Analysis of True Time Burden when Adding Anesthesia and Contrast to Pediatric MRI: An Institutional Experience

Alain E. Sherman, MBA1, Susan Palasis, MD2, Mary R. Wyers, MD2, Jonathan D. Samet, MD1,2

1Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, Chicago, IL  2Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago, Chicago, IL

Objectives

- Administration of anesthesia and gadolinium-based contrast agents adds significant time and resources to MRI exams
- Anesthesia has well-documented risks in pediatric patients
- The long-term risks of gadolinium-based contrast use in pediatric patients remains unknown
- Recent studies have demonstrated that MRI may be performed for a variety of clinical indications (e.g., sacroiliitis, IBD, MSK infection) without the need for contrast
- Non-sedated MRI has been shown to be successful in pediatric age groups for acute brain, abdominal, and MSK imaging
- The present study sought to examine the time burden of anesthesia and IV contrast in pediatric MRI at our institution
- It is critical to understand this burden in order to mitigate workflow disruptions, overutilization of resources, costs, and, most importantly, risk to patients

Methods

- A retrospective analysis of all pediatric MRI exams (body, MSK, neuro) requiring anesthesia and/or IV contrast performed at a tertiary children’s hospital system from January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2019 was conducted
- Data were gathered from 4 clinical sites

Contrast

- 4,233 contrast-enhanced MRI exams were identified
- The following timepoints were recorded: exam start, contrast administration, and exam end
- Contrast burden was calculated as the elapsed time between contrast administration and exam end and expressed as a proportion of total exam time
- Observed exam times were stratified by MRI type and compared to expected times published in MRI protocol manuals using one-sample t-tests

Anesthesia

- 6,247 MRI exams requiring anesthesia were identified and grouped into those requiring general anesthesia (GA, n = 5,252) and conscious sedation (CS, n = 995)
- The following timepoints were recorded: preoperative start time, anesthesia induction, and time out of MRI room
- The anesthesia encounter was defined as the elapsed time between anesthesia induction and time out of MRI room and expressed as a proportion of total exam time

Results

- Mean total exam time for contrast-enhanced exams was 1 hour 19 minutes (SD = 41 minutes, Range: 2 minutes to 13 hours 8 minutes)
- Mean contrast burden was 29 minutes (SD = 26 minutes, Range: 0 minutes to 5 hours 32 minutes)
- On average, 32.6% of exam time was attributed to contrast administration (SD = 21.4%)

Discussion

- Administration of IV contrast accounted for approximately 1/3 of MRI exam times, adding 1 hour and 19 minutes, on average
- All types of contrast-enhanced MRIs had observed exam times that were significantly longer than expected
- GA accounted for the majority of MRI exam encounters, adding 2 hours and 26 minutes, on average
- CS accounted for 38.5% of MRI exam encounters, adding 54 minutes, on average
- Contrast has been demonstrated to be unnecessary for a growing body of clinical indications
- Many children are able to comply with MRI without the need for anesthesia
- Optimizing the use of contrast and sedation would tremendously improve radiology workflow
- Judicious use of MRI protocols based on these data would offer very large cost savings for health systems
- Gadolinium-based contrast agents have been shown to accumulate in soft tissue for indeterminate periods of time with unknown clinical consequences
- Anesthesia poses known risks to pediatric patients

Selected References