Cool Fingers and Pulse Oximetry

To the Editor— Frequently, intraoperative monitoring of patients via pulse oximetry is inhibited during a surgical procedure when the pulse oximeter fails to detect pulsation, from which arterial oxygen saturation is estimated. Hemodynamically the patient may be stable, but, on palpation, may have cool extremities. Because we did not think passive heating, which has been used in the past, would be helpful during this particular case, we devised an alternative solution to this problem.

While monitoring a patient undergoing radical prostatectomy with the D25 probe of a Nellcor® N100 pulse oximeter placed on the patient’s right first finger, the oximeter ceased to function, despite effective shielding from ambient light interference. We palpated the patient’s fingers, found they were quite cool, and therefore assumed the loss of signal was due to inadequate pulse amplitude. We loosely wrapped the patient’s forearm with a pediatric warming blanket, connected it to the warming source, and set the temperature at 39°C. After approximately 15 min, pulsation in the finger was reestablished and the pulse oximeter resumed readings of SpO₂. We placed an adult D25 Nellcor® finger probe on the first finger of the patients opposite hand, but pulsation was not detected. We then measured the skin tem-
Acute Treatment after Accidental Intrathecal Injection of Hypertonic Contrast Media

To the Editor—Acute neurotoxicity of hypertonic solutions of contrast media is well established in experimental studies\textsuperscript{1,2} and in humans.\textsuperscript{3} However, until now, no treatment has been proposed. We describe a treatment used in one case of accidental intrathecal injection of hypertonic solution of meglumine amidotrizoate (Angiografin\textsuperscript{®}).

A 69-year-old, 80-kg man with a history of inferior myocardial infarction and colon carcinoma with pulmonary and painful coccygeal metastases was scheduled for insertion of a thoracic intrathecal catheter with an implantable pump for intrathecal opioid administration. In order to verify the position of the catheter in the subarachnoid space, 10 ml of hypertonic solution of contrast media was accidentally injected through the reservoir of the implantable device (fig. 1). Concomitantly, signs of neurotoxicity, including spastic paraparesis, cutaneous hyperesthesia, spontaneous pain of the lower extremities, and cardiovascular effects including tachycardia 150 bpm and ST segment depression, occurred. The patient was immediately admitted to the intensive care unit where an effort was made to dilute the contrast media by infusion of saline into the subarachnoid space. A second catheter was inserted into the lumbar subarachnoid space via the L4–L5 interspace and sterile saline was injected in 10 ml aliquots up to a total of 180 ml. After each injection of 10 ml of sterile saline 10 ml of cerebrospinal fluid were withdrawn through the lowest catheter. Cardiovascular and neurological signs soon disappeared and no sequelae were noted 24 h later.

Fig. 1. Radiography after injection of the hypertonic solution of the contrast media through the reservoir of the implantable device showing the subarachnoid space and the renal opacification.

REFERENCES


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