

# Anatomy and investigation of the nervous system

## **Lecture 22**



- 1. Identify the different radiological modalities used for evaluation of CNS
- 2. Identify the indication and contraindication for each modality
- 3. Identify the radiological anatomy of brain and its vasculatures in different modalities.



#### Color index:

Black: Main text Red: Important

Yellow: Golden notes Green: Drs notes 439

Dark green: Drs notes 438

Gray: Extra



#### Introduction

- The radiological investigation used for evaluation of the brain and skull:
  - Plain X-ray skull (For skull, intracranial or dural calcification, rarely used now).
  - o CT scan. (most common)
  - MRI. (modality of choice)
  - MRA, MRV and CTA (For vessels).
  - Catheter angiogram (The gold standard for vessels, but now used mainly for intervention).
  - Duplex US of carotid arteries.
  - o US for neonatal brain.
- The newer imaging modalities have had a great impact on the diagnosis of diseases of the central nervous system.
- CT and MRI have become the standard investigations for disorders of the brain. Nowadays they're only limited for certain complications like trauma to assess the presence of fracture.
- Plain films (X-ray) are still the initial investigations for disorders of the bones of the skull, particularly fractures, but otherwise have limited uses.

## >> Plain X-ray skull

#### **Indications:**

- 1. Trauma (X-rays cannot detect hemorrhage in the brain it will only show the fracture, and this is not useful because we want to see the secondary effect of trauma, if there is a hemorrhage or not).
- 2. Congenital anomalies (to see the size of the skull whether it's small 'microcephaly' or large 'macrocephaly').
- 3. Calcification: normal or abnormal (vascular, neoplasm).
- 4. Metastasis: lytic/sclerotic (osteolytic which is destructive or osteoblastic which is sclerotic nowadays it's replaced by CT).
- 5. Multiple Myeloma.
- 6. Metabolic disorders (endocrine disorders: hypoparathyroidism).

7.Fractures

- ★ Plain x-ray of skull only shows the bony outlines nothing from inside
- what you see in plain x-ray is bone basically, we start with it but it's not enough

#### Introduction

SKULL PA VIEW

Two basic views:

1-PA
occipitofrontal
2- Lateral
also more two
views but rarely
done with the
presence of CT
(submentoverti
cal, towens AP)

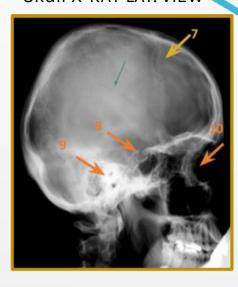


represents groove for middle meningeal artery.

The green

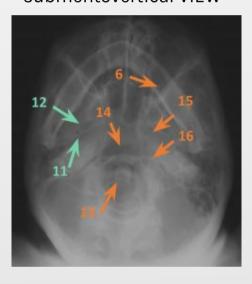
arrow

Skull X-RAY LAT. VIEW



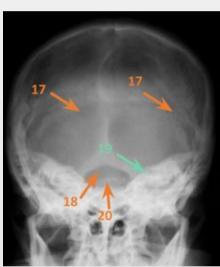
submentovertical VIEW

Used to
assess
foramina of
the skull but
now we use
HRCT.



TOWENS VIEW (AP)

Used to assess the petrous bone and the internal meatus canal.



- standard views: lateral &PA
- rarely used views: submentovertical & TOWENS
- always areas of lucencies are filled with air
- 1. Petrous bone.
- 2. Frontal sinus.
- 3. Ethmoid sinuses.
- 4. Orbit.
- 5. Mastoid air cells.
- 6. Mandible.
- 7. Coronal suture.
- 8. Sella turcica.
- 9. External auditory meatus.
- 10. Orbital groove.
- 11. Foramen spinosum.
- 12. Foramen ovale.
- 13. Odontoid.
- 14. Anterior arch of C1.
- 15. Carotid canal.
- 16. Occipital condyle
- 17. Lambdoid suture.
- 18. Foramen magnum.
- 19. Internal auditory meatus.
- 20. Dorsum sellae

#### CT scan

## Principles

- The axial plane is the routine projection, but it's sometimes possible to obtain direct coronal scans by changing the position of the patient. But we cannot get direct sagittal unlike MRI which we can take axial, coronal and sagittal directly. So how can we have a sagittal image on CT? we do CT image-reformatting by the computer.
- The window settings are selected for the brain, but may be altered to show the bones.

| Advantages  | Disadvantages  |
|---|--|
| <ul> <li>Spiral CT can perform a head scan in 15 mins (very quick) pre and post contrast scans.</li> <li>The scan itself can take as little as 10 seconds for the brain.</li> <li>Patients preparation: nill (just ask about pregnancy and kids. If you are giving IV contrast, ask about allergies and renal function).</li> </ul> | <ul> <li>Using ionizing radiation which might affects the skin and give a risk for cancer (if we ask which is better CT or MRI? MRI because it uses microwaves and magnetic field).</li> <li>Contraindicated in pregnancy. it affects fetus.</li> <li>limit using in children</li> </ul> |

## Indications

- Trauma (the best and initial modality to assess patients with trauma; it's very fast. To detect fracture and hemorrhage → CT without contrast).
- Detection of blood  $\rightarrow$  at any stage (acute, subacute and chronic) or any location.
- Strokes (plain CT, plain means without contrast) (CT is the first investigation to be done in a patient with stroke,
  - 1- To exclude hemorrhage, 2- To confirm the presence of infarction). Acute stroke center (team) will assess acute stroke patient within 3-6 hours (the window time when you can save the area of infarction) and help to plan management and the need for anti-thrombolytic injection depending on the findings. MRI is more sensitive but we use CT more frequently in acute stroke.
- Tumors. usually we prefer MRI and angiogram, but initially we can do CT
- Infections (meningitis, encephalitis).
- Vascular disorders (e.g aneurysm).

#### >> Type of contrast media

• Iodinated contrast → nonionic low-osmolar contrast media (L.O.C.M).

#### >> Normal CT brain

- CSF is seen as water density (Black) within the ventricular system and subarachnoid space (fluid is black and bone is white).
- Grey matter is differentiated from white matter (White matter is relatively darker than grey matter).
- The falx is denser than the brain (dural folds between the hemispheres).
- Large arteries and venous sinuses can be recognized when opacified by contrast medium.
- Posterior fossa may be obscured by artifacts from overlying temporal and occipital bone.
- MRI gives clearer evaluation of brainstem rather than CT. You cannot detect small infarctions in brainstem by CT scan, why? because there are artifacts called "beam hardening artifacts" coming from the thick bones making artifact lines that cover the brain tissue there.

How to know it's a CT? bones > white

At the level of the lower part of the brain (lower skull).

A. Orbit.

B. Sphenoid sinus.

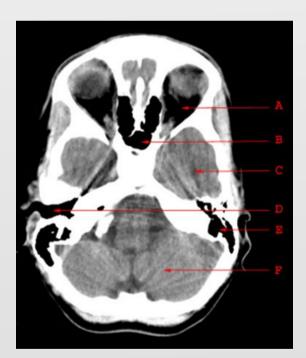
C. Temporal lobe.

D. External auditory canal.

E. Mastoid air cells (they are thought to protect the delicate structures of the ear, regulate ear pressure and possibly protect the temporal bone during trauma).

F. Cerebellar hemisphere.

- sinuses occupied by air (shown black)



plain X-ray (without contrast), if we give IV contrast the vessels will appear very white same as bone

A. Frontal lobe.

B. Frontal bone (superior surface of orbital part)

C. Dorsum sellae is part of the sphenoid bone in the skull.

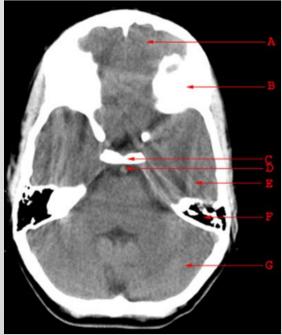
D. Basilar artery. (it may appear white If you inject)

E. Temporal lobe.

F. Mastoid air cells protects the structures of the ear, regulates pressure and protects the temporal bone.

G. Cerebellar hemisphere.

Consequence cuts of CT scan, you can see the orbit is getting smaller and the frontal lobe starts to appear.



A. Anterior horn of the lateral ventricle.

B. Caudate nucleus.

C. Anterior limb of the internal capsule.

D. Putamen and globus pallidus.

E. Posterior limb of the internal capsule.

F. Third ventricle.

G. Quadrigeminal plate cistern (the portion of the midbrain tectum upon which the superior and inferior colliculi sit).

H. Cerebellar vermis (unpaired medial structure which connects the cerebellar hemispheres).

I. Occipital lobe.



#### At the level of lateral ventricles:

A. Falx cerebri.

B. Frontal lobe.

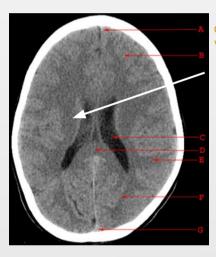
C. Body of the lateral ventricle.

D. Splenium of the corpus callosum, it's white matter fibers which connect the two hemispheres (the thickest and most posterior portion of the corpus callosum).

E. Parietal lobe.

F. Occipital lobe.

G. Superior sagittal sinus.



Corona radiata. we see it at the level of lateral ventricles.

#### A. Falx cerebri.

B. Sulcus (hypodense or black )(filled with fluid which is CSF)

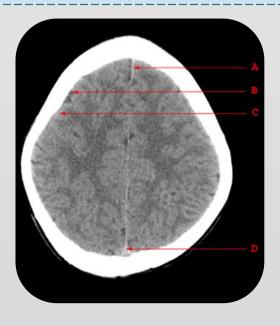
C. Gyrus (hyperdense).

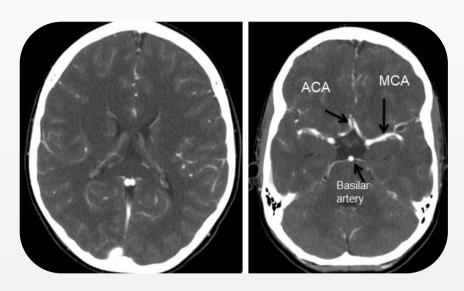
D. Superior sagittal sinus.

- gray matter is whiter, white matter is darker

- no contrast= no brightness

This cut is called supraventricular scan (above the level of ventricles) and it's the only part of the brain without the ventricular system. Most of this image is related to the frontal lobe and a small part is related to the parietal lobe.





Contrast enhanced CT
CT with contrast= vessels are white

#### >> Contrast Enhanced CT

- When do we need to inject contrast? To assess vasculature of the brain (vascular malformations, aneurysms, neoplastic lesion, infection meningitis, cerebritis, and empyema) but we don't need to inject contrast in trauma or stroke.
- IV injection of contrast medium is often given because the abnormality is not seen in pre-contrast scans, it may be rendered visible following contrast enhancement (consequence of breakdown of blood brain barrier allowing contrast to enter the lesion particularly in neoplasm, infection, inflammation and certain stage of ischemia). Also, it helps in demonstrating blood vessels.
- Is there enhancement for the brain parenchyma? No. Why? Because we have BBB that prevents any macromolecules from going inside the brain. We only can see the contrast in the parenchyma in invasive tumors or infections that break the BBB.
- You can adjust the time while injecting the contrast, we have a certain time we can catch the contrast either in the arteries or in the veins (CTA and CTV).

The arrows are pointing to Straight sinus.



Sagittal reconstruction



**Coronal reconstruction** 

★ Computer reconstructions can, in selected circumstances, be made from the axial sections which then provide images in coronal or sagittal planes:

Brain Window

The window settings are selected for the brain, but may be altered to shows the bones.

• Acute Extradural hemorrhage (acute epidural hematoma), Shows brain parenchyma, swelling, midline shift,we cannot see skull fractures.

• It shows details of the bones & can assess any fracture in the skull. We can't see the hemorrhage here.

Fracture

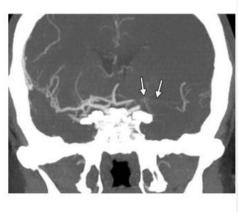
## >> CTA (CT Angiogram)

• CT angiography is helpful in the diagnosis of vascular diseases and abnormalities such as stenosis, occlusion or vascular malformation.

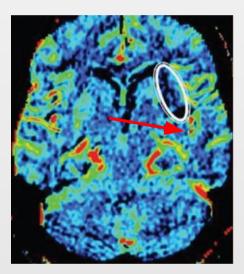
#### >> CT Perfusion

- Asses brain blood flow and volume.
- mainly In acute stroke, very early cranial CT may be normal.
- shows great promise in refining the selection of patients suitable for thrombolysis, as it can accurately determine infarct core from potentially salvageable ischaemic penumbra.
- Some cerebral tumours are associated with angiogenesis and a breakdown of the blood-brain barrier. Angiogenesis can be detected as an increase in flow and volume parameters, and blood-brain barrier breakdown can be quantified as contrast accumulates in the interstitial space. Such aggressive features can distinguish malignant from benign tumours when standard imaging may not.
- It assesses blood flow to the brain tissue. We can also get colored images that show areas with high fowl and low flow to tell us whether we can re-perfuse the tissue or not.
- The normal blood flow to the brain is 600 ml/100 g tissue/min. If <20 ml, hypoperfusion happens and it can go back to normal when reperfusion occurs. If <10 ml, true infarction happens (cellular death) this tissue won't go back to normal again.
- How will we know if this patient will benefit from thrombolytic agents or not? By CT perfusion





Occlusion of left middle cerebral artery, the contrast is not filling the vessels beyond the arrows, so it means there is an occlusion.



Cerebral Blood Volume

**Cerebral Blood Flow** 

- -Red areas mean very high flow = blood vessels.
- -Blue or green areas are also blood flow but in a different gradient.
- -The circled area demonstrates very low or zero blood flow. This is infarcted tissue (dead cells, necrotic core).

-The black bigger circle
demonstrates the
hypoperfused area and if this
patient starts on thrombolytic
agents this hypoperfused area
can go back to normal.

#### **MRI**

#### **Pros**

- No ionizing radiation
- No patient preparation needed (unless fasting for general anaesthesia)
- safe in pregnancy and children

#### Cons

- Not useful in acute setting
- take a lot of time to do
- noisy

Check lecture 1 for more information

#### **Indications**

- Strokes (More sensitive in early detection of a stroke, but CT is faster)
- Tumors.
- Infection.
- abscess
- Vascular disorders.
- White matter disease (More sensitive than CT, Eg: MS)
- Some cases of trauma when CT is not enough (Unlike CT, MRI isn't usually used in trauma)

#### Contraindications

- Cardiac pacemaker (Not absolute because now we have compatible PM), but you have to make sure)
- Cochlear implants (Absolute).
- Ocular prosthesis.
- Intraocular ferrous foreign body
- Neurostimulators.
- Pregnancy (1st trimester) (not absolute, but without contrast).
- Claustrophobics

#### >> Features of MRI

- MRI is a multi planar technique (can produce images in Sagittal, axial and coronal planes) which is useful for assessment of extent of brain tumors and for better visualization of structures of posterior fossa and cranio-cervical junction.
- MRI is a multi sequential technique (can create images in T1WI, T2WI, FLAIR\*, gradient and other sequences).
  - and because of that MRI is more sensitive and better in diagnosing than CT but not in acute settings.
  - \*Fluid attenuation inversion recovery
  - but not all fluid will be attenuated it has to be 1. Clear 2. Within a space
- It is possible to recognize flowing blood and therefore large arteries and veins stand out clearly without the need for contrast medium injection.
- The contrast used if needed is **Gadolinium** 
  - less allergic side effects than CT contrast. We should evaluate every patient for renal function before injecting contrast.
- inject contrast to assess vessels lesions

## **MRI**

# Axial MRI Brain (Axial T1WI) T2WI **FLAIR** Coronal Sagittal MRI Brain (Coronal T1WI) MRI gives a very clear evaluation of the brainstem MRI Brain (Sagittal T1WI)

The Characteristic signal intensity of brain structures in different MRI sequences:

|  | Grey matter | White matter | CSF (IMPORTANT)          |
|--|-------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| T1WI   | Grey        | Light        | Dark                     |
| T2WI   | Light       | Dark         | White The only white CSF |
| FLAIR  | Light       | Dark         | Dark                     |
| - basically it's T2 but we suppressed the signals :) -for lesions adjacent to ventricles |             |              |                          |

#### **MRI**

**FLAIR**\_is like T2 except that fluid is suppressed and that's why it appears dark, it only suppresses fluid within a free space (Ventricles and subarachnoid space or fluid in a cyst) but not Interstitial fluid so if there is brain edema it will appear WHITE (hyperintense or bright). because of that it is much more sensitive at detecting lesions than T2 (All lesions in T2 are white so it's hard to distinguish them from CSF), Also flair doesn't suppress turbulent fluids (Hemorrhage and pus) completely, while clear fluid like CSF is suppressed completely.

**Susceptibility Weighted Sequence (SWI):** Unlike T1,T2 and flair, SWI poorly differentiates between brain tissue (grey matter, white matter and CSF) but it can detect lesions that contain iron and calcification even the small ones (<u>blooming effect</u>).

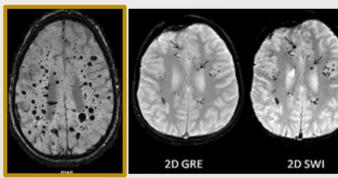
- patient had severe head injury, unconscious, CT or MRI completely normal> diffuse axonal injury.
- The most common use of SWI is for the identification of small amounts of hemorrhage/blood products or calcium, both of which may be inapparent on other MRI sequences.

#### Signal loss (darkness) in SWI is due to:

- → Paramagnetic.
- → Diamagnetic.

The best way to detect subarachnoid and micro-hemorrhages in patients with HTN and patients with cavernoma (vascular malformation) is SWI.

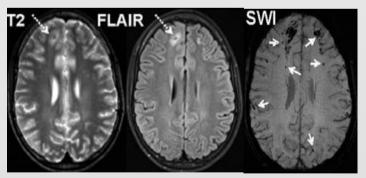
- → Calcium.
- → Blood product "iron". (can show minor bleeding that can't be detected by CT or MRI)



SWI showing multiple cavernoma with old hemosiderin

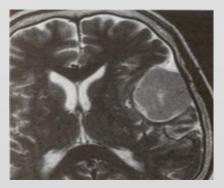
## Patient post RTA with diminished level of consciousness.

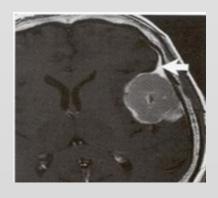
the SWI shows multiple foci of dark signal intensity (blooming) at grey-white matter interface (not seen in T2WI and FLAIR) representing hemorrhagic diffuse axonal injuries.

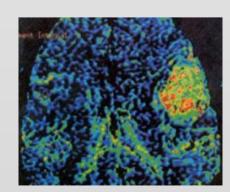


#### **>>**

#### Meningioma







Contrasted T1 Perfusion-Weighted

#### MRI vs MRV

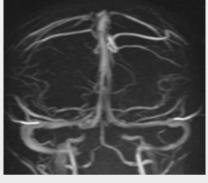
#### MRA (Angiography)

- Can be done with or without injection of contrast medium using time of flight technique. (unlike CT)
- Can be used to assess intra and extracranial arteries for any vascular abnormalities such as stenosis, occlusion or vascular malformation.

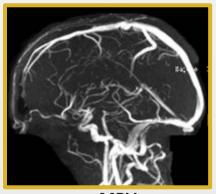
#### MRV (Venography)

- Can be done either with (better) or without (pregnancy) injection of contrast medium.
- Assess venous dural sinuses, superficial and deep venous system.
- Can confirm presence of venous thrombosis.





**MRV** 



MI

>> MR Diffusion

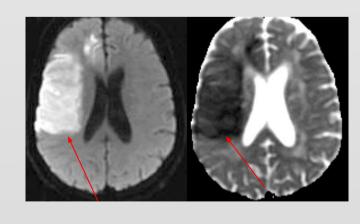
**MR Diffusion:** Depends on movement of water molecules in the extracellular space, any lesion that narrows the ECF, like tumors and edema, will cause diffusion restriction. Very helpful in assessment of:

- Early brain infarction (Most sensitive, detect infarction at time of stroke or after minutes, while CT after 6 h, T2 and flair after 2-3h).
- Brain abscess.
- Certain types of brain tumor either intra-axial or extra-axial: Lymphoma, Glioblastoma, meningioma.
- imp in acute strokes or tiny strokes which can't seen in CT

**True diffusion restriction:** bright in DWI and dark in ADC map, which happens in stroke, some types of tumors, and abscess.

Sensitivity of detecting infarction in order: 1. MRI diffusion.

- 2. FLAIR.
- 3. T2WI.



DWI ADC map

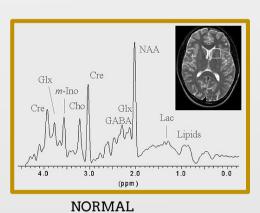
## **MR Spectroscopy**

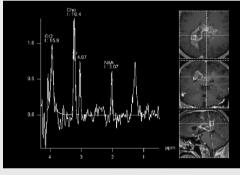
#### MR Spectroscopy: "I just want you to know what is MR Spectroscopy"

Unlike MRI, the technique of MRS does not generally produce images, instead creates spectra (see figures). Each peak in the spectrum arises from a different brain metabolite (NAA, N-acetylaspartate; Cre; Creatine; Cho, Choline; myol; myo-Inositol, Lac; Lactate, Glx; Glutamate and Glutamine, GABA; gamma aminobutyric acid). The height of each peak is an indication of metabolite concentrations. The NAA peak arises from the neurons in the brain. Loss of this metabolite indicates damage or loss of neurons.

#### Very helpful in:

- Differentiating neoplastic from non neoplastic processes, if Choline is high and NAA is low > neoplastic processes.
- Differentiating benign from malignant tumors.
- Determining certain types of tumors.
- Assessment of white matter diseases.
- Assessment of neurodegenerative diseases.
- demyelinating disorders
- It also helps to detect tumor recurrence or post radiation necrosis.





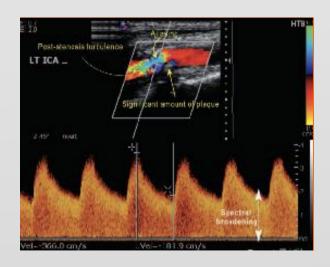
contrast enhanced MRI (T1)

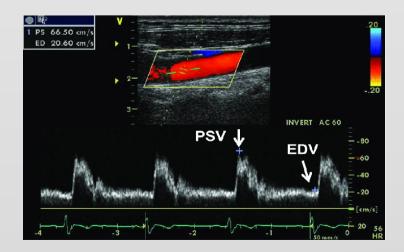
MR Spectroscopy in GBM
intra-axial lesion: (GBM =
Glioblastoma multiforme)
Notice the high Cho and low
NAA

## >> Carotid Doppler

• Easiest and cheapest way to assess carotid narrowing and the degree of narrowing.

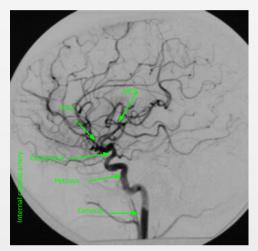
**ABNORMAL** 



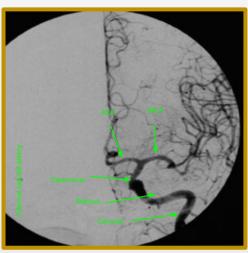


## **Cerebral angiogram**

- It is the gold standard technique for assessment of intra and extracranial vessels.
- It can demonstrate different vascular diseases (stenosis, occlusion, vascular malformation and blood supply of brain tumors).
- It is an invasive technique, only assess the vessels
- Recently its main role is for intervention purposes such as treatment of vascular malformation (aneurysm/arteriovenous malformation) or preoperative embolization of vascular supply of tumor. So it helps in diagnosis of early aneurysm which can't be detected by CT or MRI, and manages it as the same time.

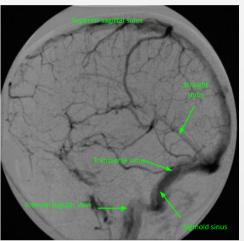


Internal carotid angiogram (lateral view)



Internal carotid angiogram (AP)

Catheter angiography



Venous phase cerebral angiogram (Lateral view)

#### Neonatal brain Ultrasound

- It is a simple and easy way to scan the head of neonates and young babies (not used in adults because of their skull).
- used in sick babies but for better details go for MRI or CT scan.
- Doesn't use ionizing radiation.
- Scanning is best done through an open fontanelle.
- Little discomfort to the baby.
- Readily carried out even on ill babies in intensive care units.
- It has proved that it is particularly useful in detecting ventricular dilatation (hydrocephalus), intracerebral hemorrhage and congenital abnormalities of the brain.

#### Coronal



**Sagittal** 



## Summary

| Modality                 | Types and features  |   | Indications   |  |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| X-ray                    | ★ Plain x-ray of skull only shows the bony outlines nothing from inside.  |   | <ol> <li>Trauma</li> <li>Congenital anomalies of the skull</li> <li>Calcification</li> <li>Metastasis: lytic/sclerotic</li> <li>Multiple Myeloma.</li> <li>Metabolic disorders.</li> </ol>  |  |
| CT scan                  | <ul> <li>CSF is seen as water density (Black) within the ventricular system and subarachnoid space.</li> <li>Grey matter is differentiated from white matter (White matter is relatively darker than grey matter).</li> </ul> |   | <ol> <li>Trauma (the best and initial)</li> <li>Strokes (CT is the first investigation to be done in a patient with stroke)</li> <li>Tumors.</li> <li>Infections (meningitis, encephalitis).</li> <li>Vascular disorders (e.g aneurysm).</li> </ol> |  |
| T2W FLAI SWI MRI MRA     | Grey matt T1WI: Grey. T2WI: Light. FLAIR: Light.  | er White matter CSF Light. Dark  Dark. White  Dark. Dark                                  | <ul> <li>Visualize brain tissue</li> <li>FLAIR: distinguishes between CSF and edema, hemorrhage or pus</li> </ul>   |  |
|                          | SWI:  | poorly detect brain tissue, but<br>detects brain lesions that<br>contains iron or calcium | Subarachnoid and micro hemorrhage in patients with HTN or cavernoma   |  |
|                          | MRA:  | Done with or without contrast   | Asses any <b>abnormality in intra and extracranial arteries</b> eg: occlusion, stenosis   |  |
|                          | MRV:  |   | Asses dural sinuses and deep veins eg: venous thrombosis  |  |
|                          | MR diffusion  | Detects early brain infarction  |   |  |
|                          | MR Creates spectra of brain metabolites  Tumor recurrence or positive metabolites   | Tumor recurrence or post radiation necrosis   |   |  |
| Carotid<br>Doppler       | Easy, cheap and non invasive  |   | Carotid narrowing   |  |
| Cerebral<br>Angiogram    | Gold standard for intra and extracranial vessels (Invasive technique)   |   | Interventions: (aneurysm, arteriovenous malformation), Preoperative embolisation of tumors  |  |
| Ultrasound<br>(Neonates) | -simple and easy way to scan the head of neonates   |   | - hydrocephalus - intracerebral hemorrhage - congenital anomalies   |  |

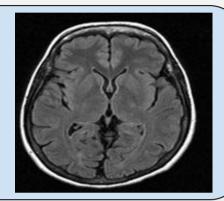
## **438** Quiz

1-A patient presented with acute upper limb weakness, you suspect brain ischaemia. What is the best modality to detect ischaemia?

- a. MRI Diffusion.
- b. SWI
- c. MRA
- d. FLAIR

2- what type of image is this?

- a. T1WI
- b. T2WI
- c. SWI
- d. FLAIR



3- A patient comes with papilledema, the patient uses oral contraceptive. You suspect venous thrombosis. What is the modality of choice?

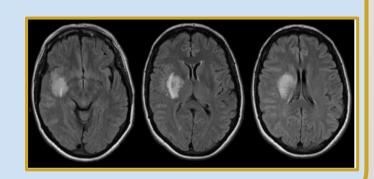
- a. MRA
- b. MRV
- c. MR diffusion
- d. MR spectroscopy

4- 2 years old boy present with lumbosacral posterior spinal defect and large herniated sac. Which one of the following considered appropriate to evaluate level of spinal cord and content of the sac?

- a. X-ray
- b. CT
- c. MRI
- d. Lumbar myelogram

5- MRI done for a 56 years old male. Based on the abnormality shown in the MRI sequence, what is the clinical presentation of the patient?

- a. Hemiparesis
- b. Meningeal symptoms
- c. Severe headache
- d. Loss of consciousness



## **439 Quiz**

1- A 50 year old patient came to the ER with stroke (first 3 hours). Which ONE of the following techniques can be used to look for penumbra (tissue at risk) to start thrombolytic therapy as early as possible?

- a. Non enhanced CT brain
- b. CT perfusion
- c. MRA
- d. MRV

2- Which of the following will appear hyper-intense (bright) on flair MRI?

- a. Arachnoid cyst
- b. Edema
- c. Ventricular space
- d. Epidural space

3-Which of the following MRI sequences is used to confirm occult blood after trauma?

- a. MRA
- b. MRV
- c. Susceptibility weighted sequence
- d. MR T1WI

4- One of the contraindications of MRI?

- a. Intraocular ferrous foreign body
- b. Infection
- c. Vascular disorders
- d. White matter disease

5- A young patient came to the emergency room after a road traffic accident was suspected to have intracranial hemorrhage and skull fractures Which ONE of the following imaging modality is commonly used to confirm the diagnosis?

- a. CT brain without contrast
- b. CT brain with contrast
- c. MRI brain with contrast
- d. Plain x-ray skull

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