



Features of Carotid Endarterectomy in Russia. How do we Resolution Issues?

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Abstract: This review of the literature discusses the solution of unresolved issues related to carotid endarterectomy in Russia: (1) A program has been created for choosing the tactics of revascularization of patients with simultaneous atherosclerotic lesions of the coronary and carotid arteries; (2) Using the methods of computer modeling, studying the genetics and morphology of

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restenosis, it was found that the classic carotid endarterectomy with plasty of the reconstruction zone with a patch is an unsafe type of revascularization; (3) An eversion carotid endarterectomy with transposition of the internal carotid artery over the hypoglossal nerve has been developed, which makes it possible to prevent damage to the latter during repeated carotid endarterectomy for restenosis; (4) It has been established that carotid endarterectomy is associated with a high risk of complications in patients over 75 years of age; (5) It has been proven that emergency carotid endarterectomy in the first hours after the development of a stroke is not safe because. combined with the maximum number of all non-favorable cardiovascular events; (6) 3 new types of carotid endarterectomy with carotid glomus preservation have been developed. (Curr Probl Cardiol 2022;47:101272.)

Introduction

Carotid endarterectomy is an operation to prevent ischemic stroke, aimed at removing an atherosclerotic plaque from the internal carotid artery that stenoses its lumen.¹⁻⁵ The degree of stenosis of more than 60%-70% can cause neurological events with subsequent disability and/or death.⁶⁻¹⁰ Therefore, the issues of carotid endarterectomy are of extremely high relevance on an all-Russian and global scale.¹¹⁻¹⁵

The purpose of this literature review was to analyze the latest Russian publications on unresolved issues of carotid endarterectomy.

Combined Lesion of the Internal Carotid Arteries and Coronary Arteries

The first and most important direction is the choice of revascularization strategy in patients with simultaneous atherosclerotic lesions of the internal carotid arteries and coronary bed. In a large domestic study, which included more than 300 patients, 4 treatment tactics were analyzed, including staged operations (coronary bypass grafting and carotid endarterectomy in various sequences), simultaneous (carotid endarterectomy + coronary bypass grafting) and hybrid interventions (percutaneous coronary intervention + carotid endarterectomy).¹⁶⁻²⁰ The authors came

to the conclusion that there can be no single universal optimal strategy for revascularization, since patients with multifocal atherosclerosis are completely disparate among themselves. The choice of the method of treatment should be only personalized.²¹⁻²⁵ And then, under the guidance of the cardiovascular surgeon A. N. Kazantsev, a unique program was developed based on a complex mathematical analysis of the predictors of the development of certain cardiovascular complications after each of the 4 revascularization strategies.²⁶⁻³⁰ This development made it possible to determine the likelihood of postoperative adverse events, creating opportunities for personalized determination of treatment tactics associated with the lowest risk of developing the latter.³¹⁻³⁵

A separate sub-direction of this study was associated with the development of a hybrid form of revascularization, which had not been performed anywhere else in the world before - percutaneous coronary intervention + carotid endarterectomy.³⁶⁻⁴⁰ The patient received a loading dose of clopidogrel, after which the first stage, percutaneous coronary intervention, was performed by an endovascular surgeon.⁴¹⁻⁴⁵ Then the patient was transported to the vascular operating room for carotid endarterectomy.⁴¹⁻⁴⁵ The authors described in detail the entire scheme of surgical treatment, developed a method for hemostasis and drainage of the wound after intervention on the internal carotid artery.⁴¹⁻⁴⁵ During hybrid revascularization, the patient was subjected to aggressive anticoagulant and deaggregant therapy, which was accompanied by high wound bleeding, as well as the risk of developing an acute hematoma of the intervention area.^{43,46,47} The use of local hemostasis, as well as the key factor - double drainage, made it possible to significantly reduce the incidence of all hemorrhagic complications in this cohort of patients, which made percutaneous coronary intervention + carotid endarterectomy a safe form of treatment.^{43,46,47} Its introduction into practice made it possible to abandon traumatic coronary bypass grafting, which not only reduced postoperative mortality, but also significantly reduced the period of rehabilitation of patients.^{43,46,47} The study of hospital and long-term results of percutaneous coronary intervention + carotid endarterectomy proved its high efficiency.

Restenosis of the Internal Carotid Artery: Computer Modeling, Genetics

Analyzing hospital and long-term results of carotid endarterectomy, as well as predictors of adverse cardiovascular events, a group of Russian authors came to a number of interesting conclusions.⁴⁸⁻⁵² In particular,

one of the important provisions demonstrated a high incidence of restenosis of the internal carotid artery after the classical technique of surgery with plasty of the reconstruction area with a patch.⁵³ Studying histological preparations of a removed substrate that narrows the lumen of the artery, it was found that neointimal hyperplasia, which does not depend on dyslipidemia, diabetes mellitus, smoking, etc., plays a fundamental role in this process.⁵⁴ Later, on the basis of computer modeling of the properties of hemodynamics in the carotid bifurcation, the team of authors led by the cardiovascular surgeon Kazantsev A.N. proved for the first time in Russia that patch implantation leads to expansion of the carotid bulb.⁵⁵⁻⁵⁹ This, in turn, causes a turbulent nature of the blood flow, with parietal thrombosis and congestion zones, which is a trigger for future changes and restenosis of the internal carotid artery.⁵⁵⁻⁵⁹ Therefore, classical carotid endarterectomy is an unsafe type of surgery on the internal carotid artery.⁵⁵⁻⁵⁹ Subsequently, long-term outcomes of ipsilateral classical carotid endarterectomy and contralateral eversion carotid endarterectomy in the same patient were demonstrated.^{60,61} Thus, there was an equal amount of all biochemical, physical, and genetic factors that could cause restenosis of the internal carotid artery. The study showed that after the classical technique of surgery with plastic reconstruction of the reconstruction zone with a patch, a greater number of verified cases of loss of the lumen of the vessel is observed, which confirmed the unsafety of this method of revascularization.^{60,61}

However, cases of restenosis have also been observed after the eversion intervention technique.^{62,63} But they, as a rule, were diagnosed in a later period of observation (more than 2 years).⁶²⁻⁶⁴ Genetic studies have shown that the DNA contained in an atherosclerotic plaque removed from the internal carotid artery has strict sequences that occur only when restenosis develops.⁶⁵⁻⁶⁹ Thus, the direct hereditary nature of this phenomenon was proved in Russia.⁷⁰⁻⁷⁴

But with the development of medical technologies, carotid angioplasty with stenting has become an alternative to carotid endarterectomy, and in some cases a significant competitor.⁷⁵ To date, the results of carotid angioplasty with stenting in Russia have been studied, demonstrating a high rate of complications in the long-term follow-up period associated with stent fracture and restenosis.⁷⁵⁻⁷⁷ In general, the number of adverse cardiovascular events reached the equivalent values of the classical carotid endarterectomy, but was much inferior to the eversion technique.⁷⁵ Thus, eversion carotid endarterectomy may be the only safe operation of choice for patients with hemodynamically significant stenoses of the internal carotid artery in Russia.

Methods of Surgical Treatment of Restenosis of the Internal Carotid Artery in Russia

The development of hemodynamically significant restenosis of the internal carotid artery after carotid endarterectomy and carotid angioplasty with stenting is always accompanied by a risk of ischemic stroke.^{78–80} Therefore, the choice of treatment tactics for these patients plays a key role in the prevention of this complication. It is known that restenosis after carotid angioplasty with stenting is successfully eliminated by carotid endarterectomy with stent removal.^{76,77} The most common cause of restenosis in these conditions was stent fracture or progressive growth of atherosclerotic plaque through its cells.^{76,77} Therefore, a radical operation made it possible to remove both the foreign body (stent) and the substrate (plaque) with an optimal result of the operation. If it was about restenosis of the internal carotid artery after carotid endarterectomy, then the most preferred option for reconstruction was carotid angioplasty with stenting.⁷⁸ After all, repeated carotid endarterectomy under these conditions is performed with the release of arteries from scar tissue, which is associated with a risk of bleeding and trauma to the cranial nerves.^{78,81,82} However, in some cases, when contraindications to carotid angioplasty with stenting are absolute (renal failure with high creatinine levels, allergy to a contrast agent, etc.), the operation of choice is repeated carotid endarterectomy.^{81,82} One of the studies demonstrated a high incidence of hypoglossal nerve neuropathy after repeated carotid endarterectomy, which was accompanied by a decrease in the quality of life of the patient and was not always characterized by regression of symptoms.⁸¹ Under these conditions, in Russia, to eliminate this complication, a new eversion carotid endarterectomy with transposition of the internal carotid artery over the hypoglossal nerve was developed.^{83,84} Thus, if a patient developed restenosis and there was a need to perform repeated carotid endarterectomy, then the nerve was located under the internal carotid artery, which excluded its traumatization during arterial isolation.^{83,84} Ultimately, the issue of hypoglossal neuropathy was completely eliminated.^{83,84}

Optimal Age for Carotid Endarterectomy

Characterizing patients with multifocal atherosclerosis, numerous works have repeatedly mentioned that these patients most often have a aggravated comorbid background and an age exceeding 60 years.^{85–87} Conducting small single-centre studies, the authors' teams demonstrated

that age over 75 years does not affect the incidence of postoperative complications.⁸⁸⁻⁹⁰ Although it is logical that it is in this cohort of patients that the maximum number of cases of multivessel coronary lesions, atrial fibrillation, diabetes mellitus, chronic renal failure, etc. should be concentrated. In August 2021, a multicenter Russian (8 medical institutions in St. Petersburg, Krasnodar, Kemerovo) study on this issue was published.⁹¹ For 12 years, the results of 7248 operations on the internal carotid arteries were analyzed. Of these, in 712 cases, carotid endarterectomy was performed in patients older than 75 years.⁹¹ Among them, mortality reached 1%, myocardial infarction - 2%, stroke - 1.7%. Thus, the combined endpoint was 4.6% ($P < 0.0001$).⁹¹ For the first time in Russia, it was proved that carotid endarterectomy in old age is an unsafe method of brain revascularization.⁹¹ In this regard, the authors came to the conclusion that a more justified type of reconstruction in patients over 75 years of age may be carotid angioplasty with stenting, which is not combined with high trauma and the need to clamp the internal carotid artery.⁹¹

Carotid Endarterectomy in the First Hours After the Development of Stroke and in the Acute Period of Stroke

A separate interest was associated with the timing of cerebral revascularization after the development of ischemic stroke. Dr. Tarasov R.S. proved that carotid endarterectomy in the acute period of stroke is a safe method of treating patients, leading to a significant regression of neurological symptoms and associated with a low risk of adverse cardiovascular events.^{92,93} In publications devoted to emergency carotid endarterectomy in the first hours after the development of a stroke, the entire amount of preoperative preparation of the patient was demonstrated, which made it possible to achieve a satisfactory outcome of urgent revascularization.⁹⁴ In particular, the routine use of a temporary shunt has been proposed to reduce the hemodynamic shock after occlusion of the internal carotid artery, which is associated with the likelihood of hemorrhagic transformation.⁹⁵ It is this complication that has become the most frequent adverse cardiovascular event in this cohort of patients.⁹⁴⁻⁹⁷ And in 2021, the first worldwide Russian multicenter study was completed (13 medical institutions, 615 patients), studying the comparative results of carotid endarterectomy and carotid angioplasty in the first hours after the development of a stroke.⁹⁶ The authors demonstrated that the greatest number of "symptomatic" (3.6%) hemorrhagic transformations develop after carotid endarterectomy.⁹⁶ This results in a maximum combined

endpoint of 20.4%.⁹⁶ Thus, carotid endarterectomy is an unsafe method of revascularization in the first hours after the development of a stroke.⁹⁶

Glomus-Sparing Carotid Endarterectomy in Russia

One of the achievements of carotid surgery in Russia was the development of 3 new types of surgery aimed at removing atherosclerotic plaque and preserving the carotid glomus (Fig 1).⁹⁸⁻¹⁰⁰

The first 2 options are used for local and extended atherosclerotic plaque in the internal carotid artery.^{101,102} In turn, with the help of “Chik-chirik” carotid endarterectomy, a similar operation is performed with transposition of the internal carotid artery over the hypoglossal nerve.^{103,104} However, the purpose of these types of reconstruction is to perform carotid endarterectomy with preservation of the carotid glomus.⁹⁸⁻¹⁰⁰ Such manipulation is necessary to reduce the risk of developing uncontrolled arterial hypertension in the postoperative period, which can cause the development of hemorrhagic transformation and myocardial infarction.⁹⁸⁻¹⁰⁰ Cardiovascular surgeon Kazantsev A.N. proved that the implementation of the operations proposed by him allows not only to eliminate these complications, but also to reduce the frequency of all adverse cardiovascular events.⁹⁸⁻¹⁰⁰ Alone and even in combination with coronary artery bypass grafting, these carotid endarterectomies are safer and more effective than conventional reconstruction options.¹⁰⁵ In the first hours after the development of a stroke, emergency glomus-sparing CEE demonstrates more optimal outcomes compared to eversion and classical techniques, which can recommend it as the revascularization of choice in emergency carotid surgery.¹⁰⁰ In 2021, the results of a multi-center study (13 institutions, 1827 patients) on the treatment of resistant arterial hypertension with carotid endarterectomy were published.¹⁰⁶ The authors concluded that carotid endarterectomy with preservation of the carotid glomus effectively contributes to the achievement of target levels of arterial hypertension, which makes it possible to recommend it as the operation of choice.¹⁰⁶

Conclusion

Over the past 5 years, Russian scientists have made a significant contribution to the development of carotid endarterectomy. For the first time in the world: (1) A program was created to select tactics for revascularization of patients with simultaneous atherosclerotic lesions of the coronary and carotid arteries; (2) Using the methods of computer modeling,

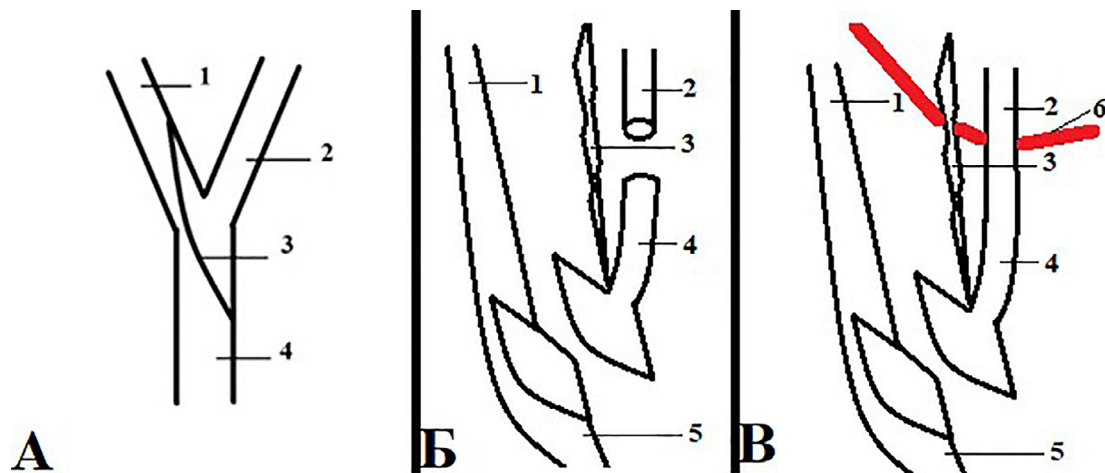


FIG 1. Glomus-sparing carotid endarterectomy developed in Russia. A - Glomus-sparing carotid endarterectomy: 1 - external carotid artery, 2 - internal carotid artery, 3 - arteriotomy, 4 - common carotid artery; Б - Glomus-sparing autotransplantation of the internal carotid artery: 1 - external carotid artery, 2 - section of the internal carotid artery remaining in the wound, 3 - carotid glomus, 4 - resected section of the internal carotid artery with preserved carotid glomus, 5 - common carotid artery; В - «Chik-chirik» carotid endarterectomy: 1 - external carotid artery, 2 - section of the internal carotid artery remaining in the wound, 3 - carotid glomus, 4 - resected section of the internal carotid artery with preserved carotid glomus, 5 - common carotid artery, 6 - hypoglossal nerve under the internal carotid artery and carotid glomus after transposition. (Color version of figure is available online.)

studying the genetics and morphology of restenosis, it was found that the classic carotid endarterectomy with plasty of the reconstruction zone with a patch is an unsafe type of revascularization; (3) An eversion carotid endarterectomy with transposition of the internal carotid artery above the hypoglossal nerve has been developed, which makes it possible to prevent damage to the latter during repeated carotid endarterectomy; (4) It has been established that carotid endarterectomy is associated with a high risk of complications in patients over 75 years of age; (5) It has been proven that carotid endarterectomy in the first hours after the development of a stroke is not safe because it is combined with the maximum number of all adverse cardiovascular events; (6) 3 new types of carotid endarterectomy with preservation of the carotid glomus have been developed.

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