

Title of Manuscript: **Pathophysiological to Clinical Aspects of Head Injury: Narrative Literature Review**

1. Proofread document received (February 4th, 2022)
 - Document from proofreading service
2. Submitted to the journal "Open Access Indonesian Journal of Medical Reviews" (February 9th, 2022)
3. Peer Reviewer results: Revision Required (February 17th, 2022)
4. Revised version received by journal (February 25th, 2022)
5. Paper Accepted for publication (March 1st, 2022)
6. Galley proof (March 2nd, 2022)
7. Paper published (March 4th, 2022)

March 26th, 2021

HM Publisher

Jl Sirnaraga No 99, 8 Ilir, Ilir Timur 3, Palembang, South Sumatra, Indonesia

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March 26th, 2021

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Submitted to the journal "Open Access Indonesian Journal of Medical Reviews" (February 9th, 2022)

Pathophysiological to Clinical Aspects of Head Injury: Narrative Literature Review

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Abstract

A head injury is an alteration of brain function or brain pathology, caused by external forces on the head. The alteration of brain function consists of any period of loss or decrease in consciousness, anterograde or retrograde amnesia, neurological deficits or mental changes after an injury that hits the head. A study reported the highest incidence of head injuries was in the Americas at 1299 cases per 100,000 inhabitants followed by Europe at 1012 cases per 100,000 inhabitants. The lowest incidence of head injuries occurred on the African continent, with 801 cases per 100,000 inhabitants. Based on this data, the overall incidence of head injuries in the world is 939 cases per 100,000 population with most of them being minor head injuries (55.9 million cases per year) and 5.28 million people experiencing severe head injuries.

Keywords: head injury, pathophysiology, clinical

Introduction

A head injury is an alteration of brain function or brain pathology, caused by external forces on the head. The alteration of brain function consists of any period of loss or decrease in consciousness, anterograde or retrograde amnesia, neurological deficits or mental changes after an injury that hits the head. ^{1,2} A study reported the highest incidence of head injuries was in the Americas at 1299 cases per 100,000 inhabitants followed by Continental Europe at 1012 cases per 100,000 inhabitants. The lowest incidence of head injuries occurred on the African continent, with 801 cases per 100,000 inhabitants. Based on this data, the overall incidence of head injuries in the world is 939 cases per 100,000 population with most of them being minor head injuries (55.9

million cases per year) and 5.28 million people experiencing severe head injuries. At the regional level, the highest incidence of head injuries in the world is in Southeast Asia, with 18.3 million cases.³⁻⁵ In Indonesia, there have been several reports of head injuries, during June-December 2018 there were 118 cases of head injuries recorded at H. Adam Malik Hospital, North Sumatra with patient ages ranging from 18 years to 35 years and dominated by the male sex. In this study, the most cases were epidural hemorrhages. Based on medical record data at the Dr. M. Djamil Padang Central General Hospital, there were 356 cases of head injuries in 2017 and 505 cases in 2018.⁵

Head Injury Classification

The classification of head injuries was made based on clinical severity and assessed using *the Glasgow Coma Scale (GCS)*. *The Glasgow coma scale* consists of 3 components that allow a quick assessment of the severity of head injuries namely eye, verbal and motor. Score scores of 14-15, 9-13 and 3-8 are respectively classified as minor head injuries, moderate head injuries and severe head injuries. Table 1 shows the scoring on GCS.^{6,7}

Table1 Glasgow Coma Scale

Response	Score					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Eye	Not opening your eyes	Opening the eyes with pain stimulation	Opening eyes with sound	Spontaneous eye-opening	-	-
Verbal	Silent	Unclear voice	Inappropriate wording	Confused, disorientation	Good orientation, normal	-
Motor	Not doing Gestures	Extension due to pain stimulation	Abnormal flexion to pain stimuli	Flexion / avoidance of pain stimulation	Localizes pain stimulation	Following orders

Other classifications of head injuries are divided by morphology:

- a. Fractures of the skull: cranium (depressive and non-depressive fractures) and crani base.

- b. Intracranial lesions: focal (epidural, subdural and intracerebral/contusion), diffuse (concussion, ischemic injury, diffuse axon injury).⁸

The main causes of head injuries are traffic accidents, falls and assaults. By mechanism, head trauma is classified as blunt (the most common mechanism), penetrating (most fatal injury) and explosive. The most severe injuries result from motor vehicle collisions and falls.^{9,10}

Pathophysiology of Head Injuries

Head injuries can be classified into primary and secondary injuries. Primary injuries include injuries from brain shifts due to direct impact, rapid accelerations or penetration. This injury can cause contusion, hematomas or axon injuries. Secondary injury occurs after primary injury in the form of the production of biochemical compounds such as glutamate which causes further damage to the mitochondria as well as cell death and necrosis. Secondary head injuries cause systemic hypotension, hypoxia and increased intracranial pressure that proceeds to brain herniation.¹¹⁻¹³

Initial phase

The initial phase occurs directly after trauma due to impaired blood flow and ischemia conditions that lead to conditions of decreased *adenosine triphosphate*, oxygenation, glucose consumption and distribution, depolarization of calcium ion channels, increased lactate and cell death of neurons. After the death of neuron cells, glutamate comes out of the damaged presynaptic vesicles that cause excitotoxicity. Glutamate binds to N-methyl-D-aspartate receptors, increases Ca^{2+} and Na^{+} in cells and activates enzymes responsible for tissue damage. Excessive accumulation of calcium inside neurons also stimulates the activity of *nitric oxide* and causes oxidative stress. This exacerbates cell death.¹⁴ Necrotic areas of nerve cells and glia cells are concentrated in places with impaired blood supply, may occur due to epidural hemorrhage, subdural hemorrhage and intracerebral hemorrhage. Secondary contusion can occur in opposite brain tissues due to coup and *counter coup* mechanisms.¹³ Cognitive deficits, behavioral changes and hemiparesis depending on the severity of the injury. In contrast to focal injuries, the main mechanism of diffuse brain injury is the rapid acceleration and deceleration forces that cause shear and strain injuries of cerebral brain tissue. This leads to injuries of axons, oligodendrocytes and blood vessels, which proceeds with brain edema and ischemic brain damage. The degree of axonal injury and degeneration of neurons determines the severity of the head injury.¹³

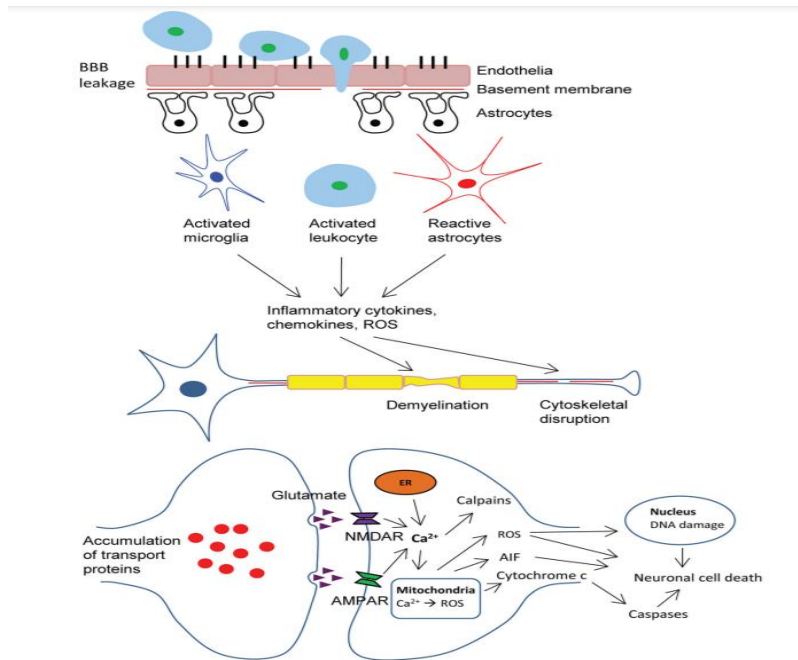


Figure 1. Pathophysiological scheme of head injuries

Phase Intermediat

Abnormal functioning caused by mechanical damage and neurotrauma results in an inflammatory process. This inflammation can increase brain injury and activate microglia, which further prolongs nerve inflammation. An increase in cytokines and pro-inflammatory chemokines occurs approximately 1 hour after nerve injury. One inflammatory cytokine, IL-1b, acts on astrocytes, activates intracellular ERK pathways, and releases the metalloproteinase-9 matrix. The metalloproteinase matrix will erode the extracellular matrix, impair the integrity and function of the BBB, and induce chronic nerve inflammation.¹⁴ The brain is usually protected from immune cells and pathogens due to the presence of *Blood Brain Barrier* (BBB). However, damage to the BBB after a head injury causes leakage of prostaglandins, nitrite oxides, cytokines and inflammatory mediators into brain tissue. After primary injury, the inflammatory response is activated by the invasion of monocytes, neutrophils and lymphocytes passing through the BBB.¹⁵

Final Phase

The ultimate goal of the inflammatory process is the removal of pathogens from the place of injury, regenerating damaged cells and improving the functioning of nerve cells. However, the recovery process leaves some sequelae such as seizures and epilepsy. The reduction in expression of Kv.4.2 increases nervous stimuli that are thought to mediate seizures. In addition, injury-

induced epilepsy is caused by activation of the trkB/ERK1/2-CREB/Elk-1 pathway and expression of GAP-43.¹⁴

Head Injury Diagnosis

Anamnesis

In the anamnesis asked the mechanism of injury, symptoms and findings of physical examination associated with head injury.¹⁶ The mechanism of injury is associated with immediate intervention which includes observation, admission to the hospital or ICU and/or neurosurgical intervention. The mechanisms of injury that most often result in severe head injuries include pedestrians who are hit by vehicles, passengers who are thrown from motor vehicles and people who fall from a height of more than 1 m or other. Motorcycle collisions, not wearing helmets and chronic alcoholism are associated with an increased risk of severe intracranial injury even with mild initial symptoms.^{1 6,17} The presence of vomiting, especially more than two episodes, has a higher probability of developing severe head injuries. Post-traumatic seizures are also associated with higher degrees of severity.^{1 6,17}

Physical Examination

In patients with mild and moderate head injuries, physical examination findings can be helpful in predicting severe injuries. Focal neurological deficits are associated with severe head injuries. Signs of a skull fracture (open, depressive or stable) such as hemotympanum, otorrhea, peri-orbital ecchymosis, or fracture of the skull base identified by postauricular ecchymosis (*battle sign*) are also associated with severe head injuries. Severe injury to an unconscious drunk patient can be associated with alcohol intoxication. In minor head injuries, the initial GCS 13, the aggravation of GCS and GCS <14 2 hours post injury are all linked to the possibility of more severe intracranial injuries.¹⁶

Imaging

Radiological examination plays an important role in identifying patients with head injuries. Common imaging includes CT scans of the head and MRIs. Imaging will help distinguish patients who require immediate neurosurgical intervention or may go home in patients under observation. When there are clinical indications for imaging, a non-contrast head CT scan is the top choice. MRI is superior in identifying small focal traumatic lesions.¹⁷ Non-contrast head CT scans are recommended as selected imaging and can identify subdural hemorrhage, epidural hemorrhage,

subarachnoid hemorrhage, intracerebral hemorrhage, cerebral contusion, skull fracture, pneumocephalus and cerebral edema. Indications of a CT scan are divided into two criteria, namely moderate risk of intracranial injury and high risk of intracranial injury.¹⁶

Table 2. Indications for CT scan of head injuries

Medium risk	High risk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of consciousness after injury • Drug intoxication • Post-traumatic seizures • The mechanism of trauma is unclear • Age less than 2 years • Vomiting • Amnesia after head injury • Multiple traumas • There are baseline fracture marks • Severe injuries to the face • Suspected depressive or penetrating fracture of the skull • Accompanied by GCS ≤ 14 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear loss of consciousness cause • Focal neurological deficits • Depressed fracture • Skull penetrating injury

Head Injury Management

Management of prehospital

The service of head injury patients must be started from the site of the injury with the aim of maintaining the airway and maintaining adequate circulation and ventilation. Patients with moderate and severe head injuries should be immediately sent to a health center that has a neurosurgery facility. The initial goal of management is the prevention of hypoxia and hypotension because both of these things increase mortality twice as much.¹⁸

- Airway/oxygenation management

- Prevention, identification and therapy of hypoxia (saturation $O_2 < 90\%$ and/or cyanosis).
- Airway maneuver.
- Ventilation with NRM.
- Endotracheal intubation if there are indications.
- Ventilation Management
 - Intubated patient and mechanical ventilation: if available, target $PaCO_2$ 40 mmHg.
 - Prophylactic hyperventilation on the prevention of ICT is not recommended.
- Management tekanan intrakranial
 - Hypotension: at systolic blood pressure < 90 mmHg, fluid resuscitation with bolus initial 1 liter of normal saline or RL with a target TDS of ≥ 90 mmHg is carried out.
 - Hypertension: therapy in acute hypertension is not recommended in case of head injury. However, IV fluids are restricted at minimal speed if the TDS ≥ 140 mmHg.

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Medical intervention

Elevation kepala

Head elevation in head injuries generally has a rapid effect in lowering intracranial pressure. Tekanan Intrakranial (ICT) is reduced by the transfer of cerebrospinal fluid from the intracranial compartment as well as encouraging venous outflow. Although the average carotid pressure decreases during the elevation of the head, ICT decreases and cerebral blood flow is not affected.¹⁴

Hyperventilation

Hyperventilation lowers ICT by reducing the partial pressure of intraarterial carbon dioxide ($PaCO_2$) and causes vasoconstriction. But this action ultimately leads to a decrease in cerebral blood volume. Prophylactic hyperventilation is not recommended, since vasoconstriction lowers blood flow to the brain. The use of hyperventilation in conditions of severe head injury is usually only used for brief deterioration during acute neurological aggravation. Hyperventilation up to $PaCO_2$ 25 mmHg to lower ICT.¹⁹⁻²¹

Convulsive prophylaxis

Current head injury guidelines state that the use of antiepileptic profilaks for 1 week is acceptable to help prevent early seizures. Currently the recommended drug is phenytoin. However, there has been no proven benefit in the prevention of long-term seizures after a head injury, so profilaksis stopped after 7 days. 2^{2-2 4}

Hyperosmolar Therapy

Hyperosmolar therapy in head injuries can be given in the form of a bolus or infusion. The administration of mannitol is recommended in patients with euvolemic severe head injury. 2² Mannitol is used to reduce the increase in ICT. The most common preparation is a 20% solution (20 g of mannitol per 100 ml of solution). Strong indications for the administration of mannitol in euvolemic patients are pupil dilation, hemiparesis and loss of consciousness. 2²

Drugs that cause coma status

The patient is made into a coma by infusion of benzodiazepine or barbiturate. Administration is carried out with a continuous electrocephalogram. This therapy serves to lower the metabolic needs of the brain. This administration is only recommended in cases of severe refractory ICT enhancement after medical therapy and maximum ICT reduction. 2^{2.2 3}

Therapeutic hypothermia

This therapy may decrease oxidative injury due to the effect of decreasing metabolic needs of the brain but risks changes in blood sugar, platelet count and coagulation factors. This therapy was performed on a severe head injury. 2^{4.2 3}

Intervention Bedah

Surgical intervention is generally necessary when there is a mass effect of either epidural hemorrhage, subdural hemorrhage, intracerebral hemorrhage atau contusio with a significant blood volume. The main management of epidural hemorrhage is craniotomy in the traumatized area, with the evacuation of hematomas and cauterization of torn blood vessels, often median arteries. Acute subdural hemorrhage is usually associated with more severe brain injury. 2^{4.2 5}

Conclusion

A head injury is an alteration of brain function or brain pathology, caused by external forces on the head. The alteration of brain function consists of any period of loss or decrease in

consciousness, anterograde or retrograde amnesia, neurological deficits or mental changes after an injury that hits the head.

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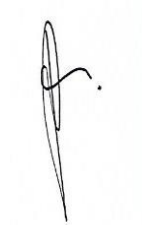
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Submission acknowledgement

Dear author(s),

Rachmat Hidayat* has submitted the manuscript "Pathophysiological to Clinical Aspects of Head Injury: Narrative Literature Review" to Open Access Indonesian Journal of Medical Reviews. The paper will be screened by editor and reviewed by peer review.

Cordially,



Prof. Paula Magnano, PhD

Editor



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(*) Corresponding author

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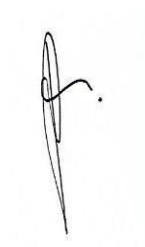


Peer Review Results

Dear author(s),

Rachmat Hidayat* has submitted the manuscript "Pathophysiological to Clinical Aspects of Head Injury: Narrative Literature Review" to Open Access Indonesian Journal of Medical Reviews. The decision : Revision Required.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "P. Magnano", is positioned to the left of the publisher's logo.

Prof. Paula Magnano, PhD

Editor



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(*) Corresponding author

Reviewer 1: Revision required

Pathophysiological to Clinical Aspects of Head Injury: Narrative Literature Review →1

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Abstract →3

A head injury is an alteration of brain function or brain pathology, caused by external forces on the head. The alteration of brain function consists of any period of loss or decrease in consciousness, anterograde or retrograde amnesia, neurological deficits or mental changes after an injury that hits the head. A study reported the highest incidence of head injuries was in the Americas at 1299 cases per 100,000 inhabitants followed by Europe at 1012 cases per 100,000 inhabitants. The lowest incidence of head injuries occurred on the African continent, with 801 cases per 100,000 inhabitants. Based on this data, the overall incidence of head injuries in the world is 939 cases per 100,000 population with most of them being minor head injuries (55.9 million cases per year) and 5.28 million people experiencing severe head injuries.

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Initial phase

The initial phase occurs directly after trauma due to impaired blood flow and ischemia conditions that lead to conditions of decreased *adenosine triphosphate*, oxygenation, glucose consumption and distribution, depolarization of calcium ion channels, increased lactate and cell death of neurons. After the death of neuron cells, glutamate comes out of the damaged presynaptic vesicles that cause excitotoxicity. Glutamate binds to N-methyl-D-aspartate receptors, increases Ca^{2+} and Na^{+} in cells and activates enzymes responsible for tissue damage. Excessive accumulation of calcium inside neurons also stimulates the activity of *nitric oxide* and causes oxidative stress. This exacerbates cell death.¹⁴ Necrotic areas of nerve cells and glia cells are concentrated in places with impaired blood supply, may occur due to epidural hemorrhage, subdural hemorrhage and intracerebral hemorrhage. Secondary contusion can occur in opposite brain tissues due to coup and *counter coup* mechanisms.¹³ Cognitive deficits, behavioral changes and hemiparesis depending on the severity of the injury. In contrast to focal injuries, the main mechanism of diffuse brain injury is the rapid acceleration and deceleration forces that cause shear and strain injuries of cerebral brain tissue. This leads to injuries of axons, oligodendrocytes and blood vessels, which proceeds with brain edema and ischemic brain damage. The degree of axonal injury and degeneration of neurons determines the severity of the head injury.¹³

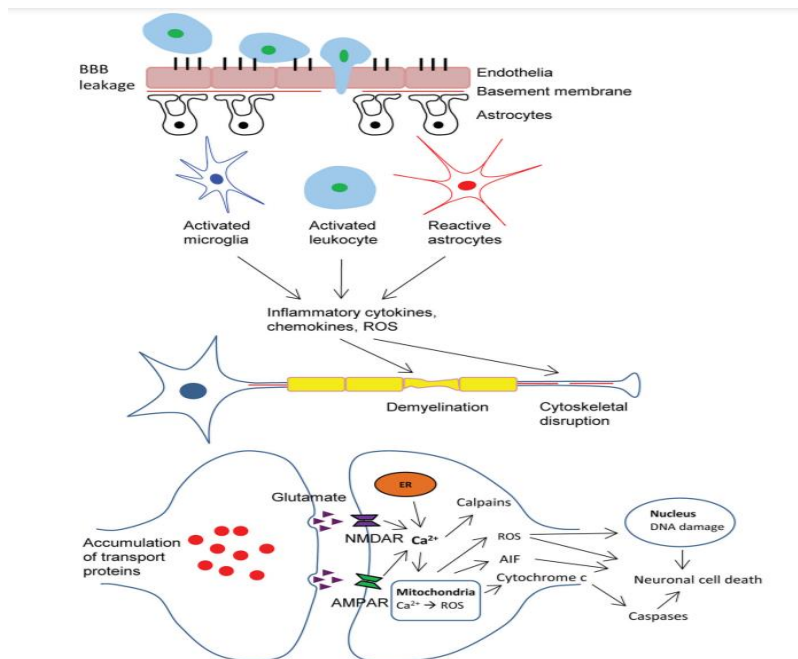


Figure 1. Pathophysiological scheme of head injuries

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Imaging

Radiological examination plays an important role in identifying patients with head injuries. Common imaging includes CT scans of the head and MRIs. Imaging will help distinguish patients who require immediate neurosurgical intervention or may go home in patients under observation. When there are clinical indications for imaging, a non-contrast head CT scan is the top choice. MRI is superior in identifying small focal traumatic lesions.¹⁷ Non-contrast head CT scans are recommended as selected imaging and can identify subdural hemorrhage, epidural hemorrhage,

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Head Injury Management

Management of prehospital

The service of head injury patients must be started from the site of the injury with the aim of maintaining the airway and maintaining adequate circulation and ventilation. Patients with moderate and severe head injuries should be immediately sent to a health center that has a neurosurgery facility. The initial goal of management is the prevention of hypoxia and hypotension because both of these things increase mortality twice as much.¹⁸

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 - Hypotension: at systolic blood pressure < 90 mmHg, fluid resuscitation with bolus of 1 liter of normal saline or RL with a target TDS of ≥ 90 mmHg is carried out.
 - Hypertension: therapy in acute hypertension is not recommended in case of head injury. However, IV fluids are restricted at minimal speed if the TDS ≥ 140 mmHg.

18

Medical intervention

Elevation kepala

Head elevation in head injuries generally has a rapid effect in lowering intracranial pressure. Intracranial pressure (ICT) is reduced by the transfer of cerebrospinal fluid from the intracranial compartment as well as encouraging venous outflow. Although the average carotid pressure decreases during the elevation of the head, ICT decreases and cerebral blood flow is not affected.¹⁴

Hyperventilation

Hyperventilation lowers ICT by reducing the partial pressure of intraarterial carbon dioxide ($PaCO_2$) and causes vasoconstriction. But this action ultimately leads to a decrease in cerebral blood volume. Prophylactic hyperventilation is not recommended, since vasoconstriction lowers blood flow to the brain. The use of hyperventilation in conditions of severe head injury is usually only used for brief deterioration during acute neurological aggravation. Hyperventilation up to $PaCO_2$ 25 mmHg to lower ICT.¹⁹⁻²¹

Convulsive prophylaxis

Current head injury guidelines state that the use of antiepileptic profilaks for 1 week is acceptable to help prevent early seizures. Currently the recommended drug is phenytoin. However, there has been no proven benefit in the prevention of long-term seizures after a head injury, so profilaksis stopped after 7 days. 2^{2-2 4}

Hyperosmolar Therapy

Hyperosmolar therapy in head injuries can be given in the form of a bolus or infusion. The administration of mannitol is recommended in patients with euvolemic severe head injury. 2² Mannitol is used to reduce the increase in ICT. The most common preparation is a 20% solution (20 g of mannitol per 100 ml of solution). Strong indications for the administration of mannitol in euvolemic patients are pupil dilation, hemiparesis and loss of consciousness. 2²

Drugs that cause coma status

The patient is made into a coma by infusion of benzodiazepine or barbiturate. Administration is carried out with a continuous electrocephalogram. This therapy serves to lower the metabolic needs of the brain. This administration is only recommended in cases of severe refractory ICT enhancement after medical therapy and maximum ICT reduction. 2^{2.2 3}

Therapeutic hypothermia

This therapy may decrease oxidative injury due to the effect of decreasing metabolic needs of the brain but risks changes in blood sugar, platelet count and coagulation factors. This therapy was performed on a severe head injury. 2^{4.2 3}

Intervention Bedah

Surgical intervention is generally necessary when there is a mass effect of either epidural hemorrhage, subdural hemorrhage, intracerebral hemorrhage atau contusio with a significant blood volume. The main management of epidural hemorrhage is craniotomy in the traumatized area, with the evacuation of hematomas and cauterization of torn blood vessels, often median arteries. Acute subdural hemorrhage is usually associated with more severe brain injury. 2^{4.2 5}

Conclusion → 5

A head injury is an alteration of brain function or brain pathology, caused by external forces on the head. The alteration of brain function consists of any period of loss or decrease in

consciousness, anterograde or retrograde amnesia, neurological deficits or mental changes after an injury that hits the head.

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4→ Introduction should be showed the urgency of study (epidemiology data), biological plausibility concept, and lack of knowledge in the study.

5→ Conclusion should more specific and not more showed more review.

6→ Authors must check the references for make update references. References should no more than 10 years.

Reviewer 2: Revision required

Pathophysiological to Clinical Aspects of Head Injury: Narrative Literature Review →1

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Abstract →3

A head injury is an alteration of brain function or brain pathology, caused by external forces on the head. The alteration of brain function consists of any period of loss or decrease in consciousness, anterograde or retrograde amnesia, neurological deficits or mental changes after an injury that hits the head. A study reported the highest incidence of head injuries was in the Americas at 1299 cases per 100,000 inhabitants followed by Europe at 1012 cases per 100,000 inhabitants. The lowest incidence of head injuries occurred on the African continent, with 801 cases per 100,000 inhabitants. Based on this data, the overall incidence of head injuries in the world is 939 cases per 100,000 population with most of them being minor head injuries (55.9 million cases per year) and 5.28 million people experiencing severe head injuries.

Keywords: head injury, pathophysiology, clinical →2

Introduction →4

A head injury is an alteration of brain function or brain pathology, caused by external forces on the head. The alteration of brain function consists of any period of loss or decrease in consciousness, anterograde or retrograde amnesia, neurological deficits or mental changes after an injury that hits the head. ^{1,2} A study reported the highest incidence of head injuries was in the Americas at 1299 cases per 100,000 inhabitants followed by Continental Europe at 1012 cases per 100,000 inhabitants. The lowest incidence of head injuries occurred on the African continent, with 801 cases per 100,000 inhabitants. Based on this data, the overall incidence of head injuries in the world is 939 cases per 100,000 population with most of them being minor head injuries (55.9 million cases per year) and 5.28 million people experiencing severe head injuries. At the regional level, the highest incidence of head injuries in the world is in Southeast Asia, with 18.3 million

cases.³⁻⁵ In Indonesia, there have been several reports of head injuries, during June-December 2018 there were 118 cases of head injuries recorded at H. Adam Malik Hospital, North Sumatra with patient ages ranging from 18 years to 35 years and dominated by the male sex. In this study, the most cases were epidural hemorrhages. Based on medical record data at the Dr. M. Djamil Padang Central General Hospital, there were 356 cases of head injuries in 2017 and 505 cases in 2018.⁵

Head Injury Classification

The classification of head injuries was made based on clinical severity and assessed using the Glasgow Coma Scale (GCS). The Glasgow coma scale consists of 3 components that allow a quick assessment of the severity of head injuries namely eye, verbal and motor. Score scores of 14-15, 9-13 and 3-8 are respectively classified as minor head injuries, moderate head injuries and severe head injuries. Table 1 shows the scoring on GCS.^{6,7}

Table 1 Glasgow Coma Scale

Response	Score					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Eye	Not opening your eyes	Opening the eyes with pain stimulation	Opening eyes with sound	Spontaneous eye-opening	-	-
Verbal	Silent	Unclear voice	Inappropriate wording	Confused, disorientation	Good orientation, normal	-
Motor	Not doing Gestures	Extension due to pain stimulation	Abnormal flexion to pain stimuli	Flexion / avoidance of pain stimulation	Localizes pain stimulation	Following orders

Other classifications of head injuries are divided by morphology:

- Fractures of the skull: cranium (depressive and non-depressive fractures) and crani base.
- Intra k ranial lesions: focal (epidural, subdural and intracerebral/contusio), diffuse (concusio, ischemic injury, diffuse axon injury).⁸

The main causes of head injuries are traffic accidents, falls and assaults. By mechanism, head trauma is classified as blunt (the most common mechanism), translucent (most fatal injury) and explosive. The most severe injuries result from motor vehicle collisions and falls.^{9,10}

Pathophysiology of Head Injuries

Head injuries can be classified into primary and secondary injuries. Primary injuries include injuries from brain shifts due to direct impact, rapid accelerations or penetration. This injury can cause contusion, hematomas or axon injuries. Secondary injury occurs after primary injury in the form of the production of biochemical compounds such as glutamate which causes further damage to the mitochondria as well as cell death and necrosis. Secondary head injuries cause systemic hypotension, hypoxia and increased intracranial pressure that proceeds to brain herniation.¹¹⁻¹³

Initial phase

The initial phase occurs directly after trauma due to impaired blood flow and ischemia conditions that lead to conditions of decreased *adenosine triphosphate*, oxygenation, glucose consumption and distribution, depolarization of calcium ion channels, increased lactate and cell death of neurons. After the death of neuron cells, glutamate comes out of the damaged presynaptic vesicles that cause excitotoxicity. Glutamate binds to N-methyl-D-aspartate receptors, increases Ca^{2+} and Na^{+} in cells and activates enzymes responsible for tissue damage. Excessive accumulation of calcium inside neurons also stimulates the activity of *nitric oxide* and causes oxidative stress. This exacerbates cell death.¹⁴ Necrotic areas of nerve cells and glia cells are concentrated in places with impaired blood supply, may occur due to epidural hemorrhage, subdural hemorrhage and intracerebral hemorrhage. Secondary contusion can occur in opposite brain tissues due to coup and *counter coup* mechanisms.¹³ Cognitive deficits, behavioral changes and hemiparesis depending on the severity of the injury. In contrast to focal injuries, the main mechanism of diffuse brain injury is the rapid acceleration and deceleration forces that cause shear and strain injuries of cerebral brain tissue. This leads to injuries of axons, oligodendrocytes and blood vessels, which proceeds with brain edema and ischemic brain damage. The degree of axonal injury and degeneration of neurons determines the severity of the head injury.¹³

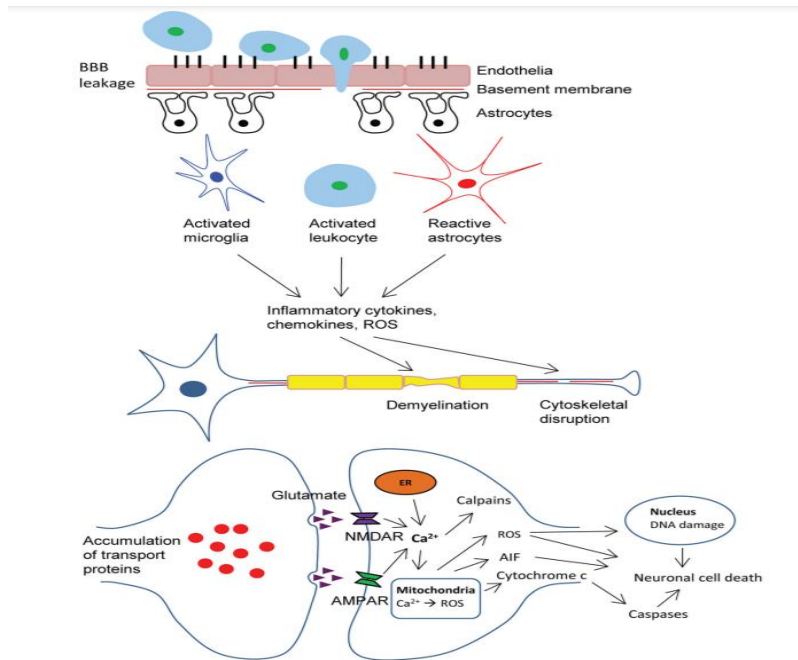


Figure 1. Pathophysiological scheme of head injuries

Phase Intermediat

Abnormal functioning caused by mechanical damage and neurotrauma results in an inflammatory process. This inflammation can increase brain injury and activate microglia, which further prolongs nerve inflammation. An increase in cytokines and pro-inflammatory chemokines occurs approximately 1 hour after nerve injury. One inflammatory cytokine, IL-1b, acts on astrocytes, activates intracellular ERK pathways, and releases the metalloproteinase-9 matrix. The metalloproteinase matrix will erode the extracellular matrix, impair the integrity and function of the BBB, and induce chronic nerve inflammation.¹⁴ The brain is usually protected from immune cells and pathogens due to the presence of *Blood Brain Barrier* (BBB). However, damage to the BBB after a head injury causes leakage of prostaglandins, nitrite oxides, cytokines and inflammatory mediators into brain tissue. After primary injury, the inflammatory response is activated by the invasion of monocytes, neutrophils and lymphocytes passing through the BBB.¹⁵

Final Phase

The ultimate goal of the inflammatory process is the removal of pathogens from the place of injury, regenerating damaged cells and improving the functioning of nerve cells. However, the recovery process leaves some sequelae such as seizures and epilepsy. The reduction in expression of Kv.4.2 increases nervous stimuli that are thought to mediate seizures. In addition, injury-

induced epilepsy is caused by activation of the trkB/ERK1/2-CREB/Elk-1 pathway and expression of GAP-43.¹⁴

Head Injury Diagnosis

Anamnesis

In the anamnesis asked the mechanism of injury, symptoms and findings of physical examination associated with head injury.¹⁶ The mechanism of injury is associated with immediate intervention which includes observation, admission to the hospital or ICU and/or neurosurgical intervention. The mechanisms of injury that most often result in severe head injuries include pedestrians who are hit by vehicles, passengers who are thrown from motor vehicles and people who fall from a height of more than 1 m or other. Motorcycle collisions, not wearing helmets and chronic alcoholism are associated with an increased risk of severe intracranial injury even with mild initial symptoms.^{16,17} The presence of vomiting, especially more than two episodes, has a higher probability of developing severe head injuries. Post-traumatic seizures are also associated with higher degrees of severity.^{16,17}

Physical Examination

In patients with mild and moderate head injuries, physical examination findings can be helpful in predicting severe injuries. Focal neurological deficits are associated with severe head injuries. Signs of a skull fracture (open, depressive or stable) such as hemotympanum, otorrhea, peri-orbital ecchymosis, or fracture of the skull base identified by postauricular ecchymosis (*battle sign*) are also associated with severe head injuries. Severe injury to an unconscious drunk patient can be associated with alcohol intoxication. In minor head injuries, the initial GCS 13, the aggravation of GCS and GCS <14 2 hours post injury are all linked to the possibility of more severe intracranial injuries.¹⁶

Imaging

Radiological examination plays an important role in identifying patients with head injuries. Common imaging includes CT scans of the head and MRIs. Imaging will help distinguish patients who require immediate neurosurgical intervention or may go home in patients under observation. When there are clinical indications for imaging, a non-contrast head CT scan is the top choice. MRI is superior in identifying small focal traumatic lesions.¹⁷ Non-contrast head CT scans are recommended as selected imaging and can identify subdural hemorrhage, epidural hemorrhage,

subarachnoid hemorrhage, intracerebral hemorrhage, cerebral contusion, skull fracture, pneumocephalus and cerebral edema. Indications of a CT scan are divided into two criteria, namely moderate risk of intracranial injury and high risk of intracranial injury.¹⁶

Table 2. Indications for CT scan of head injuries

Medium risk	High risk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of consciousness after injury • Drug intoxication • Post-traumatic seizures • The mechanism of trauma is unclear • Age less than 2 years • Vomit • Amnesia after head injury • Multiple traumas • There are baseline fracture marks • Severe injuries to the face • Suspected depressive or penetrating fracture of the skull • Accompanied by GCS ≤ 14 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear loss of consciousness cause • Focal neurological deficits • Depressed fracture • Skull penetrating injury

Head Injury Management

Management of prehospital

The service of head injury patients must be started from the site of the injury with the aim of maintaining the airway and maintaining adequate circulation and ventilation. Patients with moderate and severe head injuries should be immediately sent to a health center that has a neurosurgery facility. The initial goal of management is the prevention of hypoxia and hypotension because both of these things increase mortality twice as much.¹⁸

- Airway/oxygenation management

- Prevention, identification and therapy of hypoxia (saturation $O_2 < 90\%$ and/or cyanosis).
- Airway maneuver.
- Ventilation with NRM.
- Endotracheal intubation if there are indications.
- Ventilation Management
 - Intubated patient and mechanical ventilation: if available, target $PaCO_2$ 40 mmHg.
 - Prophylactic hyperventilation on the prevention of ICT is not recommended.
- Management tekanan intrakranial
 - Hypotension: at systolic blood pressure < 90 mmHg, fluid resuscitation with bolus initial 1 liter of normal saline or RL with a target TDS of ≥ 90 mmHg is carried out.
 - Hypertension: therapy in acute hypertension is not recommended in case of head injury. However, IV fluids are restricted at minimal speed if the TDS ≥ 140 mmHg.

18

Medical intervention

Elevation kepala

Head elevation in head injuries generally has a rapid effect in lowering intracranial pressure. Tekanan Intrakranial (ICT) is reduced by the transfer of cerebrospinal fluid from the intracranial compartment as well as encouraging venous outflow. Although the average carotid pressure decreases during the elevation of the head, ICT decreases and cerebral blood flow is not affected.¹⁴

Hyperventilation

Hyperventilation lowers ICT by reducing the partial pressure of intraarterial carbon dioxide ($PaCO_2$) and causes vasoconstriction. But this action ultimately leads to a decrease in cerebral blood volume. Prophylactic hyperventilation is not recommended, since vasoconstriction lowers blood flow to the brain. The use of hyperventilation in conditions of severe head injury is usually only used for brief deterioration during acute neurological aggravation. Hyperventilation up to $PaCO_2$ 25 mmHg to lower ICT.¹⁹⁻²¹

Convulsive prophylaxis

Current head injury guidelines state that the use of antiepileptic profilaks for 1 week is acceptable to help prevent early seizures. Currently the recommended drug is phenytoin. However, there has been no proven benefit in the prevention of long-term seizures after a head injury, so profilaksis stopped after 7 days. 2^{2-2 4}

Hyperosmolar Therapy

Hyperosmolar therapy in head injuries can be given in the form of a bolus or infusion. The administration of mannitol is recommended in patients with euvolemic severe head injury. 2² Mannitol is used to reduce the increase in ICT. The most common preparation is a 20% solution (20 g of mannitol per 100 ml of solution). Strong indications for the administration of mannitol in euvolemic patients are pupil dilation, hemiparesis and loss of consciousness. 2²

Drugs that cause coma status

The patient is made into a coma by infusion of benzodiazepine or barbiturate. Administration is carried out with a continuous electrocephalogram. This therapy serves to lower the metabolic needs of the brain. This administration is only recommended in cases of severe refractory ICT enhancement after medical therapy and maximum ICT reduction. 2^{2.2 3}

Therapeutic hypothermia

This therapy may decrease oxidative injury due to the effect of decreasing metabolic needs of the brain but risks changes in blood sugar, platelet count and coagulation factors. This therapy was performed on a severe head injury. 2^{4.2 3}

Intervention Bedah

Surgical intervention is generally necessary when there is a mass effect of either epidural hemorrhage, subdural hemorrhage, intracerebral hemorrhage atau contusio with a significant blood volume. The main management of epidural hemorrhage is craniotomy in the traumatized area, with the evacuation of hematomas and cauterization of torn blood vessels, often median arteries. Acute subdural hemorrhage is usually associated with more severe brain injury. 2^{4.2 5}

Conclusion → 5

A head injury is an alteration of brain function or brain pathology, caused by external forces on the head. The alteration of brain function consists of any period of loss or decrease in

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Pathophysiological to Clinical Aspects of Head Injury: Narrative Literature Review

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Head injury
Pathophysiology
Clinical

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The author has reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

<https://doi.org/10.37275/OAJMR.v2i2.174>

ABSTRACT

Head injury is a change in brain function or brain pathology, caused by external forces on the head. Changes in brain function consist of any period of loss or loss of consciousness, anterograde or retrograde amnesia, neurological deficits, or mental changes following a head injury. A study reported that the highest incidence of head injury was in the Americas, which was 1299 cases per 100,000 population, followed by Europe, which was 1012 cases per 100,000 population. The lowest incidence of head injury occurred on the African continent, which was 801 cases per 100,000 population. Based on these data, the overall incidence of head injuries in the world is 939 cases per 100,000 population with most of them being mild head injuries (55.9 million cases per year) and 5.28 million people experiencing severe head injuries.

1. Introduction

Head injury is a change in brain function or brain pathology, caused by external forces on the head. Changes in brain function consist of any period of loss or loss of consciousness, anterograde or retrograde amnesia, neurological deficits, or mental changes following a head injury.^{1,2} A study reported the highest incidence of head injuries was in the Americas, namely 1299 cases per 100,000 population, followed by Europe, which was 1012 cases per 100,000 population. The lowest incidence of head injury occurred on the African continent, which was 801 cases per 100,000 population. Based on these data, the overall incidence of head injuries in the world is 939 cases per 100,000 population with most of them being mild head injuries (55.9 million cases per year)

and 5.28 million people experiencing severe head injuries. At the regional level, the highest incidence of head injury in the world is in Southeast Asia, which is 18.3 million cases.³⁻⁵ In Indonesia, there have been several reports of head injuries, during June-December 2018 there were 118 cases of head injuries were recorded at H. Adam Malik Hospital, North Sumatra with patient ages ranging from 18 years to 35 years and dominated by the male gender. man. In this study, most cases were epidural bleeding. Based on medical record data at Dr. M. Djamil General Hospital Padang there were 356 head injury cases in 2017 and 505 cases in 2018.⁵

Classification of head injury

Classification of head injuries was made based on clinical severity and was assessed using the Glasgow Coma Scale (GCS). The Glasgow coma scale consists of 3 components that allow a rapid assessment of the

severity of the head injury: eye, verbal, and motor. Scores of 14-15, 9-13, and 3-8 were classified as mild head injury, moderate head injury, and severe head injury, respectively. Table 1 displays the scores on the GCS.^{6,7}

Table 1 Glasgow coma scale

Response	Score					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Eyes	Does not open eyes	Opening the eyes with pain stimulation	Opens eyes with sound	Opens eyes spontaneously	-	-
Verbals	Does not make sound	Unclear voice	Inappropriate words	Confused, disorientated	Good orientation, normal	-
Motor	No movement	Extension due to painful stimulation	Abnormal flexion to painful stimulation	Flexion/ avoids pain stimulation	Localizing pain stimulation	Following orders

Other classifications of head injuries are classified according to morphology: a) Fracture of the skull: cranium (depressive and non-depressive fractures) and the cranial base, b) Intracranial lesions: focal (epidural, subdural, and intracerebral/contusion), diffuse (concussion, ischemic injury, diffuse axon injury).⁸

The main causes of head injuries are traffic accidents, falls, and assaults. Based on the mechanism, head trauma is classified as blunt (a most common mechanism), penetrating (most fatal) and explosive. The most serious injuries result from motor vehicle collisions and falls.^{9,10}

Pathophysiology of head injuries

Head injuries can be classified into primary and secondary injuries. Primary injuries include injuries due to shifting of the brain due to direct impact, rapid acceleration-deceleration, or penetration. These injuries can lead to contusions, hematomas, or axonal injuries. The secondary injury occurs after primary injury in the form of the release of biochemical compounds such as glutamate which causes further

damage to mitochondria and cell death and necrosis. A secondary head injury causes systemic hypotension, hypoxia, and increased intracranial pressure leading to brain herniation.¹¹⁻¹³

The initial phase

The initial phase occurs immediately after trauma due to impaired blood flow and ischemic conditions leading to conditions of decreased adenosine triphosphate, oxygenation, glucose consumption and distribution, depolarization of calcium ion channels, increased lactate, and neuronal cell death. After neuronal cell death, glutamate exits the damaged presynaptic vesicles causing excitotoxicity. Glutamate binds to N-methyl-D-aspartate receptors, increases Ca²⁺ and Na⁺ in cells, and activates enzymes responsible for tissue damage. Excessive accumulation of calcium in neurons also stimulates *nitric oxide* and causes oxidative stress. This exacerbates cell death.¹⁴ Necrotic areas of nerve cells and glial cells are concentrated in areas where the blood supply is impaired, which can occur due to epidural hemorrhage, subdural hemorrhage, and

intracerebral hemorrhage. Secondary contusions can occur in opposing brain tissues because of the coup and counter-coup.¹³ Cognitive deficits, behavioral changes, and hemiparesis depend on the severity of the injury. In contrast to focal injury, the main mechanism of diffuse brain injury is rapid acceleration

and deceleration forces that cause shear and strain injuries to cerebral brain tissue. This results in injury to axons, oligodendrocytes, and blood vessels, which leads to cerebral edema and ischemic brain damage. The degree of axonal injury and neuronal degeneration determines the severity of the head injury.¹³

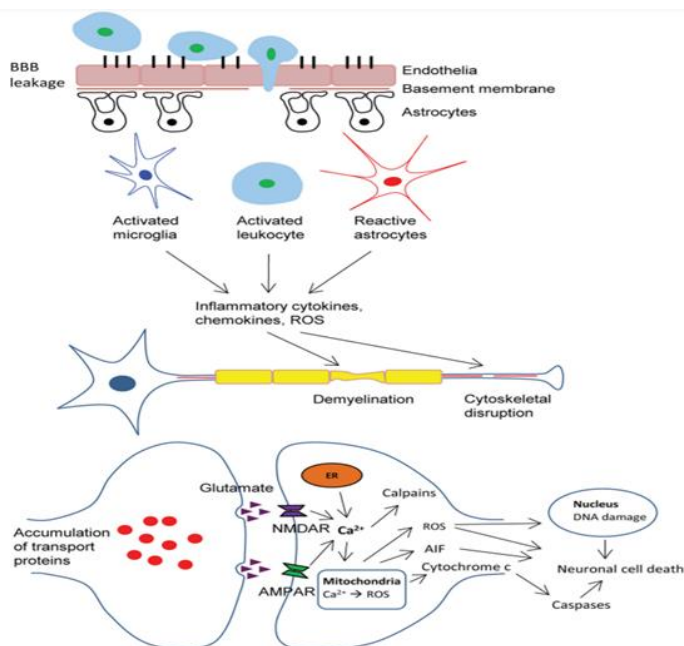


Figure 1. Schematic of the pathophysiology of head injury.

Intermediate phase

Abnormal function caused by mechanical damage and neurotrauma results in an inflammatory process. This inflammation can increase brain injury and activate microglia, which further prolongs neuroinflammation. An increase in proinflammatory cytokines and chemokines occurs approximately 1 hour after nerve injury. One of the inflammatory cytokines, IL-1b, acts on astrocytes, activates the intracellular ERK pathway, and releases matrix metalloproteinase-9. Matrix metalloproteinases will erode the extracellular matrix, impair the integrity and function of the BBB, and induce chronic neuroinflammation.¹⁴ The brain is normally protected from immune cells and pathogens due to the presence of the *Blood-Brain Barrier* (BBB). However, damage to the BBB following head injury results in leakage of prostaglandins, nitric oxide, cytokines, and inflammatory mediators into brain tissue. After the

primary injury, the inflammatory response is activated by the invasion of monocytes, neutrophils, and lymphocytes across the BBB.¹⁵

Final phase

The inflammatory process is to remove pathogens from the site of injury, regenerate damaged cells and improve nerve cell function. However, the recovery process leaves some sequelae such as seizures and epilepsy. The reduced expression of Kv.4.2 increases the excitability of the nerves thought to mediate seizures. In addition, injury-induced epilepsy is caused by activation of the trkBerk1/2-CREB/Elk-1 pathway and GAP-43 expression.¹⁴

Diagnosis of head injury

Anamnesis

Anamnesis is asked the mechanism of injury, symptoms and findings of physical examination

associated with head injury.¹⁶ The mechanism of injury was associated with immediate intervention which included observation, admission to hospital or ICU, and/or neurosurgical intervention. The mechanisms of injury that most often result in severe head injuries include pedestrians being hit by vehicles, passengers being thrown from motorized vehicles, and people falling from a height of more than 1 meter. Motorcycle collisions, not wearing a helmet, and chronic alcoholism are associated with an increased risk of severe intracranial injury even with mild initial symptoms.^{16,17} The presence of vomiting, especially more than two episodes, has a higher probability of developing a severe head injury. Posttraumatic seizures are also associated with a higher degree of severity.^{16,17}

Physical examination

In patients with mild and moderate head injuries, physical examination findings can help predict serious injury. Focal neurologic deficits are associated with a severe head injury. Signs of skull fracture (open, depressed, or base) such as hemotympanum, otorrhea, peri-orbital ecchymosis, or skull base fracture identified by postauricular ecchymosis (*Battle*

sign) are also associated with a severe head injury. A severe injury in an unconscious drunk patient may be associated with alcohol intoxication. In mild head injury, initial GCS 13, GCS worsening, and GCS <14 2 hours post-injury were all associated with more severe intracranial injury.¹⁶

Imaging

Radiological examination plays an important role in identifying patients with head injuries. Common imaging techniques include a CT scan of the head and an MRI. Imaging will help differentiate patients who require immediate neurosurgical intervention or who may be discharged from patients under observation. When there is a clinical indication for imaging, a non-contrast head CT scan is the first choice. MRI is superior in identifying small, focal traumatic lesions.¹⁷ Non-contrast head CT scan is recommended as the imaging choice and can identify subdural hemorrhage, epidural hemorrhage, subarachnoid hemorrhage, intracerebral hemorrhage, cerebral contusion, skull fracture, pneumocephalus, and cerebral edema. Indications for CT scanning are divided into two criteria, namely moderate risk of intracranial injury and high risk of intracranial injury.¹⁶

Table 2. Indications for CT scan in head injury

Moderate risk	High risk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of consciousness after injury • Drug intoxication • Post-traumatic seizures • The mechanism of trauma is unclear • Age less than 2 years • Vomiting • Amnesia after head injury • Multiple trauma • Signs of base fracture • Severe facial injury • Suspicion of depression or fractured skull • With GCS ≤14 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear decrease in consciousness • Focal neurologic deficit • Depressive fracture • Translucent skull injury

Management of head injury

Prehospital management

Care for head-injured patients should begin at the site of injury to maintain the airway and maintain adequate circulation and ventilation. Patients with

moderate to severe head injuries should be immediately sent to a medical center with a neurosurgical facility. The initial goal of management was the prevention of hypoxia and hypotension because both of these doubled mortalities.¹⁸

- Airway management/oxygenation
 - Prevention, identification, and therapy of hypoxia (O_2 saturation < 90% and/or cyanosis).
 - Airway maneuver.
 - Ventilation with NRM.
 - Endotracheal intubation is indicated.
- Ventilation Management
 - Intubated and mechanically ventilated patient: if available, target $PaCO_2$ of 40 mmHg.
 - Prophylactic hyperventilation in the prevention of ICP is not recommended.
- Management of blood pressure
 - Hypotension: at systolic blood pressure < 90 mmHg, fluid resuscitation was performed with an initial bolus of 1 liter of normal saline or RL with a target TDS of 90 mmHg.
 - Hypertension: therapy for acute hypertension is not recommended in cases of head injury. However, IV fluids are restricted at a minimal rate if the TDS is 140 mmHg.¹⁸

Medical Interventions

Head elevation

Elevation in head injuries generally has a rapid effect on lowering intracranial pressure. Intracranial pressure (ICP) is reduced by displacement of cerebrospinal fluid from the intracranial compartment and promoting venous outflow. Although the mean carotid pressure is reduced during head elevation, ICP is reduced and cerebral blood flow is not affected.¹⁴

Hyperventilation

Hyperventilation lowers ICP by reducing the intraarterial partial pressure of carbon dioxide ($PaCO_2$) and causing vasoconstriction. However, this action ultimately causes a decrease in cerebral blood volume. Prophylactic hyperventilation is not recommended, because vasoconstriction reduces blood flow to the brain. The use of hyperventilation in the setting of

severe head injury is usually only used for a short time during acute neurologic deterioration. Hyperventilate to $PaCO_2$ 25 mm Hg to lower ICP.¹⁹⁻²¹

Seizure prophylaxis

Current head injury guidelines state that 1 week of prophylactic antiepileptic use is acceptable to help prevent early seizures. Currently, the recommended drug is phenytoin. However, there has been no proven benefit in the long-term prevention of seizures after the head injury, so prophylaxis was discontinued after 7 days.²²⁻²⁴

Hyperosmolar therapy

Hyperosmolar therapy in head injuries can be given as a bolus or infusion. Administration of mannitol is recommended in euvolemic severe head injury patients.²² Mannitol is used to reduce the increase in ICP. The most common preparation is a 20% solution (20 g of mannitol per 100 ml of solution). Strong indications for administering mannitol in euvolemic patients are pupillary dilation, hemiparesis, and decreased consciousness.²²

Medications that cause coma status

The patient is brought into a coma by infusion of a benzodiazepine or barbiturate. The administration is carried out with a continuous electroencephalogram. This therapy serves to reduce the metabolic needs of the brain. This administration is only recommended in cases of severe refractory increase in ICP after medical therapy and maximal reduction in ICP.^{22,23}

Therapeutic hypothermia

This therapy can reduce oxidative injury due to the effect of decreasing the metabolic demands of the brain but at risk of changes in blood sugar, platelet count, and coagulation factors. This therapy is performed on severe head injuries.^{24,23}

Surgical Intervention

Surgical intervention is generally required when there is a mass effect of either an epidural

hemorrhage, subdural hemorrhage, intracerebral hemorrhage, or contusion with significant blood volume. The principal management of epidural hemorrhage is craniotomy of the traumatized area, with the evacuation of the hematoma and cauterization of the torn vessel, often the middle meningeal artery. Acute subdural hemorrhage is usually associated with more severe brain injury.^{24,25}

2. Conclusion

Head injury is a change in brain function or brain pathology, caused by external forces on the head. Changes in brain function consist of any period of loss or loss of consciousness, anterograde or retrograde amnesia, neurological deficits, or mental changes following a head injury.

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Letter of Acceptance

Manuscript “Pathophysiological to Clinical Aspects of Head Injury: Narrative Literature Review” by Rachmat Hidayat*, has been accepted to publish in Open Access Indonesian Journal of Medical Reviews Vol 2 issue 2 in March 2022.

Cordially,



Prof. Paula Magnano, PhD
Editor **HM Publisher**

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The Corresponding Author can access the account in website :

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Pathophysiological to Clinical Aspects of Head Injury: Narrative Literature Review

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Head injury
Pathophysiology
Clinical

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The author has reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

<https://doi.org/10.37275/OAJMR.v2i2.174>

ABSTRACT

Head injury is a change in brain function or brain pathology, caused by external forces on the head. Changes in brain function consist of any period of loss or loss of consciousness, anterograde or retrograde amnesia, neurological deficits, or mental changes following a head injury. A study reported that the highest incidence of head injury was in the Americas, which was 1299 cases per 100,000 population, followed by Europe, which was 1012 cases per 100,000 population. The lowest incidence of head injury occurred on the African continent, which was 801 cases per 100,000 population. Based on these data, the overall incidence of head injuries in the world is 939 cases per 100,000 population with most of them being mild head injuries (55.9 million cases per year) and 5.28 million people experiencing severe head injuries.

1. Introduction

Head injury is a change in brain function or brain pathology, caused by external forces on the head. Changes in brain function consist of any period of loss or loss of consciousness, anterograde or retrograde amnesia, neurological deficits, or mental changes following a head injury.^{1,2} A study reported the highest incidence of head injuries was in the Americas, namely 1299 cases per 100,000 population, followed by Europe, which was 1012 cases per 100,000 population. The lowest incidence of head injury occurred on the African continent, which was 801 cases per 100,000 population. Based on these data, the overall incidence of head injuries in the world is 939 cases per 100,000 population with most of them

being mild head injuries (55.9 million cases per year) and 5.28 million people experiencing severe head injuries. At the regional level, the highest incidence of head injury in the world is in Southeast Asia, which is 18.3 million cases.³⁻⁵ In Indonesia, there have been several reports of head injuries, during June-December 2018 there were 118 cases of head injuries were recorded at H. Adam Malik Hospital, North Sumatra with patient ages ranging from 18 years to 35 years and dominated by the male gender. In this study, most cases were epidural bleeding. Based on medical record data at Dr. M. Djamil General Hospital Padang there were 356 head injury cases in 2017 and 505 cases in 2018.⁵

of 3 components that allow a rapid assessment of the severity of the head injury: eye, verbal, and motor. Scores of 14-15, 9-13, and 3-8 were classified as mild head injury, moderate head injury, and severe head injury, respectively. Table 1 displays the scores on the GCS.^{6,7}

Classification of head injury

Classification of head injuries was made based on clinical severity and was assessed using the Glasgow Coma Scale (GCS). The Glasgow coma scale consists

Table 1 Glasgow coma scale

Response	Score					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Eyes	Does not open eyes	Opening the eyes with pain stimulation	Opens eyes with sound	Opens eyes spontaneously	-	-
Verbals	Does not make sound	Unclear voice	Inappropriate words	Confused, disorientated	Good orientation, normal	-
Motor	No movement	Extension due to painful stimulation	Abnormal flexion to painful stimulation	Flexion/ avoids pain stimulation	Localizing pain stimulation	Following orders

Other classifications of head injuries are classified according to morphology: a) Fracture of the skull: cranium (depressive and non-depressive fractures) and the cranial base, b) Intracranial lesions: focal (epidural, subdural, and intracerebral/contusion), diffuse (concussion, ischemic injury, diffuse axon injury).⁸

The main causes of head injuries are traffic accidents, falls, and assaults. Based on the mechanism, head trauma is classified as blunt (a most common mechanism), penetrating (most fatal) and explosive. The most serious injuries result from motor vehicle collisions and falls.^{9,10}

Pathophysiology of head injuries

Head injuries can be classified into primary and secondary injuries. Primary injuries include injuries due to shifting of the brain due to direct impact, rapid acceleration-deceleration, or penetration. These injuries can lead to contusions, hematomas, or axonal injuries. The secondary injury occurs after primary injury in the form of the release of biochemical

compounds such as glutamate which causes further damage to mitochondria and cell death and necrosis. A secondary head injury causes systemic hypotension, hypoxia, and increased intracranial pressure leading to brain herniation.¹¹⁻¹³

The initial phase

The initial phase occurs immediately after trauma due to impaired blood flow and ischemic conditions leading to conditions of decreased adenosine triphosphate, hypoxia, decreased oxygenation, glucose consumption and distribution, depolarization of calcium ion channels, increased lactate, and neuronal cell death. After neuronal cell death, glutamate exits the damaged presynaptic vesicles causing excitotoxicity. Glutamate binds to N-methyl-D-aspartate receptors, increases Ca^{2+} and Na^{+} in cells, and activates enzymes responsible for tissue damage. Excessive accumulation of calcium in neurons also stimulates nitric oxide and causes oxidative stress. This exacerbates cell death.¹⁴ Necrotic areas of nerve cells and glial cells are concentrated in areas where the

blood supply is impaired, which can occur due to epidural hemorrhage, subdural hemorrhage, and intracerebral hemorrhage. Secondary contusions can occur in opposing brain tissues because of the coup and counter-coup.¹³ Cognitive deficits, behavioral changes, and hemiparesis depend on the severity of the injury. In contrast to focal injury, the main

mechanism of diffuse brain injury is rapid acceleration and deceleration forces that cause shear and strain injuries to cerebral brain tissue. This results in injury to axons, oligodendrocytes, and blood vessels, which leads to cerebral edema and ischemic brain damage. The degree of axonal injury and neuronal degeneration determines the severity of the head injury.¹³

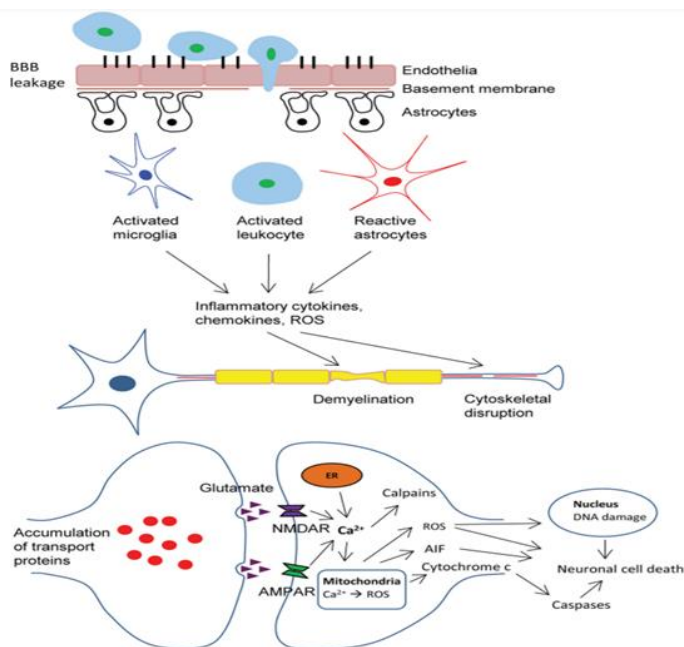


Figure 1. Schematic of the pathophysiology of head injury.

Intermediate phase

Abnormal function caused by mechanical damage and neurotrauma results in an inflammatory process. This inflammation can increase brain injury and activate microglia, which further prolongs neuroinflammation. An increase in proinflammatory cytokines and chemokines occurs approximately 1 hour after nerve injury. One of the inflammatory cytokines, IL-1b, acts on astrocytes, activates the intracellular ERK pathway, and releases matrix metalloproteinase-9. Matrix metalloproteinases will erode the extracellular matrix, impair the integrity and function of the BBB, and induce chronic neuroinflammation.¹⁴ The brain is normally protected from immune cells and pathogens due to the presence of the *Blood-Brain Barrier* (BBB). However, damage to the BBB following head injury results in leakage of prostaglandins, nitric oxide, cytokines, and

inflammatory mediators into brain tissue. After the primary injury, the inflammatory response is activated by the invasion of monocytes, neutrophils, and lymphocytes across the BBB.¹⁵

Final phase

The inflammatory process is to remove pathogens from the site of injury, regenerate damaged cells and improve nerve cell function. However, the recovery process leaves some sequelae such as seizures and epilepsy. The reduced expression of Kv.4.2 increases the excitability of the nerves thought to mediate seizures. In addition, injury-induced epilepsy is caused by activation of the trkB/ERK1/2-CREB/Elk-1 pathway and GAP-43 expression.¹⁴

Diagnosis of head injury

Anamnesis

Anamnesis is asked the mechanism of injury, symptoms and findings of physical examination associated with head injury.¹⁶ The mechanism of injury was associated with immediate intervention which included observation, admission to hospital or ICU, and/or neurosurgical intervention. The mechanisms of injury that most often result in severe head injuries include pedestrians being hit by vehicles, passengers being thrown from motorized vehicles, and people falling from a height of more than 1 meter. Motorcycle collisions, not wearing a helmet, and chronic alcoholism are associated with an increased risk of severe intracranial injury even with mild initial symptoms.^{16,17} The presence of vomiting, especially more than two episodes, has a higher probability of developing a severe head injury. Posttraumatic seizures are also associated with a higher degree of severity.^{16,17}

Physical examination

In patients with mild and moderate head injuries, physical examination findings can help predict serious injury. Focal neurologic deficits are associated with a severe head injury. Signs of skull fracture (open, depressed, or base) such as hemotympanum, otorrhea, peri-orbital ecchymosis, or skull base

fracture identified by postauricular ecchymosis (*Battle sign*) are also associated with a severe head injury. A severe injury in an unconscious drunk patient may be associated with alcohol intoxication. In mild head injury, initial GCS 13, GCS worsening, and GCS <14 2 hours post-injury were all associated with more severe intracranial injury.¹⁶

Imaging

Radiological examination plays an important role in identifying patients with head injuries. Common imaging techniques include a CT scan of the head and an MRI. Imaging will help differentiate patients who require immediate neurosurgical intervention or who may be discharged from patients under observation. When there is a clinical indication for imaging, a non-contrast head CT scan is the first choice. MRI is superior in identifying small, focal traumatic lesions.¹⁷ Non-contrast head CT scan is recommended as the imaging choice and can identify subdural hemorrhage, epidural hemorrhage, subarachnoid hemorrhage, intracerebral hemorrhage, cerebral contusion, skull fracture, pneumocephalus, and cerebral edema. Indications for CT scanning are divided into two criteria, namely moderate risk of intracranial injury and high risk of intracranial injury.¹⁶

Table 2. Indications for CT scan in head injury

Moderate risk	High risk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of consciousness after injury • Drug intoxication • Post-traumatic seizures • The mechanism of trauma is unclear • Age less than 2 years • Vomiting • Amnesia after head injury • Multiple trauma • Signs of base fracture • Severe facial injury • Suspicion of depression or fractured skull • With GCS ≤14 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear decrease in consciousness • Focal neurologic deficit • Depressed fracture • Translucent skull injury

Management of head injury

Prehospital management

Care for head-injured patients should begin at the site of injury to maintain the airway and maintain

adequate circulation and ventilation. Patients with moderate to severe head injuries should be immediately sent to a medical center with a neurosurgical facility. The initial goal of management

was the prevention of hypoxia and hypotension because both of these doubled mortalities.¹⁸

- Airway management/oxygenation
 - Prevention, identification, and therapy of hypoxia (O_2 saturation < 90% and/or cyanosis).
 - Airway maneuver.
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 - Endotracheal intubation is indicated.
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 - Prophylactic hyperventilation in the prevention of ICP is not recommended.
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 - Hypotension: at systolic blood pressure < 90 mmHg, fluid resuscitation was performed with an initial bolus of 1 liter of normal saline or RL with a target TDS of 90 mmHg.
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Medical Interventions

Head elevation

Elevation in head injuries generally has a rapid effect on lowering intracranial pressure. Intracranial pressure (ICP) is reduced by displacement of cerebrospinal fluid from the intracranial compartment and promoting venous outflow. Although the mean carotid pressure is reduced during head elevation, ICP is reduced and cerebral blood flow is not affected.¹⁴

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Hyperventilation lowers ICP by reducing the intraarterial partial pressure of carbon dioxide ($PaCO_2$) and causing vasoconstriction. However, this action ultimately causes a decrease in cerebral blood volume. Prophylactic hyperventilation is not recommended,

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Current head injury guidelines state that 1 week of prophylactic antiepileptic use is acceptable to help prevent early seizures. Currently, the recommended drug is phenytoin. However, there has been no proven benefit in the long-term prevention of seizures after the head injury, so prophylaxis was discontinued after 7 days.²²⁻²⁴

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Hyperosmolar therapy in head injuries can be given as a bolus or infusion. Administration of mannitol is recommended in euvolemic severe head injury patients. Mannitol is used to reduce the increase in ICP. The most common preparation is a 20% solution (2 g of mannitol per 100 ml of solution). Strong indications for administering mannitol in euvolemic patients are pupillary dilation, hemiparesis, and decreased consciousness.²²

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This therapy can reduce oxidative injury due to the effect of decreasing the metabolic demands of the brain but at risk of changes in blood sugar, platelet count, and coagulation factors. This therapy is performed on severe head injuries.^{24,23}

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Surgical intervention is generally required when there is a mass effect of either an epidural hemorrhage, subdural hemorrhage, intracerebral hemorrhage, or contusion with significant blood volume. The principal management of epidural hemorrhage is craniotomy of the traumatized area, with the evacuation of the hematoma and cauterization of the torn vessel, often the middle meningeal artery. Acute subdural hemorrhage is usually associated with more severe brain injury.^{24,25}

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CERTIFICATE

OF PUBLICATION

For the article titled:
**Pathophysiological to Clinical Aspects of Head Injury: Narrative
Literature Review**

Authored by;
Rachmat Hidayat

Published in
Open Access Indonesian Journal of Medical Reviews Volume 3 Issue 2 2022

Indexed in:

