High-field diffusion tensor imaging characterization of cerebral white matter injury in LPS exposed fetal sheep

Yohan van de Looij 1,2, Grégory Lodygensky 3, Justin Dean 3, Henrik Hagberg 3, Rolf Gruetter 2,4, Carina Mallard 3, Petra Hüppi 1 and Stéphane Sizonenko 1

1Division of Child Growth & Development, Department of Pediatrics, University Hospital of Geneva, 2Laboratory for functional and metabolic imaging, Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, 3Perinatal Center, Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg, 4Department of Radiology, University of Geneva and Lausanne.

Introduction:
In gyrencephalic species such as sheep, precise anatomical and microstructural characterization of the consequences of fetal inflammation is important for the comprehension of perinatal brain injury mechanisms. The aim of this study was to provide MRI delineation of the changes in the developing white matter (WM) following lipopolysaccharide (LPS) exposure in the 0.7 gestation fetal sheep.

Material and Methods:
Animal:
- Fetal sheep at 103d of gestation (term = 145d) received vehicle (Sham) or LPS (LPS)

MRI:
- T1W, T2W and DTI performed.
- Gray/White matter (GM/WM) volumes and Corpus callosum (CC) thickness measured.
- Diffusivities (D⊥, D// and MD) and fractional anisotropy (FA) quantified in the MR lesions.

Staining:
- AF/T, GFAP, neurofilament (NF) and amyloid precursor protein (APP).

Results and discussion:
Total brain and WM volumes as well as CC thickness were significantly reduced following LPS exposure as already observed in human preterm [2].

MR signal abnormalities are summarized in the figure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesion name</th>
<th>Focal/ Diffuse</th>
<th>MRI</th>
<th>DTI</th>
<th>Fiber disruption</th>
<th>Histology</th>
<th>Lesion Area</th>
<th>Human corresponding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diff WM lesions</td>
<td>Diffuse</td>
<td>T1W, T2W, FA, MD</td>
<td>D⊥</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>AF/T, GFAP, NF, APP</td>
<td>Intragryal WM</td>
<td>DEHSI [3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necrosis</td>
<td>Focal</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cysts</td>
<td>Focal</td>
<td>↓↓</td>
<td>↑↑</td>
<td>↑↑</td>
<td>↑↑</td>
<td>↑↑</td>
<td>↑↑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NC: No change, NA: not available, ↑: increase/accumulation, ↓: decrease/reduction

Conclusion:
The combination of lesions depicted by DTI in LPS treated fetal sheep (i.e. DEHSI, punctate lesions and cysts) mimics very well the pattern of injuries seen in premature infants confirming the relevance of such a model.


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