

Trigeminal Disorders

Last updated: September 5, 2017

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TRIGEMINAL NEURALGIA (TIC DOULOUREUX, FOTHERGILL DISEASE)

- paroxysmal disorder of excruciating, lancinating painful spasms.

- most common neuralgia!!!
- one of the most excruciating pain syndromes!!! (may drive sufferers to suicide)
- *Aretaeus of Cappadocia* - first indication of trigeminal neuralgia.
- first adequate clinical description - *Fothergill in 1773*.

EPIDEMIOLOGY

- INCIDENCE 4-5 / 100.000 population; PREVALENCE 155 / 1 mln.
 - slight **female** predominance (3:2).
 - INCIDENCE peaks in middle age (> 50% cases onset in sixth or seventh decade), but occasionally may affect children.
- N.B. appearance in young patient - suspicion of *demyelinating disease!*

ETIOLOGY

- a) **SECONDARY** (intrinsic and extrinsic *tumors* near gasserian ganglia, *multiple sclerosis* plaques*, syringomyelia, infarction, aneurysm, cholesteatoma, basilar impression).
 *2-8% patients have MS; 4% MS patients have TN; denuded axons promote *ephaptic transmission*
 Trigeminal neuralgia related to MS is more difficult to manage pharmacologically and surgically!
- b) **IDIOPATHIC**
 N.B. most idiopathic cases are due to *pulsations of aberrant vascular loop* compressing root at its entry zone! – **NVC (neurovascular contact)**
- most commonly - superior or anterior inferior cerebellar artery; less commonly – vein.
 - with aging, blood vessels can become ectatic and atherosclerotic.

Vascular compression syndromes:

- 1) trigeminal neuralgia
- 2) CN9 neuralgia
- 3) hemifacial spasm
- 4) torticollis

PATHOLOGY-PATHOPHYSIOLOGY

- BIOPSY - *focal demyelination* but no inflammatory cells.
- **ephaptic (nonsynaptic) neurotransmission** between demyelinated trigeminal axons - physiological substrate for paroxysmal pain (esp. if initiated by cutaneous stimuli).
- frequently, ectopic impulses are generated in trigeminal nerve secondary to *vascular compression*.

CLINICAL FEATURES

- brief **lightning-like series of jabs (spasms)**; jab lasts **fraction of second**, episode lasts **seconds ÷ few minutes**.
- pain is reported as: lancinating, stabbing, searing, burning, electrical.
- intensity is such that patient winces or grimaces (hence the name *tic douloureux*).
- **unilateral** (in ≈ 5% **bilateral***, but simultaneous bilateral spasms are quite atypical).
 *most often in MS patients!
- strictly affects divisions of CN V (in 15% all three divisions):

$$3^{rd} (70\%) > 2^{nd} > 1^{st} (5\%)$$

vs. postherpetic neuralgia most frequently affects CNV₁

- pain occurs (throughout day and night):
 - a) *spontaneously*
 - b) *precipitated* by stimuli (cutaneous, auditory, even draft of air); often *temporal summation* of stimuli is necessary to invoke response.
- > 90% have demonstrable **trigger point** - small area (on cheek, lip, nose) that can reproduce pain when stimulated (by facial movement, chewing, touch).
- *between attacks, there are no symptoms*, but patient is anxious about having another attack.
- some patients are unable to chew, eat, drink, shave, or brush their teeth for fear of triggering spasm (patients may appear emaciated, males disheveled).
- *no neurologic deficits!!!* (*subjective hyper- / hypo-esthesias* over face may be reported).

N.B. sensory disturbances, constant pain are atypical for trigeminal neuralgia!

- after paroxysm, there is relatively **refractory phase** (2- min) during which is it difficult to trigger attack.
- disease lasts indefinite years (**severity steadily increases** – pain intervals shorten, pain becomes atypically constant, medically intractable).
- *psychological problems* may occur secondary to chronic pain (up to suicide).



CLASSIFICATION

type 1 (> 50% **episodic** pain)

type 2a (> 50% **constant** pain with history of **episodic** pain)

type 2b (**constant** pain with no history of episodic pain)

TN1 Idiopathic, sharp, shooting, electrical shock-like, episodic pain lasting several seconds, with pain-free intervals between attacks

TN2 describes idiopathic trigeminal facial pain that is aching, throbbing, or burning for more than 50% of the time and is constant in nature (constant background pain being the most significant attribute).

There may be a minor component of sharp, episodic pain

DIAGNOSIS

- diagnosis can usually be made by history alone.
- **MRI** is only test always indicated (even if there is no loss of sensation or other abnormality on neurological examination!) - identifying etiologies of **SECONDARY CASES!** (in 15% cases tumor is found!); techniques:
 - a) *coronal 3D time of flight MRA is centered on vertebral-basilar system; collapsed MRA is then superimposed on routine spin echo T1 images, which show cisternal portions of fifth nerve – vascular loop compression is accurately identified.*
 - b) *CISSS sequence (white CSF and black nerves)*
- **trigeminal reflex testing** can be screening to identify **SECONDARY CASES** (*trigeminal sensory deficits* identify **SECONDARY CASES**, but poor specificity - absence of these deficits cannot rule out **SECONDARY CASES**).
- laboratory studies are normal.

MEDICAL THERAPY

(many require lifelong medication!):

- 1) **CARBAMAZEPINE!!!** – **first-line & most effective medication**; the only medication approved by FDA
 - started gradually; max daily dose 1200 mg;
 - follow serum levels, liver function tests, and white blood cell counts to avoid toxicity.
 - dose may be tapered once pain is controlled, since remission may occur.
 - 2) **GABAPENTIN** – efficacious as carbamazepine but with profoundly fewer side effects!
 - 3) **BACLOFEN!!**
 - 4) **LAMOTRIGINE!!**
 - 5) **OXCARBAZEPINE!!** – alternative.
 - 6) **LYRICA**
 - 7) **PHENYTOIN**; intravenous **fosphenytoin** (250 mg) is useful for acute severe attack.
 - 8) valproic acid, clonazepam, pimozide
- 50% patients eventually have some kind of surgical procedure!
many experts believe that patients failing to respond to first-line therapy are unlikely to respond to alternative medications and suggest early surgical referral.

SURGICAL THERAPY

Studies are limited, especially in the realm of long term follow up.
Many options available – *patient characteristics* are important.

1. DISTAL (PERIPHERAL) PROCEDURES

1. **NEURECTOMIES** - partial or complete sectioning of peripheral nerve
 2. **CRYOTHERAPY** - surgically exposed nerve is exposed to 3 two-minute freeze – thaw cycles
 3. **ABSOLUTE ALCOHOL** - highly neurotoxic; after injecting 0.5 – 1.5 mL EtOH, inject small air bubble to avoid sinus tract.
- generally not recommended - high incidence of early recurrence (no long term studies, only retrospective case series) - average pain free interval about 2 years
 - local anesthesia - medical fitness not required - indicated for patients with limited life span.
 - pain must be localized to nerve branch.

2. GASSERIAN GANGLION PROCEDURES (percutaneous trigeminal gangliolysis)

Idea: to *selectively destroy A-delta and C fibers (nociceptive)* while preserving A-alpha and beta fibers (touch).

AANS videos:

<http://www.neurosurgicalatlas.com/grand-rounds/percutaneous-procedures-for-trigeminal-neuralgia-radiofrequency-and-balloon>

PROCEDURE DETAILS

Foramen ovale cannulation – see p. Op310 >>

- limited **neuroleptic analgesia** (patient is easily arousable) or **general anesthesia**.
- **lesioning is carried out:**
 - a) thermally
 - b) chemically
 - c) mechanically

RADIOFREQUENCY (RF) THERMOCOAGULATION

- introduced in 1965 by Sweet and altered by Tew in 1982.
- used in MS / tumor patients and for those who are not suitable for / do not want general anesthesia.
- electrode position should be manipulated until **paresthesias (upon stimulation) are confined to distribution in which pain is located** – can ablate selective branch (V1 or 2 or 3).
- must produce **HYPOESTHESIA*** in pain distribution (if complete anesthesia - risk of postoperative anesthesia dolorosa) - **continuous sensory testing is ideal** (but some patients need general anesthesia again due to strong pain produced).
- electrical current supposedly **ablates small pain fibers** while preserving heavily myelinated touch and proprioception fibers!
- lowest recurrence rates of all percutaneous procedures!

*in case of cancer pain **ANESTHESIA** must be attained to achieve adequate pain relief.

GLYCEROL (PERCUTANEOUS RETROGASSERIAN GLYCEROL RHIZOTOMY, PRGR)

Risk counselling:

procedure typically causes an episode of bradycardia
risk of a cheek hematoma
risk of not being able to get through the foramen (approx. 10%)
risk of the general anesthetic.

Procedure

- introduced by Håkanson in 1981.
Håkanson S. Trigeminal neuralgia treated by the injection of glycerol into the trigeminal cistern. Neurosurgery. 1981;9(6):638–646
- patient on stretcher, supine, intubated.
- foramen ovale cannulation using 18G **foramen ovale needle** (Dr. Holloway uses 18G size 3.5 in **spinal needle**) – see p. Op310 >>
- needle is left in place and patient is seated upright with head flexed.
- verify that needle is in Meckel's cave – see p. Op310 >>
- some experts empty Meckel's cave by letting CSF drip.
- sterile anhydrous **GLYCEROL** injection into trigeminal cistern with tuberculin syringe; volume – glycerol fills Meckel's cave from bottom up: if treating V3 – enough 0.2 cm³, for V1 – need 0.4 cm³ (Meckel's cave volume is approx. 0.4 cm³); Dr. Broaddus injects 0.5 cm³ in all cases.
- patient is extubated sitting and seated upright with head flexed for 2 hours after procedure.
N.B. if neck is extended at any time, glycerol is lost – procedure is in vain

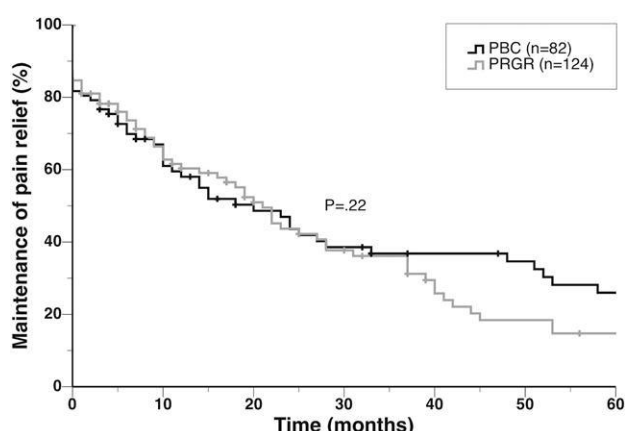
Postoperatively

- **check for corneal reflex** (usually just mild decrease) – if impaired, needs eye protection*.
*glycerol is best for CNV₁ cases (because of corneal denervation risk with other methods).
- **neuralgia relief is immediate**; if onset is delayed for > 7 days, likely result will be poor.
- relief may last for many months without any significant neurological deficit; but hypoesthesia / dysesthesia is common (up to 60%).
- longest / largest study showed recurrence rate at 54 months to be 74%.

Fujimiki T, Fukushima T, Miyazaki S. Percutaneous retrogasserian glycerol injection in the management of trigeminal neuralgia: long-term follow-up results. J Neurosurg. 1990; 73:212-216

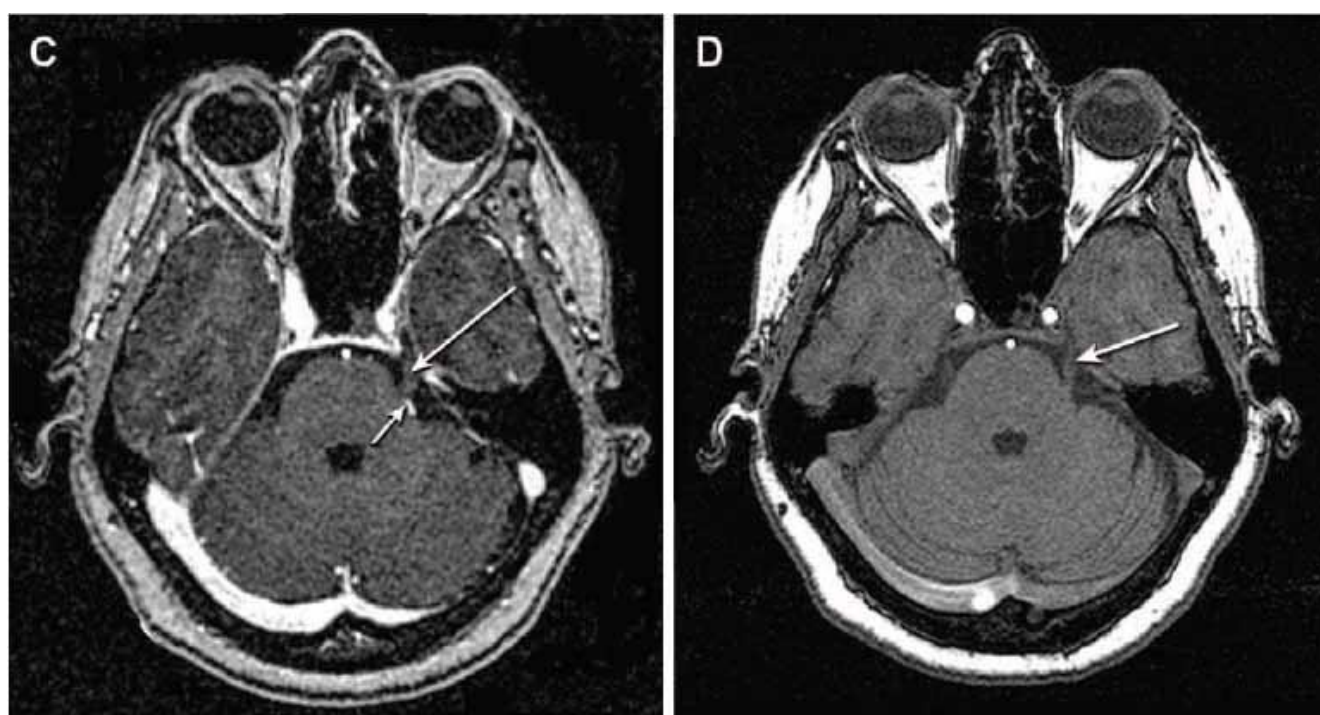
BALLOON (PERCUTANEOUS BALLOON COMPRESSION, PBC)

- original description by Mullan and Lichtor and later by Bergenheim et al.
Mullan S, Lichtor T. Percutaneous microcompression of the trigeminal ganglion for trigeminal neuralgia. J Neurosurg. 1983;59(6):1007–1012
Bergenheim AT, Asplund P, Linderöth B. Percutaneous retrogasserian balloon compression for trigeminal neuralgia: review of critical technical details and outcomes. World Neurosurg. 2013;79(2):359–368.
- usually done under general anesthesia, supine
- 13-gauge needle with a semisharp stylet inserted through a stab incision 2 to 3 cm lateral to the angle of the mouth, directed into the oval foramen
- 4F Fogarty balloon catheter inserted 17 to 19 mm beyond the tip of the needle → balloon inflated with 0.3-0.8 mL iohexol at 300 mg/mL – “pear-shaped” configuration (reflects shape of Meckel's cave) → pressure held for 1-6 minutes before the contrast is aspirated.
- mechanism of action unclear – combination of **massaging** and **lesioning** actions.
- instant pain relief (with associated sensory loss; **temporary masseter weakness** is common).
- **lowest risk of corneal anesthesia**; highest risk of hearing loss.
- 6-14% recurrence in first year; troubling dysesthesias occur in 6-15%.



3. POSTERIOR FOSSA (ROOT ENTRY ZONE) PROCEDURES

Root entry zone:



Source of picture: Neurosurgery 58:666-673, 2006

MICROVASCULAR DECOMPRESSION (MVD), S. JANNETTA PROCEDURE

– classic, most effective procedure! (addresses etiology!); durable and nondestructive; risks associated with craniotomy and general anesthesia

Operative and postoperative details – see p. Op350 >>

- Dandy originally described vascular compression as a cause of pain in 1925.
- indicated for *younger, healthier patients* (without MS – low response rate) with life expectancy > 5 years.

Gold standard treatment for most TN patients unless they have significant comorbidities!

RADIOSURGERY (GAMMA-KNIFE) - RETROGASSERIAN RHIZOLYSIS

- least invasive safe procedure with low morbidity (often used in poor surgical candidates).

- single dose of 86 (40-90) Gy at 100% isodose (or 43 Gy at 50% isodose) to trigeminal root (single 4-mm isocenter at 5-14 mm distance anterior to emergence of nerve, so 50% isodose is next but does not touch brainstem).
- complications: hypesthesia, troubling dysesthesias.
 - Increasing volume (to include more of nerve root) increases complications but does not provide better pain relief!
- rate of success 24-60% (takes time to reach effect).
- 1 month follow up - **acute toxicity**:
 - Facial numbness (15-30%)
 - Dysesthesia (10-16%)
 - Corneal keratitis (5-7%)
- at 2 years failure rate is ≈ 35-40%

RHIZOTOMY

- **approach** (and patient characteristics) are *similar to that of MVD*.
- whole or part of **sensory division** is sectioned.
- results are comparable with MVD, however:
 - higher recurrence rate
 - sensory loss is more common
 - painful dysesthesia / anesthesia dolorosa occur in about 8 %

POSTOPERATIVE

- check for facial numbness, jaw opening weakness / deviation.
- taper meds (e.g. Tegretol) every 2-4 weeks and stop

SURGICAL THERAPY – RESULTS

	RF	Glycerol	Balloon	MVD
Initial success	91-99%	91%	93%	85-98%
Recurrence 2-6 yrs	19%	54%	21%	15%
	6 yrs	4 yrs	2 yrs	5 yrs
Recurrence >10 yrs	80%			30%
	12 yrs			10 yrs
Facial numbness	98%	60%	72%	2%

TABLE 3. Barrow Neurological Institute pain intensity score^a

Score	Pain relief
I	No pain, off medications
II	Occasional pain, off medications
IIIa	No pain, continued use of medications
IIIb	Pain persists, but adequately controlled with medications
IV	Pain not adequately controlled with medications
V	No relief

- treatment failure occurs in most of **MS-related** TN patients independently of type of treatment.
 - **balloon compression** had highest rate of initial pain-free response (IPFR), duration of pain-free intervals (PFIs) compared with other modalities in initial treatment of **MS-related TN**.

Mohammad-Mohammadi, Alireza "Surgical Outcomes of Trigeminal Neuralgia in Patients With Multiple Sclerosis", Neurosurgery: December 2013 - Volume 73 - Issue 6 - p 941-950

GENICULATE NEURALGIA

GRADENIGO SYNDROME

- **apical petrositis** (osteomyelitis) with localized meningitis involving **CN5 & CN6**:
 - 1) facial sensory loss
 - 2) facial pain (e.g. in temporal region), headache.
 - 3) abducens paralysis
 - 4) may also involve **CN7** (facial palsy), **CN8** (deafness)
- in children, following suppurative otitis media or mastoiditis.
- pain worse at night, aggravated by jaw or ear movement.
- multiple approaches to infected petrous cells are possible:
 - a) if it is complication of otitis media: **simple mastoidectomy** → air cell track containing granulation tissue can be followed into petrous apex and adequate drainage can be obtained.
 - b) **middle cranial fossa approach**.

ONION-SKIN PATTERN FACE ANESTHESIA

- caused by **damage to spinal tract of trigeminal nerve** in high cervical region.

RAEDER PARATRIGEMINAL SYNDROME

- 1) intense pain in CN5₁ distribution
 - 2) lacrimation, conjunctival injection, rhinorrhea
 - 3) ipsilateral mydriasis (postganglionic Horner's syndrome).
- idiopathic or **pathology of carotid sympathetic plexus** (near Meckel cave).
 - may not actually represent distinct clinical entity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY for ch. “Cranial Neuropathies” → follow this [LINK >>](#)