Keywords: Hemiplegia; Muscle spasticity; Nerve block; Neurotomy; Tendon lengthening

Introduction.– The spastic equinovarus foot is a common deformity among hemiplegic patients. The reasons were shown to be varied and complex explaining why a single procedure does not exist to correct all deformities. The treatments described in the literature are physical therapy, stretching, orthosis, functional electrical stimulation, chemodenervation with botulinum toxin, phenol or alcohol, selective neurotomy, intrathecal baclofen therapy and tendon lengthening and transfer. However, no practical guidelines are available as a guide for the management of the spastic foot.

Aim.– To establish guidelines for the treatment of the spastic equinovarus foot among hemiplegic patients.

Results.– The diagnostic nerve block with anaesthetics of the motor nerve branches of the tibial nerve is mandatory to determine the cause(s) of the deformity. The spastic foot in stance phase is due to spasticity and/or contracture of the calf muscles (soleus, gastrocnemius, tibialis posterior and flexor hallucis and digitorum). The spastic foot in swing phase is also related to the lack of activation of dorsiflexors and/or imbalance between tibialis anterior and peroneus muscles. The spasticity will be treated with botulinum toxin injections and neurotomy, the contracture by tenotomy, the weakness by orthosis and functional electrical stimulation and imbalance by tendon transfer. These treatments are frequently combined.

Conclusion.– We present our personal guidelines for the treatment of the spastic equinovarus foot. The diagnostic nerve block helps to determine the respective responsibility of the spasticity, of the contracture, of the weakness and of the imbalance in the deformity allowing us to choose the most appropriate treatment(s).

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A new approach to treatment of foot-drop syndrome with functional electrical stimulation in chronic stroke patients

C. De Labachelerie, a, b, C. Azevedo Coste b, J. Pelisier a, I. Laffont a, J. Froger a

a CHU Nîmes, route de Caron, 30240 Le-Grau-du-Roi, France
b INRIA, DEMAR, LIRMM (Labo. Informatique, robotique et microélectronique de Montpellier), France

* Corresponding author.
E-mail address: cdelabach@gmail.com

Keywords: Dropfoot; Orthotic effect; Gait; FES; Paralysis

Background.– Functional electrical stimulation in stroke patients showed orthotic and therapeutic effects on foot-drop syndrome [1,2]. Drawbacks of classical methods using footswitch are poor adaptability, muscle fatigue leading to poor foot-drop correction during the day and often wired connection. We are developing a new method to monitor in a continuous manner gait cycles phases with accelerometry, angular rate and magnetic field measurements in combination. Thanks to this approach, we can implement a pre-programmed stimulation pattern adapted to the recorded measures. The aim of this study is to assess validity of gait cycle measurement in stroke patients.

Methods.– Fifteen chronic stroke patients performed three trials in three different conditions: no stimulation, classic stimulation triggered by heel switch and stimulation triggered by gait event detection extracted from the continuous analysis of gait cycles. Data are compared to those given by electronic footprints assessment (Garitte®). Results.– This method of continuous gait analysis is able to accurately detect heel-off and heel-on gait events and thus trigger tibial nerve stimulation when desired.

Discussion.– Only one measure has been done whereas evaluation after a training period and a new adaptation of parameters would have allowed the individualization of the procedure. However, performances are at least similar to the classic footswitch based stimulation.

Conclusion.– This study, validate this new approach. Future developments should permit to assess stimulation timing, adaptation of stimulation pattern to dorsiflexors force in case of fatigability, implement an algorithm able to detect changes in gait circumstances (turn back, obstacle clearance, stairs climbing/ descending, etc.) in order to adapt stimulation parameters according to these circumstances.

References


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