Modified Gott shunt to avoid left ventricular overload and cerebral hypoperfusion during distal aortic arch surgery

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Spinal cord injury, overload on the left ventricle, and increased cerebral blood flow pressure above the aortic clamp are well-known challenges in thoracoabdominal aortic surgery. We present a successful repair of a pseudoaneurysm of the distal arch in a patient who had previously undergone coarctation surgery and in whom a modified Gott shunt was used to ensure, at the same time, spine and brain perfusion during the beating heart procedure as well as to gain effective decompression of the left side of the heart. Institutional Review Board approval was waived, and informed consent of the patient was obtained.

CASE REPORT

A 57-year-old woman was referred to our hospital with complaints of dyspnea. Her prior history included a coarctation repair (interposition technique) during childhood through lateral left thoracotomy. A computed tomography scan revealed a large aortic arch pseudoaneurysm at the site of the proximal anastomosis (Fig 1) with extravasation of contrast material at the base of the left subclavian artery at the anastomosis site. The case was discussed by a multidisciplinary team including a cardiac surgeon, a vascular surgeon, and one interventional radiologist, who agreed in judging the anatomy not suitable for endovascular repair. Conventional repair using cardiopulmonary bypass under circulatory arrest was at first planned as a primary treatment of choice. Nonetheless, because of the excellent exposure of both ascending and descending aorta through left anterolateral thoracotomy, we switched to off-pump distal aortic arch “clamp and sew’ repair. For monitoring of cerebral function, multimodal physiologic monitoring and near-infrared spectroscopy were employed.

A single dose of heparin (5000 units) was administered. The ascending aorta was cannulated with a 22F cannula (Edwards Lifesciences, Irvine, Calif), a second aortic cannula (22F; Edwards Lifesciences) was similarly used to cannulate the descending aorta, and it was connected to the other by a 9.5-mm tube (length, 400 mm). The side port of the ascending cannula was then connected to a 10-mm shunt placed into the left subclavian artery, making a small incision within a double 6-0 Prolene purse-string suture (Fig 2).

Flow was measured by incorporating a flow meter probe between the cut halves of the shunt. The flow ranged from 180 to 230 mL/min, proximal aortic pressure varied from 110 to 140 mm Hg. No difference was detected between right and left radial pressures (systolic, 110-120 mm Hg; diastolic, 70-72 mm Hg). Systolic and diastolic femoral pressures ranged between 110 to 125 mm Hg and 70 to 75 mm Hg, respectively.

The aorta was cross-clamped between the left subclavian artery and the carotid artery to ensure an optimal landing zone for the new prosthesis. A second clamp was placed proximal to the descending cannula. After aneurysm resection, a 24-mm straight woven Dacron prosthesis (Vascutek Gelweave Valsalva; Terumo CVS, Inc, Northridge, CA) was used. It was anastomosed to the distal aortic arch at the base of the left subclavian artery (end to end). Subsequently, the clamp on the aortic arch was released and placed on the prosthesis to restore the physiologic flow into the left subclavian artery. Finally, the distal anastomosis was performed. The aorta was deaired and unclamped. The prosthesis was covered with the remaining tissue. Throughout the procedure, the patient remained hemodynamically stable. Cross-clamp time was 43 minutes.
The postoperative course was uneventful. Fig 3 shows the control computed tomography image before discharge on postoperative day 10.

DISCUSSION

Surgical repair of aneurysms of the distal arch and thoracoabdominal aorta still represents a great challenge for the surgeon. Spinal cord injury, which remains the most devastating complication despite advances in spinal cord protection, occurs with an incidence ranging between 8% and 28%. Several distal perfusion techniques have been developed to limit this complication, including passive shunt (Gott shunt), left-sided heart bypass, and partial cardiopulmonary bypass, all presenting advantages and drawbacks.

Another serious concern is the rise of pressure above the cross-clamp, leading to an increase in cerebral blood flow and cerebrospinal fluid pressure during aortic cross-clamping. For this reason, a left subclavian shunt is employed to protect the brain during distal aortic surgery, although some authors cast doubt on its actual effectiveness.

We present a simple solution to address, at the same time, either the spinal perfusion or the increase of pressure above the aortic clamp during a complex aortic aneurysm repair. It is a simple modification of a passive

Fig 1. Computed tomography angiogram depicts the aneurysm preoperatively.

Fig 2. Scheme of the modified Gott shunt through an anterolateral thoracotomy. The yellow arrows show the direction of the flow.

Fig 3. Predischarge three-dimensional computed tomography image shows complete repair of the aneurysm with no extravascular leakage.
The suggested modified shunt is a simple, effective, and inexpensive technique. It requires only partial anticoagulation and does not need specific perfusion personnel. It might represent a valid extra aid for aortic surgeons.

REFERENCES


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