

Original Research Article

## **Middle Cerebral Artery Peak Systolic Velocity as a Predictor of Perinatal Outcome in Fetal Growth Restriction**

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**Abstract:** The objective is study the role of fetal MCA-PSV for prediction of perinatal outcome in growth restricted fetuses. A Hospital based cohort study of 40 IUGR fetuses (gestation age 28-36 weeks, EFW < 10<sup>th</sup> percentile, UA-PI >95<sup>th</sup> percentile) in whom MCA-PSV values were obtained on three or more occasions from the time of admission till delivery depending upon period of gestation and severity of IUGR. MCA-PSV values were considered abnormal when they were above the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile for MCA-PSV range. For analysis purpose two groups were made of twenty patients each depending upon MCA-PSV. All the fetuses (100%) in group B (i.e. with abnormal MCA-PSV) had adverse perinatal outcome in the form of either mortality (both IUFD and neonatal mortality) or major neonatal complication consisting of NICU stay  $\geq$  14 days, requirement of artificial ventilation or presence of intraventricular hemorrhage, respiratory distress or sepsis. Specificity of abnormal MCA-PSV was found to be 100% in predicting adverse perinatal outcome. Doppler study of MCA-PSV should be used in the surveillance of IUGR fetuses together with currently used Doppler parameters so as to decide the optimal time for delivery permitting maximum maturity with minimal fetal hypoxia or acidosis and hence optimizing fetal outcome.

**Keywords:** Fetal growth restriction, Middle cerebral artery- peak systolic velocity, Neonatal-outcome, IUD & NICU stay

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### **INTRODUCTION**

IUGR is considered as a major contributor to perinatal morbidity and mortality, affecting 3-10% of all pregnancies. The timing of delivery of an IUGR baby has always posed a challenge to the obstetrician. It is important to identify the growth restricted fetuses that are at imminent risk of perinatal death from those that are not. This has been made possible by Doppler studies which have become the gold standard in the management of growth restricted fetuses and aids in decision making.

Umbilical artery and middle cerebral artery are the most frequently studied vessels and are good predictor of growth restricted fetuses at risk of antenatal compromise[1].

This study aimed to determine the diagnostic performance of fetal MCA-PSV for prediction of adverse perinatal outcome in IUGR fetuses and to determine the longitudinal trends that occur in MCA-PSV in IUGR fetuses.

### **MATERIAL & METHODS**

This study was a hospital based cohort study done after approval by the Ethics committee. 40 pregnant women with singleton pregnancy with IUGR and who fulfilled the following inclusion criteria were enrolled in the study-

#### **Inclusion criteria**

- Period of gestation  $\geq$ 28 weeks and <36 weeks
- Estimated fetal weight <10<sup>th</sup> percentile &
- Umbilical artery- pulsatility index >95<sup>th</sup> percentile.

#### **Exclusion criteria**

- Women with fetuses showing congenital anomalies were excluded from the study.

Informed written consent was obtained from the mothers prior to enrollment.

These women were further subjected to Doppler studies of MCA-PSV using standard techniques. MCA-PSV values were considered abnormal when they were above the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile for MCA-PSV range.

For analysis purpose two groups were made of 20 patients each.

**Group A** i.e. IUGR patients with normal MCA PSV.

**Group B** i.e. IUGR patients with abnormal MCA PSV.

Doppler studies of UA and MCA were repeated depending on period of gestation and severity of IUGR. Ultrasonography along with Doppler study were performed using two systems- ALOKA (Alpha -6 MO2552 LI) or Toshiba (SSA-510A) by transabdominal method using trans abdominal probe of 2-5 Mhz. The MCA was visualized in transverse axial view of fetal head at a slightly caudal plane than one used for biparietal diameter measurements. All recordings were obtained in the absence of fetal breathing and fetal movement.

Indications for delivery were- Abnormal fetal heart tracing, absent diastolic or reversal of diastolic flow in umbilical artery, worsening of maternal condition like preeclampsia, gestational age > 34 weeks in patients with high resistance diastolic flow and amniotic fluid index less than 5.

Steroids were administered (Inj. Betamethasone 12 mg i. m. stat followed by repeat dose after 24 hours) to all the women between 28 to 36 weeks to enhance fetal lung maturity. Induction of labour was done depending upon the Bishop's Score. Emergency caesarean section was done whenever fetal distress

developed. Elective caesarean was done for associated fetal and obstetric indications.

Neonatal outcomes which were assessed included Gestational age at birth, birth weight of newborn, APGAR score at 5 min, stay in NICU, condition on discharge from NICU and adverse perinatal outcome. Adverse perinatal outcome was described by the following end points- perinatal or neonatal mortality & major neonatal complications like intra- ventricular hemorrhage, respiratory distress or sepsis or prolonged NICU stay for >14 days.

Data gathered was then statistically analyzed using microsoft excel and SPSS software. Difference in proportion was analysed using chi-square tests while difference in mean was inferred by unpaired “t” test. Significance level for tests was determined as 95% (P <0.05).

**RESULTS**

The two groups were comparable when age, religion, residence, literacy, socioeconomic status and gravida status was considered.

85% of women in group A and 75% in group B had cesarean section. There were 5 vaginal deliveries out of 20 in group B of which 3 were IUFD and the other 2 were delivered vaginally because of patients refusal for cesarean section.

Neonatal outcomes in terms of Live birth, IUFD, Birth weight (in kg), APGAR score at 5 min , mean duration and prolonged stay(>14 days) in NICU and associated neonatal mortality are shown in table 1.

**Table 1: Neonatal outcomes**

Outcome:	Group-A (Normal MCA PSV) (N=20)	Group-B (Abnormal MCA PSV) (N=20)	P-Value
Mean Gestational Age at delivery (in weeks)	36.10 ± 0.91	34.20 ± 1.36	<0.001
Live birth	(100%)	17(85%)	NS
IUD	0 (0%)	3 (15%)	-
Birth Weight of newborn (in kg)	1.99 ± 0.38	1.54 ± 0.35	< .001
APGAR Score (at 5 Min) < 7	14 (70%)	20 (100%)	0.007
Mean Duration of Stay in NICU (in days)	9.37 ± 6.37	14.64 ± 8.47	<0.05
Prolonged NICU stay (>14 days)	2 (10%)	16 (94.1%)	0.00003601
Neonatal Mortality	0 (0%)	1 (5.9%)	-

The association of abnormal MCA Doppler with adverse perinatal outcome was found to be significant for PSV (P-value < 0.05). Specificity for abnormal MCA-PSV was found to be 100% which implies that

presence of abnormality of MCA-PSV is associated with high chances of adverse perinatal outcome (table no. 2).

**Table 2: Association of abnormal MCA-PSV with adverse perinatal outcome**

Doppler Parameter	Adverse Perinatal Outcome (n=22)	No Adverse Perinatal Outcome (n=18)	P- value	Sensitivity (%)	Specificity (%)	Positive Predictive Value	Negative Predictive Value
<u>Group A</u> Normal MCA-PSV (5 <sup>th</sup> -95 <sup>th</sup> percentile)	2	18	<0.05	90.91%	100%	100%	90%
<u>Group B</u> Abnormal MCA - PSV (>95 <sup>th</sup> percentile)	20	0					

## DISCUSSION

The mean gestational age at the time of delivery in Group-A was  $36.10 \pm 0.91$  wks and that in Group-B was  $34.20 \pm 1.36$  wks ( $p$  value  $<0.001$ ). Thus, supporting that abnormal MCA Doppler waveforms result in delivery at an earlier gestation and hence contributing to poor perinatal outcome.

Bukowski *et al* [2] observed in their case control study that almost 30% of fetuses born before 35 wks were under the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile for birth weight compared to only 4.5% of the fetuses born at 37 wks or later.

There were 20 (100%) live births in Group-A and in Group-B there were 17 (85%) live births. In Group-B there were 3 (15%) IUID. Thus, again indicating that abnormal MCA-PSV is an important predictor of adverse perinatal outcome.

When outcome of live newborn was studied, in Group-A, 12 (60%) newborns were only kept in nursery for observation and were later handed over to the family, 6 (30%) out of 20 babies were kept in NICU but were discharged in  $<14$  days, 2 (10%) out of 20 babies were kept in NICU and met the criteria of adverse perinatal outcome and were discharged after a stay in NICU of  $\geq 14$  days. There was no neonatal mortality in group A. While in Group-B, 100% i.e. all 17 live born babies were admitted in NICU and 16 (94.1%) stayed for  $\geq 14$  days. Also, there was 1 (5.9%) neonatal mortality in Group-B.

In a study conducted by Nalini YL *et al* [3] it was observed that 35% cases with abnormal UA and MCA Doppler waveforms required NICU admission whereas only 5% cases with normal Doppler flow were shifted to NICU.

The mean duration of NICU stay in Group-B was 14.64 days which was significantly more than that in Group-A i.e. 9.37 days ( $p$ -value $<0.05$ ). Our findings are in accordance with the study of Hemlata D *et al* [1] in which neonates with abnormal MCA Doppler were more than twice as likely to be admitted in neonatal intensive care unit than the neonates with normal Doppler waveforms.

The mean birth weight (1.99 kg v/s 1.54 kg) was significantly lower in patients who had adverse MCA-PSV as compare to those having normal MCA-PSV ( $p$ -value $<0.001$ ). Birth weight in particular is strongly associated with fetal, neonatal and post neonatal mortality, infant and childhood morbidity and long term growth and development [4, 5].

In Group-A, 14 (70%) babies had APGAR score (at 5 min)  $<7$  while in Group-B 100% babies had APGAR score (at 5 min)  $<7$  ( $p$ -value-0.007). A study conducted by Hemlata D *et al* [1] also concluded that abnormal Doppler velocities were associated with a low 5 min APGAR score.

MCA-PSV showed an increase with gestational age in most of the study subjects. In the fetuses having fetal death, the PSV showed an initial increase in velocity beyond the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile followed by a fall prior to demise, however, the value remained above the upper limit of normal.

PSV is a parameter that has been less investigated in FGR fetuses. Ozcan T *et al* [6] reported that the MCA PSV is increased in IUGR fetuses suggesting that it could be a good predictor of perinatal mortality. Rizzo *et al* [7] have also concluded that the middle cerebral artery peak systolic velocity increases in severely growth restricted fetuses and it remains elevated until a few hours prior to fetal demise.

The association of abnormal MCA Doppler with adverse perinatal outcome was found to be significant for PSV ( $P$ -value  $< 0.05$ ). Specificity for abnormal MCA-PSV was found to be 100% which implies that presence of abnormality of MCA-PSV is associated with high chances of adverse perinatal outcome. Our findings are consistent with the study of Mari G *et al* [8] who have concluded that a high MCA-PSV predicts perinatal mortality better than does a low MCA-PI and proposed that MCA-PSV might be valuable in the clinical assessment of IUGR fetuses that have abnormal UA Doppler.

## CONCLUSIONS

Umbilical artery and middle cerebral artery have long been considered as the gold standard for the

assessment of fetuses with fetal growth restriction. In MCA, pulsatility index (PI) is the most frequently studied parameter.

Fetal MCA-PSV appears to be a reliable indicator of adverse perinatal outcome in growth restricted fetuses thus implying that abnormality in MCA-PSV warrants stringent monitoring. Serial Doppler examinations of fetal MCA-PSV provide better information than does a single measurement.

Doppler study of MCA-PSV should be used in the surveillance of IUGR fetuses together with currently used Doppler parameters so as to decide the optimal time for delivery permitting maximum maturity with minimal fetal hypoxia or acidosis and hence optimizing fetal outcome.

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