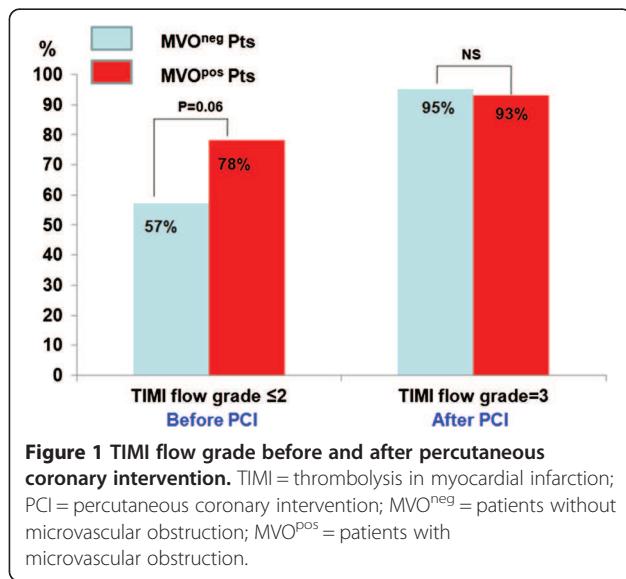
At day 5, the extent of MVO was $7.3 \pm 3.7\%$. Infarct size was $23.5 \pm 8.4\%$ in MVO^{pos} patients versus $12.7 \pm 9.4\%$ in MVO^{neg} patients ($p = 0.0001$). There was a significant correlation between the extent of MVO at day 5 and the infarct size at day 5 ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.0001$). Similarly, we observed a significant correlation between extent of MVO and time to reperfusion ($r = 0.43$, $p = 0.004$).

At 6 months follow-up, a significant positive correlation was observed among MVO^{pos} patients between MVO at day 5 and infarct size at 6 months (Figure 2). In MVO^{pos} patients, the relative change in LV end-diastolic volume index (LVEDVI) and in LV end-systolic volume

Table 1 Baseline and angiographic characteristics

	All patients N = 51	Pts MVO^{neg} N = 22 (43%)	Pts MVO^{pos} N = 29 (57%)	P
Age - years	53.6 ± 9.9	56 ± 10	52.6 ± 9.4	0.27
Female (%)	9 (18)	4 (19)	5 (17.5)	0.93
Arterial hypertension (%)	18 (35)	7 (32)	11 (38)	0.65
Diabetes mellitus (%)	11 (22)	5 (23)	6 (21)	0.86
Family history of CAD (%)	15 (29)	7 (32)	8 (27)	0.74
Current smoking	42 (82)	18 (82)	24 (83)	0.93
Hyperlipidemia (%)	21 (41)	9 (41)	12 (41)	0.97
Body mass index $\geq 30\text{Kg}/\text{m}^2$(%)	9 (18)	3 (14)	6 (20.6)	0.51
One vessel disease (%)	28 (55)	13 (59)	15 (52)	0.60
Multivessel disease (%)	16 (31)	7 (32)	9 (31)	0.95
Stenosis $< 50\%$ (%)	7 (14)	2 (9)	5 (17)	0.40
Anterior location (%)	18 (35)	9 (41)	9 (31)	0.46
Time from symptom onset to 1st reperfusion therapy – hours	5.3 ± 3.2	4.7 ± 2.9	5.9 ± 3.7	0.21
Fibrinolysis (%)	14 (27)	5 (23)	9 (31)	0.73
Primary PCI (%)	37 (73)	17 (77)	20 (69)	
Rescue PCI (%)	6 (12)	2 (9)	4 (14)	0.94
Aspirin	51 (100)	22 (100)	29 (100)	1
Clopidogrel loading dose (300/600 mg)	34/17	14/8	20/9	0.69
GP IIb-IIIa inhibitors (%)	22 (43)	8 (36)	14 (48)	0.39
TnI peak (ng/mL) (range)	81 ± 71	$53.6 (13-225)$	$118.5 (22-585)$	0.0006
CK peak, U/L (range)	1985 ± 1522	$1825 (63-9580)$	$2663 (160-9930)$	0.006
CK-MB peak, U/L (range)	124 ± 132	$145.6 (9-940)$	$189.1 (9-760)$	0.09

Pts MVO^{neg} = patients without microvascular obstruction; Pts MVO^{pos} = patients with microvascular obstruction; CAD = coronary artery disease; PCI = percutaneous coronary intervention; TnI = troponin I; CK = creatine kinase; CK-MB = creatine kinase isoenzyme myocardial and brain.

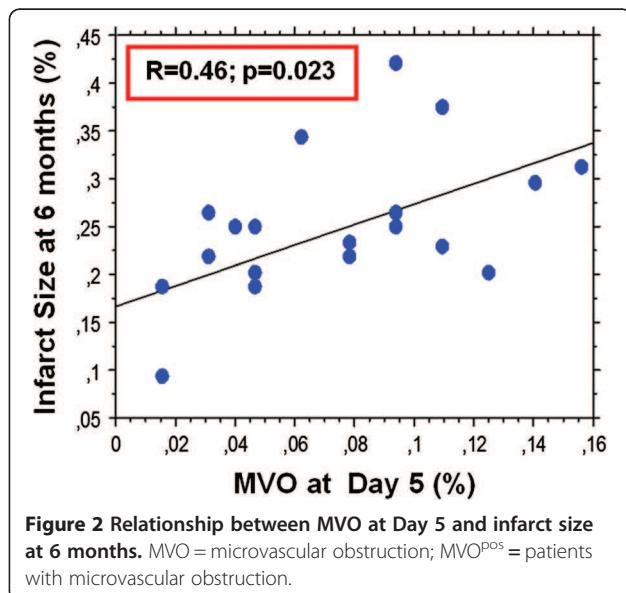


index (LVESVI) was significantly greater than in MVO^{neg} patients ($p = 0.002$ for LVEDVI, $p = 0.004$ for LVESVI) (Figure 3). There was no significant difference in relative change in LV ejection fraction (LVEF).

Enzyme measurement

Peak troponin and peak CK were significantly higher in MVO^{pos} patients (respectively $p = 0.0006$ and $p = 0.006$) (Table 1).

There was no significant difference in terms of peak troponin values between patients with TIMI flow grade 3 and those with TIMI flow ≤ 2 after revascularisation (peak troponin 75 ± 58 vs 83 ± 65 , TIMI 3 vs ≤ 2 respectively, $p = 0.65$).



Correlation between the extent of MVO and troponin I levels

The extent of MVO at day 5 was significantly correlated with peak troponin (Figure 4) and troponin I levels at 6, 12, 24, 48 and 72 hours (Table 2). Infarct size was significantly correlated with peak troponin ($p < 0.0001$) and the different cTnI levels ($p < 0.001$), except cTnI at admission.

Relationship between the presence of MVO and troponin I levels

Peak troponin and all cTnI levels except cTnI at admission were significant predictors of MVO (Table 3). The Area under the curve (ROC) varied from 0.68 for troponin at 72 h to 0.766 for troponin at 12 h. Sensitivity varied from 56% for troponin at 48 h to 74% for troponin at 6 h. Specificity ranged from 65% for troponin at 6 h and 72 h to 88% for troponin at 12 h, 48 h and the AUC troponin. Using ROC curve analysis, a cTnI level > 89 ng/ml at 12 hours was found to be the best cut-off value to predict MVO with a sensitivity of 63% and a specificity of 88% ($p < 0.0002$) (Figure 5).

Discussion

We aimed to find an accessible prognostic marker that could identify patients with microvascular dysfunction after reperfusion at the acute phase of myocardial infarction. Our data demonstrated that troponin levels (except troponin at admission), and particularly peak troponin, were correlated with the extent of MVO on MRI at day 5. A troponin I level > 89 ng/ml at 12 hours was found to be the best cut-off value to predict MVO, with a sensitivity of 63% and a specificity of 88%.

The phenomenon of no-reflow [25,26] or microvascular obstruction is due to microembolization of atherosclerotic debris or thrombotic material, intimal oedema, tissue haemorrhage and/or leukocyte sticking [8,27], and is diagnosed well by MRI [3,6,13,28]. In addition, besides microvascular obstruction, intra-myocardial hemorrhage and microvascular destruction have also been shown to play an important role in this setting [29]. At the acute phase of MI, the successful restoration of epicardial coronary artery patency does not always lead to adequate reperfusion at the microvascular level. In our study, although 93 to 95% of the patients had a TIMI flow grade =3 after PCI at 24 h, MVO was diagnosed by MRI in 57% of cases at day 5. There was no significant difference in peak troponin between patients with TIMI flow grade 3 and those with TIMI flow ≤ 2 after revascularisation. Several studies have shown that microvascular dysfunction after infarct-related artery revascularization is associated with myocardial reperfusion injury, resulting in greater infarct size [2-10], left ventricular impairment [3-5,7,11-17], recurrent MI [2-4,14], heart failure [2-4,12,14] and higher mortality [2-5,12,14,18,19]. In

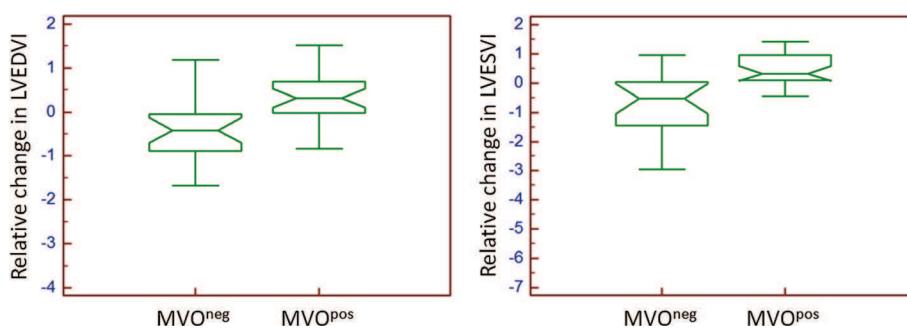


Figure 3 Relative change at 6 months from baseline in left ventricular end-diastolic volume index (LVEDVI) and left ventricular end-systolic volume index (LVESVI) normalized for baseline infarct size. MVO^{neg} = patients without microvascular obstruction; MVO^{pos} = patients with microvascular obstruction.

patients with MVO, mortality has been reported to increase by 75% at 1 month [18], 67% at 1 year [5] and 50% at 5 years [19]. In our study, MVO at day 5 was associated with LV remodelling at 6 months, as reflected by significantly increased left ventricular volumes assessed on MRI. These results are comparable to those of Orn et al. [7] at 1 year, and those of Nijveldt et al. [13] at 4 months, using the MRI technique.

This is strong evidence that both serial and single-point measurements of troponin correlate well with infarct size [8,9,20]. In routine practice, plasma levels of troponin I are used by the clinician to estimate the extent of necrosis. In our study, infarct size was significantly correlated with peak troponin and with the serial troponin I levels, except for troponin values at admission. To date, only 3 studies have investigated the relationship between MVO as assessed by MRI and serial troponin measurements, and the optimal timing for a single measurement. Our results confirm those of the literature. In the study of Neizel et al. [8], 61 patients with STEMI <24 h reperfused by fibrinolysis or PCI, underwent MRI within 4 ± 1 days and serial troponin T

measurements at admission and after 24, 48, 72 and 96 hours. They found that a troponin T level > 2.52 µg/l at 24 h was a predictor for MVO with a sensitivity of 100% and a specificity of 80%. In this study, Neizel et al. used troponin T levels, and no troponin measurements were performed between admission and 24 h. Furthermore, MVO was evaluated on earlier delayed-enhancement imaging after contrast injection. Younger and al [9] enrolled 93 patients who underwent MRI on average 3.7 ± 1.4 days after medical treatment for acute ST elevation or non-ST elevation myocardial infarction. Serum troponin I concentrations were sampled at 12 h and 72 h only after admission. They found a close relationship between a single measurement of troponin I at 72 h and the extent of MVO. The early and complete reperfusion of the infarct-related artery accelerates the appearance of cardiac enzymes in the first hours after reperfusion therapy. This wash-out phenomenon is characterized by a steeper rise and an earlier peak after successful restoration of anterograde coronary blood flow. These changes are more pronounced after mechanical reperfusion, which was used in our study, than after thrombolytic therapy [8]. Therefore, the almost exclusive reliance on thrombolytic therapy

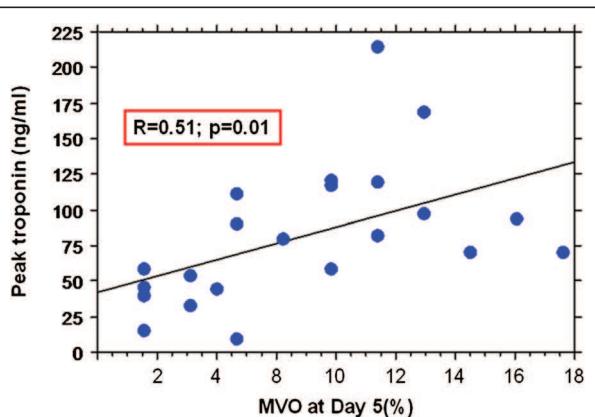


Figure 4 Relationship between MVO and Peak troponin.
 MVO = microvascular obstruction.

Table 2 Correlation between the extent of MVO and troponin I levels

	MVO (N = 29)	
	r	p
Troponin peak	0.51	0.01
AUC troponin	0.58	0.01
Troponin on admission	0.11	0.59
Troponin at 6H	0.57	0.01
Troponin at 12H	0.67	<0.0001
Troponin at 24H	0.46	0.02
Troponin at 48H	0.57	0.01
Troponin at 72H	0.42	0.04

MVO = microvascular obstruction; AUC = area under the curve; H = hours.

Table 3 Cut-off value of cTnI predictive of MVO

	Cut-off value (ng/ml)	Se (%)	Sp (%)	AUC ROC	p
Troponin at H6	44.6	74	65	0.729	0.0025
Troponin at H12	89	63	88	0.766	0.0002
Troponin at H24	27.4	65	81	0.703	0.0116
Troponin at H48	16.35	56	88	0.724	0.0041
Troponin at H72	7.9	71	65	0.68	0.0308
Peak troponin	79.9	63	82	0.761	0.0003
AUC Troponin	275.3	59	88	0.726	0.0057

Se = sensitivity; Sp = specificity; AUC = area under the curve; ROC = receiver operating characteristic; H = hours.

in the study of Younger and al [9] may explain the more delayed troponin release observed. In study by Mayr and al [10], MRI was performed in 118 patients within 8 days after successful interventional reperfusion of STEMI. Cardiac troponin T concentrations were measured at least 3 times during the first 24 h after admission, and subsequently on days 1, 2, 3 and 4. These authors demonstrated that a peak troponin $> 4.7 \mu\text{g/l}$ was predictive of MVO with a sensitivity of 78% and a specificity of 83%.

One of the advantages of the present study is the large number of repeat troponin measures, at relatively short time intervals, which allowed more accurate determination of a threshold value that could predict MVO at the acute phase of infarction.

It has previously been shown that a longer duration of ischemia is associated with more pronounced impairment of myocardial perfusion and consequently, infarct size [30]. In our study, we observed a correlation between the extent of MVO and the time to reperfusion.

Thus, the relation between troponin and the presence of MVO should be interpreted taking into account the time to reperfusion, since restoration of TIMI flow grade 3 by angioplasty does not necessarily guarantee the normalization of myocardial perfusion [31].

Newton et al. previously studied MVO on MRI in the context of non-ST elevation MI, and observed that MVO was correlated with infarct size and troponin levels. Thus, it would appear that the results observed in the context of STEMI are also applicable in NSTEMI [32].

Study limitations

This is a single-center study, with a relatively small population of highly selected patients. Nonetheless, the selection of the population made it possible to independently analyse MVO as evaluated by MRI in the absence of other cardiovascular comorbidities. Secondly, we did not evaluate blush grade, which corresponds to the angiographic evaluation of microcirculation after revascularisation. Our study focused on MVO at 5 days, which is a different phenomenon, and shown to be an independent prognostic factor in acute MI. These results merit further confirmation in a larger, prospective study. Thirdly, reperfusion strategy (primary PCI or thrombolysis) may possibly influence the occurrence of MVO. In particular, it has been shown that rescue PCI is associated with an increased thrombotic risk in this setting. However, in our study, only 6 (12%) patients underwent rescue PCI. This likely did not impact on the relation observed between MVO and peak troponin, as there was no significant difference between groups (Table 1). Fourthly, MRI could not be performed in 6 patients (11.7%) at 6 months. However, this does not impact the interpretation of the primary endpoint evaluated at 5 days.

Conclusion

Our results suggest a correlation between plasma levels of cardiac troponin I at the acute phase of AMI, and the extent of MVO as assessed by 3-T cardiac magnetic resonance imaging. The extent of MVO at 5 days post-STEMI is correlated with infarct size, and negatively impacts on

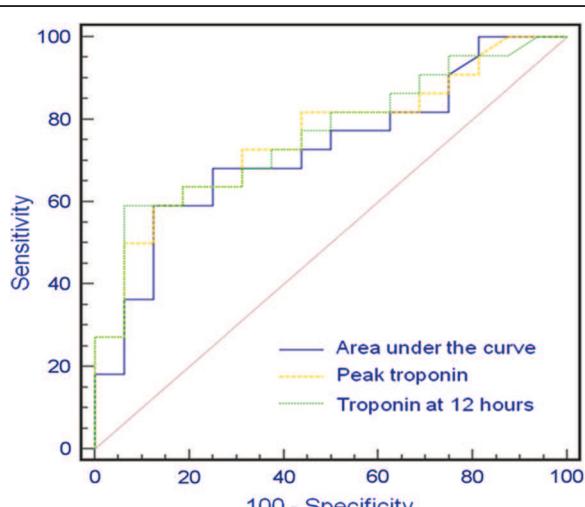


Figure 5 Cut-off value of cTnI predictive of MVO. ROC curves established for: AUC troponin ($\text{AUC}_{\text{ROC}} 0.726$, 95% CI 0.56-0.86). Peak troponin ($\text{AUC}_{\text{ROC}} 0.757$, 95% CI 0.59-0.88). Troponin at 12 hours ($\text{AUC}_{\text{ROC}} 0.763$, 95% CI 0.6-0.88) cTnI = cardiac troponin I; MVO = microvascular obstruction; ROC = receiver operating characteristic; AUC = area under the curve.

LV remodeling at 6 months. A cut-off value of 89 ng/mL for cTnI at 12 hours seems to best predict the presence of early MVO with high sensitivity and specificity. Troponin measurement is an easily accessible prognostic marker that could help identify patients with MVO and unfavorable prognosis.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors' contributions

Study conception and design: KP, MFS, NM. Acquisition of data: KP, RC, MFS, PP, FS, NM. Analysis and interpretation of data: FE, RC, PP, FS, NM. Drafting of the manuscript and critical revision: All. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript to be published. All authors agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

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III. Echocardiographie

“Comparison of right ventricular systolic function in patients with low risk and intermediate-to-high risk pulmonary embolism: a two-dimensional Strain imaging study.”

Descotes-Genon V, Chopard R, Morel M, Meneveau N, Schiele F, Bernard Y. Echocardiography. 2013 Mar;30(3):301-8.

III.A. Introduction

L'embolie pulmonaire (EP) est une pathologie relativement fréquente (≈ 20 cas/10000 habitants)² dont le pronostic reste grave malgré les avancées thérapeutiques, avec une mortalité à 3 mois d'environ 10%.³ L'obstruction du lit artériel pulmonaire a principalement des conséquences hémodynamiques, qui apparaissent pour un degré d'obstruction $>30\text{-}50\%$ chez les patients sans antécédent pulmonaire ou cardiovasculaire.⁴ L'obstruction des artères pulmonaires, par un ou plusieurs thrombus, peut entraîner une augmentation brutale des résistances vasculaires pulmonaires et provoquer un état de choc ou le décès du patient par dysfonction aiguë du ventricule droit (VD).⁵ Le bombement du septum inter-ventriculaire dans le ventricule gauche (SIV paradoxal), lié à l'augmentation de la post-charge VD, peut également participer à la réduction du débit cardiaque, par altération de la fonction diastolique du VG et/ou obstacle à l'éjection aortique.⁶ Après cette phase aiguë, chez les patients survivants, des mécanismes compensateurs entrent en jeu, avec une stimulation sympathique inotope et chronotope positive associée à une vasoconstriction périphérique, qui permettent une augmentation des pressions pulmonaires et une restauration des débits pulmonaires et systémiques.⁷ Secondairement, une déstabilisation peut survenir, soit du fait de récidives d'évènements emboliques⁸, soit du fait de la défaillance des mécanismes compensateurs liée à une ischémie du VD secondaire à une hypoperfusion coronaire.⁹

L'hypotension représente le facteur pronostique le plus important de l'EP. Dans l'étude observationnelle ICOPER, la mortalité à 90 jours était de 52,4% (95%CI 43,3-62,1%) chez les patients avec une pression artérielle systolique <90 mmHg et de 14,7% (95%CI 13,3-16,4%) chez les patients normotendus.¹⁰ Parallèlement à l'hypotension, la dysfonction VD¹¹ ainsi que l'augmentation des biomarqueurs (troponine, BNP)^{12, 13} sont des paramètres indépendants reliés à la mortalité dans les EP. Ainsi, les dernières recommandations de l'ESC, publiées en 2008, ont proposé de stratifier la gravité de l'EP en 3 stades, grave, intermédiaire et non grave, en fonction de la présence ou non de ces critères pronostics (hypotension, dysfonction VD, biomarqueurs). La stratégie thérapeutique est directement adaptée en fonction du stade de gravité (Tableau 1).¹⁴

Tableau 1 : stratification du risque des embolies pulmonaires, selon les recommandations de l'ESC.¹⁴

PE-related early MORTALITY RISK	RISK MARKERS			Potential treatment implications
	CLINICAL (shock or hypotension)	RV dysfunction	Myocardial injury	
HIGH >15%	+	(+) ^a	(+) ^a	Thrombolysis or embolectomy
NON HIGH	Inter mediate 3-15%	—	+	Hospital admission
		—	—	Early discharge or home treatment
Low <1%	—	—	—	

Evaluation échocardiographique du ventricule droit

L'évaluation de la fonction ventriculaire droite est donc au cœur de la prise en charge des EP. Celle-ci peut être effectuée par scanner¹⁵ ou de façon plus simple et plus précise, en échocardiographie.¹⁶ Plusieurs paramètres échocardiographiques ont été rattachés à l'existence d'une dysfonction VD et au pronostic des EP: les signes de surcharge VD¹⁷ avec un diamètre télé-diastolique VD (en para-sternale) >30 mm, un rapport diamètre VD/diamètre VG >1, un SIV paradoxal, un temps d'accélération du flux pulmonaire <90 ms ou un gradient d'insuffisance tricuspidienne (IT) >30 mmHg ; le signe 60/60, qui correspond à un temps d'accélération du flux pulmonaire <60 ms associé à un gradient d'IT ≤60 mmHg¹⁸ ; et le signe de McConnell avec une normokinésie ou une hyperkinésie de l'apex de la paroi libre du VD associée à une hypokinésie des segments médians et basaux.^{19, 20}

Paradoxalement, aucun de ces signes, sauf le dernier, n'appréhende directement la fonction systolique VD. Celle-ci est en effet très difficile à analyser en échocardiographie, notamment du fait de la forme du VD, en croissant, avec deux portions distincts, la chambre de remplissage et l'infundibulum.²¹ Il a été essayé d'adapter, au VD, la méthode d'évaluation de la fraction d'éjection VG par la formule de somation des disques de Simpson, mais une corrélation modérée avait été retrouvée, comparativement à la méthode de référence, l'IRM.²²

Dans ce cadre, des technologies d'analyse échocardiographique particulière, étudiant les paramètres de déformations myocardiques régionales (vélocities, Strain et Strain rate) permettent désormais d'avoir accès directement à la fonction systolique du VD.^{23, 24}

Le Strain représente la déformation relative d'un segment lors de la contraction myocardique et est défini par la formule suivante (Figure 1) :

$$\text{Strain (\%)} = (l_1 - l_0) / l_0$$

Avec un segment de longueur l_0 qui présente une longueur l_1 en réponse à une contraction.

Le Strain Rate dérive du Strain et mesure la vitesse de déformation.

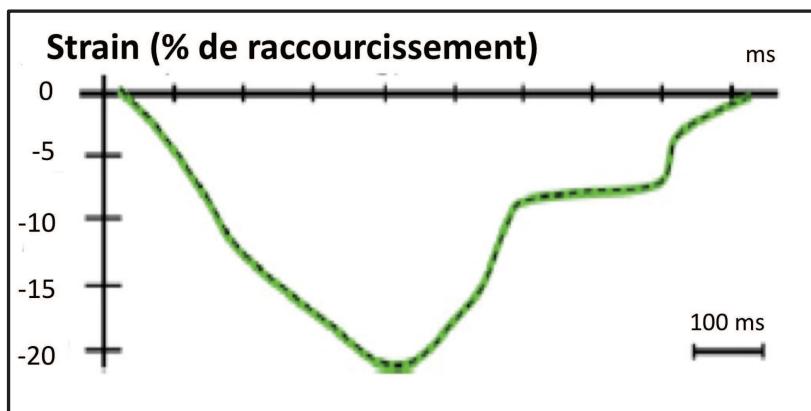


Figure 1: exemple de courbe de Strain au cours d'un cycle cardiaque, chez un sujet présentant une fonction cardiaque normale (d'après Gorcsan et al.¹).

Les paramètres de déformation myocardique ont été validés expérimentalement sur des fantômes²⁵ et sur des modèles animaux²⁶, comparativement à la méthode de référence, la sonomicrométrie, et sous différentes conditions de charge pour le VD.²⁷ Ils permettent de décrire le fonctionnement myocardique régional selon les 3 axes d'orientation des fibres musculaires, à savoir longitudinal, radial, et circonférentiel, ainsi que les mouvements de rotation entre l'apex et la base du cœur (Figure 2). A noter qu'au niveau du VD, l'orientation des fibres myocardiques est préférentiellement longitudinale.²⁸

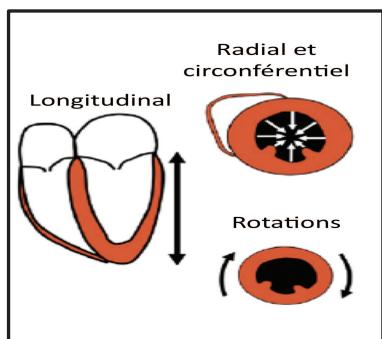


Figure 2 : évaluation des déformations myocardiques régionales en fonction de l'orientation des fibres musculaires.

Le Strain et les autres paramètres de déformation myocardique, peuvent être obtenus à partir du *Doppler Tissulaire* qui quantifie les vitesses de déplacement myocardique en estimant le délai temporel (ou décalage de phase) entre les signaux de radiofréquence réfléchis après l'émission d'une impulsion ultrasonore.²⁹ Cette technique présente comme principal inconvénient la nécessité d'un alignement strict du faisceau ultrasonore dans l'axe des mouvements myocardiques. Ainsi, seules les déformations longitudinales peuvent-être étudiées avec cette technique. De plus, la résolution spatiale est limitée et le temps de traitement et d'analyse des images est long, se faisant point par point.³⁰

Le Speckle Tracking

Une technologie récente d'analyse des images échographiques, le "*Speckle Tracking*", permet désormais de s'affranchir des limites du Doppler Tissulaire. Le Speckle Tracking repose sur l'analyse des pixels (speckles). Au niveau de chaque zone myocardique sélectionnée, le logiciel repère un groupe de pixels qu'il recherche et suit image par image, afin d'apprécier les déplacements dans les 3 axes (Figure 3).³¹

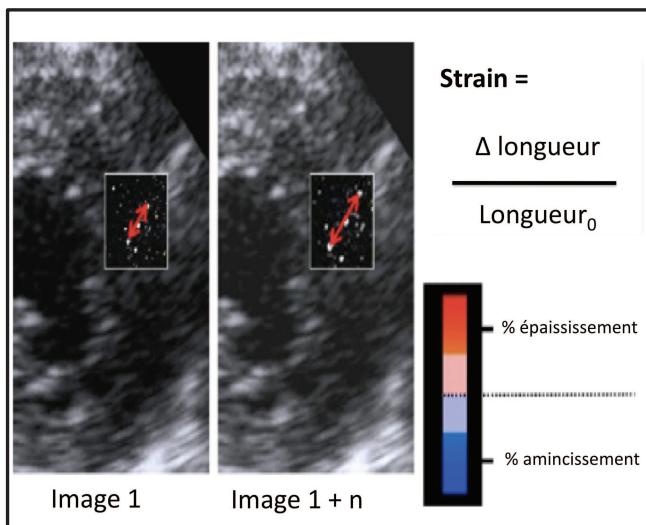


Figure 3: principes du Speckle Tracking.

Les paramètres échocardiographiques de déformation myocardique ont été étudiés dans pratiquement toutes les pathologies touchant de près ou de loin le VG.¹ Ils apparaissent comme étant liés à des anomalies myocardiques précliniques, non détectables par d'autres paramètres usuels, comme chez le coronarien stable³², la cardiomyopathie hypertrophique^{33, 34} ou la maladie de Fabry³⁴ par exemple. Ils ont par ailleurs été identifiés comme des facteurs pronostiques dans plusieurs pathologies cardiovasculaires.^{35, 36} En pratique clinique courante, ces paramètres échocardiographiques sont utilisés pour l'estimation des pressions de remplissage VG (vélocities

avec le pic de l'onde Ea à l'anneau mitral)³⁷ et peuvent permettre la distinction entre les diagnostics de cardiomyopathie restrictive et de constriction péricardique³⁸, et entre le cœur de sportif et une cardiomyopathie hypertrophique.³⁹

En ce qui concerne l'analyse du VD, une étude ayant inclus 88 patients, a trouvé que le Strain longitudinal VD était le paramètre échographique le mieux corrélé à la fraction d'éjection VD estimée en IRM.⁴⁰ Oxborough et al. ont récemment défini les valeurs normales du Strain longitudinal, obtenu en Speckle Tracking, chez des sujets sains.⁴¹ Par ailleurs, quelques études de petite taille ont évalué l'intérêt du Speckle Tracking dans les cardiopathies congénitales⁴², après un infarctus du myocarde inférieur⁴³, dans les hypertension artérielle pulmonaires^{44, 45}, dans la dysplasie arythmogène du VD⁴⁶ ainsi que dans l'EP, nous y reviendrons.

III.B. Travail de recherche

Comparison of right ventricular systolic function in patients with low risk and intermediate-to-high risk pulmonary embolism: a two-dimensional Strain imaging study

Il avait déjà été mis en évidence, à partir d'acquisitions en Doppler Tissulaire, une diminution du pic systolique de vélocité à l'anneau tricuspidé⁴⁷ ainsi qu'une diminution des valeurs de Strain longitudinal (Strain médian particulièrement) au niveau de la paroi latérale du VD chez des patients présentant une EP, notamment en cas d'obstruction vasculaire >25%.^{48, 49}

De plus, avant la publication de notre travail de recherche, seules 2 études avaient analysé l'intérêt du Speckle Tracking dans les EP. Platz et al. avaient montré une diminution du Strain au niveau du VD chez 75 patients ayant une EP, comparativement à 30 sujets contrôles.⁵⁰ Stergiopoulos et al. retrouvaient que le Strain VD était un facteur prédictif indépendant de mortalité après une EP, dans une petite étude ayant inclus 53 patients.⁵¹

Dans ce travail de recherche, nous avons utilisé le Speckle Tracking pour décrire la fonction systolique VD, évaluée par le Strain longitudinal VD, chez les patients présentant une EP grave ou de gravité intermédiaire, c'est à dire avec une dysfonction VD objectivée sur les paramètres échographiques 2D conventionnels, comparativement à un groupe de patients avec une EP non grave.

III.C.a Matériels et méthodes

Il s'agissait d'une étude monocentrique, descriptive, qui a inclus toutes les EP hospitalisées dans le service de Cardiologie du CHU de Besançon, entre Juin 2011 et Janvier 2012. Les critères d'inclusion étaient l'existence d'une EP objectivée par le scanner thoracique ou la scintigraphie de ventilation/perfusion. La gravité de l'EP était classée selon les recommandations de l'ESC, en fonction de l'état hémodynamique, de l'existence d'une dysfonction VD en échographie et d'une augmentation de la troponine et/ou du BNP.¹⁴

L'étude échographique a consisté, tout d'abord, en une analyse de paramètres conventionnels d'étude du VD : le diamètre télé-diastolique du VD, les aires télé-systoliques et télé-diastoliques du VD, la fraction de raccourcissement du VD, le rapport diamètre VD sur diamètre VG, la vitesse du flux d'IT, les pressions pulmonaires systoliques, l'existence d'un SIV paradoxal, l'excursion de l'anneau tricuspidé (TAPSE) ainsi que le pic systolique de l'onde S à l'anneau tricuspidé en doppler tissulaire. Ensuite, nous avons réalisé une mesure du Strain longitudinal au niveau de la

paroi latérale du VD et du SIV. Chacune de ces parois étant également divisée en 3 segments : basal, médian et apical.

III.B.c. Résultats

62 patients ont été inclus dans notre étude ; 33 patients (53%) présentaient une EP non grave et 26 (47%) une EP grave ou de gravité intermédiaire. Le taux de mortalité à 3 mois n'était pas statistiquement différent entre les 2 groupes (6,0% pour les patients ayant une EP grave ou de gravité intermédiaire vs 3,4% pour les EP non graves ; P =NS).

Par définition, l'ensemble des paramètres échographiques conventionnels d'étude du VD étaient significativement diminués chez les patients avec une EP grave ou de gravité intermédiaire. En ce qui concerne l'analyse en Speckle Tracking, le Strain longitudinal global (paroi latérale + SIV) était significativement plus bas en cas d'EP grave ou de gravité intermédiaire, comparativement aux patients ayant une EP non grave ($-13,1 \pm 4,8\%$ vs. $-18,7 \pm 4,9\%$, respectivement ; P <0,01). Les valeurs de Strain étaient diminuées au niveau de la paroi latérale ($-10,7 \pm 4,8\%$ vs. $-20,2 \pm 6,2\%$; P <0,01) et également du SIV ($-13,3 \pm 6,0\%$ vs. $-7,2 \pm 4,7\%$; P <0,01). L'analyse par segment a montré que seules les valeurs de Strain au niveau des segments latéro-médian, latéro-apical et septo-apical étaient significativement différentes entre les 2 groupes (Tableau 2).

Tableau 2 : valeurs du pic systolique de Strain longitudinal.

2D Strain (%)	Low risk (n=29)	Intermediate-to-high risk (n=26)	P value
Right ventricle (1)	-18.7 ± 4.9	-13.1 ± 4.8	<0.01
Free wall (2)	-20.2 ± 6.2	-12.7 ± 4.8	<0.01
- Basal	-20.8 ± 8.1	-18.9 ± 8.9	0.41
- Mid	-20.3 ± 7.6	-11.8 ± 5.6	<0.01
- Apical	-19.6 ± 6.9	-7.4 ± 9.1	<0.01
Septal wall (2)	-17.2 ± 4.7	-13.5 ± 6	<0.01
- Basal	-16.1 ± 5.6	-15.5 ± 6.6	0.74
- Mid	-17.7 ± 4.5	-15 ± 6.6	0.07
- Apical	-17.7 ± 7	-9.9 ± 8	<0.01

(1) Average of 6 segments; (2) Average of 3 segments

Les valeurs de Strain étaient faiblement corrélées aux autres paramètres échographiques, la plus forte corrélation étant avec le TAPSE avec un $r^2 = 0,35$ (P <0,01). Par contre, dans notre étude, nous n'avons pas retrouvé de corrélation entre le Strain VD et le taux de BNP et de troponine.

III.B.c. Conclusions

Dans cette étude descriptive, nous avons mis en évidence une dysfonction systolique VD, objectivée par une altération des valeurs de Strain longitudinal VD, chez les patients présentant une EP grave ou de gravité intermédiaire comparativement à un groupe de patients avec une EP non grave.

D'autres études seront nécessaires afin de déterminer si ces paramètres dérivés du Speckle Tracking peuvent fournir des informations supplémentaires pour l'évaluation du risque des patients présentant une EP.

Le tiré-à-part de la publication de ce travail dans le journal *Echocardiography* (2013 Mar;30(3):301-8) est fourni ci-après.

Comparison of Right Ventricular Systolic Function in Patients with Low Risk and Intermediate-to-High Risk Pulmonary Embolism: A Two-Dimensional Strain Imaging Study

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Aim: Right ventricular (RV) dysfunction is key for risk stratification in pulmonary embolism (PE). The goal of this study was to compare RV strain values between low and intermediate-to-high risk PE patients assessed by two-dimensional (2D) strain imaging. **Methods:** The inclusion criterion was a diagnosis of PE confirmed by thoracic computed tomography scan with contrast medium, or by scintigraphy perfusion lung scan. Risk stratification of PE was defined as high when there was hemodynamic instability; intermediate when there were signs of RV dysfunction on echocardiography; and/or elevated troponin I and/or brain natriuretic peptide and low when none of these criteria were present. All patients underwent echocardiography at admission. Apical four-chamber images were analyzed off line using both conventional and 2D strain imaging. **Results:** Sixty-two patients (mean age 66 years) were prospectively recruited: 33 with low risk PE, 29 with intermediate-to-high risk PE. Global 2D RV strain differed significantly between groups (-13.1% vs. -18.7% , $P < 0.01$), as did free wall (-12.7% vs. -20.2% , $P < 0.016$) and septal wall (-13.5% vs. -17.2% , $P < 0.01$). When the RV was divided into segments, we observed a similar reduction in absolute strain value in the mid and apical free wall segments and in the apical septal wall (-20.3 ± -7.6 vs. $-11.8 \pm 8.9\%$; $P < 0.01$ and -19.6 ± 6.9 vs. $-7.4 \pm 9.1\%$; $P < 0.01$, and -17.7 ± 7.0 vs. 9.9 ± 8.0 ; $P < 0.01$, respectively). 2D strain and tricuspid annular plane systolic excursion were significantly related ($r^2 = 0.35$, $P < 0.01$). **Conclusions:** Peak RV longitudinal 2D strain is reduced in patients with intermediate-to-high risk PE, especially in the apical and mid segments of the free wall. Global and regional RV longitudinal 2D strain is altered in patients with intermediate-to-high risk PE as compared with low risk PE. (Echocardiography 2013;30:301-308)

Key words: pulmonary embolism, right ventricular strain, risk stratification

Pulmonary embolism (PE) is a frequent cardiovascular pathology and its severity is related to the extent of vascular obstruction and the presence or absence of right ventricular (RV) dysfunction. The evaluation of RV dysfunction is therefore an essential step in risk stratification in the setting of PE, as underlined in the European Society of Cardiology guidelines for the management and treatment of PE.¹

Echocardiography is a simple and widely available imaging technique that can be used at the bedside round the clock, and which is suitable for evaluating RV dysfunction. Echocardiographic anomalies that should raise suspicion of PE include RV dilatation, tricuspid regurgitation jet

velocity >2.5 m/sec, and paradoxical septal motion. More specific signs have been described, such as the "McConnell sign," defined by an akinesia of the mid-free wall RV but normal motion at the apex) and the "60/60" sign.^{2,3}

Evaluation of the degree of deformation of the ventricular walls by tissue Doppler imaging (TDI), which measures TDI strain, is another method of exploring RV function.⁴ In the context of PE, the peak ventricular deformation is decreased for the middle part of the ventricle wall, whereas it remains normal for the basal and apical segments.^{5,6} RV deformation is also related to the extent of vascular obstruction as estimated by perfusion scan.⁷ However, TDI is dependent upon the angle of insonation which can limit spatial resolution.⁸

Conversely, the more recent speckle tracking technique is angle independent and enables easier assessment of both regional and global

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systolic strain from two-dimensional (2D) strain imaging.⁹ There is currently only very few data available evaluating 2D strain measures in the RV in the context of PE.¹⁰⁻¹²

The aim of our study was to compare RV 2D strain imaging parameters in patients with PE according to the level of risk (low vs. intermediate-to-high risk).

Methods:

Study Population:

We performed a single-center, prospective study from June 2011 to January 2012. All patients admitted in the Cardiac Intensive Care Unit for symptomatic PE were included after written informed consent was obtained, regardless of their age, sex, or comorbidities. The inclusion criterion was a diagnosis of PE confirmed by thoracic computed tomography scan with contrast medium, or by scintigraphy perfusion lung scan.

Risk stratification was according to the guidelines of the European Society of Cardiology.¹ Risk was defined as high when there was hemodynamic instability (i.e., systolic blood pressure <90 mmHg, or a pressure drop of ≥ 40 mmHg for more than 15 minutes); intermediate when there were signs of RV dysfunction on echocardiography (i.e., presence of at least 2 of the following: RV/left ventricular (LV) ratio >1 ; paradoxical septal motion; tricuspid insufficiency velocity >3 m/sec) and/or elevated troponin I and/or brain natriuretic peptide (BNP); and low when none of these criteria were present. We divided patients into 2 groups according to the presence or absence of RV dysfunction, that is, intermediate and high-risk patients together, versus low-risk patients.

Patients were treated according to current guidelines.¹ All of them received initial anticoagulant therapy with intravenous unfractionated heparin or subcutaneous low-molecular-weights heparins. For patients with high risk PE, additional thrombolysis was performed. For intermediate risk PE, thrombolysis was performed in patients who experienced a deterioration of their hemodynamic status, and was left at the discretion of the physician on duty.

Echocardiographic Analysis:

Conventional echocardiography was performed at the bedside at the time of diagnosis using a portable echo device (Vivid I; General Electric, Milwaukee, WI, USA), using a 3 MHz transducer. Echocardiography was performed with patients lying down on their left side. Echographic parameters used to establish the diagnosis of RV dysfunction were measured as previously

described:¹³ end-diastolic RV diameter in the apical four-chamber view and the parasternal long axis; end-diastolic and end-systolic RV area; tricuspid regurgitation jet velocity in meters per second (m/sec) in the apical four-chamber or parasternal short-axis view; paradoxical septal motion in the parasternal short axis; RV/LV ratio calculated with end-diastolic diameters in the apical four-chamber view. Tricuspid Annular Plane Systolic Excursion (TAPSE) was measured (M-mode recording through the apex of the RV and the junction between the RV free wall and the tricuspid annulus), as well as maximum systolic velocity of the tricuspid annulus by TDI, end-systolic and end-diastolic RV area, fractional area change (defined as [end-diastolic RV area – end-systolic RV area]/end-diastolic RV area $\times 100$). Pulmonary artery systolic pressure was determined by added right atrial pressure to the gradient between RV and right atrium assessed on the basis of inferior vena cava and inspiratory collapse.

For 2D strain imaging acquisition, the RV was visualized in the four-chamber apical view, at a frame rate of almost 80 frames/sec. Images from 3 cardiac cycles were recorded and were subsequently analyzed offline by 2 independent operators (VDG, MM) using dedicated software (Echopac station version 6.1.0; Vingmed ultrasound, General Electric).

Myocardial 2D strain deformation was assessed with the following procedure: The RV was divided into 2 walls, the septal wall and the free wall, with each wall subsequently divided into 3 segments (basal, mid, and apical). Longitudinal 2D strain was measured for each of the 6 segments, for the 2 walls, and globally for the whole RV, in all patients. For each segment, we recorded the average of the measurements from the 2 observers. Each observer was blinded to the other observer's results and to actual patient risk status. Overall, RV longitudinal strain was calculated as the average of the 6 segments (average of the 3 segments from each of the free and septal walls).

Left ventricular ejection fraction was evaluated from apical four- and two-chamber views by using biplane Simpson's method.

Statistical Analysis:

Quantitative data are presented as mean \pm standard deviation (SD) and qualitative data as number and percentage. Comparisons between groups were performed using the Student's *t*-test, the chi-square test, and Fisher's exact test as appropriate. Interobserver reproducibility was assessed using the Bland-Altman method, plotting the average of the measures from both observers against the difference between measures from both observers for each of the 6

segments in all patients.¹⁴ Linear regression curves were established to compare the 2D strain values with conventional echocardiographic measures of RV dysfunction (RV/LV ratio, TAPSE, tricuspid insufficiency maximal velocity, fractional area change, maximum systolic velocity of the tricuspid annulus by tissue Doppler). All analyses were performed using the SAS system, version 9.2 (SAS Institute Inc., Cary, NC, USA). A P-value of <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Results:

During the enrollment period, 71 patients were hospitalized in our department for PE. Among the 71 patients, all patients underwent echocardiography, but the exam was recorded and available for analysis in 62 patients (26 female, 42%). Average age was 66 ± 19 years (range 19–89). Diagnosis of PE were done by CT pulmonary angiography ($n = 42$, 67%) and ventilation perfusion isotope scans ($n = 20$, 33%). Thirty-three patients (53%) were considered to have low-risk PE, and 26 (47%) had intermediate-to-high risk PE. The baseline characteristics of the study population are presented in Table I.

TABLE I
Baseline Characteristics of the Study Population

	Low Risk (n = 33)	Intermediate- to-high Risk (n = 29)	P-value
Males/females	17/16	13/16	0.087
Age (years)	63 ± 21	69 ± 16	0.270
History of VTE	5 (15%)	3 (10%)	0.830
COPD	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	0.080
Cancer	6 (18%)	4 (14%)	0.490
Diabetes	5 (15%)	2 (7%)	0.290
Obesity	5 (15%)	1 (3%)	0.060
Heart rate (beats/min)	84 ± 16	102 ± 19	<0.01
Syncope (n)	0	8 (27%)	<0.01
ECG modifications	3 (9%)	16 (48%)	<0.01
Systolic blood pressure (mmHg)	141 ± 19	128 ± 26	0.062
Diastolic blood pressure (mmHg)	81 ± 15	76 ± 15	0.242
Troponin I ($\mu\text{g/L}$)	<0.15	0.87 ± 1.31	<0.01
Troponin positive	0	18 (62%)	<0.01
BNP (pg/mL)	64 ± 62	467 ± 537	<0.01
Initial anticoagulant			
Unfractionated heparin	15 (45%)	16 (55%)	0.850
LMWH	18 (54%)	13 (44%)	0.245
Thrombolytic therapy	0 (0%)	10 (34%)	<0.01

VTE = venous thromboembolism; COPD = chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; Bpm = beats/minute; BNP = brain natriuretic peptide; LMWH = low-molecular-weight heparins. ECG modifications defined as right bundle branch block, S1Q3 aspect, negative anterior T-waves.

During the in-hospital phase, we observed no deaths or recurrent PE. At 3 months, all-cause mortality was similar between groups (3.4%, in the low risk PE group vs. 6.0%, in the intermediate-to-high risk PE group, $P = \text{NS}$). Bleeding complications occurred only in the intermediate-to-high risk group ($n = 5$, 15.1%).

The echocardiographic characteristics of the study population are shown in Table II. By definition, in the intermediate-to-high risk group, there was dilatation of the right cavities (right to left ventricle ratio of 1.1 ± 0.3), associated with the presence of paradoxical septal motion. Average systolic pulmonary artery pressure was 52 ± 14 mmHg. Furthermore, we observed a significant decrease in the other criteria of RV dysfunction (namely TAPSE, RV fractional area change, S-wave velocity at the tricuspid annulus) in the intermediate-to-high risk group as compared with the low risk group. No significant correlation was observed between conventional echocardiographic parameters and troponin or BNP.

TABLE II
Echocardiographic Characteristics of the Study Population at Baseline

	Low Risk (n = 29)	Intermediate- to-high Risk (n = 26)	P-value
LV end-diastolic diameter (mm)	47 ± 7.7	41 ± 8.3	0.018
LV end-systolic diameter (mm)	28 ± 6	27 ± 6	0.32
Ejection fraction (%)	69 ± 10	63 ± 13	0.11
LV end-diastolic volume (mL)	105 ± 38	80 ± 35.5	0.018
LV end-systolic volume (mL)	33 ± 16	28 ± 16	0.32
RV/LV ratio	0.65 ± 0.15	1.1 ± 0.3	<0.01
Paradoxical septal motion (n)	1	20	<0.01
Tricuspid insufficiency peak velocity (m/sec)	2.6 ± 0.7	3.3 ± 0.5	<0.01
Systolic PAP (mmHg)	34 ± 11	52 ± 14	<0.01
TAPSE (mm)	18.5 ± 5.2	15.1 ± 4.1	0.01
Fractional area change (%)	46 ± 14	29 ± 13	<0.01
RV end-diastolic area (cm^2)	17.5 ± 1.8	22.4 ± 6.8	<0.01
RV end-systolic area (cm^2)	9.2 ± 3.3	15.8 ± 5.4	<0.01
Peak S at tricuspid annulus (m/sec)	10.1 ± 2.9	8.1 ± 1.9	<0.01

LV = left ventricular; RV = right ventricular; PAP = pulmonary arterial pressure; TAPSE = tricuspid annular plane systolic excursion.

Interobserver variability for assessment of 2D strain parameters was evaluated using the Bland-Altman test (Fig. 1). The average interobserver difference in 2D strain measures was -0.23 ± 5.84 (2 SD = 11.45; range -22, +31).

By 2D strain, overall peak systolic longitudinal strain was $-16.0 \pm 5.6\%$ for the RV in the whole population; $-16.7 \pm 6.7\%$ for the free wall and $-15.4 \pm 5.7\%$ for the septal wall. An example of 2D strain measurement in a patient with intermediate risk PE is shown in Figure 2. We observed a significant difference in 2D strain values between the 2 risk groups, with a significantly lower absolute value in the intermediate-to-high risk group as compared with low risk PE group ($-13.1 \pm 4.8\%$ vs. $-18.7 \pm 4.9\%$, $P < 0.01$). This difference was also observed in the 2D strain values obtained in the RV free wall ($-1.7 \pm 4.8\%$ vs. $-20.2 \pm 6.2\%$, $P < 0.01$) and in the septal wall (-13.5 ± 6.0 vs. $-17.2 \pm 4.7\%$, $P < 0.01$). When the RV was divided into segments, we observed a similar reduction in absolute strain value in the mid and apical free wall segments and in the apical septal wall (Table III).

Peak systolic strain was significantly correlated with TAPSE ($r^2 = 0.35$, $P < 0.01$). It was also significantly correlated with RV/LV ratio, maximal tricuspid regurgitation velocity, peak S-wave velocity at the tricuspid annulus and fractional area change, albeit with lower correlation coefficients (Fig. 3). No significant correlation was observed between peak systolic strain and troponin or BNP and levels of correlation were close with those observed with conventional measurements.

Discussion:

Our results show a reduction in RV longitudinal strain in the presence of intermediate-to-high risk PE, as compared with low-risk PE patients. The

reduction was observed over the entire RV, in both the septal and free walls.

To our knowledge, the RV systolic function in PE remains poorly described with the use of 2D strain imaging and reduction of RV strain values in intermediate-to-high risk PE were not previously reported. Previous studies reported a reduction of the regional RV longitudinal strain values in the context of PE as compared with healthy subjects.^{10,15} Furthermore, Stergiopoulos et al.¹¹ reported that 2D strain RV parameters were significantly correlated with in-hospital mortality in 53 patients.

Before the advent of 2D strain imaging, several studies of strain were performed using TDI.^{6,7} Peak strain measured by this method appears to be slightly lower than in our study, at a similar level of PE severity. In the study by Park et al.,⁶ which included patients with intermediate severity criteria, strain was evaluated at -5% in the midventricle, -10% for the apex and -17% for the base. Similarly, Kjaergaard et al.⁷ evaluated peak systolic strain at -1% and -7% in the mid part of the RV free wall, when perfusion defects were, respectively, 25–49% or >50 .

In our study, the differences between groups were not observed for all segments of the free wall. Indeed, We observed that peak strain value at the basal segment was similar in both groups. These results are in line with those reported by Kjaergaard et al.,⁷ who also failed to observe any variation in strain at the level of the basal segment of the free wall, contrary to the mid. This finding is coherent with the McConnell sign, which emphasized the existence of hypokinesia in the mid part of the RV free wall.³ Furthermore, Sugiura et al.¹⁰ observed that when RV dysfunction persisted despite appropriate therapy, peak systolic strain was significantly lower in the apical and mid segments of the RV free wall, compared with healthy volunteers, whereas there was no significant difference was observed in the basal segment of the free wall.

One of the possible explanations for this is to be found in the anatomy. Indeed, in the apical four-chamber view, the apical segment is part of the RV outflow tract, and the basal segment is part of the inflow tract. The inflow tract is mainly composed of circumferentially oriented subepicardial fibers contrary to the outflow tract, where layers of fibers are rather longitudinally oriented.^{16–18} In this context, a previous study reported a reduction in RV outflow tract fractional shortening in patients with pulmonary hypertension, whereas TAPSE, which measures longitudinal function of the inflow tract, did not vary significantly.¹⁹ We thus considered the peak systolic values obtained for the mid and apical segments of the free wall could be most relevant.

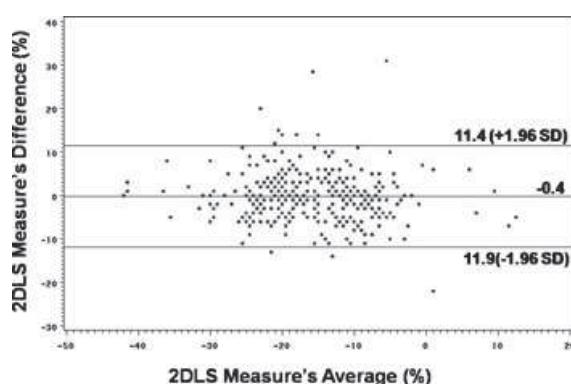


Figure 1. Bland-Altman test of 2-dimensional longitudinal strain measures.

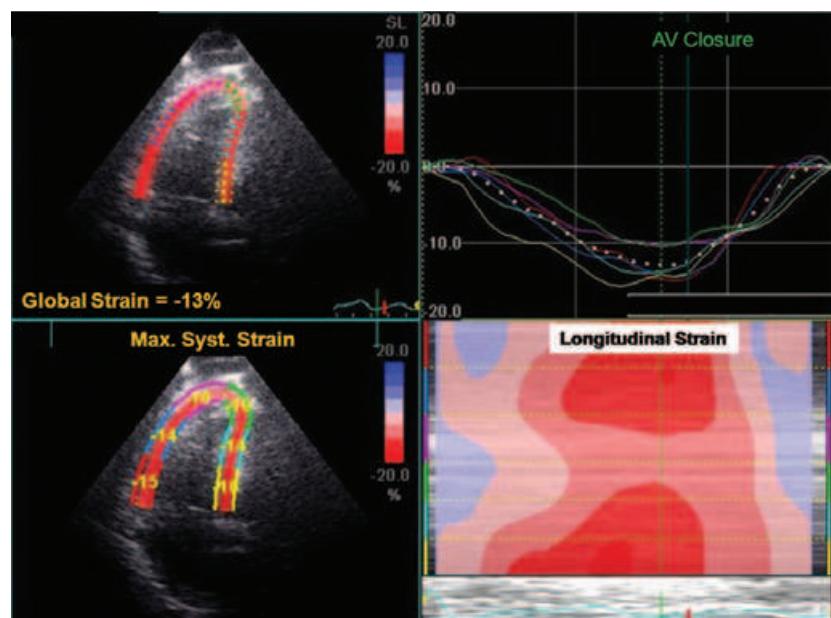


Figure 2. Example of two-dimensional longitudinal right ventricular strain in a patient with intermediate-risk pulmonary embolism. Global strain was evaluated at -13% , and varied between -10% and -16% for the 6 predefined segments.

TABLE III

Peak Longitudinal Two-dimensional (2D) Strain Measures in the Study Population

2D Strain (%)	Low Risk (n = 29)	Intermediate-to-high Risk (n = 26)	P-value
Right ventricle*	-18.7 ± 4.9	-13.1 ± 4.8	<0.01
Free wall†	-20.2 ± 6.2	-12.7 ± 4.8	<0.01
Basal	-20.8 ± 8.1	-18.9 ± 8.9	0.41
Mid	-20.3 ± 7.6	-11.8 ± 5.6	<0.01
Apical	-19.6 ± 6.9	-7.4 ± 9.1	<0.01
Septal wall†	-17.2 ± 4.7	-13.5 ± 6	<0.01
Basal	-16.1 ± 5.6	-15.5 ± 6.6	0.74
Mid	-17.7 ± 4.5	-15 ± 6.6	0.07
Apical	-17.7 ± 7	-9.9 ± 8	<0.01

*Average of 6 segments.

†Average of 3 segments.

One of the major difficulties is the lack of gold standard for “normal” RV longitudinal strain values, by 2D strain. Two studies have reported assessment of RV function in healthy subjects using 2D strain. The first reported a 2D strain value of -24.8% for the whole free wall, and showed good correlation with values obtained by TDI.²⁰ The second study, also in healthy subjects, reported RV longitudinal 2D strain of -25.5% , -28.6% and -31.5% , respectively, in the basal, mid, and apical segments.²¹ A recent study by Meris et al.²² proposed a cutoff value of

-19% to distinguish normal and impaired RV function. This study also underlined the difference in longitudinal strain between the RV free wall and the septum, as we also observed in our study.

In our study, peak systolic strain of the RV free wall was on average -20% in the group without signs of RV dysfunction, that is, lower than what is reported in the literature. This raises the question of the sensitivity of this criterion. Unlike the control groups in the works cited above, our study did not include a group of healthy controls, but rather 2 groups with PE of varying degrees of risk. We can thus suppose that, while these subjects may not have had any signs of RV dysfunction according to the classic criteria (i.e., RV dilatation, paradoxical septal motion, tricuspid regurgitation velocity), there likely existed some level of dysfunction that could only be detected early by 2D strain analysis.

We observed a moderate, albeit significant correlation between peak longitudinal 2D strain of the RV free wall, in particular the mid segment, and TAPSE. These 2 measures are indeed quite close to each other, as they both assess longitudinal deformation. Similarly, we also observed significant, albeit slightly weaker correlations between peak 2D strain and the other echographic criteria of RV dysfunction, underlining how difficult it is in practice to quantify this dysfunction, since so-called “classic” criteria of RV dysfunction may not always be sensitive enough to detect a low level of RV dysfunction.

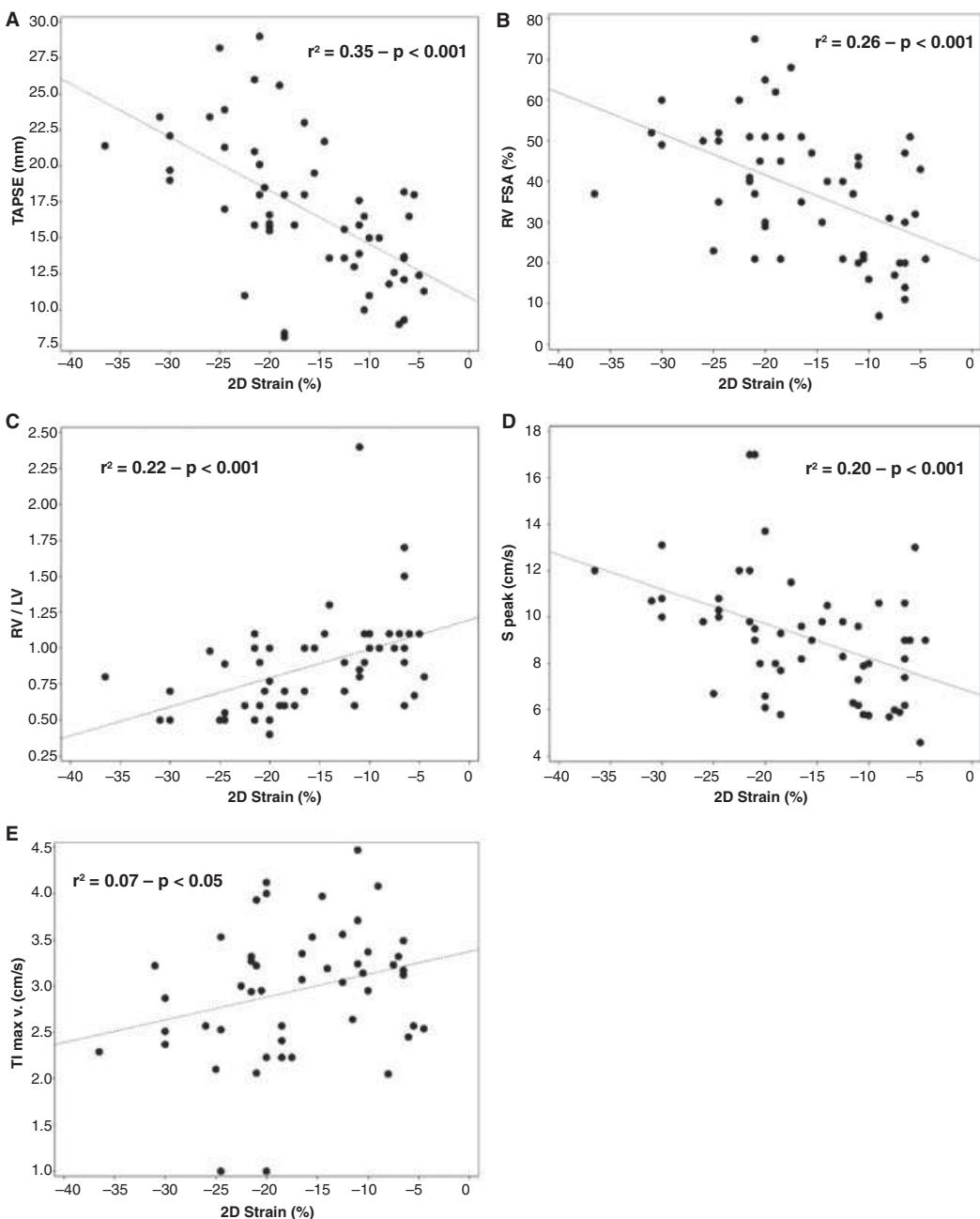


Figure 3. Linear regression curves between peak systolic longitudinal 2-dimensional strain of the mid segment of the right ventricular (RV) free wall and tricuspid annular plane systolic excursion ($P < 0.01$, $r^2 = 0.35$) **A**; RV fractional area change ($P < 0.01$, $r^2 = 0.23$) **B**; right to left ventricle ratio ($P < 0.01$, $r^2 = 0.2$) **C**; peak S at tricuspid annulus by tissue Doppler ($P < 0.01$, $r^2 = 0.19$) **D**, and maximal tricuspid insufficiency velocity ($P = 0.05$, $r^2 = 0.05$) **E**.

For example, for a RV/LV ratio between 0.6 and 1.0, 2D strain varied between -5% and -35% in our study, representing considerably different profiles of RV function.

We also observed an average pulmonary artery systolic pressure of 52 mmHg in the group at intermediate-to-high risk, which is in the higher end of the expected range in this population, who had no RV dysfunction. In a population

such as this, a pulmonary artery pressure in the range of 36 mmHg would have been expected.²³ However, this can be explained by the fact that we included all-comers in this study, and among the 26 patients in the intermediate-to-high risk group, 23% had had previous thrombo-embolic disease, and 1 additional patient (4%) who had chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. These patients were likely to

have had preexisting pulmonary arterial hypertension, which may have been exacerbated by the acute PE.

Detecting RV dysfunction is an important element of the initial workup of PE. The presence of RV dysfunction is a prognostic factor for short-term mortality.^{24–26} In a recent meta-analysis, the relative risk of death was multiplied by 2.5 in the presence of echocardiographic signs of RV dysfunction.²⁷ Similarly, according to the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) guidelines, mortality is <3% in low-risk patients, but can be up to 15% in the presence of RV dysfunction.¹ We did not observe any such difference in our study, where clinical evolution during the in-hospital phase and at 3 months was similar in both groups. However, 2 criticisms can be made of classic echocardiographic criteria of RV dysfunction. Firstly, they have a low sensitivity, ranging between 55% and 70%, and secondly, specificity plummets from 90% to 21% when the patient has a history of cardiopulmonary disease. Therefore, it is likely that more sensitive echocardiographic measures such as 2D strain could be of particular use in evaluating risk in this setting.

Conclusion:

Peak RV longitudinal 2D strain is reduced in patients with intermediate-to-high risk PE, especially in the apical and mid segments of the free wall. This measure could be used to quantify RV dysfunction, particularly when so-called “classic” criteria are not sufficient to confirm or rule out the diagnosis. Further studies are warranted to identify a threshold value that would define RV dysfunction and to assess the prognostic value of this measure.

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III.C. Mise à jour

Le principal fait marquant ces dernières années concernant les EP est la publication de l'étude PEITHO, qui s'est intéressée au traitement des EP de gravité intermédiaire. Par ailleurs, quelques études, concernant l'intérêt du Speckle Tracking dans cette pathologie, ont été publiées. Enfin, des développements technologiques en échocardiographie sont en cours pour l'étude du VD, avec l'analyse en 3D pour le calcul de la fraction d'éjection et pour le Speckle Tracking.

III.C.a.Traitemennt des embolies pulmonaires de gravité intermédiaire

Jusqu'à très récemment, la prise en charge des EP de gravité intermédiaire était mal définie, par manque de données spécifiques. Les dernières recommandations de l'ESC de 2008, reposant principalement sur une étude randomisée de 256 patients⁵², stipulent que le traitement thrombolytique peut être envisagé chez les patients ne présentant pas un sur-risque hémorragique, sans plus de précision.

Les résultats de l'étude PEITHO (The Pulmonary Embolism Thrombolysis trial), publiés cette année, ont apporté des réponses plus étayées sur la place de la thrombolyse dans l'EP de gravité intermédiaire.⁵³ L'étude PEITHO était une étude multicentrique qui a inclus 1006 patients randomisés pour recevoir, soit de l'héparine + placebo (500 patients), soit de l'héparine + un traitement thrombolytique (tenecteplase, 506 patients). Les critères d'inclusion étaient une EP de gravité intermédiaire associant une stabilité hémodynamique, des signes de dysfonction VD (en échographie ou en scanner) et une augmentation de la troponine. Les résultats montrent une réduction du taux de survécu du critère primaire d'efficacité, décès ou instabilité hémodynamique au cours des sept premiers jours, comparativement à l'héparine seule (thrombolyse 2,6% vs. héparine 5,6%; OR: 0,44; 95%CI 0,23-0,87; P =0,02), liée principalement à une réduction des épisodes d'instabilité hémodynamique (P =0,002). Par contre, le nombre de saignements extra-crâniens majeurs et d'accidents neurologiques à 7 jours étaient significativement plus importants dans le groupe thrombolyse (P <0,001 et P =0,003, respectivement). L'analyse des sous-groupes montrait que le taux d'accidents hémorragiques extra-crâniens était moins élevé chez les patients ≤75 ans (P =0,09).

Ces résultats semblent indiquer un bénéfice à l'administration d'un traitement thrombolytique dans les EP de gravité intermédiaire, préférentiellement chez les patients âgés de 75 ans et

moins. Les prochaines recommandations de l'ESC, qui doivent être publiées cette année, seront probablement modifiées au vu des résultats de cette étude.

III.C.b.Embolie pulmonaire et Speckle Tracking

Depuis la publication de notre travail, 2 autres études ont analysé l'intérêt du Speckle Tracking dans les EP.

Vitarelli et al. ont montré que le Strain longitudinal VD, particulièrement le Strain médian, était réduit dans les EP de gravité intermédiaire ($n = 66$), comparativement à un groupe contrôle ($n = 66$), et que ce paramètre représentait un facteur prédictif indépendant de la survenue d'événements à 6 mois en analyse multivariée (HR : 2,95 ; 95%CI : 1,31-3,23 ; P =0,02).⁵⁴

Ichikawa et al., quant à eux, ont montré que les patients avec une EP aiguë ($n = 37$) et ceux porteurs d'un cœur pulmonaire chronique (CPC) ($n = 36$) présentaient une altération, à la fois du Strain longitudinal VD, et altération des valeurs de Strain longitudinal, radial et circonférentiel VG, comparativement à un groupe de sujets contrôles ($n = 33$). De plus, il était mis en évidence, en Speckle Tracking, un asynchronisme intra-VG et cet asynchronisme était plus important en cas d'EP aiguë qu'en cas de CPC.⁵⁵

III.C.c. Développements technologiques : acquisitions en 3 dimensions (3D)

La limite principale de l'échographie bi-dimensionnelle (2D) pour l'analyse du VD est que cette technique ne visualise au maximum que deux parois, la paroi latérale du VD et le SIV, en sachant que ce dernier participe également à la fonction systolique VG. L'utilisation de la 3D semble pouvoir permettre de mieux appréhender la géométrie complexe du VD. A partir d'une acquisition en apicale 4 cavités modifiée⁵⁶, les algorithmes de reconstruction représentent directement les 3 parois de la chambre de remplissage (parois antérieure, latérale et SIV) ainsi que l'infundibulum pulmonaire. Il a été retrouvé une bonne corrélation entre l'échocardiographie 3D et l'IRM, pour l'estimation des volumes télé-diastoliques et télé-systoliques VD ainsi que pour le calcul de la fraction d'éjection VD ($r = 0,83$, $r = 0,77$ et $r = 0,72$ respectivement).⁵⁷ De plus, une étude récente a montré la possibilité d'effectuer des acquisitions en Speckle Tracking 3D à partir d'un échographe Toshiba (Toshiba Medical System, Toochigi, Japon). Le VD est divisé arbitrairement en 16 segments et le logiciel analyse automatiquement les différents paramètres de déformation myocardique.⁵⁸

III.D. Conclusions

Le VD est au centre du processus physio-pathologique de l'EP ; sa dysfonction constituant un important facteur pronostique.

Le fonctionnement du VD peut facilement être évalué au lit du malade par échocardiographie. Dans ce travail de recherche, nous avons utilisé une technologie récente d'échocardiographie, le Speckle Tracking, afin d'analyser la fonction systolique VD dans les EP en fonction de leur stade de gravité. Notre étude était l'une des premières sur le sujet et nous avons pu observer une altération du strain longitudinal VD en cas d'EP grave ou de gravité intermédiaire.

Notre travail, comme celui de Vitarelli et al. et celui de Ichikawa et al., semble indiquer que l'étude du Strain VD pourrait avoir un intérêt dans la stratification du risque des EP de gravité intermédiaire, peut-être lorsque les biomarqueurs ne sont pas augmentés.

Le Speckle Tracking apparaît être un outil intéressant et fiable pour l'évaluation des fonctions systoliques régionales. Cependant, particulièrement pour l'étude du VD, les développements technologiques avec la représentation en 3D sont primordiaux, afin d'appréhender au mieux l'ensemble de sa morphologie.

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Conclusion générale

Pour ce travail de thèse, nous avons réalisé cinq études originales en utilisant trois technologies d'imagerie cardiovasculaire non-invasive.

-Nous avons démontré, à partir d'une étude ex-vivo sur des artères coronaires humaines, que le scanner 64 détecteurs ne permettait pas de caractériser précisément les différents composants des plaques. La distinction des plaques fibreuses et des plaques lipidiques est en effet impossible. Par ailleurs, notre travail a montré que l'IVUS ne devait pas servir d'imagerie de référence lors des études sur la plaque car cet examen présente lui aussi de nombreuses imprécisions.

-Notre travail sur la thrombo-aspiration rapporte un effet très significatif de l'extraction effective de thrombus lors des thrombo-aspirations à la phase aiguë des STEMI, avec une réduction de la taille du no-reflow et de l'infarctus, évaluées en IRM ; une thrombo-aspiration positive représentant par ailleurs dans notre travail, un critère indépendamment lié à la taille finale de l'infarctus. L'extraction effective de thrombus pourrait être considérée, en salle de cathétérisme, comme un critère de jugement de l'efficacité de la thrombo-aspiration.

-Notre étude sur les syndromes coronaires à coronaires angiographiquement normales a confirmé l'intérêt de l'IRM dans le bilan étiologique de cette présentation clinique, permettant un diagnostic étiologique dans 2/3 des cas. Par ailleurs, nous avons observé une excellente évolution pour le tiers des patients chez qui l'IRM ne décèle pas d'anomalie myocardique. Des études d'une plus grande envergure seront nécessaires afin de confirmer nos résultats.

-Par ailleurs, nous avons pu déterminer une valeur seuil de troponine prédictive de la survenue d'un no-reflow, chez des patients ayant présenté un premier épisode de STEMI.

-Enfin, à partir d'analyses en Speckle Tracking, nous avons mis en évidence une dysfonction systolique VD, objectivée par une altération des valeurs de Strain longitudinal VD, chez les patients présentant une EP grave ou de gravité intermédiaire, comparativement à un groupe de patients avec une EP non grave.

