

William G. Bradley, Jr, MD, PhD • David Scalzo, MD<sup>2</sup> • John Queralt, MD  
Wolfgang N. Nitz, MS • Dennis J. Atkinson, MS • Priscilla Wong, MD

## Normal-Pressure Hydrocephalus: Evaluation with Cerebrospinal Fluid Flow Measurements at MR Imaging<sup>1</sup>

**PURPOSE:** To evaluate magnetic resonance (MR) imaging-based quantitative phase-contrast cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) velocity imaging for prediction of successful shunting in patients with normal-pressure hydrocephalus (NPH). **MATERIALS AND METHODS:** Eighteen patients (mean age, 73 years) with NPH underwent routine MR imaging and CSF velocity MR imaging before ventriculoperitoneal (VP) shunting. The calculated CSF stroke volume and the aqueductal CSF flow void score were compared with the surgical results.

**RESULTS:** All 12 patients with CSF stroke volumes greater than 42  $\mu\text{L}$  responded favorably to CSF shunting. Of the six patients with stroke volumes of 42  $\mu\text{L}$  or less, three improved with shunting while three did not. The relationship between CSF stroke volume greater than 42  $\mu\text{L}$  and favorable response to VP shunting was statistically significant ( $P < .05$ ). There was no statistically significant relationship between aqueductal CSF flow void score and responsiveness to shunting.

**CONCLUSION:** CSF velocity MR imaging is useful in the selection of patients with NPH to undergo shunt formation.

**Index terms:** Brain, hydrocephalus, 10.823 • Cerebrospinal fluid, flow dynamics, 10.1214 • Cerebrospinal fluid, MR, 10.1214 • Shunts, ventriculoperitoneal, 10.4513

Radiology 1996; 198:523-529

**N**ORMAL-PRESSURE hydrocephalus (NPH) is characterized by the clinical triad of dementia, gait apraxia, and urinary incontinence, as well as normal opening pressure at lumbar puncture. Findings of imaging studies demonstrate ventriculomegaly out of proportion to cortical sulcal enlargement. Since it was first described in 1965 (1,2), NPH and treatment of it by means of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) shunting have been the focus of much investigation. The reported success of CSF diversion in treatment of NPH has varied considerably (3-7); the mean rate of improvement is only 50% (8). Prediction of surgical outcome has been attempted by using clinical signs and symptoms (6,9-11), findings of tests of CSF dynamics (eg, CSF pressure recording) (12), response to intrathecal saline infusion (13,14), response to CSF drainage (9,15), findings of imaging studies (such as radiography of the cisterns after administration of radionuclides [16,17], computed tomography [13,18], and radiography of the cisterns after administration of metrizamide [19]), and cerebral blood flow measurements (20-24).

Unfortunately, conflicting reports of the prediction of efficacy with many of these variables have been published, and no clearly useful criteria for selecting patients with NPH to undergo shunt formation have been identified.

Recently, magnetic resonance (MR) imaging has shown great promise toward this end. In particular, a prominent CSF flow void within the aqueduct on proton-density-weighted images has been correlated with a

Table 1  
CSF Study Results and Response to Shunt

Patient No./ Age (y)/ Sex	Initial MR Imaging Results		Response to Shunt
	Flow Void Score	CSF Stroke Volume ( $\mu\text{L}$ )	
1/76/F	3	154	+
2/70/F	1	26	+
3/78/F	2	106	+
4/77/F	1	38	+
5/72/F	1	58	+
6/80/M	3	258	+
7/68/F	3	40	+
8/83/M	2	82	+
9/76/M	1	18	-
10/69/F	2	92	+
11/77/M	4	42	-
12/72/F	4	208	+
13/75/F	1	70	+
14/80/F	4	352	+
15/73/M	2	70	+
16/71/F	3	48	+
17/54/M	3	92	+
18/69/M	1	38	-

Note.—+ = positive response, - = negative response.

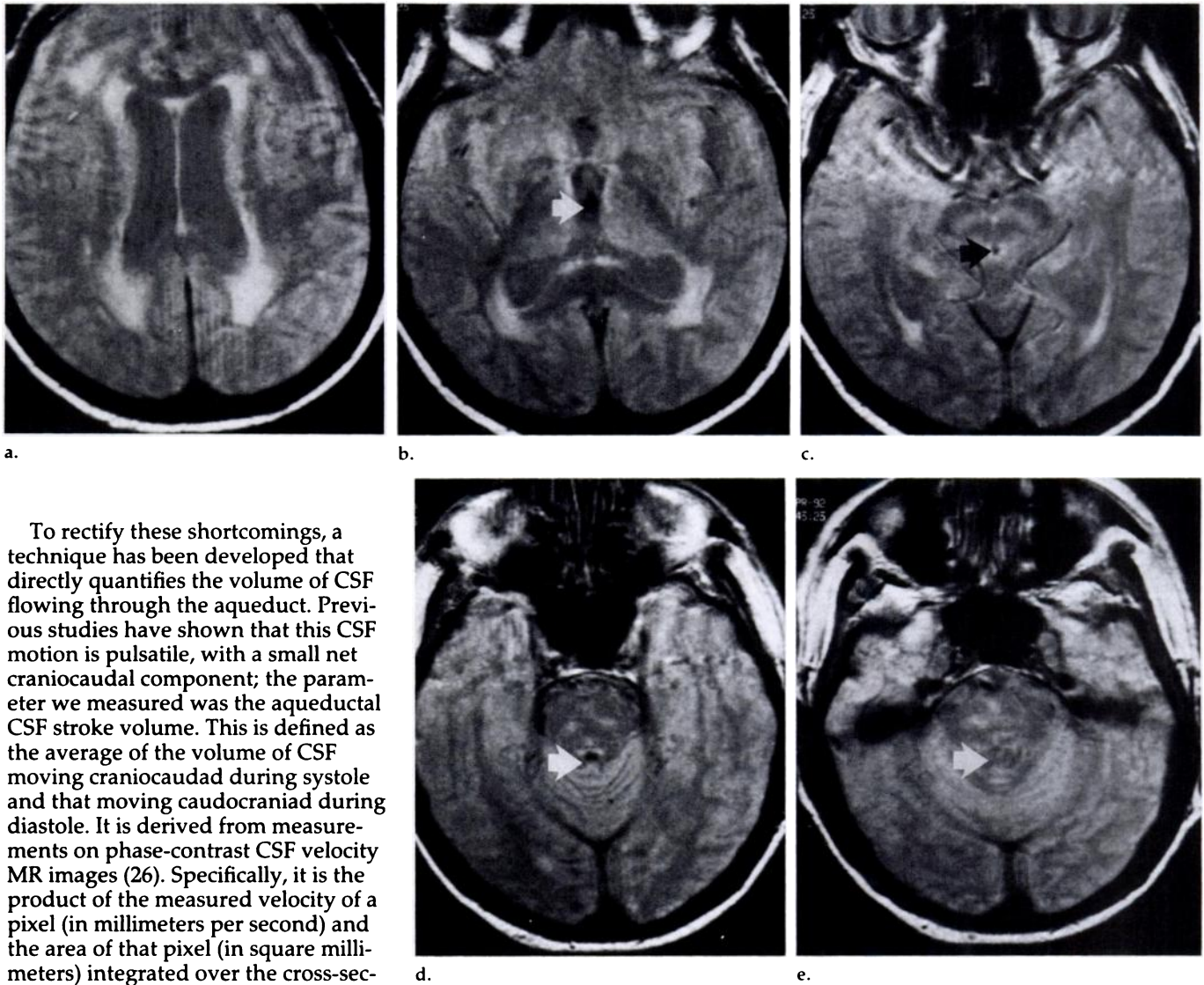
positive response to CSF diversion, while a normal flow void has been linked to a negative response (25). However, the appearance of the flow void is highly dependent on the acquisition parameters used, as well as on the technical characteristics of the MR imaging systems (eg, gradient strength). In addition, evaluation of the flow void is subjective, and common use of gradient moment nulling or "flow compensation" makes the flow void more difficult to evaluate, possibly rendering the flow void a less sensitive predictor than was originally reported for non-flow-compensated images (25).

**Abbreviations:** CSF = cerebrospinal fluid, FISP = fast imaging with steady-state precession, NPH = normal-pressure hydrocephalus, VP = ventriculoperitoneal.

<sup>1</sup> From the Long Beach Memorial Medical Center, Memorial MRI Center, 403 E Columbia St, Long Beach, CA 90806 (W.G.B., J.Q.); the Department of Radiological Sciences, University of California, Irvine, Orange (D.S., P.W.); and Siemens Medical Systems, Iselin, NJ (W.N.N., D.J.A.). Received June 7, 1995; revision requested July 20; revision received August 22; accepted August 28. Address reprint requests to W.G.B.

<sup>2</sup> Current address: Section of Neuroradiology, University of Utah, Salt Lake City. William G. Bradley Jr, MD, PhD, gets research support from GE Medical Systems and Siemens Medical Systems.

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**Figure 1.** Images and data obtained in an 83-year-old man (patient 8) with clinical NPH, intermediate CSF flow void, elevated aqueductal CSF stroke volume (82  $\mu$ L), and favorable response to VP shunting. (a–e) Proton-density-weighted axial spin-echo MR images (3,000/22) demonstrate a moderate (score of 2) CSF flow void (arrow in b–d). (Fig 1 continues.)

To rectify these shortcomings, a technique has been developed that directly quantifies the volume of CSF flowing through the aqueduct. Previous studies have shown that this CSF motion is pulsatile, with a small net craniocaudal component; the parameter we measured was the aqueductal CSF stroke volume. This is defined as the average of the volume of CSF moving craniocaudad during systole and that moving caudocranial during diastole. It is derived from measurements on phase-contrast CSF velocity MR images (26). Specifically, it is the product of the measured velocity of a pixel (in millimeters per second) and the area of that pixel (in square millimeters) integrated over the cross-sectional area of the aqueduct integrated in time over mechanical systole or diastole.

The units of the aqueductal CSF stroke volume are thus cubic millimeters or microliters. The purposes of this study were to compare the efficacies of using measurements of aqueductal CSF stroke volume and aqueductal CSF flow void on routine MR images as predictors of shunt response in patients with clinical NPH.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

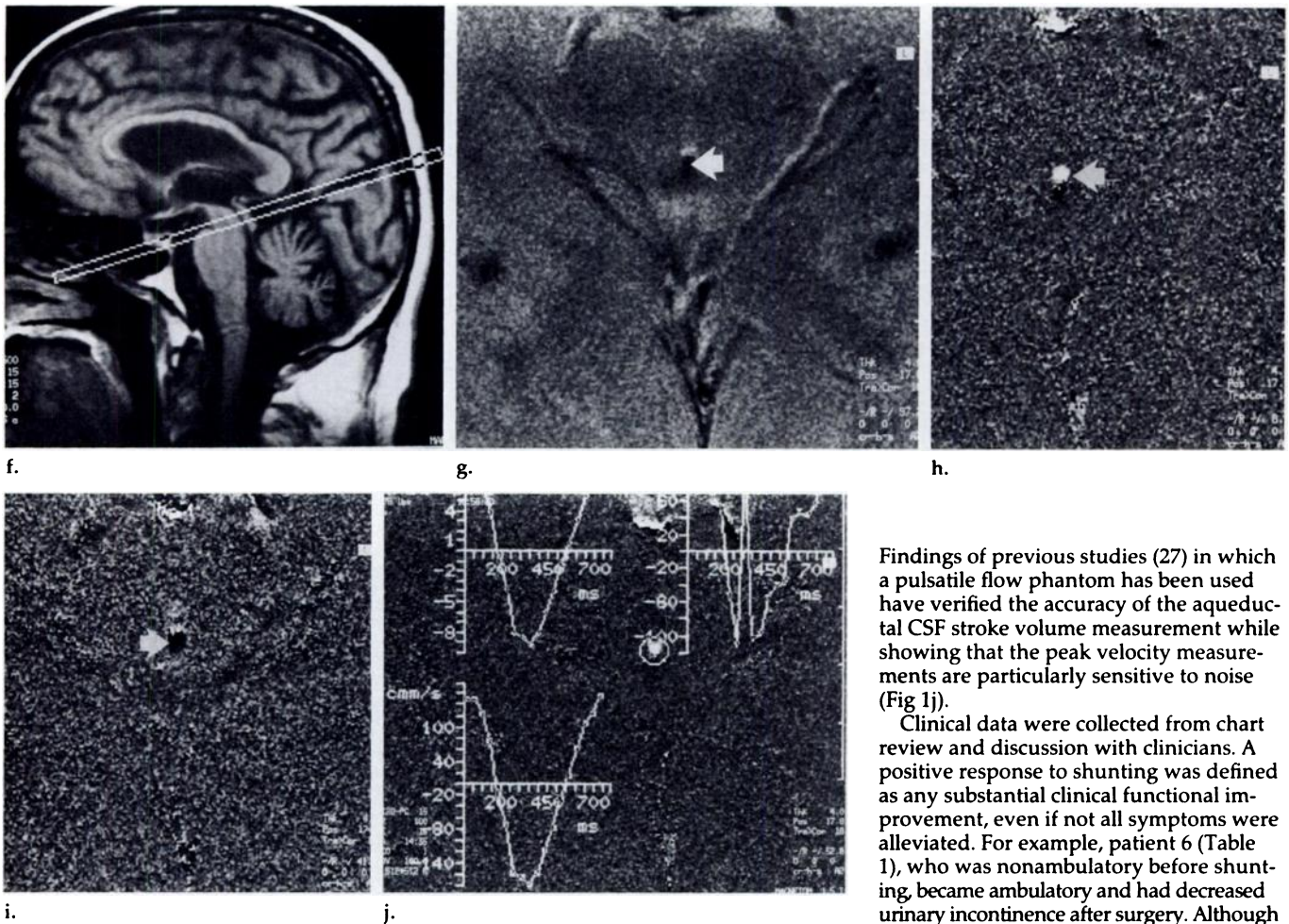
In 42 consecutive patients with clinical, lumbar puncture, and routine MR imaging findings suggestive of NPH, aqueductal CSF stroke volumes were measured by means of CSF velocity MR imaging. Of these 42 patients, 18 underwent ventriculoperitoneal (VP) shunt formation because of the results of the CSF flow study, severity of NPH symptoms, and presence of coexisting disease. The study population comprises eight men and 10 women aged 54–83 years (mean age, 73 years).

Spin-echo, proton-density-weighted axial MR imaging was performed with ei-

ther a 1.5-T Siemens Magnetom 63SP or SP4000 (3,000/22 [repetition time msec/echo time msec]; Siemens Medical Systems, Erlangen, Germany) or a 1.5-T GE Signa Advantage 5x (3,000/30; GE Medical Systems, Milwaukee, Wis). Imaging parameters were a standard  $192 \times 256$  matrix, a 22-cm field of view, 20 sections, and a 5-mm section thickness. Intersection gap was 1.5 or 2.5 mm for the Siemens or GE system, respectively. First-order flow compensation in the readout and section-select directions was used in all sequences. Aqueductal flow voids were scored blindly (Table 1) by an MR imaging-trained radiologist (D.S.) on a scale of 0–4 (Figs 1–3) according to a method similar to that used in a previous study (25): 0 indicated no signal loss; 1, signal loss confined to the aqueduct and upper fourth ventricle; 2, signal loss extending from the posterior third to the upper fourth ventricles; 3, signal loss extending to the posterior third ventricle and middle fourth ventricle; and 4, signal loss extending from the

foramen of Monro to the obex of the fourth ventricle. In the previous study (25), flow voids were scored as 0 and 1 in healthy control subjects and in patients who did not respond to shunting, while prominent flow voids were scored as 2–4 in patients with NPH who responded to shunting.

The techniques for CSF velocity MR imaging used in the current study have been described in detail previously (26). All CSF flow MR studies were performed with the Siemens system by using a modified, two-dimensional, fast imaging with steady-state precession (FISP) sequence (100/16; flip angle,  $15^\circ$ ) with a section thickness of 4 mm and positioning of the section perpendicular to the aqueduct (Fig 1). Flow encoding was used in the section-select direction by using an aliasing velocity of 200 mm/sec. A  $512 \times 512$  matrix and a 160-mm field of view were used, which resulted in an in-plane spatial resolution of 0.3125 mm. The loss of signal-to-noise ratio resulting from use of such small pixels was



**Figure 1** (continued). (f) Sagittal, scout, T1-weighted, spin-echo MR image (500/15) demonstrates position of section for assessing CSF flow through the aqueduct. (g) Magnitude FISP MR image (100/16; 15° flip angle) obtained during CSF flow study demonstrates aqueduct (arrow). (h) Phase-contrast FISP MR image (100/16; 15° flip angle) obtained during systole demonstrates craniocaudal flow (arrow; whitest areas = 200 mm/sec craniocaudal). (i) Phase-contrast FISP MR image (100/16; 15° flip angle) obtained during diastole demonstrates caudocranial flow (arrow; blackest areas = 200 mm/sec caudocranial). (j) Plots of mean velocity (millimeters per second; upper left), peak velocity (millimeters per second; upper right), and volumetric flow rate (cubic millimeters per second; lower left) as functions of the cardiac cycle (milliseconds). Peak velocity plot demonstrates aliasing.

partially compensated for by reducing the bandwidth from 130 Hertz per pixel to 78 Hertz per pixel. Use of a half-Fourier algorithm (with 16 lines of oversampling) helped to keep the measurement time within reason (14 minutes). The CSF velocity data ultimately used to calculate the aqueductal CSF stroke volume were obtained from these images.

Continuous data acquisition and retrospective cardiac gating with electrocardiographic leads were used to allow evaluation of CSF velocity during the entire cardiac cycle (26). Thirty-two flow-encoded acquisitions were obtained in 3.2 seconds (usually three or four cardiac cycles) before advance of the phase-encoding gradient. Data were then retrospectively sorted into 18 cine frames spanning the complete cardiac cycle. A "zero-velocity" reference image was calculated by averaging all the phase measurements on each of the phase images with the assumption of zero net flow through the

aqueduct of Sylvius during one cardiac cycle. The phase measurements on this zero-velocity reference image were then subtracted from the phase measurements on each of the phase images to produce 18 phase-contrast, CSF velocity MR images. While this assumption of zero net flow clearly introduces some error, the magnitude of the error has been shown to be less than 5% in healthy control subjects and considerably less than 5% in patients with hydrocephalus, because more than 95% of the volumetric flow during one cardiac cycle is to-and-fro (26).

Software was developed to determine the mean and peak velocities and the volumetric flow rate through the aqueduct as a percentage of the cardiac cycle (Figs 1j, 2f, 3f). Stroke volumes for both diastole and systole were then calculated by integrating the area under the volumetric flow rate curve versus time. The mean of the absolute value of these two measurements was the aqueductal CSF stroke volume.

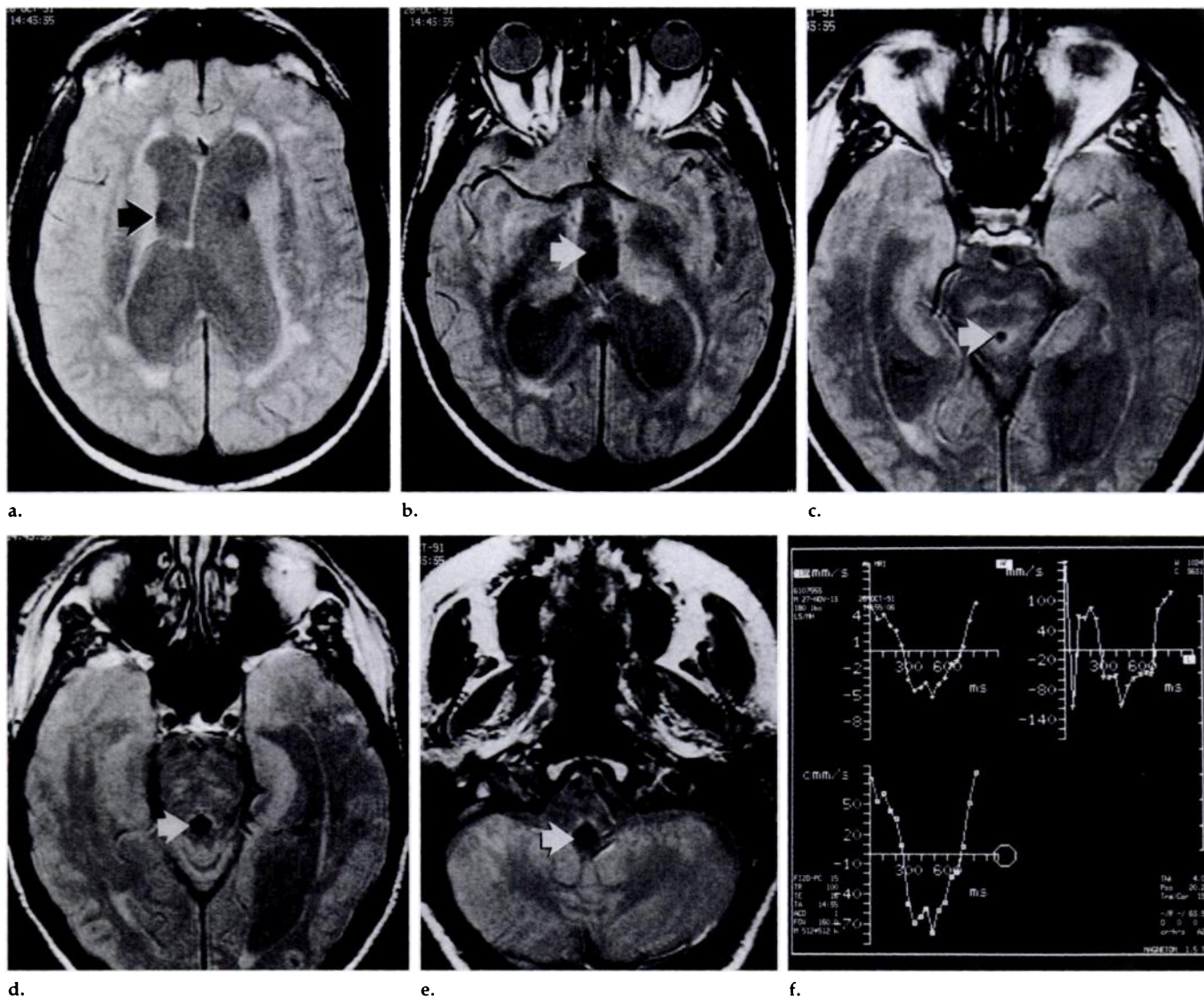
Findings of previous studies (27) in which a pulsatile flow phantom has been used have verified the accuracy of the aqueductal CSF stroke volume measurement while showing that the peak velocity measurements are particularly sensitive to noise (Fig 1j).

Clinical data were collected from chart review and discussion with clinicians. A positive response to shunting was defined as any substantial clinical functional improvement, even if not all symptoms were alleviated. For example, patient 6 (Table 1), who was nonambulatory before shunting, became ambulatory and had decreased urinary incontinence after surgery. Although this patient had no improvement in his substantial dementia, these other improvements allowed his family to provide care at home and alleviated the need for skilled nursing. Thus, this was considered a positive outcome. This mixed response, however, was atypical. In most patients, there was either obvious improvement or clearly no substantial change; thus, differentiation between positive and negative responses to shunting was, in most cases, not difficult.

## RESULTS

The routine MR images obtained in all patients displayed ventriculomegaly, usually out of proportion to sulcal enlargement (although varying degrees of atrophy were also present). Age, sex, aqueductal CSF flow void score, aqueductal CSF stroke volume, and response to shunting are summarized in Table 1.

All 12 patients in this series with stroke volumes greater than 42  $\mu\text{L}$  responded to shunting (Fig 1), while half of the six patients with an aqueductal CSF stroke volume of 42  $\mu\text{L}$  or less did not respond (Figs 2, 3). Patients with an aqueductal CSF stroke volume greater than 42  $\mu\text{L}$  were, therefore, considered to have hyperdynamic CSF flow and positive CSF flow study findings, while those with



**Figure 2.** Images and data obtained in a 77-year-old man (patient 11) with increased CSF flow void; borderline, decreased aqueductal CSF stroke volume ( $42 \mu\text{L}$ ); and negative response to VP shunting. (a–e) Proton-density-weighted axial spin-echo MR images (3,000/22) demonstrate marked CSF flow (score of 4) through aqueduct and third and fourth ventricles (arrow). (f) Plot of mean velocity (millimeters per second) and volumetric flow rate (cubic millimeters per second) as a function of the cardiac cycle (milliseconds). Velocity is substantially reduced compared with that in the patient in Figure 1, who had hyperdynamic flow.

an aqueductal CSF stroke volume less than  $42 \mu\text{L}$  were considered to have normal CSF flow and negative CSF flow study findings. Of the 12 patients with positive study findings, all improved after CSF diversion; thus, positive predictive value was 100%. Three of the patients with negative CSF flow study findings responded positively to shunting, while three did not respond; thus, negative predictive value was 50%.

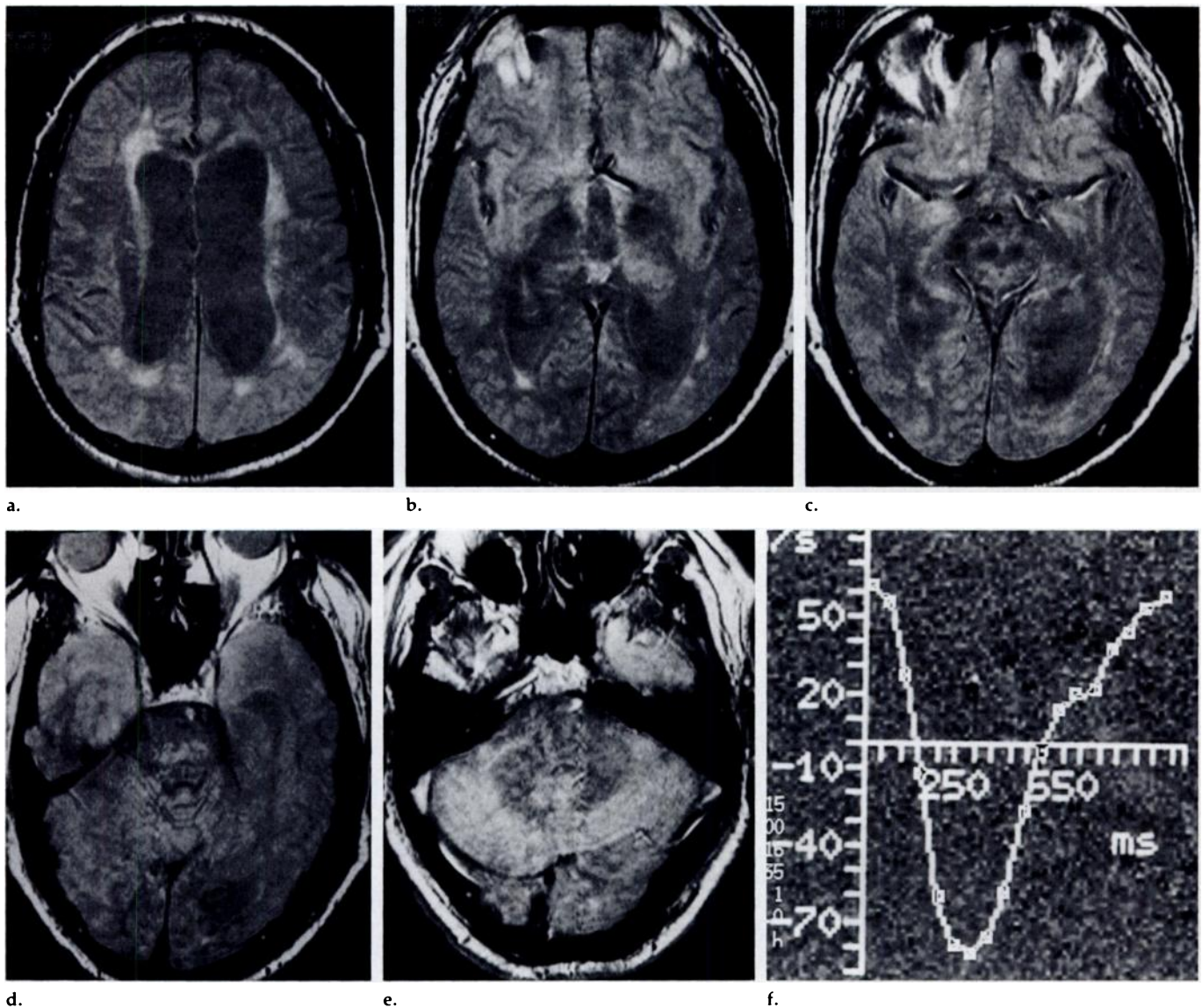
The sensitivity of the aqueductal stroke volume criteria was 80%, and the specificity was 100%. Overall accuracy was 83%. These results are summarized in Tables 2 and 3. Results of a Fisher exact test performed with the data in Table 2 indicate a significant association between high CSF stroke volume and favorable surgical response ( $P < .05$ ).

As in a previous study (25), all patients with CSF flow void scores of 2 or higher were considered to have hyperdynamic CSF flow and positive study findings, while those with a score of 0 or 1 were considered to have normal CSF flow and negative study findings. Of the 12 patients with positive findings according to these criteria, 11 had improvement with CSF shunting (Fig 1) while one did not (Fig 2). In contrast, four of the patients with negative findings had improvement while two did not (Fig 3). These data are listed in Table 4; there was no statistically significant relationship between the CSF flow void score and response to CSF shunting according to Fisher exact test results. The sensitivity of using these CSF flow void score criteria was

73%; specificity, 67%; positive predictive value, 92%; and negative predictive value, 33%. Overall accuracy was 72%. These results are summarized in Table 3.

## DISCUSSION

The following conclusions can be drawn from this study. Positive CSF flow study findings (ie, stroke volume greater than  $42 \mu\text{L}$ ) are associated with an increased likelihood of improvement with CSF shunting. Positive predictive value in the patients in this study was 100%. Negative predictive value of the quantitative CSF flow study findings was 50%. Positive predictive value for the CSF flow void score was 92%; thus, when findings are positive, there is a reasonable



**Figure 3.** Images and data obtained in a 69-year-old man (patient 18) with minimal CSF flow void (score of 1) and decreased aqueductal CSF stroke volume (38  $\mu$ L) consistent with atrophy who nonetheless underwent shunt formation without response. (a–e) Proton-density-weighted axial spin-echo MR images (3,000/22) demonstrate minimal CSF flow void. (f) Plot of volumetric flow rate versus phase of the cardiac cycle shows decreased flow compared with that in Figure 1. X axis indicates milliseconds, and y axis indicates cubic millimeters or microliters per second.

chance of a favorable surgical response. Negative predictive value for the CSF flow void score was only 33%. Thus, when a marked flow void is not seen, the patient may still have a favorable response to surgery. This probably represents CSF motion averaging during the cardiac cycle in a patient with an elevated aqueductal CSF stroke volume. Overall, the quantitative aqueductal CSF stroke volume is a better predictor than the qualitative CSF flow void score.

That the aqueductal CSF stroke volume was more sensitive to hyperdynamic flow than the CSF flow void score was predictable. The aqueductal CSF flow void represents an average of CSF motion during the entire cardiac cycle. The aqueductal CSF stroke

volume, on the other hand, is derived from cardiac-gated data without averaging over systole and diastole. Before the use of flow compensation, aqueductal CSF flow resulted in relatively greater signal loss. With the routine use of flow-compensation techniques, the aqueductal flow void is less prominent, and the CSF flow void sign previously reported (25) has become a less sensitive predictor of NPH response to ventricular shunting.

Understanding the association between elevated CSF stroke volume and favorable shunt response requires knowledge of the underlying cause of NPH. Unfortunately, this pathophysiology has eluded investigators since the initial description of the disease.

Indeed, multiple explanations have been put forth, none of which is entirely adequate. However, one model previously described (25) explains much of what is seen in the current study and is compatible with many of the theories and phenomena described in the literature.

As originally conceived (25), the primary purpose of CSF flow analysis was to differentiate shunt-responsive NPH from cerebral atrophy ("burned out" NPH). Both conditions are characterized by ventriculomegaly; however, the latter does not respond to CSF diversion.

In the setting of NPH, the brain is pushed close to the cranium because of ventricular enlargement. During systole, blood fills the cerebral hemi-

spheres. Because the brain cannot expand outward, it expands inward. This compresses the lateral and third ventricles, expressing a relatively large volume of CSF through the aqueduct. This results in a prominent CSF flow void and a large CSF stroke volume. Roughly the same volume of CSF returns to the lateral ventricles during diastole with egress of blood from the cranial vault through the venous system. In atrophy, by comparison, blood flow to the brain is decreased; thus, stroke volume is smaller and there is a reduced CSF flow void.

It is generally accepted that NPH-like symptoms are produced when the expanded lateral ventricles place excessive tangential shearing forces on periventricular white matter fibers associated with gait; problem with gait is often the primary symptom in NPH. With continued ventricular expansion, the cortex is exposed to increased radial shearing forces, leading to dementia. Recent preliminary MR imaging studies depicting brain motion (28) hold promise for the evaluation of such shearing motions. Indeed, abnormal findings have been documented at histopathologic analysis and MR imaging in the periventricular region in patients with NPH (29–31). Some authors have implicated compromised cerebral blood flow as the main contributing factor to these histopathologic changes (31–35).

Pettorossi et al (36) placed latex balloons in the lateral ventricles of lambs posterior to the foramen of Monro. They inflated and deflated them synchronously with normal CSF pulsations such that the CSF pulse pressure was increased without a concomitant increase in the mean CSF pressure—a situation analogous to that seen in NPH (36,37). A second group of animals underwent similar inflation and deflation of a balloon within the brain parenchyma, while a third group underwent permanent inflation of balloons (without pulsation) in both lateral ventricles. In only the first group, in which the elevated CSF pulse pressure originated from within the lateral ventricles, did periventricular histopathologic changes such as those reported in patients with NPH manifest. Thus, it was concluded that the critical factor responsible for symptoms in NPH was the “waterhammer” force exerted by the reexpanding lateral ventricles on the periventricular tissues. The purpose of shunting in such patients was, therefore, not to decrease the mean pressure (which was already normal), but rather to provide additional capaci-

**Table 2**  
Response to Shunt according to Quantitative CSF Flow Study Results

Clinical Response to Shunt	No. of Patients with Stroke Volume	
	> 42 $\mu$ L	$\leq$ 42 $\mu$ L
Improvement	12	3
No improvement	0	3

Note.—Positive result was defined as a stroke volume > 42  $\mu$ L; a negative result,  $\leq$  42  $\mu$ L.  $P < .05$  according to the Fisher exact test.

tance. Thus, when the brain expands during systole, some of the CSF can go out the shunt, limiting the maximum pressure rise and the shearing forces on the periventricular fibers.

One must explain why some patients with imaging findings suggestive of atrophy have improvement after CSF shunting (7). To do this, one must consider that both the CSF stroke volume and CSF pulse pressure are influenced not only by the degree of atrophy present, but also by the ventricular size, aqueductal diameter, brain compliance, and cerebral blood flow. For example, compromised microvasculature in the periventricular region might allow these tissues to become injured at a lower pulse pressure than would tissues with a normal microvascular supply (31). Alternatively, decreased tensile strength of the ventricular wall or adjacent parenchyma might allow greater diastolic reexpansion of the ventricles (32–42), leading to increased mechanical trauma to the periventricular white matter tracts and/or increased transependymal CSF flow. This would cause decreased tissue pressure and microvascular compromise (35).

Several limitations of this study should be noted. First, the number of patients, especially those with negative CSF flow study findings who underwent shunt formation, is small. Second, the study is retrospective. (A prospective trial in which all patients undergoing a quantitative CSF flow study, including those thought not to have NPH, also would undergo shunt formation would be difficult to justify ethically.) Third, although attempts were made at blinding chart reviews, this was not always possible because of information about the CSF flow study written in the physician's notes. Fourth, although this phase-contrast technique is excellent for quantitating laminar flow (27), it may result in substantial underestimation of turbulent

**Table 3**  
Sensitivity, Specificity, Predictive Values, and Accuracy of Results of Quantitative CSF Flow Study versus CSF Flow Void Analysis

Parameter	Quantitative CSF Flow Study Results	Flow Void Analysis Results
Sensitivity (%)	80	73
Specificity (%)	100	67
Positive predictive value (%)	100	92
Negative predictive value (%)	50	33
Accuracy (%)	83	72

**Table 4**  
Response to Shunt according to CSF Flow Void Score

Clinical Response to Shunt	No. of Patients with CSF Flow Void Score	
	$\geq$ 2	< 2
Improvement	11	4
No improvement	1	2

Note.—A flow void score of  $\geq$  2 or greater indicated hyperdynamic CSF flow; a score of < 2 indicated normal CSF flow. Differences were not statistically significant according to the Fisher exact test.

flow in patients with especially hyperdynamic CSF flow. Fortunately, in such cases, the CSF flow void should be particularly prominent.

Despite these shortcomings, it is thought that the quantitative CSF flow study is a useful method of predicting response to shunting in patients with NPH and should be considered the test of choice after clinical evaluation and routine imaging (ie, computed tomography or MR imaging) in the work-up in such patients. ■

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