

Musculature et innervation pelvi-périnéale en dissection anatomique assistée par ordinateur

Krystel Nyangoh Timoh

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MUSCULATURE ET INNERVATION PELVI-PERINEALE EN DISSECTION ANATOMIQUE ASSISTEE PAR ORDINATEUR

Thèse de doctorat de l'Université Paris-Saclay préparée à l'université Paris-Sud

École doctorale n°568 Biosigne Signalisations et Réseaux Intégratifs en Biologie Spécialité de doctorat: Recherche clinique, innovation technologique, santé publique

Thèse présentée et soutenue au Kremlin Bicêtre, le 17 Juin 2019, par

Krystel NYANGOH TIMOH

Composition du Jury:

M, Hervé Fernandez Professeur, Paris-Sud M, Stéphane Ploteau MCU-PH, Nantes. M, Geoffroy Canlorbe MCU-PH, La Pitié-Salpétrière M, David Moszkowicz PHU, Paris Saclay Mne, Claire Haegelen Professeur, Rennes 1 M, Thomas Bessede MCU-PH, Paris Sud M, Gérard Benoit Professeur, Paris Sud M, Fabrice Duparc Professeur, Rouen

Président

Rapporteur

Examinateur

Co-Directeur de thèse

Examinateur

Directeur de thèse

Co-Directeur de thèse

Rapporteur

RÉSUMÉ	4
ABSTRACT	5
MOTS CLÉS	6
REMERCIEMENTS	7
VALORISATION DU TRAVAIL	9
LISTE DES ABBREVIATIONS	14
LISTE DES FIGURES	15
PRÉAMBULE	16
1 INTRODUCTION	17
1.1 ANATOMIE DU MUSCLE ELEVATEUR DE L'ANUS ET DE SON INNERVATION.	18
1.1.1 ANATOMIE DES MUSCLES DU PLANCHER PELVIEN	18
1.1.2 ANATOMIE DE L'INNERVATION DU PLANCHER PELVIEN	21
1.1.3 Interet clinique	23
1.2 DISSECTION ANATOMIQUE ASSISTEE PAR ORDINATEUR	25
2 OBJECTIFS	26
<u>Objecting</u>	
2 METHODES	20
3 METHODES	28
3.1 ÉTUDE ANATOMIQUE CHEZ LE FŒTUS	29
3.1.1 Prerequis legal	29
3.1.2 Prelevements macroscopiques	30
	32
3.1.3 CONDITIONNEMENT HISTOLOGIQUE	32
3.1.4 COLORATION ET IMMUNOMARQUAGE	32
3.1.5 PROTOCOLE D'HISTOLOGIE	36
3.1.6 PROTOCOLE DE MICROSCOPIE OPTIQUE	41
3.2 RECONSTRUCTION TRIDIMENSIONNELLE	42
3.2.1 MATERIEL	42
3.2.2 ACQUISITION DES IMAGES	42
3.2.3 SEGMENTATION MANUELLE PAR CONTOURAGE DES COUPES HISTOLOGIQUES ET RECONSTRUCTION	
TRIDIMENSIONNELLE.	43
3.3 MICROSCOPIE ELECTRONIQUE À TRANSMISSION	46
3.3.1 PRELEVEMENT	46
3.3.2 COUPES SEMI-FINES	47
3.3.3 COUPES ULTRAFINES	47
3.3.4 VISUALISATION AU MICROSCOPE ELECTRONIQUE À TRANSMISSION (JEOL, 1010).	48
4 DECLUTATE	40
4 RESULTATS	49
4.1 ÉTUDE CHEZ LE FŒTUS FEMININ HUMAIN: INNERVATION ET STRUCTURE DU MUSCLE ELEVATEUR DE L'ANUS.	51
4.1.1 INNERVATION DU MUSCLE ELEVATEUR DE L'ANUS CHEZ LE FŒTUS FEMININ HUMAIN.	51
4.1.2 STRUCTURE MUSCULAIRE DU MUSCLE ELEVATEUR DE L'ANUS CHEZ LE FŒTUS FEMININ HUMAIN.	55
4.2 ÉTUDE CHEZ LE FŒTUS MASCULIN HUMAIN : INNERVATION ET STRUCTURE DU PLANCHER PELVIEN MUSCULAIRE ET	C 4
NNERVATION DE L'URETRE.	61

2

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

4.2.1 Innervation et structure du plancher pelvien chez le fœtus masculin humain.	61
4.2.2 INNERVATION AUTONOME DU SPHINCTER DE L'URETRE CHEZ LE FŒTUS MASCULIN HUMAIN.	68
5 <u>DISCUSSION</u>	72
5.1 RAPPEL DES PRINCIPAUX RESULTATS	73
5.2 CHOIX DU MODELE : DISSECTION ANATOMIQUE ASSISTEE PAR ORDINATEUR SUR MODELE FŒTAL	73
5.2.1 PRELEVEMENT EN-BLOC	73
5.2.2 Le modele fœtal humain	74
5.2.3 L'APPORT DE L'IMMUNOHISTOCHIMIE	74
5.3 QUELLES IMPLICATIONS CLINIQUES ?	75
5.3.1 CONTINENCE ET STATIQUE PELVIENNE	75
5.3.2 GROSSESSE ET ACCOUCHEMENT PAR VAGINALE	76
5.3.3 CHIRURGIE PELVIENNE RADICALE	78
5.3.4 LA REEDUCATION PELVI-PERINEALE	80
5.4 LES LIMITES DU MODELE.	81
5.5 DIVERSIFICATION DU MODELE.	82
5.5.1 ORIGINE ET NATURE DE L'URETERE PELVIEN.	83
5.5.2 MICRO-ANATOMIE FONCTIONNELLE ET STRUCTURELLE DU NERF SCIATIQUE.	85
5.6 ANATOMIE AUGMENTEE, REALITE AUGMENTEE CHIRURGICALE.	87
6 CONCLUSION	88
7. DEFEDENCES	0.4
7 REFERENCES	91
R ANNEXES: PRINCIPALES PUBLICATIONS	97





RÉSUMÉ

Titre : Musculature et innervation pelvi-périnéale en dissection anatomique assistée par ordinateur

Mots clés : Anatomie - Chirurgie pelvienne radicale - Dissection Anatomique Assistée par Ordinateur (DAAO)- Dysfonction du plancher pelvien- Innervations autonomes et somatiques pelvipérinéales- Muscle élévateur de l'anus

Résumé: Introduction: Parmi les structures anatomiques impliquées dans la statique pelvienne, la continence urinaire et anale, le muscle élévateur de l'anus (MEA), le sphincter urétral (SU) et son innervation ont un rôle déterminant. Au cours de la grossesse, de l'accouchement par voie vaginale, de la chirurgie radicale pelvienne, des lésions des muscles du plancher pelvien ou de son innervation peuvent survenir. Ces lésions sont à l'origine de dysfonctions du plancher pelvien telle que le prolapsus uro-génital ou l'incontinence urinaire. Une meilleure connaissance de l'anatomie musculaire et nerveuse pelvi-périnéale est nécessaire pour diminuer la survenue et traiter ces troubles fonctionnels. Classiquement les muscles du plancher pelvien sont décrits comme entièrement striés sous contrôle somatique (nerf du MEA et/ou nerf pudendal (NP)). La dissection Anatomique Assisté par Ordinateur (DAAO) en utilisant des marqueurs nerveux et musculaires spécifiques peut aujourd'hui compléter les établies par conventionnelle classique de sujets anatomiques. Objectif : L'objectif était de décrire l'innervation (origine, topographie, trajet, rapports, fonction) et la structure musculaire du MEA, de décrire l'innervation (origine, topographie, trajet, rapports, fonction) du sphincter urétral pour perspective les en implications potentielles dans les dysfonctions du plancher pelvien.

Méthodes: Nous avons étudié 9 fœtus humains (6 féminins et 3 masculins). Des coupes histologiques sériées de 5 μm d'épaisseur ont été effectuées dans les régions pelviennes de 7 fœtus âgés de 18 à 40 semaines de gestation. Pour chaque niveau de coupe, des lames ont été

colorées puis traitées en immunohistochimie pour détecter : l'ensemble des fibres nerveuses (anticorps anti-protéine S100), les fibres autonomes cholinergiques (anti-VAChT), les fibres autonomes adrénergiques (anti-TH), les fibres autonomes nitrergiques (anti-nNOS), les fibres somatiques (anti-PMP 22), les fibres sensorielles (anti-CGRP), les fibres musculaires lisses (anti-SMA) et les fibres musculaires striées (anti-MYOG). Les coupes ont ensuite été numérisées par un scanner de haute résolution optique et les images ont été reconstruites en 3D avec le logiciel Winsurf®. Un fœtus additionnel a été entièrement destiné à réaliser de la microscopie électronique afin de confirmer nos résultats au niveau architectural musculaire.

Résultats: Nous avons observé une innervation à la fois autonome (plexus hypogastrique inférieur (PHI)) et somatique (nerf du MEA et NP) du MEA. Nous avons individualisé des zones de cellules musculaires lisses au sein du plancher pelvien notamment de la partie médiane sous contrôle autonome (PHI) que nous nommons « compartiment médian musculaire lisse ».

Nous avons systématisé le plancher pelvien musculaire en une zone médiale lisse sous contrôle nerveux autonome réalisant une interface entre les viscères pelviens, et une zone musculaire striée latérale sous contrôle nerveux somatique.

Enfin, nous avons mis en évidence une double innervation à la fois somatique et autonome du sphincter urétral.

Conclusion: La DAAO a permis de mettre en évidence une innervation pelvi-périnéale complexe avec l'intrication du système nerveux somatique et autonome. La fonction du contingent musculaire lisse pelvien reste à préciser.





ABSTRACT

Title: Pelvic perineal muscular structure and innervation using computer anatomic assisted dissection

Keywords: Anatomy- Radical pelvic surgery- Computer-Assisted Anatomic Dissection (CAAD)-Pelvic floor dysfunction- Autonomic and somatic pelvic-perineal Innervations- Levator ani muscle.

Abstract: Levator ani muscle (LAM), urethral sphincter (US), and their innervation play a major role in pelvic status, urinary continence and anal continence. During pregnancy, vaginal delivery, pelvic radical surgery, damage of pelvic floor muscles or of their innervation may occur. These lesions are responsible for pelvic floor dysfunction such as urogenital prolapse or urinary incontinence. Better knowledge of pelvi-perineal muscle and nerve anatomy is needed to reduce the occurrence and treat these pelvic floor dysfunctions. Classically pelvic floor muscles are described as entirely striated under somatic control (levator ani nerve (LAN) and /or pudendal nerve (PN)). Computer Assisted Anatomical Dissection (CAAD) using specific nerve and muscle markers can nowadays complete data established by conventional dissection of anatomical subjects. The objective was to describe the innervation and the muscular structure of the levator ani muscle, to describe nerve supply of the urethral sphincter in order to better understand pelvic floor dysfunction.

Methods: We studied nine human fetuses (6 female and 3 male). Serial histological sections of 5 μm of thickness were performed in the lumbar and pelvic regions of seven human fetuses aged 18 to 40 weeks of gestation. For each level, slides were stained and then treated in immunohistochemistry to detect: general nerve fibers (anti-protein S100), autonomic cholinergic fibers (anti-tyrosine hydroxylase), autonomic nitrergic fibers (anti-tyrosine hydroxylase), autonomic nitrergic fibers (anti-nNOS), somatic nerve fibers (anti-peripheral myelin protein 22), sensory fibers (anti-CGRP), smooth muscle fibers (anti-SMA) and striated muscle fibers (anti-MYOG).

The slides were then digitized by a high-resolution optical scanner and the images were reconstructed in 3D using the Winsurf® software. One fetus was entirely reserved for electronic microscopy in order to confirm our results.

Results: We observed that LAM innervation is supplied by both autonomic (inferior hypogastric plexus (IHP)) and somatic (LAN and PN). We have individualized areas of smooth muscle cells in the pelvic floor, particularly the median part controlled by the autonomic system that we named "smooth muscle medial compartment".

We systematized within the pelvic floor muscle a smooth medial part under an autonomic nervous control as interface between the pelvic viscera and a lateral striated muscle part under somatic nervous control.

Finally, we have demonstrated a dual innervation both somatic and autonomic sphincter urethral.

Conclusion: CAAD has demonstrated complex pelvic-perineal innervation with the interaction of the somatic and autonomic nervous system. The function of the pelvic smooth muscle contingent remains to be clarified.



MOTS CLÉS

Mots clés:

Anatomie
Chirurgie pelvienne radicale
Dissection Anatomique Assistée par Ordinateur (DAAO)
Dysfonction du plancher pelvien
Innervations autonomes et somatiques pelvi-périnéales
Muscle élévateur de l'anus

Key words:

Anatomy
Radical pelvic surgery
Computer-Assisted Anatomic Dissection (CAAD)
Pelvic floor dysfunction
Autonomic and somatic pelvic-perineal Innervations
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Signalisations et Réseaux Intégratifs en Biologie ED 419 Biosigne
Université Paris-Saclay
UMR 788 Inserm
Bâtiment Grégory Pincus, Secteur Marron, Porte 47
80 Rue du Général Leclerc
94276 – Le Kremlin Bicêtre – France

Équipe d'accueil :

Equipe MRSNA

Morphologie et Régénération du Système Nerveux Autonome
U1195 – Université Paris-Saclay & INSERM
Faculté de Médecine Paris-Sud
63 avenue Gabriel Péri
94270 – Le Kremlin Bicêtre – France



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6

VALORISATION DU TRAVAIL

Publications originales Intégrées aux résultats du mémoire de thèse.

- Nyangoh Timoh, K., Bessede, T., Zaitouna, M., Peschaud, F., Chevallier, J-M., Fauconnier, A., Benoit, G., Moszkowicz, D. Anatomy of the levator ani muscle and implications for obstetrics and gynecology, Gynecol Obstet Fertil. 2015 Jan;43(1):84-90. Review. <u>IF=0,6</u>
- Nyangoh Timoh, K., Bessede, T., Lebacle, C., Zaitouna, M., Martinovic, J., Diallo, D., Creze, M., Chevallier, J-M., Darai, E., Benoît, G., Moszkowicz, D., Levator ani muscle innervation: anatomical study in human fetus, Neurourol Urodyn, 2017; 36:1464-1471. IF=3,3
- 3. **Nyangoh Timoh, K.**, Moszkowicz, D., Zaitouna, M., Lebacle, C., Martinovic, J., Diallo, D., Creze, M., Lavoue, V., Darai, E., Benoit, G., Bessede, T. Detailed muscular structure and neural control anatomy of the levator ani muscle: a study based on female human fetuses. Am J Obstet Gynecol. 2018:121e1-121e2. *IF* = 5,7
- Nyangoh Timoh, K.*, Deffon, J.*, Moszkowicz, D., Lebacle, C., Creze, M., Martinovic, J., Zaitouna, M., Diallo, D., Lavoue, V., Fautrel, A., Gérard, B., Bessede, T. Smooth muscle of the male pelvic floor: a study based on human fetuses. *Soumis à J Anat.* <u>IF= 2,5</u>
- Nyangoh Timoh, K., Moszkowicz, D., Creze, M., Zaitouna, M., Lebacle, C., Diallo, D., Felber, M., Martinovic, J., Lavoue, V., Fautrel, A., Gérard, B., Bessede, T. Anatomical evidence of an autonomic innervation of the male urethral sphincter, a study based on human fetuses, *Soumis à J urol*. <u>IF =5,4</u>

Publications originales

Complémentaires en collaboration avec l'équipe U1195 intégrées dans la discussion

- Zaitouna, M., Alsaid, B., Lebacle, C., Nyangoh Timoh, K., Benoit, G., Bessede, T. Origin and nature of pelvic ureter innervation. Neurourol Urodyn 2017;36:271-9.
 IF= 3,3
- 7. Creze, M., Zaitouna, M., **Nyangoh Timoh, K.**, Diallo, D., LebacleC., Bellin, M. F., Ducreux, D., Benoit, G., Bessede, T.: Functional and structural microanatomy of the fetal sciatic nerve. Muscle Nerve 2017;56:787-96. *IF*=2,5

*contribution équivalente.



Communication orale en français

- 1. Nyangoh Timoh Krystel, Deffon Julie, Moszkowicz David, Lebacle Cédric, Creze Maud, Martinovic Jelena, Diallo Djibril, Zaitouna Mazen, Fautrel Alain, Benoit Gérard, Bessede Thomas. « Innervation des zones de cellules musculaires lisses au sein du plancher pelvien musculaire chez le fœtus masculin humain" Congrès des morphologistes, Rennes, 2019, Prix de la meilleure communication orale.
- 2. Nyangoh Timoh Krystel, Deffon Julie, Moszkowicz David, Lebacle Cédric, Creze Maud, Martinovic Jelena, Diallo Djibril, Zaitouna Mazen, Fautrel Alain, Benoit Gérard, Bessede Thomas « Innervation du sphincter urétral masculin » Congrès des morphologistes, Caen, 2018.
- 3. Nyangoh Timoh Krystel, Bessede Thomas, Martinovic Jelena, Diallo Djibril, Lebacle Cédric, Zaitouna Mazen, Chevallier Jean Marc, Peschaud Frédéric, Emile Darai, Benoit Gérard, Moszkowicz David. Existence de zones de cellules musculaires lisses au sein du muscle élévateur de l'anus sous contrôle autonome chez le fœtus féminin humain. Congrès des morphologistes, Reims, 2017, Prix de la meilleure communication orale.
- **4. Nyangoh Timoh K**, Bessede Thomas, Martinovic Jelena, Diallo Djibril, Lebacle Cédric, Zaitouna Mazen, Chevallier Jean Marc, Peschaud Frédéric, Emile Darai, Benoit Gérard, Moszkowicz David, « Innervation du muscle élévateur de l'anus chez le fœtus féminin humain » **Congrès des morphologistes**, **Toulouse**, **2016**.
- 5. Nyangoh Timoh K, Bessede Thomas, Martinovic Jelena, Diallo Djibril, Lebacle Cédric, Zaitouna Mazen, Chevallier Jean Marc, Peschaud Frédéric, Emile Darai, Benoit Gérard, Moszkowicz David, « Innervation du muscle élévateur de l'anus chez le fœtus féminin humain » Congrès de la Société de Chirurgie Gynécologique pelvienne (SCGP), Paris, 2016
- **6. Nyangoh Timoh K**, Bessede Thomas, Martinovic Jelena, Diallo Djibril, Lebacle Cédric, Zaitouna Mazen, Chevallier Jean Marc, Peschaud Frédéric, Emile Darai, Benoit Gérard, Moszkowicz David, « Innervation du muscle élévateur de l'anus chez le fœtus féminin humain » **Société savante d'anatomie paris, 2016.**
- 7. Nyangoh Timoh K, Bessede Thomas, Martinovic Jelena, Diallo Djibril, Lebacle Cédric, Zaitouna Mazen, Chevallier Jean Marc, Peschaud Frédéric, Emile Darai, Benoit Gérard, Moszkowicz David, « Innervation du muscle élévateur de l'anus chez le fœtus féminin humain » Société Interdisciplinaire francophone d'UroDynamique et de Pelvi Périnéologie (SIFUD), Antibes, 2016.



Communication orale en anglais

- 8. **Nyangoh Timoh K**, Bessede Thomas, Martinovic Jelena, Diallo Djibril, Lebacle Cédric, Zaitouna Mazen, Chevallier Jean Marc, Peschaud Frédéric, Emile Darai, Benoit Gérard, Moszkowicz David, « Levator ani innervation : an anatomical study.» **European Urology Association (EUA), Munich, 2016.**
- 9. Nyangoh Timoh K, Bessede Thomas, Martinovic Jelena, Diallo Djibril, Lebacle Cédric, Zaitouna Mazen, Chevallier Jean Marc, Peschaud Frédéric, Emile Darai, Benoit Gérard, Moszkowicz David, « Levator ani innervation : an anatomical study.» American Association of Anatomists (AAA), San Diego, 2016.
- **10. Nyangoh Timoh K,** Bessede Thomas, Martinovic Jelena, Diallo Djibril, Lebacle Cédric, Zaitouna Mazen, Chevallier Jean Marc, Peschaud Frédéric, Emile Darai, Benoit Gérard, Moszkowicz David, « Levator ani innervation : an anatomical study.» **European society for surgical research (ESSR), Glasgow, 2016.**
- **11.Nyangoh Timoh K,** Bessede Thomas, Martinovic Jelena, Diallo Djibril, Lebacle Cédric, Zaitouna Mazen, Chevallier Jean Marc, Peschaud Frédéric, Emile Darai, Benoit Gérard, Moszkowicz David, « Levator ani innervation : an anatomical study.» **European association for clinical anatomy (EACA), Rouen, Juin 2015.**

Communication affichée en anglais

12.Nyangoh Timoh K, Bessede Thomas, Martinovic Jelena, Diallo Djibril, Lebacle Cédric, Zaitouna Mazen, Chevallier Jean Marc, Peschaud Frédéric, Emile Darai, Benoit Gérard, Moszkowicz David, « Levator ani innervation : an anatomical study.» International Urogynecological association (IUGA), Nice, Juin 2015.



Co-encadrement d'une étudiante en Master 2 sur la thématique de recherche

- Julie Deffon, Master 2, 2016-2017.
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Nyangoh Timoh, K.*, Deffon, J.*, Moszkowicz, D., Lebacle, C., Creze, M., Martinovic, J., Zaitouna, M., Diallo, D., Lavoue, V., Fautrel, A., Gérard, B., Bessede, T. Smooth muscle of the male pelvic floor: a study based on human fetuses. Soumis à J Anat.

Relecture au cours du doctorat, au sujet d'articles sur la thématique de recherche

- SARA-D-19-00039 "The transvaginal approach in minimally invasive surgery: an anatomical, histological and clinical study" Surgical and Radiologic Anatomy. Reçu le 23/01/2019. (Surgical Radiologic Anatomy)
- 2. CA-18-0526 « Preservation of Denonvilliers' fascia for nerve-sparing laparoscopic total mesorectal excision: a neuro-histological study." Reçu le 14/12/2018 (Clinical Anatomy)
- 3. NAU-17-0547.R1 Levator Ani avulsion: the histological composition of this site. A cadaveric study. Reçu le 10/07/2018 (Neurourology and Urodynamics)



Prix et distinctions

1. Prix de la meilleure communication orale au congrès des morphologistes, Rennes, Mars 2019

Nyangoh Timoh Krystel, Deffon Julie, Moszkowicz David, Lebacle Cédric, Creze Maud, Martinovic Jelena, Diallo Djibril, Zaitouna Mazen, Fautrel Alain, Benoit Gérard, Bessede Thomas. « Innervation des zones de cellules musculaires lisses au sein du plancher pelvien musculaire chez le fœtus masculin humain". 500 euros: descernée par le Pr C. Fontaine.

2. Prix de la meilleure communication orale au congrès des morphologistes, Reims, Mars 2017

Nyangoh Timoh Krystel, Bessede Thomas, Martinovic Jelena, Diallo Djibril, Lebacle Cédric, Zaitouna Mazen, Chevallier Jean Marc, Peschaud Frédéric, Emile Darai, Benoit Gérard, Moszkowicz David. « Existence de zones de cellules musculaires lisses au sein du muscle élévateur de l'anus sous contrôle autonome chez le fœtus féminin humain.» 500 euros : descernée par le Pr C.Fontaine.

3. Obtention de la bourse CORECT (Comité de la Recherche Clinique et Translationnelle) du CHU de Rennes d'une valeur de 39 000 euros, Janvier 2018.

Étude clinique post doctorale. « Comparaison de la micro-innervation et de la microstructure musculaire du muscle élévateur de l'anus entre les patientes ayant un prolapsus uro-génital et celles assymptomatiques ».

4. Nominée pour le prix du chirurgien de l'avenir 2015 (Fondation de l'Avenir, Master 2 sciences chirurgicales, Universités Paris XI et XII)

Nyangoh Timoh Krystel, Bessede Thomas, Martinovic Jelena, Diallo Djibril, Lebacle Cédric, Zaitouna Mazen, Chevallier Jean Marc, Peschaud Frédéric, Emile Darai, Benoit Gérard, Moszkowicz David. « Innervation du muscle élévateur de l'anus chez le fœtus féminin humain.»



LISTE DES ABBREVIATIONS

AL: actine lisse

ASI: ailes iliaques

C: clitoris

CGRP: Calcitonin Gene Related Peptide

CMML : compartiment médian musculaire lisse

CC: corps clitoridiens

HE: Hématoxyline-éosine

DAAO: dissection anatomique assistée par ordinateur

MEA: muscle élévateur de l'anus.

MYOG: myogénine NC: nerf caverneux

NNOS: neural nitric oxydase Synthase

NO : nerf obturateur NP : nerf pudendal

NSP: nerfs splanchniques pelviens

PHI: plexus hypogastrique inférieur

SEU : sphincter externe de l'urètre

SIU : sphincter interne de l'urètre

SMA : smooth muscle actin

TH: tyrosine Hydroxylase

SU : sphincter urétral

TM: Trichrome de Masson

Ur : urètre

VACHT: vesicular acetylcholine transporte



LISTE DES FIGURES

Figure 1: Vue schématique du muscle élévateur de l'anus après avoir enlevé la vulve e	ŧt
les structures périnéales.	19
Figure 2: Vue supérieure schématisant l'innervation du muscle élévateur de l'anus	22
Figure 3: Autorisation administrative pour les prélèvements fœtaux	29
Figure 4: Autorisation parentale de prélèvements de tissus fœtaux	30
Figure 5: Fœtus « FK » de 36 semaines de gestation	32
Figure 6: Contourage des structures anatomiques	45
Figure 7: Fœtus « J » de 23 semaines de gestation	47
Figure 8: Coupes ultrafines en microscopie électronique	48
Figure 9: Coupe sériée transverse du fœtus "FI" de 21 semaines de gestation	53
Figure 10: Reconstruction tridimensionnelle issu de la dissection anatomique par	
ordinateur du fœtus « FI » (vue latérale)	54
Figure 11: Coupe sériée sagittale du fœtus « FL » de 21 semaines de gestation	57
Figure 12: Coupe sériée transverse du foetus "FI" de 21 semaines de gestation	58
Figure 13: Microscopie électronique provenant du fœtus « FI » de 23 semaines de	
gestation montrant des cellules contenant de l'actine lisse au sein du muscle élévateur d	de
l'anus	58
Figure 14 : Reconstruction tridimensionnelle issu de la dissection anatomique par	
ordinateur du fœtus "I" (vue latérale)	59
Figure 15: Synthèse des résultats. Représentation schématique de l'innervation du	
muscle élévateur de l'anus et de sa structure.	60
Figure 16 : Coupe sériée sagittale du fœtus "ML" de 23 semaines de gestation et coupe	
sériée transverse du fœtus "MK" de 23 semaines de gestation.	65
Figure 17 : Reconstruction tridimensionnelle issu de la dissection anatomique par	
ordinateur du fœtus "MK" (vue latérale).	66
Figure 18 : Reconstruction tridimensionnelle issu de la dissection anatomique par	
ordinateur du fœtus "MK"	67
Figure 19: Coupe sériée transverse du fœtus "MK" de 23 semaines de gestation	70
Figure 20: Reconstruction tridimensionnelle issu de la dissection anatomique par	
ordinateur du fœtus "MK"	71
Figure 21 : Dissection anatomique assisté par ordinateur (CAAD) des organes du bass	
du fœtus masculin de 20 semaines de gestation montrant le trajet des nerfs et leur relat	
avec les organes voisins.	84
Figure 22 : Illustration immuno-histochimique du nerf sciatique (NS) chez un fœtus de 2	
semaines de gestation	86



PREAMBULE

PRÉAMBULE

Pour comprendre les dysfonctions du plancher pelvien (prolapsus uro-génital, dysfonction

érectile, incontinence urinaire, incontinence anale), une meilleure connaissance de

l'innervation pelvi-périnéale s'impose comme un prérequis indispensable.

Dans notre équipe "Morphologie et Régénération du Système Nerveux Autonome", nous

souhaitons étendre les connaissances susceptibles d'optimiser la préservation des

fonctions génitales, urinaires et anales. A partir de cela, nous cherchons aussi à préparer

des stratégies de régénération nerveuse qui contribueraient à restaurer ces fonctions.

Dans cette Thèse, le but était de dépasser la simple connaissance morphologique

descriptive et de prendre en compte des données fonctionnelles (basées sur la distribution

des neurotransmetteurs). Pour cela, nous avons utilisé la technique de "Dissection

Anatomique Assistée par Ordinateur" (DAAO) mise au point dans l'équipe par le passé. Elle

permet de s'affranchir des limites descriptives de la dissection anatomique conventionnelle

en déterminant la nature des fibres nerveuses par des méthodes immuno-histochimiques

de localisation des neurotransmetteurs (adrénergiques, cholinergiques, sensitifs, etc...) (1).

Cette DAAO devient complémentaire de la dissection conventionnelle dont elle prolonge la

portée clinique, chirurgicale voire radiologique grâce à des reconstructions

tridimensionnelles à la fois anatomiques et fonctionnelles (2).

Dans cette logique, l'étude de l'innervation autonome et somatique pelvi-périnéale semblait

judicieuse, s'annonçant propice à analyser les principales dysfonctions génitales, urinaires

et anales. Nous espérons que les résultats de cette thèse pourront éclairer les causes et

les réparations envisageables pour ces dysfonctions, qu'elles soient primaires ou d'origine

iatrogène.

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1 Introduction



1.1 Anatomie du muscle élévateur de l'anus et de son innervation.

1.1.1 Anatomie des muscles du plancher pelvien

♦ Le muscle élévateur de l'anus

Le muscle élévateur de l'anus (MEA) est l'élément musculaire fondamental assurant une

statique pelvienne de qualité.

La description du MEA est assez hétérogène et floue dans la littérature (3). En effet, les

faisceaux musculaires ayant les mêmes origines et insertions portaient jusqu'alors des

noms différents selon les auteurs. Depuis 1889, cette description était basée uniquement

sur des données macroscopiques de dissections de sujets anatomiques adultes (4). Une

clarification a été rapportée par Kearney et al. en 2004 utilisant la nomenclature anatomique

internationale (Terminologia anatomica) (5). Cette nouvelle description est basée sur une

revue de la littérature et de reconstructions tridimensionnelles à l'aide de données IRM et a

été confrontée aux classiques descriptions purement anatomiques.

Ainsi, le MEA est décrit comme un complexe musculaire composé de trois faisceaux

musculaires principaux : un faisceau puboviscéral, un faisceau puborectal et un faisceau

iliococcygien. Le MEA délimite un hiatus urogénital (traversé par l'urètre et le vagin) et anal

(traversé par le canal anal). Il forme avec les muscles coccygiens un véritable diaphragme

pelvien qui constitue une cloison musculaire séparant le pelvis du périnée.

Le muscle élévateur de l'anus (MEA) a deux actions principales : une action statique (par le

biais du faisceau iliococcygien) et une action de contraction rapide (faisceaux puboviscéral

et puborectal) en réponse à l'élévation de la pression intra-abdominale (toux, effort).

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Le faisceau puboviscéral (portion dynamique) est composé de 3 muscles qui prennent leurs origines sur la partie postérieure du pubis et forment des anneaux autour des organes pelviens : 1) le muscle pubopérinéal se termine sur le corps périnéal et a une activité tonique permettant de rapprocher ce corps périnéal contre le pubis ; 2) le muscle pubovaginal se termine dans les parois vaginales au niveau de l'urètre moyen et sa contraction permet d'élever le vagin ; et 3) le muscle puboanal se termine entre les sphincters externe et interne et dans la peau du canal anal et sa contraction entraine une élévation de l'anus.

Le faisceau puborectal (portion dynamique) s'insère aussi sur la partie postérieure du pubis mais latéralement par rapport au faisceau puboviscéral et forme un anneau en arrière du rectum. Sa contraction ferme l'angle ano-rectal.

Le faisceau iliococcygien (portion statique) a pour origine l'arc tendineux du MEA. De chaque côté, les muscles iliococcygiens fusionnent en arrière du rectum et en avant du coccyx formant ainsi le raphé anococcygien. Il réalise un véritable diaphragme supportant les organes pelviens (**Figure 1**).

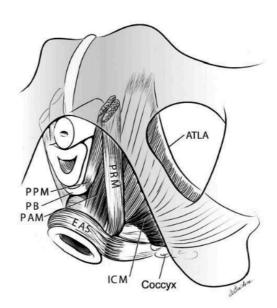


Figure 1: Vue schématique du muscle élévateur de l'anus après avoir enlevé la vulve et les structures périnéales.

ATLA: Arcade tendineuse du muscle élévateur de l'anus; EAS: Sphincter anal externe; PAM: muscle puboanal; PB: corps périnéal; PPM: muscle pubopérinéal; ICM: muscle iliococcygien; PRM: muscle puborectal

INTRODUCTION

♦ Muscle recto-urétral

Le muscle recto-urétral est décrit comme une extension antérieure du rectum.

Il quitterait le rectum au niveau de l'angle ano-rectal pour rejoindre le fascia de Denonvilliers

et la partie postérieure du sphincter externe de l'urètre au-dessus du corps périnéal (6-8).

La mise à distance du muscle recto-urétral est une étape importante au cours de la

prostatectomie radicale surtout par voie périnéale pour avoir accès à la partie postérieure

de l'apex de la prostate.

Muscle transverse périnéal profond

Il s'agit d'un muscle constant, pair, symétrique, aplati et de forme triangulaire. Il est recouvert

par les fascias supérieur et inférieur du diaphragme pelvien (9, 10).

Il s'insère dans sa partie externe étroite sur les branches ischio-pubiennes au-dessus des

muscles transverses et ischio-caverneux, et dans sa partie interne large dans le centre

tendineux du périnée.

Les études anatomiques récentes remettent en cause l'existence de ce muscle dans les

deux sexes. Le terme « muscle transverse périnéal profond » a donc été retiré de la

nomenclature internationale (11).

On nomme le centre tendineux du périnée : une masse fibro-musculaire où convergent et

s'entrelacent les unes avec les autres les fibres tendineuses de la plupart des muscles des

plans superficiel et moyen du périnée (muscles transverses superficiels et profonds,

sphincter de l'urètre, sphincter externe de l'anus, bulbospongieux) (9).

• Sphincter de l'urètre au niveau de l'urètre membraneux chez l'homme.

Au niveau de l'urètre membraneux, on retrouve toujours une couche interne de fibres

musculaires lisses (sphincter interne de l'urètre ou lissophincter) et une couche externe

INTRODUCTION

circulaire (sphincter externe ou rhabdosphincter) entourant totalement l'urètre (12), plus

épaisse dans les deux tiers supérieurs de cette portion urétrale.

Le sphincter interne de l'urètre (SIU) est composé d'une couche interne longitudinale et

d'une couche circulaire externe. La couche interne longitudinale du col vésical semble

prolonger la musculature du trigone et des orifices urétéraux pour rejoindre le veru

montanum.

Le sphincter externe de l'urètre (SEU) entoure complètement l'urètre membraneux d'un

manchon épais en avant qui s'amincit en arrière réalisant un aspect de bague à chaton. En

avant et en haut il se continue par le rhabdosphincter prostatique. Les fibres sont refoulées

par le développement de la prostate et donc sont étalée antérieurement et latéralement au

niveau de la glande. Elle a un aspect en ailes de papillon. Ses fibres musculaires striées se

mélangeant aux fibres lisses au niveau de la capsule prostatique (13).

1.1.2 Anatomie de l'innervation du plancher pelvien

Les données disponibles sur l'innervation du MEA sont conflictuelles (14-17) et il n'existe

aucune description détaillée de l'innervation du MEA. Classiquement, il est admis que le

MEA a une innervation purement somatique par le nerf du muscle élévateur de l'anus (NEA)

naissant des racines sacrées S3 et S4 et ayant un trajet supralévatorien. La participation du

nerf pudendal (NP) à cette commande nerveuse est le principal point de désaccord entre

les différents auteurs. Le nerf pudendal quant à lui a un trajet infralévatorien et naît des

racines sacrées S2, S3 et S4 (9) (Figure 2).

Il est classiquement admis que le SEU est innervé par des nerfs somatique (branches

périnéales du nerf pudendal ou branche intra-pelvienne du nerf pudendal) et le SIU par des

nerfs autonomes provenant du plexus hypogastrique inférieur (18).

Les muscles du périnée, d'après Kamina, sont innervés par la branche périnéale profonde du NP (9).

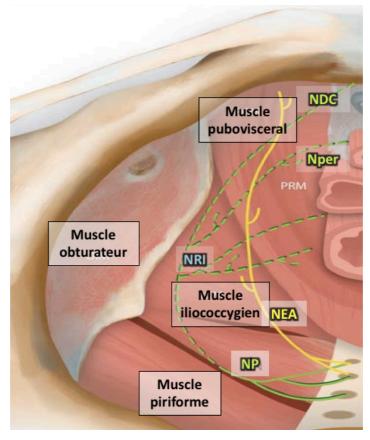


Figure 2: Vue supérieure schématisant l'innervation du muscle élévateur de l'anus.

NP : nerf pudendal, NRI : nerf rectal inférieur, Nper : nerf périnéal, NEA : nerf du muscle élévateur de l'anus



1.1.3 Intérêt clinique

♦ Chez la femme.

Article 1 (annexe page 98): Nyangoh Timoh, K., Bessede, T., Zaitouna, M., Peschaud, F., Chevallier, J-M., Fauconnier, A., Benoit, G., Moszkowicz, D. Anatomy of the levator ani muscle and implications for obstetrics and gynecology, Gynecol Obstet Fertil. 2015 Jan;43(1):84-90.

Vingt-cinq pour cent de femmes sont atteintes de dysfonction du plancher pelvien tout âge confondu (19). La connaissance de l'anatomie du MEA et de son innervation est indispensable pour comprendre les mécanismes physiopathologiques de survenue de lésions musculaires et de dénervation lors de l'accouchement par voie vaginale et trouver de nouvelles pistes de recherche en termes de prévention et de traitement, mais aussi pour informer les patientes avant leur accouchement par voie vaginale.

Les lésions musculaires et nerveuses sont les deux éléments précurseurs de dysfonctions du plancher pelvien. Elles peuvent survenir au cours de l'accouchement par voie vaginale. La présence d'anomalies musculaires du MEA est facteur de risque de prolapsus uro-génital surtout sur les compartiments antérieur et central. Les patientes souffrant de prolapsus ont 7 fois plus de risque d'avoir des avulsions du MEA (55 % versus 16 %) (20). Les avulsions du MEA sont aussi un facteur de risque de récidive après chirurgie du prolapsus (21, 22). Par ailleurs, l'association lésions du MEA-déchirure sphinctérienne anale favorise l'apparition d'incontinence anale (23). Enfin, la force musculaire du plancher pelvien est diminuée chez les patientes présentant des traumatismes musculaires du MEA (24).

La dénervation du MEA est initialisée par l'accouchement voie basse et semble être entretenue par les étirements répétés durant la poussée. Près de 25 % des patientes souffrent en post-partum de de nervation du MEA (25).

♦ Chez l'homme

Les troubles de la continence urinaire et les troubles érectiles sont présents chez 10-46%

et 16% respectivement des patients après prostatectomie radicale (26, 27). Les techniques

de préservation nerveuse décrite par Walsh en vue de diminuer les troubles érectiles après

prostatectomie radicale ont évolué ces dernières années avec l'évolution des

connaissances en anatomie (28).

Plusieurs éléments influent sur la continence urinaire post prostatectomie : des contractions

musculaires coordonnées du complexe sphinctérien, un réservoir vésical compliant et de

capacité normal, une jonction vésico-urétral avec une angulation optimale, une anastomose

vésico-urétrale avec une souplesse et bonne vascularisation, une bonne longueur de

sphincter urétral résiduel, et l'âge du patient (29).

Récemment des études cliniques ont mis en évidence une amélioration de la continence

urinaire post-opératoire lors de la préservation des bandelettes neuro-vasculaires au cours

des prostatectomies radicales (30-32). Une amélioration des connaissances de l'anatomie

de l'innervation du sphincter de l'urètre et du MEA.

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1.2 Dissection anatomique assistée par ordinateur

Les études portant sur l'anatomie topographique de l'innervation pelvienne sont en général réalisées par des dissections macroscopiques de sujets anatomiques adultes. Cette pratique a de nombreux inconvénients dont la possibilité de détruire les nerfs, de déplacer les structures, ou de ne pas reconnaître visuellement des structures très fines telles que les nerfs pelviens. L'utilisation associée de prélèvement macroscopique en bloc et de méthodes immuno-histochimiques permet de respecter l'intégrité des nerfs, leur topographie et la distribution des neurotransmetteurs au sein des tissus (33, 34). Les nerfs même très fins sont repérés. approche nature des On la fibres nerveuses (35).Aussi, à partir de ces coupes histologiques immunomarquées et du traitement de ces images par ordinateur, il est possible de reconstruire, visualiser dans l'espace et d'animer les structures anatomiques, réalisant une dissection anatomique assistée par ordinateur (DAAO) (36). Ceci permet une meilleure compréhension de la morphologie et des rapports topographiques de structures anatomiques complexes. Plusieurs de ces travaux ont été réalisés dans notre institution concernant l'innervation autonome pelvienne principalement : étude de l'innervation de la prostate (37, 38), et du clitoris (39).

2 OBJECTIFS



Les objectifs de ce travail étaient :

- De préciser la localisation, et la fonction de l'innervation du muscle élévateur de l'anus.
- De préciser la structure musculaire du muscle élévateur de l'anus.
- De préciser la localisation, et la fonction de l'innervation du sphincter urétral.
- D'établir grâce à la DAAO un modèle pédagogique tridimensionnel, utile pour l'apprentissage de l'anatomie et de la chirurgie pelvienne.



3 METHODES



3.1 Étude anatomique chez le fœtus

3.1.1 Prérequis légal

Les travaux étaient réalisés avec l'autorisation de prélèvements fœtaux à des fins scientifiques de l'Agence de la Biomédecine, n° PFS-09-005 du 27 mai 2009. Le renouvellement de cette autorisation a été demandé en 2015 et enregistré sous le protocole de recherche n° PFS15-010 (**Figure 3**).

Un formulaire de consentement pour autopsie de fœtus était systématiquement signé par les parents et l'autorisation de pratiquer des examens à visés scientifiques comportant des prélèvements pour conservation dans un but de recherche y était demandée (articles L. 1232- 2, L. 1241-6 et L. 1241-5 du code de la santé publique) (**Figure 4**).



Figure 3: Autorisation administrative pour les prélèvements fœtaux



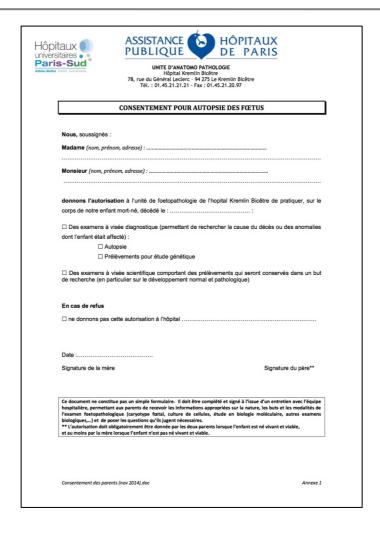


Figure 4: Autorisation parentale de prélèvements de tissus fœtaux

3.1.2 Prélèvements macroscopiques

Cette étude a été réalisée sur des pièces anatomiques issues de 9 fœtus humains (6 fœtus de sexe féminin non macérés et de 3 fœtus masculins). Ils ne présentaient ni malformation ni anomalie pelvienne évidente à l'examen macroscopique. L'âge gestationnel était évalué en fonction de la longueur vertex-coccyx, de la longueur fémorale, du diamètre bipariétal, du périmètre abdominal, du périmètre crânien et de la date présumée de conception. Tous les fœtus avaient au moins 18 semaines de gestation et leur anatomie était ainsi comparable à l'anatomie définitive de l'adulte. En effet, le cloaque est définitivement cloisonné au-delà



du 19ème stade de développement embryonnaire de la classification de Carnegie (46 jours soit environ 7 semaines de gestation). La morphologie des structures nerveuses intrapelviennes ne subit plus de modification à partir du 23ème stade du développement embryonnaire (environ 56 jours soit 8 semaines de gestation) (40). De même, à partir de 13 semaines de gestation, un tissu conjonctif dense s'organise en fascias et en ligaments et recouvre les viscères pelviens.

Les caractéristiques des fœtus sont résumées dans le Tableau 1.

Huit fœtus (5 féminins et 3 masculins) ont été analysés en immunohistochimie. Les viscères du petit bassin ont été prélevés en bloc afin de ne pas désorganiser les rapports. Le cadre osseux pelvien était aussi prélevé afin d'obtenir le muscle élévateur de l'anus et les muscles périnéaux dans leur intégrité. À la fin du prélèvement, les fœtus étaient méticuleusement reconstruits pour approcher une image corporelle satisfaisante.

Deux à trois aiguilles droites étaient mises en place selon l'axe crânio-caudal des pièces anatomiques afin de constituer des repères pour aider à la superposition et à l'alignement des coupes histologiques lors de l'étape informatique. En effet, la conservation des rapports entre les viscères est indispensable à la réalisation d'une reconstruction 3D conforme à la réalité (**Figure 5**).

	Genre	Terme « semaine de	Cause du décès	Délai de fixation depuis
		gestation »		l'expulsion (jours)
Fœtus « FF »	F	20	Fausse couche tardive	3
Fœtus « FG »	F	19	Fausse couche tardive	4
Fœtus « FH »	F	19	IMG	1
Fœtus « FI »	F	21	IMG	2
Fœtus « FJ »	F	23	IMG	Réservé à la microscopie
				électronique
Fœtus « FL »	F	21	IMG	2
Fœtus « FK »	F	36	IMG	2
Fœtus « MJ »	M	40	Fausse couche tardive	2
Fœtus « MK »	M	23	Fausse couche tardive	2
Fœtus « ML »	M	23	Fausse couche tardive	2

Tableau 1: Caractéristiques des pièces anatomiques



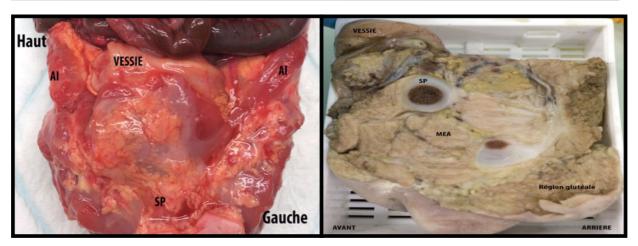


Figure 5: Fœtus « FK » de 36 semaines de gestation.

Sur la photo de gauche, pièce anatomique avec prélèvement du cadre osseux fixée en vue antérieure. Sur la photo de droite, le bassin osseux est sectionné sagittalement pour réaliser un bloc. SP: symphyse pubienne, AI: aile iliaque

3.1.3 Conditionnement histologique

Chaque pièce était fixée par le formol à 10% pendant au moins 48 heures, dans la limite de 5 jours.

3.1.4 Coloration et immunomarquage

Les colorations et immunomarquages suivants étaient utilisés (Tableau 2).

Trichrome de Masson (réf. HT15-1KT, Sigma-Aldrich, USA). Il s'agit d'une coloration permettant d'identifier les fibres de collagène des fascias et ligaments pelviens. L'hématoxyline colore les noyaux en noir, la fuchsine colore les cytoplasmes en roserouge et l'aniline colore le collagène en bleu. Les lames de trichrome de Masson étaient les lames de référence sur lesquelles était basées l'interprétation des lames immuno-marquées.



- Hématoxyline Eosine-Phloxine (HE) (réf. HHS32-1L, HTT110332-1L, Sigma-aldrich, USA): Il s'agit d'une coloration standard permettant d'identifier la morphologie des différentes structures. L'éosine-phloxine colore les cytoplasmes et le tissu conjonctif en rose. L'hématoxyline colore les noyaux en bleu. Ces lames étaient également des lames de référence sur lesquelles était basées l'interprétation des lames immunomarquées.
- Immunomarquage neuronal anti-protéine S-100 (S100). Cet immunomarquage sert à identifier les fibres nerveuses, les terminaisons nerveuses et leur distribution (41). La protéine S-100 est un immunomarqueur des cellules d'origine neurectodermique, mélanocytaire et pan-neuronal, identifiant le noyau et le cytoplasme de la cellule schwannienne dans tous les tissus nerveux fixés au formol et inclus en paraffine (42). L'anticorps utilisé pour cet immunomarquage neuronal a été obtenu par immunisation de lapins (Code No. Z0311; Dako; Danemark) et dilué au 1/400ème.
- Immunomarquage du système nerveux parasympathique (cholinergique) : antitransporteur vésiculaire d'acétylcholine (VAChT) (43). Le transporteur vésiculaire de l'acétylcholine (vesicular acetylcholine transporter) appartient à la famille des transporteurs vésiculaires de monoamine. L'acétylcholine est synthétisée dans le cytoplasme cellulaire par l'acétylcholine transférase et est transportée par le VAChT dans les vésicules synaptiques où elle est stockée jusqu'à sa libération. L'ARN messager du VAChT étant exprimé dans les neurones cholinergiques des systèmes nerveux central et périphérique, le VAChT est un marqueur des neurones des fibres cholinergiques, mais aussi des protoneurones pré-ganglionnaires du système sympathique. L'anticorps, utilisé pour cet immunomarquage neuronal a été obtenu par immunisation de lapins (Code No. V 5387) et dilué au 1/2000ème.

MÉTHODES

- Immunomarquage du système nerveux sympathique (noradrénergique) : anti-

hydroxylase de la tyrosine (TH). L'hydroxylase de la tyrosine tient un rôle majeur

dans la physiologie des neurones adrénergiques, en étant impliquée dans la

conversion de la phénylalanine en dopamine (enzyme de la synthèse des

catécholamines). La TH est employée comme marqueur des neurones

dopaminergiques et des neurones et fibres noradrénergiques (44). L'anticorps utilisé

pour cet immunomarquage neuronal a été obtenu par immunisation de lapins (Code

No. ab112) et dilué au 1/750ème.

Immunomarquage des nerfs érectiles : anti-neuronal Nitric Oxide Synthase (nNOS).

La Nitric Oxyde Synthase catalyse l'oxydation de l'arginine en oxyde nitrique et en

citrulline. nNOS est une des trois isoformes de la NOS, immunomarqueur du système

nerveux autonome jouant un rôle dans la relaxation du muscle lisse et retrouvé

majoritairement dans les cytosols des cellules des nerfs des tissus érectiles fixés au

formol et inclus en paraffine (39, 45). L'anticorps utilisé est dirigé contre les acides

aminés 1422-1433 du nNOS humain. Il a été obtenu par immunisation de lapins

(Cayman Laboratories, Dallas, TX; Cat. No.160870, 1µg/ml) et dilué au 1/200ème.

- Immunomarquage du système nerveux somatique : anti-PMP22 (PMP22). La PMP

22 est une glycoprotéine de 22 Kd produite par les cellules de Schwann et exprimée

dans la gaine de myéline du système nerveux somatique périphérique. Les gènes de

la PMP 22 et de la protéine basique de la myéline sont co-exprimés au cours du

développement et de la régénération nerveuse (46). L'anticorps utilisé pour cet

immunomarquage neuronal a été obtenu après immunisation de lapins (réf. ab61220,

abcam, USA) et dilué au1/100ème.

- Immunomarquage des nerfs sensoriels: anti-Calcitonin Gene Related Peptide

(CGRP). CGRP est présent dans les cellules C de la glande thyroïde et dans le

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- système nerveux sensoriel. Il est considéré comme un marqueur des fibres sensoriels (47).
- Immunomarquage des cellules musculaires lisses : anti-actine lisse. Cet immunomarquage sert à identifier l'actine des cellules musculaires lisses (Smooth Muscle Actin, SMA). L'anticorps polyclonal utilisé est dirigé contre la sous-unité alpha de l'actine des cellules musculaires lisses (48) (Code No. Ab 15267 ; abcam ; USA) et a été obtenu par immunisation de lapin et dilué au 1/150ème.
- Immunomarquage des cellules musculaires striées : anti-myogénine (MYOG). La myogénine est une protéine exprimée par les cellules musculaires striées. Il s'agit d'une protéine de régulation de la myogénèse. L'anticorps monoclonal est dirigé contre une région d'acides aminés de la myogénine (49) (code ISO67, Dako, USA). Il s'agit d'un anticorps nucléaire.



Anticorps	Marquage de	Code	Fournisseur	Démasquage	Dilution	Durée	Contrôle positif
				antigénique		d'incubation	
Anti-S100	Fibres nerveuses	Ab15520	Abcam, USA	Non	1/400 ^{ème}	1 heure	Plexus sacral
Anti-PMP 22	Nerfs somatique	Ab61220	Abcam, USA	Non	1/100 ^{ème}	12h à 4°	Plexus sacral
Anti-TH	Nerfs adrénergiques	Ab112	Abcam, USA	Thermochimique Tampon citraté	1/750 ^{ème}	12h à 4°	Surrénale humain
Anti- VAChT	Nerfs cholinergiques	V5387	Sigma, USA	Thermochimique Tampon citraté	1/2000 ^{ème}	12h à 4°	Colon humain
Anti- nNOS	Nerfs nitrergiques	160870	Cayman,USA	Non	1/200 ^{ème}	12h à 4°	Corps caverneux
Anti- CGRP	Nerfs sensoriels	03-16008	ARP, American research products, USA	Thermochimique Tampon citraté	1/200 ^{ème}	12h à 4°	Thyroide humaine
Anti-SMA	Fibres musculaires lisses	ab15267	Abcam, USA	Non	1/150 ^{ème}	10 mins	Colon humain
Anti- MYOG	Fibres musculaires striées	ISO-67	Dako, danemark	Thermochimique Tampon citraté	1/80	12h à 4°	Myotubes humains

Tableau 2: Résumé des caractéristiques des anticorps primaires polyclonaux utilisés.

3.1.5 Protocole d'histologie

♦ Déparaffinage et réhydratation

Avant de réaliser colorations et immunomarquages, un déparaffinage des lames blanches et une réhydratation des tissus étaient effectués.

Les lames étaient chauffées dans un four à 56°C pendant 15 minutes, permettant la fusion de la paraffine, puis transférées dans deux bains de xylène (réf. 481769, Panreac, Esp) de 10 minutes chacun pour éliminer la paraffine, réhydratées dans trois bains successifs d'alcool de degrés décroissant (100%, 90% et 80%) pendant 5 minutes chacun, rincées à



l'eau distillée pendant 3 minutes et placées pour réhydration supplémentaire dans un

tampon phosphate de pH 7,4 (phosphate buffered saline, PBS: 7,65g de NaCl + 0,724g de

Na2PO4 + 0,210g de NaPO4 pour 1000 ml d'eau distillée) pendant 30 minutes à

température ambiante.

♦ Coloration

Trichrome de Masson (réf. HT15-1KT, Sigma-Aldrich, USA) : on réalisait un bain

d'hématoxyline ferrique de Weigert (réf. HT1079-1SET, Sigma-Aldrich, USA) de 10

minutes suivi, après rinçage, d'un bain de solution écarlate de Biebrich-fuchsine

acide de 10 minutes. On différenciait les tissus, après rinçage, dans un bain d'acide

phosphotungstique 5%-acide phosphomolybdique 5% de 10 minutes puis on colorait

directement les fibres de collagène dans un bain de solution de bleu d'aniline de 7

minutes suivi d'un bain d'acide acétique à 1% (C2H4O2, acide acétique glacial, Carlo

Erba Reagenti, réf. 401422) de 3 minutes. Enfin, on déshydratait les tissus par un

bain d'alcool à 95° puis d'alcool absolu de 30 secondes chacun. On nettoyait enfin

les lames dans deux bains de xylène de 5 minutes.

Hématoxyline Eosine-Phloxine (HE): Nous faisions d'abord un bain de solution

d'Hématoxyline de Harris (réf. HHS32-1L, Sigma-Aldrich, USA) de 8 minutes suivi

d'un bain d'acide alcoolique 1% de 30 secondes et d'un bain de carbonate de lithium

(Li2CO3) de 30 secondes pour différentier les tissus, puis un bain d'alcool à 95%.

Ensuite nous faisions réaliser une contre-coloration par un bain de solution d'Eosine

Y-phloxine (réf. HTT110332-1L, Sigma-Aldrich, USA) de 30 secondes suivis d'un

nouveau bain d'alcool à 95% de 5 minutes et d'une déshydratation dans deux bains

d'alcool absolu (100%) de 5 minutes chacun. Enfin, cette étape étant complétée par

deux bains de xylène de 5 minutes chacun. Chaque étape était encadrée d'un

rinçage précautionneux à l'eau distillée.

♦ Immunohistochimie : « dissection nerveuse immunologique ».

Il y avait 7 étapes. La plupart était réalisée manuellement au laboratoire de chirurgie

expérimentale. Certaines lames ont été traitées au laboratoire d'histopathologie (H2P2 à

Rennes).

Démasquage antigénique.

Pour rendre l'immunomarquage plus sensible (en éliminant les croisements protéiques des

tissus fixé par le formol responsable de faux-négatifs) (50), un démasquage par digestion

enzymatique à la trypsine (trypsine type II-S de pancréas porcin, réf. T7409-10G, Sigma-

Aldrich, USA) à 37°C a été réalisé. La trypsine était ajoutée au PBS pendant 20 minutes à

37 °C.

Inactivation de la péroxydase endogène

Après deux rinçages successifs de 5 minutes dans le PBS, les lames étaient placées dans

une boîte à incubation (Staintray, CML, Fr). Le peroxyde d'hydrogène 3% (H2O2) était alors

ajouté en quantité suffisante afin de couvrir entièrement le tissu à étudier. Après 10 minutes

d'incubation à température ambiante, les lames étaient rincées à deux reprises dans des

bains de PBS de 5 minutes.

<u>Saturation tissulaire et incubation de l'anticorps</u>

primaire.

Les coupes histologiques étaient pré-incubées avec une solution de saturation contenant

du triton 1% (réf. 9002-93-1, Sigma-Aldrich, USA), du sérum normal de chèvre 3% (réf.

16210-004, GeneTex, USA) et du PBS.

Les lames étaient ensuite incubées sans rinçage dans une chambre humide avec 100µl de

l'anticorps primaire. Les conditions d'incubation sont présentées dans le **Tableau 2**.

Inactivation de la peroxydase endogène

Après deux rinçages successifs de 5 minutes dans le PBS, les lames étaient placées dans

une boîte à incubation (Staintray, CML, Fr). Le peroxyde d'hydrogène 3% (H2O2) était alors

ajouté en quantité suffisante afin de couvrir entièrement le tissu à étudier. Après 10 minutes

d'incubation à température ambiante, les lames étaient rincées à deux reprises dans des

bains de PBS de 5 minutes.

Incubation de l'anticorps secondaire

Après deux rinçages successifs de 5 minutes dans le PBS avec agitation lente, les lames

étaient incubées avec l'anticorps secondaire IgG biotinylé anti-espèce (réf. Z0311,

DakoCytomation, Danemark) dilué au 1/200ème, pendant 90 à 120 minutes dans une

chambre humide à température ambiante, puis rincées à deux reprises dans des bains PBS

de 5 minutes chacun.

Révélation

Pour la révélation, on utilisait l'avidine spécifique de la biotine de l'anticorps secondaire

conjuguée à la peroxydase. La solution était préparée 45 à 60 minutes avant l'utilisation (kit

Vectastain Elite Universal ABC, réf. PK6100, VectorLab, Burlingame, CA, USA). Les lames

étaient incubées pendant 60 minutes puis rincées à deux reprises dans des bains PBS

pendant 5 minutes chacun. Par la suite, étaient ajoutées quelques gouttes de 3,3'-

diaminobenzydine (DAB, réf. SK-4100, Vector Laboratories, Burlingame, California, USA),

substrat de la peroxydase de l'ABC, permettant de révéler l'ABC par une réaction colorée.

Le temps de l'incubation du DAB était contrôlé à l'aide du microscope optique (entre 1 et 10

minutes) et la réaction était interrompue par immersion des lames dans de l'eau distillée.

Les lames étaient ensuite contre-colorées par la solution d'hématoxyline de Mayer

(réf.MHS32-1L, Sigma-Aldrich, USA) pendant 2 minutes, rincées abondamment à l'eau du

robinet pendant 5 minutes et séchées à l'air. Enfin, une lamelle de gélatine de glycérol était

appliquée sur chaque lame, à l'aide de deux gouttes de couvre-objet liquide au toluène (réf.

HX755693, Merck, All).

Pour confirmer la spécificité des réactifs (contrôle positif) et éliminer les résultats

faussement négatifs (contrôle négatif), des lames de contrôle étaient préparées pour

chaque anticorps (tableau 3). Les témoins négatifs étaient préparés en remplaçant, sur les

lames témoins, l'anticorps primaire par la solution de pré-incubation, toutes les autres

étapes étant identiques par ailleurs.

♦ Traitement des coupes sériées

La première coupe était colorée par le trichrome de Masson ou l'hématoxyline-éosine et

considérée comme lame de référence.

La deuxième coupe était étudiée par immunomarquage à l'anticorps anti-Protéine S- 100,

pour identifier les fibres nerveuses qui apparaissaient colorées en marron foncé.

La troisième coupe était étudiée par immunomarquage anticorps anti-transporteur

vésiculaire d'acétylcholine (VAChT), pour identifier les nerfs autonomes parasympathiques.

La quatrième coupe était étudiée par immunomarquage par l'anticorps anti- hydroxylase de

la tyrosine (TH) pour identifier les nerfs autonomes sympathiques.

La cinquième coupe était étudiée par immunomarquage nitrergique (nNOS) pour identifier

les fibres nerveuses « érectiles » ou par immunomarquage sensoriel (CGRP) pour identifier

les fibres sensorielles.

La sixième coupe était étudiée par l'immunomarquage de l'actine musculaire lisse (SMA)

ou par l'immunomarquage musculaire striée (MYOG).

La septième coupe était étudiée par l'immunomarquage pour distinguer les fibres nerveuses

du système nerveux somatique périphérique au niveau des zones d'intérêt (PMP22).

Juin 2019 40

Krystel NYANGOH TIMOH

Les trois dernières coupes blanches étaient réservées à 4 °C pour être utilisées plus tard

en cas de dommage sur les coupes précédentes.

3.1.6 Protocole de microscopie optique

L'étape microscopique était réalisée sur un microscope « Nikon eclipse 80i» équipé d'une

caméra digitale «DXM1200F». Les agrandissements optiques disponibles étaient X4, X10,

X20 et X40.

L'étude de la première coupe, colorée par le trichrome de Masson ou hématoxyline-éosine,

permettait de distinguer les différentes structures anatomiques. Les fibres de collagène des

fascias et des ligaments pelviens était rendu visible ce qui permettait de préciser leurs

rapports avec les viscères et les structures nerveuses.

Les coupes marquées par les différents anticorps étaient alignées et séparées de 5 µm

d'intervalle. Cet espace était considéré comme négligeable, ce qui permettait d'accepter la

première lame comme référence pour lui comparer les lames immunomarquées suivantes.

La 2ème coupe, traitée par l'anticorps anti-S-100, permettait de préciser la localisation de

toutes les fibres nerveuses. En la comparant avec les coupes suivantes, marquées par

VAChT, nNOS, CGRP et TH, nous avons pu distinguer la nature et la topographie des fibres

nerveuses autonomes parasympathiques, nitrergiques, sensorielles et autonomes

sympathiques. L'immunomarquage de l'actine lisse (SMA) a permis de rechercher des

cellules musculaires lisses. L'immunomarquage de la myogénine (MYOG) a permis

d'identifier les cellules musculaires striées. L'immunomarquage de la myéline (PMP22) a

permis de distinguer les fibres nerveuses autonomes des fibres somatiques dans les zones

où elles coexistent avec une grande proximité.

3.2 Reconstruction tridimensionnelle

3.2.1 Matériel

Le matériel informatique utilisé pour l'acquisition et le traitement des images comportait :

- Un ordinateur PC DELL muni d'un processeur Intel 2 Duo Core, de 4 Go de RAM et d'un

disque dur d'une capacité de stockage de 200 Go ; système d'exploitation Windows XP.

- Une tablette graphique WACOM Cintig 12WX équipée d'un écran LCD de 12,1 pouces ;

résolution 1280*800 pixels, permettant le contourage des structures anatomiques sur coupe

histologique numérisée et la réalisation de dessins numérisés.

- Un système de numérisation: scanner à plat de film «EPSON perfectionV750 PRO» de

résolution optique maximale de 10200 dpi.

- Des logiciels : de numérisation : «SilverFast AI, version 6.4.3r4a », de traitement d'images

: «Adobe Photoshop, version 7.0 ME» et « Adobe illustrator CS5 », de reconstruction

d'images 3D : «WinSurf, version 4.3», et d'animation: « Windows movie maker, version 5.1 »

et «Allcapture Enterprise 3.0 ».

3.2.2 Acquisition des images

Toutes les coupes sériées (bidimensionnelles) étaient numérisées par un scanner de haute

résolution optique. La résolution optique de 4800 dpi était choisie car les fichiers étaient de

bonne qualité morphologique et leur taille compatible avec le logiciel de traitement. Après la

numérisation, l'image de chaque coupe histologique était recadrée et enregistrée en format

« JPEG » avec compression en qualité maximale.

Les images obtenues étaient ouvertes dans une session du logiciel Adobe Photoshop 7 et

recalées manuellement sur un axe choisi. Le recalage des images consistait en un

alignement géométrique par superposition, associant une translation et une rotation grâce

à l'utilisation de calques transparents, l'image précédente servant de référence pour l'image

suivante.

3.2.3 Segmentation manuelle par contourage des coupes histologiques

et reconstruction tridimensionnelle.

On réalisait manuellement le contourage des structures anatomiques de chaque coupe

bidimensionnelle (fibres nerveuses, vaisseaux, organes creux, reliefs osseux) à l'aide d'une

tablette graphique et de son stylet. Le logiciel WinSurf 4.3 (Surfdriver pour Windows), via

son « moteur de rendu », permettait de convertir la charpente de point en polygones, de

faire le lissage et de représenter l'ensemble des éléments entourés en trois dimensions

(Figure 6). La reconstruction 3D à partir de la « palette de commande » comportait six

étapes utilisant les fonctions suivantes :

- Fonction « New object » : les coupes sélectionnées devaient être orientées d'une coupe à

l'autre, d'une part pour faciliter le travail de saisie, d'autre part pour éviter les erreurs

grossières par manque de repère. On marquait la première et la dernière coupe, définissant

ainsi les deux extrémités de la structure à reconstruire. Sur chaque coupe on traçait, point

par point, les contours de chaque élément à reconstruire, le nombre de points devant si

possible être identique pour chaque structure d'une coupe à l'autre.

- Fonction « Adjust object » : elle consistait à empiler les contours de points obtenus pour

chaque coupe afin de mieux les aligner dans le plan vertical. En cas de décalage, les coupes

sous-jacentes étaient repositionnées par rapport aux coupes sus-jacentes par mouvements

de translation ou de rotation.

Krystel NYANGOH TIMOH

Université Paris-Saclay
Espace Technologique / Immeuble Discovery
Route de l'Orme aux Merisiers RD 128 / 91190 Saint-Aubin, France

- Fonction « Surface object » : cette fonction permettait de modéliser les surface en

convertissant la charpente de points en polygones, puis de faire le lissage des contours de

l'objet reconstruit à partir des points. Des contours trop abrupts ou aberrants pouvaient ainsi

être corrigés, avec possibilité de visualiser et de reconnaitre de la ou des coupe(s)

incriminée(s).

- Fonction « Edit object » : cette fonction permettait un retour en correction ou mise au point

sur des coupes déjà contourées.

- Fonction « View object » : la visualisation en 3D d'une, de plusieurs, voire de l'ensemble

des structures reconstruites se faisait grâce à cette fonction. Elle permettait ainsi de mettre

en évidence les rapports entre les différentes structures anatomiques, de modifier la

transparence de certaines structures pour en visualiser d'autres situées en arrière plan, de

visualiser les images sous tous les angles par rotation dans les trois axes de l'espace et

enfin de zoomer, réalisant une véritable « dissection assistée par ordinateur ».

- Fonction « New bitmap » : des captures haute définition (HD) de vues peropératoires

laparoscopiques en zoom étaient utilisées pour colorer les différentes structures

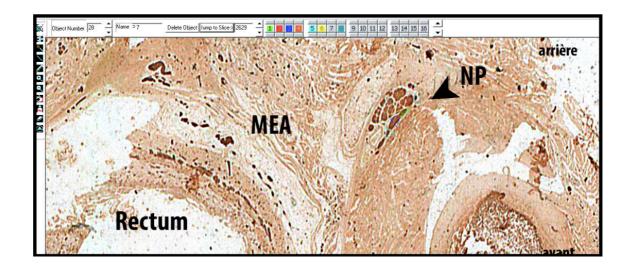
reconstruites et obtenir un aspect général plus réaliste. Les images 3D obtenues

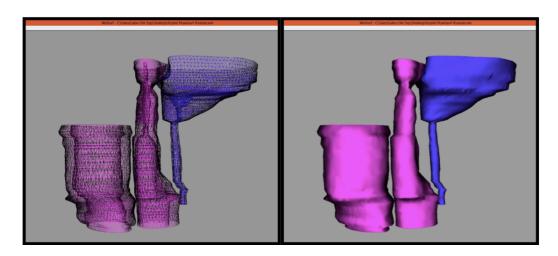
étaient traitées par un logiciel de capture vidéo (All Capture Enterprise 3.0) et

d'animation (Windows movie maker, version 5.1) afin d'obtenir des séquences

animées permettant de présenter de façon dynamique les structures anatomiques

dans les 3 plans de l'espace.





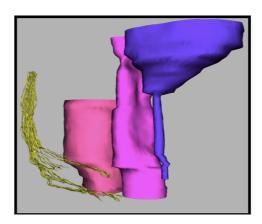


Figure 6: Contourage des structures anatomiques.

En haut, chaque fibre du nerf pudendal est contouré. Au milieu reconstruction tridimensionnelle des structures contourées avec lissage à gauche et texturage des viscères à droite. Ajout des structures nerveuses (nerf pudendal) et du rectum.



3.3 Microscopie électronique à transmission

3.3.1 Prélèvement

Un fœtus humain féminin a été utilisé pour un contrôle de certains résultats en microscopie

électronique. Le prélèvement suivait les règles précédemment décrites.

Après le prélèvement monobloc, le bassin osseux et les parties molles étaient séparées

sous loupe binoculaire. Puis le prélèvement était coupé en 4 : une coupe médiane sagittale

puis une coupe médiane frontale. Les viscères tels que l'urètre avec la vessie, le vagin avec

l'utérus, le rectum avec le colon étaient retirés pour ne garder que la structure musculaire

du plancher pelvien qui était alors coupée en 4 parties : antérieur droit, antérieur gauche,

postérieur droit et postérieur gauche (Figure 7).

Les pièces étaient fixées dans le glutaraldéhyde 3,6% (Aldrich, Réf : G5882) lot :

SLBL7631V.

Les prélèvements étaient ensuite placés dans des moules à inclusion puis mis dans

l'automate à inclusion (Lynx, Leica) pendant 5h30. L'automate à inclusion permettait de

manière systématisée une immersion dans :

- 1 tube d'acide osmique 2% (Aldrich, Réf : 75632) lot : MKBS9947V). Il permettait une

stabilisation de la coupe en agissant sur les lipides.

8 tubes d'alcool croissant permettant une déshydratation rapide et efficace.

- 2 tubes de mélange de 50 % d'acétone (VWR, réf 20065.293 lot : 14F190505) et 50

% de résine époxy (Sigma, réf : 45348) permettant une pré-incubation au contact de

la résine.

3 tubes de résine 100%.

• •

Les prélèvements étaient alors placés dans un four à chaleur sèche pour permettre la polymérisation de la résine.

Des coupes semi-fines puis ultra-fines pouvaient alors être réalisées au microtome. La réalisation des coupes semi-fines permettait de repérer les zones d'intérêt.

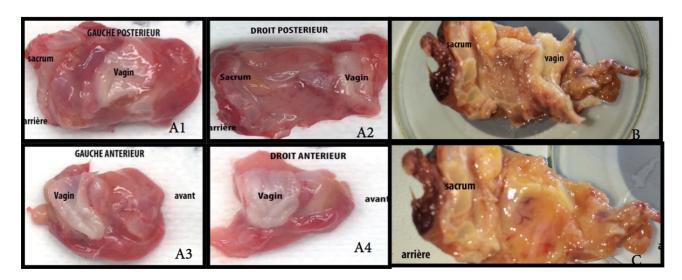


Figure 7: Fœtus « J » de 23 semaines de gestation

Les images A1, A2, A3, A4 représentent la disposition des prélèvements après coupes sagittales et frontales. Les images B et C représentent le bloc droit postérieur avant (B) et après (C) ablation de la paroi vaginale à la loupe.

3.3.2 Coupes semi-fines

L'utilisation première d'une lame de rasoir permettait de retirer le surplus de résine du prélèvement, celle d'un couteau de verre permettait de le lisser et de le dégrossir.

Le couteau de diamant histologique permettait alors de réaliser des coupes automatisées de 1 micromètre d'épaisseur.

Ces lames étaient ensuite mises sur une platine chauffante puis colorées au bleu de toluidine (SIdIa, réf T-3260, lot 105H3738).

3.3.3 Coupes ultrafines

Des coupes ultrafines (60 à 90 nm) étaient ensuite réalisées.



Elle nécessitait un retaillage du bloc au couteau de verre. Puis les coupes étaient réalisées au couteau de diamant de façon automatisé (type, marque) jusqu'à obtenir une lumière de réflexion or argenté indiquant une épaisseur de 60-90 microm (**Figure 8**). Ces prélèvements étaient récupérés sur des grilles de 3,05 mm de diamètre en cuivre.

Ensuite un contraste négatif est réalisé avec de l'acétate d'uranyl (Electron Microscopy Sciences, ref 22400, lot : 010102 action sur les acides nucléiques) et du citrate de plomb (mélange de nitrate de plomb et citrate de sodium et soude).

Les coupes sont ensuite séchées une nuit puis observées au microscope électronique.

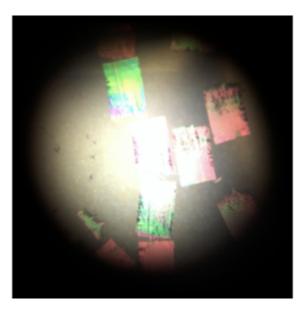


Figure 8: Coupes ultrafines en microscopie électronique

Elles sont de couleur différentes traduisant des épaisseurs différentes. Seule les lumières de réflexion orargenté indiquent une épaisseur de 60-90 micromètres.

3.3.4 Visualisation au microscope électronique à transmission (Jeol,1010).





Pour faciliter une lecture d'ensemble, nous avons pris le parti de résumer les principaux

résultats anatomiques obtenus selon le véritable ordre chronologique des recherches

réalisées.

Premièrement, étant donnée ma spécialité (gynécologie-obstétrique), nous avons étudié

l'innervation du MEA chez le fœtus féminin humain. A partir des résultats de l'innervation,

nous avons formulé une hypothèse sur la structure musculaire du MEA, nous permettant

d'aborder sa structure de façon nouvelle. Secondairement nous avons confirmé nos

résultats chez le fœtus masculin humain. De plus nous avons exploré l'innervation de

l'urètre chez le fœtus masculin humain.

•

4.1 Étude chez le fœtus féminin humain : innervation et structure du muscle élévateur de l'anus.

4.1.1 Innervation du muscle élévateur de l'anus chez le fœtus féminin

humain.

Article 2 (annexe page 105): Nyangoh Timoh, K., Bessede, T., Lebacle, C., Zaitouna,

M., Martinovic, J., Diallo, D., Creze, M., Chevallier, J-M., Darai, E., Benoît, G., Moszkowicz,

D., Levator ani muscle innervation: anatomical study in human fetus, Neurourol Urodyn,

2017; 36:1464-1471

CONTEXTE

Le muscle élévateur de l'anus (MEA) est un composant majeur du plancher pelvien.

L'altération de ce muscle ou de son innervation sont responsables de dysfonctions du

plancher pelvien. Plusieurs hypothèses sur l'innervation de ce muscle coexistent (14, 51-

53):

Une innervation somatique simple par le biais du nerf du MEA.

- Une innervation somatique simple par le biais du nerf pudendal (NP).

- Une innervation somatique double par le biais du NP et du nerf du MEA.

Dans une étude précédente, notre équipe avait démontré l'existence de communications

entre le système autonome et somatique au sein du MEA (54). Nous avons donc fait

l'hypothèse de l'existence de la participation d'un contingent autonome provenant du plexus

hypogastrique inférieur à l'innervation du MEA.

OBJECTIFS

Préciser la localisation des nerfs assurant l'innervation du MEA.

6

Préciser la fonction des nerfs assurant l'innervation du MEA.

RESULTATS

Innervation du MEA par le biais du NP (voie infralévatorienne).

tronc entre les nerfs splanchniques pelviens latéralement et le nerf sciatique

Le NP émerge des racines sacrées S2, S3 et S4. Dans le pelvis, il forme un large

médialement. Il sort du pelvis en passant par l'orifice infra-piriforme. Il pénètre dans

le périnée entre le muscle piriforme et le muscle coccygien. Dans le périnée, il est

localisé dans le canal pudendal. Il réalise la voie d'innervation infralévatorienne pour

le MEA. Le NP donne le nerf rectal inférieur, le nerf périnéal et le nerf dorsal du

clitoris. Il innerve les faisceaux puborectal, pubovaginal et ilio-coccygien du MEA. Il

innerve également les muscles périnéaux, le rectum et le sphincter externe de

l'urètre. Le NP est un nerf mixte avec seulement 30 % de fibres nerveuses

somatiques (anti-PMP22+). Il est également sympathique (anti-TH+),

parasympathique (anti-VACHT +) et nitrergiques (anti-NOS+) (Figure 9).

- Innervation par le biais du nerf du MEA (voie supralévatorienne).

Il nait de la portion intra-pelvienne du NP et des racines sacrées S2, S3 et S4. Son

trajet est latéral au PHI, au rectum, à la vessie et à l'utérus. Il réalise la voie

d'innervation supralévatorienne pour le MEA. Il donne des fibres nerveuses pour la

partie viscérale et supérieure du MEA (faisceau puborectal, faisceau pubovaginal). Il

est principalement somatique (anti-PMP22+).

Innervation par le biais du PHI (voie endolévatorienne).

Le PHI est formé de l'association entre les nerfs hypogastriques et les nerfs splanchniques

pelviens. Sa partie la plus distale est localisée dans une zone triangulaire entre le MEA, le

vagin et le rectum. Il innerve la partie médiale du MEA. Il réalise la voie d'innervation

Juin 2019 52

Krystel NYANGOH TIMOH

endolévatorienne. Il est autonome sympathique (anti-TH+) et parasympathique (anti-VACHT+) et nitrergique (anti-NOS+).

CONCLUSION

Dans cette étude, nous avons observé une triple innervation du MEA avec une participation d'un contingent autonome provenant du plexus hypogastrique inférieur. Cette participation est étonnante étant donné que le MEA est un muscle décrit comme entièrement strié.

L'innervation du MEA est à risque au cours des chirurgies pelviennes, de la grossesse du fait de voie d'innervation endo (PHI) et supralévatorienne (nerf du MEA). Elle est aussi à risque au cours de l'accouchement du fait de la voie infralévatorienne (NP).

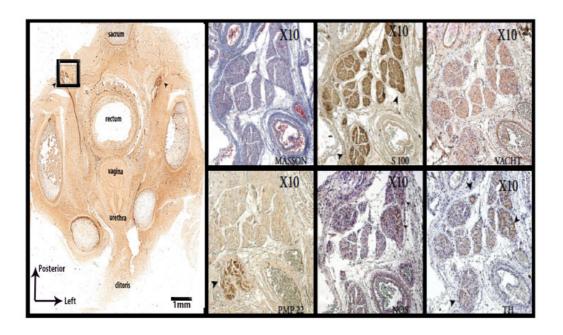


Figure 9: Coupe sériée transverse du fœtus "FI" de 21 semaines de gestation.

Ces coupes ont été colorées au trichrome de Masson et immuno-traitée par les anticorps anti -S100, VACHT, TH, NOS et PMP22. Les images ont été scannées à une résolution de 4800 dpi. Seul 30% du nerf pudendal est somatiques. Les têtes de flèche noire montrent le nerf pudendal. Dans l'image de droite, le nerf pudendal donne une fibre nerveuse correspondant au nerf dorsal du clitoris.



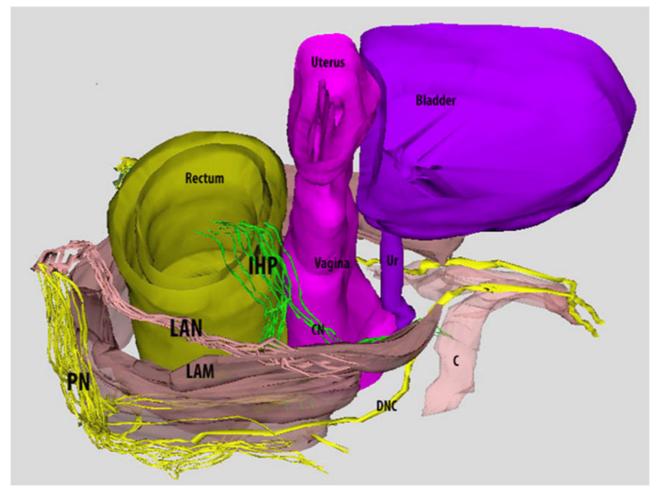


Figure 10: Reconstruction tridimensionnelle issu de la dissection anatomique par ordinateur du fœtus « FI » (vue latérale).

IHP : plexus hypogastrique inférieur : voie endolévatorienne ; LAN : nerf du muscle élévateur de l'anus : voie supralévatorienne, PN : nerf pudendal : voie infralévatorienne. DNC : nerf dorsal du clitoris. C : clitoris. CN : nerf caverneux. Ur : urètre. Vagina : vagin.



4.1.2 Structure musculaire du muscle élévateur de l'anus chez le fœtus

féminin humain.

Article 3 (annexe page 113): Nyangoh Timoh, K., Moszkowicz, D., Zaitouna, M., Lebacle,

C., Martinovic, J., Diallo, D., Creze, M., Lavoue, V., Darai, E., Benoit, G., Bessede, T.

Detailed muscular structure and neural control anatomy of the levator ani muscle: a study

based on female human fetuses. Am J Obstet Gynecol. 2018:121e1-121e2.

CONTEXTE

Dans l'article précédent, nous avons mis en évidence des fibres nerveuses autonomes

provenant du plexus hypogastrique inférieur (PHI) innervant la partie médiale du muscle

élévateur de l'anus (MEA (55)).

Nous avons donc émis l'hypothèse de la présence de contingent de cellules musculaires

lisses au sein du MEA.

OBJECTIFS

- Démontrer la présence de zones de cellules musculaires lisses au sein du MEA.

Clarifier la localisation et l'innervation des zones de cellules musculaires lisses.

RESULTATS

Morphologie globale et structure musculaire du MEA.

Le MEA a un trajet antéro-postérieur. Le muscle puborectal et le complexe puboviscéral

(faisceau pubovaginal, faisceau puboanal) s'insèrent sur le pubis et se terminent dans la

paroi vaginale (faisceau pubovaginal), dans la paroi anale (faisceau puboanal) et derrière le

rectum (faisceau puborectal) en décrivant un anneau musculaire. Chaque faisceau du

muscle iliococcygien se joint au niveau du raphé anococcygien.

Juin 2019 55

Krystel NYANGOH TIMOH

La zone médiale la plus caudale du faisceau pubovaginal réalise une protrusion entre le

rectum et le vagin délimitant une zone triangulaire où chemine le plexus hypogastrique

inférieur. De cette zone de protrusion, émergent des faisceaux de cellules musculaires

lisses connectant le MEA, le muscle longitudinal anal et la paroi vaginale. La partie latérale

du faisceau pubovaginal est composée de cellules musculaires striées.

Le faisceau puboanal est composée exclusivement de cellules musculaires lisses et est

connecté au muscle longitudinal anal.

Le muscle puborectal et le muscle iliococcygien sont entièrement striés.

Le raphé anococcygien est entièrement lisses et est connecté au muscle longitudinal anal

avec un anglé aigu (Figure 11).

Innervation du MEA

La partie médiale viscérale du MEA reçoit une innervation autonome pure via le plexus rectal

inférieur pour le faisceau puboanal et le raphé anococcygien et via le plexus hypogastrique

inférieur pour le faisceau pubovaginal.

La partie latérale pariétale du MEA reçoit une innervation somatique via le nerf pudendal

(NP) et nerf du MEA.

L'existence d'une zone médiale musculaire lisse a été confirmé en microscopie

électronique (Figure 13).

Synthèse

Nous avons identifié 3 zones de cellules musculaires lisses : 1) une zone superficielle avec

le raphé anococcygien, 2) la zone de protrusion (entre le vagin et le rectum), et 3) la partie

médiale viscérale du muscle élévateur de l'anus. Ces zones sont médiales en contact des

viscères pelviens et sous contrôle nerveux autonome (Figure 14 et Figure 15).

CONCLUSION

Nous avons systématisé la structure musculaire du MEA en une partie médiale lisse sous contrôle nerveux autonome en rapport avec les viscères pelviens et une partie latérale striée sous contrôle nerveux somatique en rapport avec le bassin osseux. Cette partie médiale lisse réalise une véritable interface avec les viscères pelviens. Ces zones de cellules musculaires lisses pourraient avoir un rôle protecteur ou de régénération. Elles pourraient aussi avoir un rôle actif sous contrôle nerveux autonome dans la statique pelvienne notamment dans les mécanismes de continence anale-défécation et continence urinaire-miction.

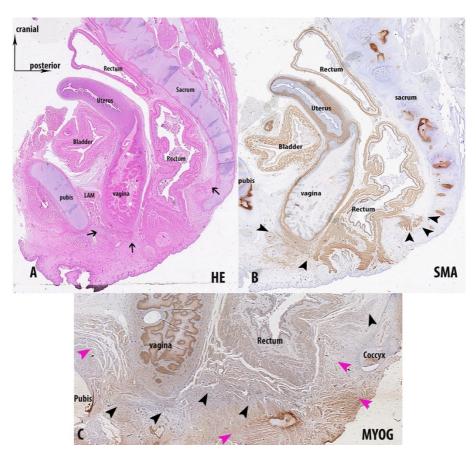


Figure 11: Coupe sériée sagittale du fœtus « FL » de 21 semaines de gestation.

Ces coupes ont été colorées à l'hématoxyline éosine et immuno-traitée par les anticorps anti - SMA, et anti-MYOG. Les images ont été scannées à une résolution de 4800 dpi.

- (A)Les flèches noires montrent le muscle élévateur de l'anus.
- (B) Les cellules musculaires lisses localisés au niveau du raphé ano-coccygien et de la partie médiale du muscle élévateur de l'anus (tête de flèches noires) s'insérant dans le canal anal et la paroi vaginale.
- (C) Les têtes de flèches violettes montrent le muscle strié. Les têtes de flèches noires montres les zones musculaires lisses.



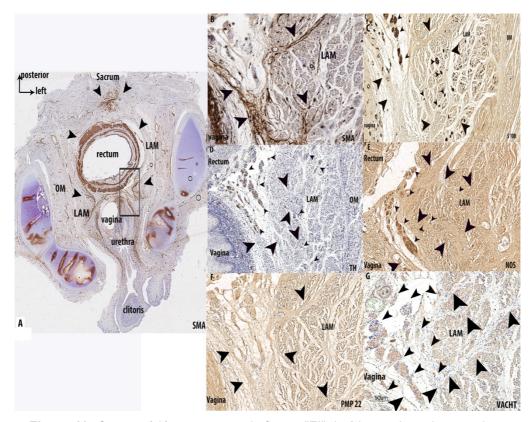


Figure 12: Coupe sériée transverse du foetus "FI" de 21 semaines de gestation.

Ces coupes ont été immuno-traitée par les anticorps anti-SMA, S100, VACHT, TH, NOS et PMP22. Les images ont été scannées à une résolution de 4800 dpi. Les têtes de flèches de grande taille montrent la proximité entre les cellules musculaires lisses et le muscle élévateur de l'anus. Les têtes de flèches de petite taille montrent tous les nerfs (C), les nerfs autonomes sympathique (D), les nerfs nitrergiques (E), les nerfs somatiques (F), et les nerfs autonomes parasympathiques (G).

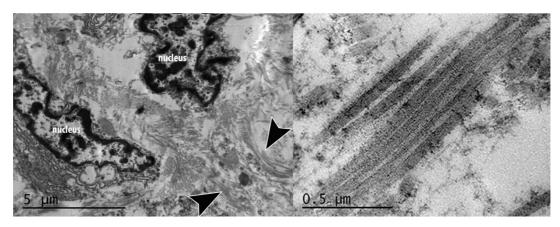


Figure 13: Microscopie électronique provenant du fœtus « FI » de 23 semaines de gestation montrant des cellules contenant de l'actine lisse au sein du muscle élévateur de l'anus.

Les têtes de flèches noires montrent des filaments d'actine lisse. L'image de gauche est un agrandissement de l'image de droite montrant les filaments d'actine lisse.



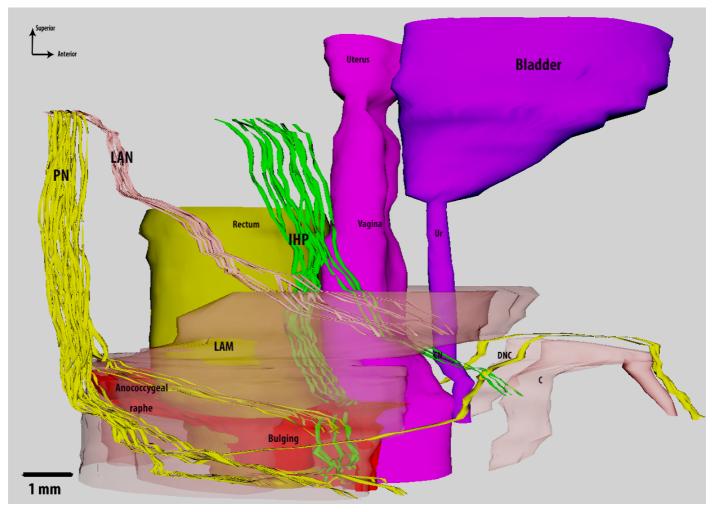


Figure 14 : Reconstruction tridimensionnelle issu de la dissection anatomique par ordinateur du fœtus "I" (vue latérale).

Les zones rouges représentent les zones de cellules musculaires lisses au sein du muscle élévateur de l'anus. IHP : plexus hypogastrique inférieur : voie endolévatorienne ; LAN : nerf du muscle élévateur de l'anus : voie supralévatorienne, PN : nerf pudendal : voie infralévatorienne. DNC : nerf dorsal du clitoris. C : clitoris. CN : nerf caverneux. Ur : urètre. Vagina : vagin.



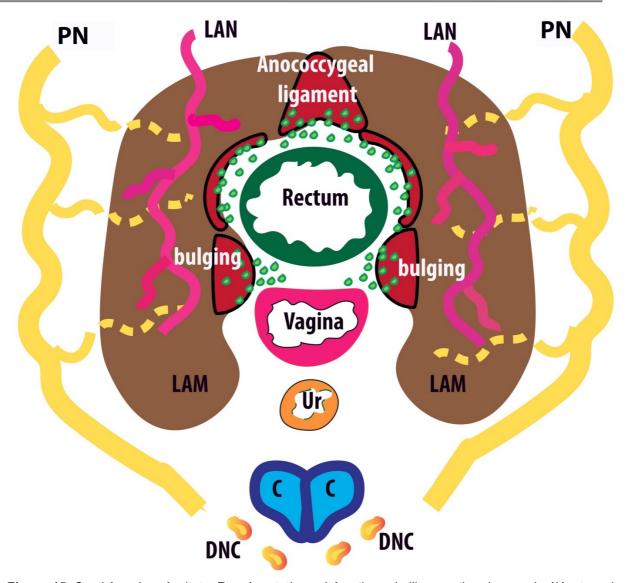


Figure 15: Synthèse des résultats. Représentation schématique de l'innervation du muscle élévateur de l'anus et de sa structure.

Le muscle élévateur de l'anus est pris comme référence anatomique.

Nous avons identifié 3 zones de cellules musculaires lisses : 1) une zone superficielle avec le raphé anococcygien, 2) la zone de protrusion (entre le vagin et le rectum), et 3) la partie médiale viscérale du muscle élévateur de l'anus. Ces zones sont médiales en contact des viscères pelviens et sous contrôle nerveux autonome endolévatorien (PHI). La partie latérale du muscle élévateur de l'anus est striée sous contrôle nerveux somatique avec une innervation par une voie supralévatorienne (LAN) et infralévatorienne (NP). IHP: plexus hypogastrique inférieur: voie endolévatorienne; LAN: nerf du muscle élévateur de l'anus: voie supralévatorienne, PN: nerf pudendal: voie infralévatorienne. DNC: nerf dorsal du clitoris. C: clitoris. CN: nerf caverneux. Ur: urètre. Vagina: vagin.



4.2 Étude chez le fœtus masculin humain : innervation et structure du plancher pelvien musculaire et innervation de

l'urètre.

4.2.1 Innervation et structure du plancher pelvien chez le fœtus masculin

humain.

Article 4 (annexe page 125): Nyangoh Timoh, K.*, Deffon, J.*, Moszkowicz, D., Lebacle,

C., Creze, M., Martinovic, J., Zaitouna, M., Diallo, D., Lavoue, V., Fautrel, A., Gérard, B.,

Bessede, T. Smooth muscle of the male pelvic floor: a study based on human fetuses..

Soumis à J Anat

*contribution équivalente.

CONTEXTE

La connaissance de l'anatomie des muscles du plancher pelvien est importante pour

diminuer les complications fonctionnelles en chirurgie urologique et digestive. Des études

anatomiques récentes ont mis en évidence la présence de cellules musculaires lisses au

sein du plancher pelvien (11, 56). Aussi, Wu a introduit le concept de compartiment médian

musculaire lisse (CMML) au sein du plancher pelvien masculin entre l'urètre et le rectum

(11). De plus, nous avons montré dans les deux articles précédents chez le fœtus féminin

que la partie médiale du muscle élévateur de l'anus (MEA) est musculaire lisse et que son

innervation est assurée par un contingent de fibres nerveuses autonomes provenant du

plexus hypogastrique inférieur (PHI) (55, 57).

Nous avons donc fait les hypothèses suivantes, pour le fœtus masculin humain, que : 1) le

CMML est plus importante que décrit jusqu'à maintenant avec une extension du sacrum à

l'urètre et que 2) l'innervation de ce CMML est assurée par le système nerveux autonome

via le PHI.

OBJECTIF

- Décrire les différents éléments du CMML.

Décrire l'innervation du CMML.

RESULTATS:

Distribution spatiale des zones de cellules musculaires lisses dans le plancher pelvien

masculin.

Toutes les structures musculaires lisses du plancher pelvien sont en continuité entre elles.

Elles définissent le CMML.

Ce compartiment est relation étroite avec le rectum, l'urètre et le MEA.

Le contingent postérieur du CMML

Il s'étend du sacrum au rectum avec des couches musculaires lisses qui pénètrent dans le

rectum comme des digitations. Il est en continuité avec le contingent antérieur.

Le contingent antérieur du CMML

En utilisant le MEA comme point de référence anatomique, nous avons observé 3 zones

(Figure 16 et Figure 17):

Zone centrolévatorienne : Il s'agit d'une zone musculaire lisse en

continuité avec le rectum. Nous avons aussi nommé cette zone

« noyau » du fait de son aspect compact. Elle est située entre les 2

MEA droit et gauche, entre le rectum et l'urètre.

Zone endolévatorienne : Elle correspond à la partie médiale du MEA et

du sphincter anal externe. Elle pénètre par des digitations dans le

rectum.

Zone infralévatorienne : Elle est située sous le MEA. Les couches de

cellules musculaires lisses s'étendent comme un éventail.

Ces 3 zones sont en continuité entre elle mais aussi avec le muscle bulbospongieux, le

sphincter urétral, le rectum, l'urètre et le MEA.

Innervation des zones de cellules musculaires lisses dans le plancher pelvien masculin.

L'innervation du CMML est assurée par le système nerveux autonome (PHI).

Le contingent postérieur du CMML reçoit les fibres nerveuses situé derrière le rectum (rétro-

rectales) provenant du PHI. La zone endolevatorienne reçoit les fibres nerveuses latéro-

prostatiques. Les zones centrolévatorienne et infralévatorienne reçoivent les nerfs latéro-

prostatiques, latéro-rectales et inter-prostatico-rectales. Certains de ces nerfs atteignent

ensuite la partie postérieure du sphincter de l'urètre et les corps érectiles.

Le CMML est donc une zone continue dans le plancher pelvien entourant les organes

pelviens. Il est ancré latéralement sur la zone musculaire striée et médialement sur les

viscères pelviens. Le CMML est sous influence nerveuse autonome (Figure 18).

La plupart des études décrivent les muscles du plancher pelvien séparément, en utilisant

parfois des termes différents pour désigner la même structure (6, 7, 10, 11, 42, 56, 58, 59).

Dans cette étude, nous avons pris le parti pour plus de clarté de décrire les zones

musculaires lisses du plancher pelvien en fonction de leur localisation par rapport au MEA.

Ce choix repose sur la nature histologique lisse commune de ces zones et leur continuité

entre elles.

D'après les descriptions des structures musculaires du plancher pelvien dans la littérature :

- La zone centrolévatorienne correspondrait au muscle recto-urétral (6, 7, 42).

La zone infralévatorienne correspondrait au muscle transverse périnéal profond (10,

56).

- La zone endolévatorienne correspondrait à la partie médiale du MEA (57, 60).

6

CONCLUSION

Nous avons mis en évidence que le muscle recto-urétral (zone centrolévatorienne), le muscle transverse périnéal profond (zone infralévatorienne) et la partie médiale du MEA (zone endolévatorienne) ont des caractéristiques communes : leur nature histologique lisse, leur innervation par le système nerveux autonome et une connexion intime entre eux, avec les viscères pelviens et les muscles striées. Ils forment donc une entité anatomique et fonctionnelle appelé compartiment médian musculaire lisse.



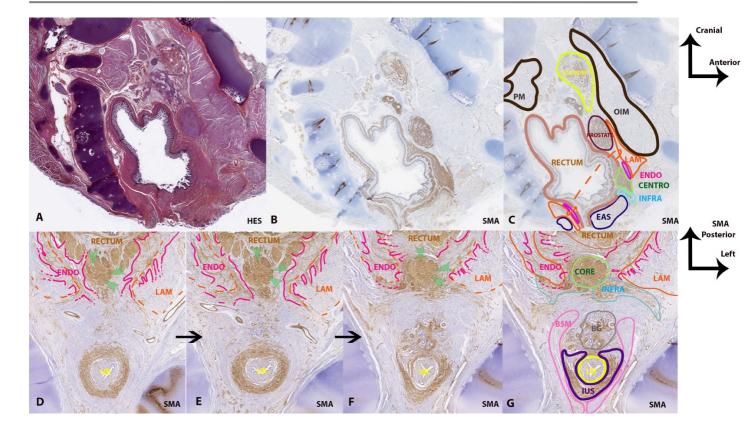


Figure 16 : Coupe sériée sagittale du fœtus "ML" de 23 semaines de gestation et coupe sériée transverse du fœtus "MK" de 23 semaines de gestation.

- (A) Coupe sagittal traitée par l'hématoxyline Eosine
- (B), (C) Coupe sagittal traité par l'anticorps anti-SMA.
- (C) est la même section que (B) mais avec des légendes.

Le faisceau pubo-rectal du muscle élévateur de l'anus réalise un anneau autour du rectum (orange pointillé).

La zone centrolévatorienne (vert clair) est en continuité avec la couche circulaire externe du rectum.

La zone endolévatorienne (violet) tapisse la partie interne du muscle élévateur de l'anus.

La zone infralévatorienne (bleu clair) est localisé sous le muscle élévateur de l'anus.

(D), (E), (F), (G) Coupe sériée traitée par l'anticorps anti-SMA .

Il s'agit de coupes séquentiel de la partie crâniale (D) vers la partie caudale (F) montrant l'émergence de la zone centrolévatorienne (flèches vertes).

(G) est la même coupe que (F) mais avec des légendes.

Une protrusion de la partie médiale du muscle élévateur de l'anus (en orange) entre l'urètre et le rectum est liée médialement à la protrusion controlatérale par une masse centrale de cellules musculaires lisses (la zone centrolévatorienne en vert clair).

La zone endolévatorienne envoie des digitations vers le muscle élévateur de l'anus et le rectum. Elle correspond à la partie médiale du muscle élévateur de l'anus.

Code: muscle piriforme : PM et muscle obturateur interne :OIM en marron foncé; la vessie en jaune; l'urètre en jaune, le muscle élévateur de l'anus (LAM) en orange ; le sphincter anal externe (EAS) en bleu foncé; la prostate en rouge foncé; le rectum en beige; les glandes bulbo-urétrales en gris; et le muscle bubospongieux en rose.



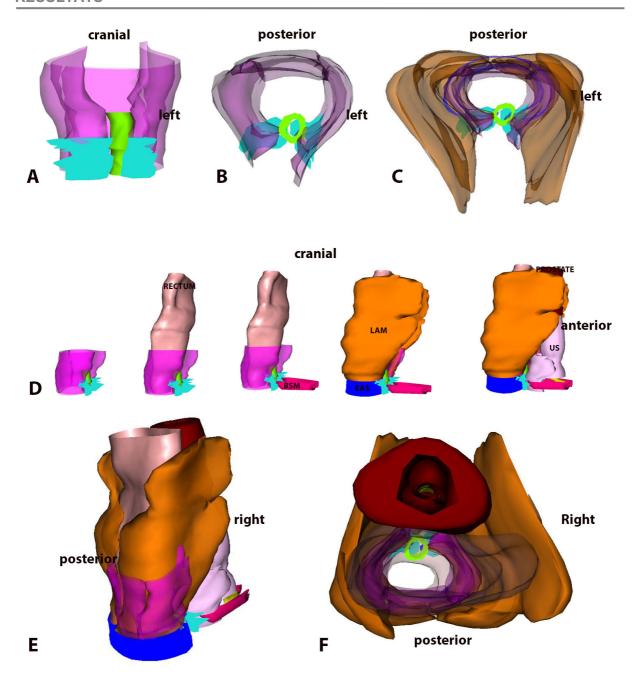


Figure 17 : Reconstruction tridimensionnelle issu de la dissection anatomique par ordinateur du fœtus "MK" (vue latérale).

- (A) (B) Reconstruction du CMML.
- (C) Reconstruction du CMML et du muscle élévateur de l'anus
- (D) Reconstruction du CMML, du rectum, du muscle bulbospongieux (BSM), du sphincter anal externe (EAS) the rectum, the bulbospongiosus muscle (BSM), the external anal sphincter (EAS), le muscle élévateur de l'anus, le sphincter urétral et la prostate.
- (E) Vue latérale droite
- (F) Vue supérieure

Code: la zone endolévatorienne est en violet ; la zone centrolévatorienne est en vert clair; la zone infralévatorienne est en bleu clair; le muscle élévateur de l'anus est en orange; le sphincter externe anal en bleu foncé; la prostate est rouge foncé; le rectum est en beige; le muscle bulbospongieux en rose; et le sphincter urétral en rose clair.



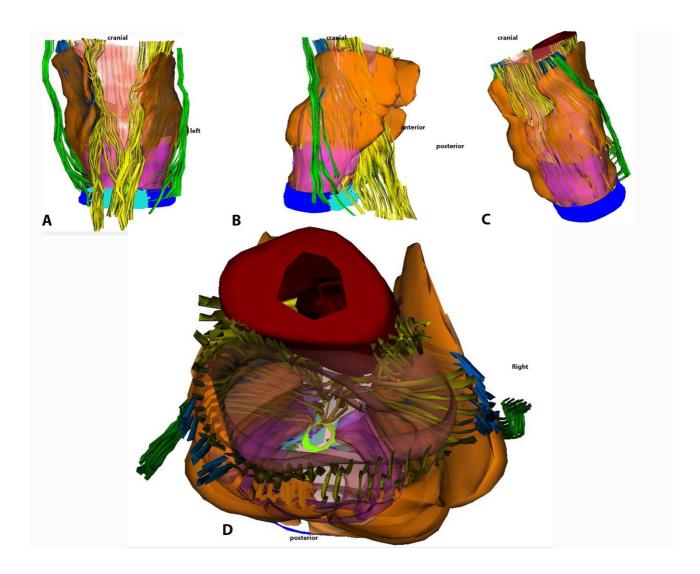


Figure 18: Reconstruction tridimensionnelle issu de la dissection anatomique par ordinateur du fœtus "MK" (A), (B) Reconstruction du CMML, muscle élévateur de l'anus, et de l'innervation autonome et somatique. (A) Vue antérieure et (B) vue latérale droite.

- (C), (D) Reconstruction du CMML, muscle élévateur de l'anus, de la prostate, du sphincter urétral et de l'innervation autonome et somatique.
- (C) Vue postérieure et (D) vue supérieure.

De nombreux nerfs passent au niveau de la zone centrolévatorienne avant d'atteindre le sphincter urétral. Pudendal nerve (green) gave innervation for the inferior part of the levator ani muscle, external anal sphincter. Levator ani nerve (blue) gave innervation for the superior part of the levator ani muscle,

Retrorectal fibers coming from IHP gave innervation for rectum and for the posterior contingent of the SMMC. Code: la zone endolévatorienne est en violet ; la zone centrolévatorienne est en vert clair; la zone infralévatorienne est en bleu clair; le muscle élévateur de l'anus est en orange; le sphincter externe anal en bleu foncé; la prostate est rouge foncé; le rectum est en beige; le muscle bulbospongieux en rose; et le sphincter urétral en rose clair, nerf pudendal en vert, nerf du muscle élévateur de l'anus en bleu, plexus hypogastrique inférieur en jaune.



4.2.2 Innervation autonome du sphincter de l'urètre chez le fœtus

masculin humain.

Article 5 (annexe page 157): Nyangoh Timoh, K., Moszkowicz, D., Creze, M., Zaitouna,

M., Lebacle, C., Diallo, D., Felber, M., Martinovic, J., Lavoue, V., Fautrel, A., Gérard, B.,

Bessede, T. Anatomical evidence of an autonomic innervation of the male urethral sphincter,

a study based on human fetuses, Soumis à J urol

CONTEXTE

Les connaissances anatomiques à propos de l'innervation du sphincter de l'urètre (SU) sont

débattues. Classiquement il est admis que le sphincter externe de l'urètre (SEU) est innervé

par des nerfs somatiques et le sphincter interne de l'urètre (SIU) par des nerfs autonomes

(18). En revanche, la participation d'un contingent autonome provenant du plexus

hypogastrique inférieur (PHI) à l'innervation du SEU est controversée (29). Pourtant, des

études cliniques rapportent que la préservation nerveuse des bandelettes neurovasculaires

au cours des prostatectomies totales est responsable d'une diminution du risque

d'incontinence urinaire post-opératoire (30-32).

Nous avons donc émis l'hypothèse que l'innervation du SEU est assurée par des nerfs

autonomes issus du PHI empruntant le même trajet que les bandelettes neurovasculaires.

OBJECTIF

Décrire l'innervation autonome du SU.

RESULTATS

L'innervation du SEU et du SIU est assurée par des nerfs autonomes provenant du PHI.

Ces nerfs sont autonomes sympathiques (anti-TH +), sensorielles (anti- CGRP+) et

nitrergique (anti-NOS+). Certaines fibres court le long des bandelettes neurovasculaires

postéro-latéralement. D'autres courent le long de la face postéro-médiale de l'apex

prostatique. Puis elles empruntent une zone musculaire lisse médiale correspondant au

muscle recto-urétral (zone centrolévatorienne) puis pénètre le SEU via son ouverture

postérieure. Certaines de ces fibres pénètrent dans le SU (SEU et SIU) sur la ligne médiane,

d'autres contournent le bulbe urétral et pénètrent à 3h et 9h, d'autres vont innerver les corps

érectiles (Figure 19 et Figure 20). L'innervation somatique du SEU est assurée par les

branches périnéales du nerf pudendal qui sont situés sous le muscle recto-urétral (zone

centrolévatorienne).

CONCLUSION

Cette étude apporte une preuve anatomique de l'existence d'un contrôle nerveux autonome

du SEU. Les nerfs autonomes proviennent du PHI et des bandelettes neurovasculaires

elles-mêmes. Ces nerfs autonomes sont situés au-dessus et à travers le muscle recto-

urétral. Les nerfs somatiques sont situés en dessous le muscle recto-urétral.

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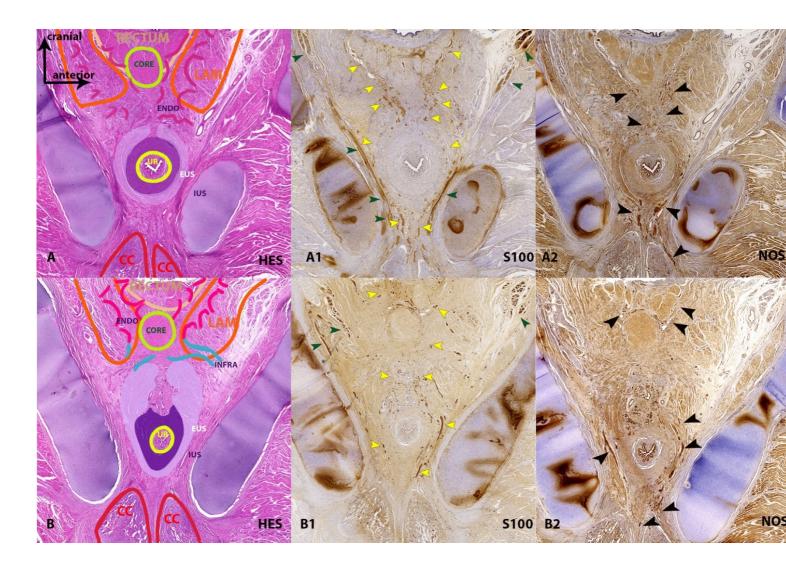


Figure 19: Coupe sériée transverse du fœtus "MK" de 23 semaines de gestation.

Les coupes (A) and (B) sont colorées par l'hématoxyline éosine.

Les coupes (A1) et (B1) sont traitées par l'anticorps anti-S100. Les coupes (A2) et (B2) sont traitées par l'anticorps anti-Nos. Les nerfs destinés à l'urètre passe à travers la zone musculaire lisse (tête de flèche jaune) entre l'urètre et le rectum. Certaines fibres pénètrent à 3h et 9h dans le sphincter urétral alors que certaine pénètre sur la ligne médiane avec une direction ventrale. Le nerf pudendal et ses branches sont indentifiées par les têtes de flèches vertes. Les nerfs se dispersant dans le sphincter externe et interne de l'urètre, et la muqueuse urétral. Des nerfs nitrergiques (anti-NOS positive) provenant du plexus hypogastrique inférieur innerve le sphincter externe et interne de l'urètre et vont vers les corps érectiles.

Color code : sphincter externe de l'urètre (EUS, violet clair), sphincter interne de l'urètre (IUS, violet foncé), muscle élévateur de l'anus (LAM, orange), rectum (beige), CMML (zone centrolévatorienne ou muscle rectourétral en vert, zone endolévatorienne ou partie médial du muscle élévateur de l'anus en rose, zone infralevatorienne ou muscle transverse périnéal profond en bleu clair), et le corps caverneux (CC, rouge).



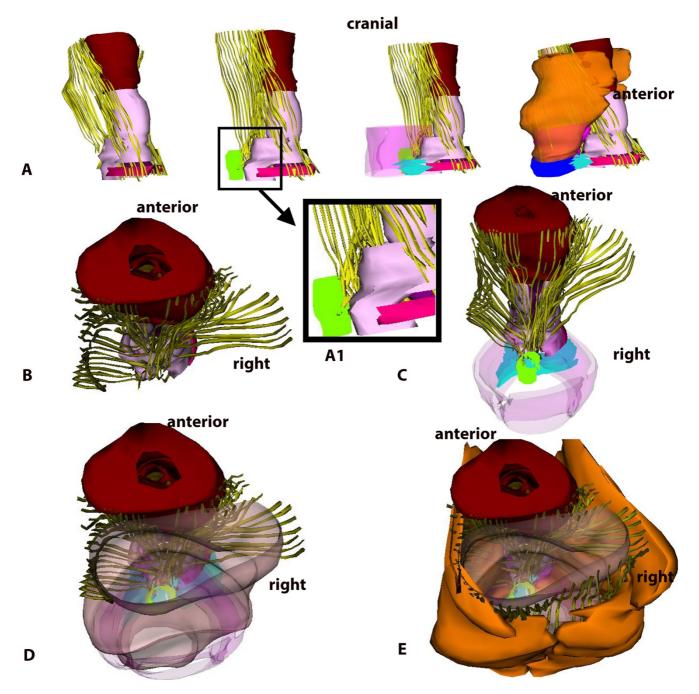


Figure 20: Reconstruction tridimensionnelle issu de la dissection anatomique par ordinateur du fœtus "MK".

(A) Vues latérales

(B, C, D, E) Vues supérieures. Nerfs destinés à l'urètre sont latéroprostatique et prérectal. Ils sont localisés dans une zone triangulaire entre l'urètre, le rectum et muscle élévateur de l'anus. Ils passent à travers une zone musculaire lisse entre le rectum et l'urètre. Ces nerfs pénètrent à 3h et 9h ou sur la ligne médiane en direction ventral. Ces nerfs empruntent le trajet des bandelettes neurovasculaires et donne l'innervation pour le sphincter interne et externe de l'urètre et les corps érectiles.

Color code : sphincter externe de l'urètre (violet clair), sphincter interne de l'urètre (violet foncé), muscle élévateur de l'anus (orange), rectum (beige), CMML (zone centrolévatorienne ou muscle rectourétral en vert, zone endolévatorienne ou partie médial du muscle élévateur de l'anus en rose, zone infralevatorienne ou muscle transverse périnéal profond en bleu clair), and muscle bulbospongieux en rose.





5.1 Rappel des principaux résultats

L'innervation pelvi-périnéale de la femme et de l'homme est plus complexe que

précédemment décrit.

Nous avons mis en évidence une innervation à la fois autonome (plexus hypogastrique

inférieur) et somatique (nerf du muscle élévateur de l'anus et nerf pudendal) du muscle

élévateur de l'anus au niveau de zones musculaires lisses.

Nous avons individualisé des zones de cellules musculaires lisses au sein du plancher

pelvien notamment de la partie médiane chez fœtus masculin sous contrôle autonome

(PHI).

Nous avons donc mis en évidence chez le fœtus féminin et masculin une systématisation

du plancher pelvien musculaire avec une zone médiale lisse sous contrôle nerveux

autonome réalisant une interface entre les viscères pelviens et une zone musculaire striée

latérale sous contrôle nerveux somatique.

Enfin, nous avons mis en évidence une double innervation à la fois somatique et autonome

du sphincter urétral.

5.2 Choix du modèle : Dissection anatomique assistée par

ordinateur sur modèle fœtal

5.2.1 Prélèvement en-bloc

Le prélèvement en bloc des fœtus humains a permis :

- De ne pas déplacer les structures intra- pelviennes et donc de limiter les artefacts de

dissection chirurgicale contrairement aux dissections conventionnelles de sujets

anatomiques.

- De prélever aussi l'ensemble du cadre osseux afin d'avoir tout le contenu intra-

pelvien permettant de limiter les pertes de données et de préserver les insertions

musculaires et les muscles pelviens dans son intégralité.

5.2.2 Le modèle fœtal humain

A partir de 8 semaines de gestation, l'anatomie de l'innervation et de la musculature

pelvienne du fœtus humain est stable et comparable à celle de l'adulte (40, 61).

Le choix de travailler sur des pièces anatomiques fœtales plutôt qu'adultes se justifie par

l'existence de nombreux avantages chez le fœtus :

La taille réduite fœtus et de ses organes. Ceci permet l'inclusion des pièces en totalité

dans un même bloc de paraffine (méga-cassettes), avec donc possibilité de conserver

les rapports topographiques des différents tissus, de limiter les pertes de données, et

d'éviter les biais de reconstruction en trois dimensions.

- Un ratio diamètre du nerf/ circonférence corporelle plus large que chez l'adulte avec un

tissu de soutien moins développé permettant une localisation des nerfs plus simple.

Une reconstruction en trois dimensions plus rapide du fait de la taille réduite.

L'utilisation de l'immunohistochimie et de la miscroscopie électronique. En effet dans

notre institution le délai décès-prélèvement de tissu est plus court les sujets anatomiques

adultes dû aux procédures techniques et administratives permettant de maintenir

l'intégrité protéique nécessaire aux techniques d'immunohistochimie et à la

miscroscopie électronique.

5.2.3 L'apport de l'immunohistochimie

L'utilisation de l'immunohistochimie est une révolution dans le monde de l'anatomie.

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Elle apporte une signification plus précise à chaque structure en lui donnant une fonction

grâce aux anticorps spécifiques utilisés. Elle apporte donc des renseignements

supplémentaires précieux. Au cours du travail, l'utilisation de l'anticorps anti-PMP22, anti-

TH et anti-VACht a permis de différencier les nerfs autonomes et somatiques. Nous avons

alors mise en évidence une participation du PHI à l'innervation du MEA. Nous avons aussi

mis en évidence une participation du PHI et notamment des nerfs caverneux à l'innervation

du SEU.

L'utilisation des anticorps anti-SMA et anti-MYOG ont permis d'individualiser manière

précise l'existence de zones de fibres musculaires lisses au sein du plancher pelvien.

5.3 Quelles implications cliniques?

5.3.1 Continence et statique pelvienne

Le MEA est impliqué dans la statique pelvienne, la continence urinaire-miction, la

continence anale- défécation et l'orgasme.

Notre travail met en évidence la présence d'une innervation à la fois autonome et somatique

du MEA. On peut faire l'hypothèse que l'influx autonome participe au tonus de base, alors

que l'influx somatique déterminerait les contractions intermittentes volontaires du MEA.

La présence de zones de cellules musculaires lisses entre les viscères pelviens et le

MEA et au sein du MEA ne semble pas être un hasard. Nous les avons identifiés chez les

9 fœtus humains étudiés féminins et masculins. Elles pourraient avoir plusieurs rôles :

- Un rôle de protection (62)

- Un rôle passif d'élasticité

Un rôle de régénération notamment après l'accouchement par voie vaginale avec une

résistance plus durable (62)

Krystel NYANGOH TIMOH

Université Paris-Saclay
Espace Technologique / Immeuble Discovery
Route de l'Orme aux Merisiers RD 128 / 91190 Saint-Aubin, France

- Un rôle actif sous l'influence des nerfs autonomes notamment un rôle d'élévation.

Tan et al ont proposé un modèle structural constitutif avec des cellules musculaires lisses

comme composant actif (63). Aussi Shafik a émis l'hypothèse d'une augmentation de

l'activité électromyographique des cellules musculaires lisses de la partie médiale du MEA

en réponse à l'augmentation de l'activité intra-abdominale (64).

Ces cellules musculaires lisses semblent être en continuité avec la couche longitudinale

antérieure du rectum dans le sens sagittal. Elles pourraient participer à la flexion antérieure

du rectum et donc à la continence fécale (65).

Les cellules musculaires lisses ne pénètrent pas l'urètre. Le MEA assure donc bien la

continence urinaire par l'intermédiaire du vagin.

La pénétration des cellules musculaires lisses dans le vagin explique l'implication du MEA

dans la sexualité. Au cours du coït, le vagin s'ouvre, s'allonge, et se renforce durant le

rapport sexuel (« the vaginolevator reflex ») (66). Ces manifestations pourraient permettre

d'adapter le vagin au pénis, d'augmenter la rigidité pénienne et d'augmenter l'ouverture de

l'introitus vaginal.

5.3.2 Grossesse et accouchement par vaginale

Après la grossesse, même sans accouchement par voie vaginale, les patientes sont

exposées au risque de dysfonction du plancher pelvien (prolapsus uro-génital, incontinence

urinaire, et incontinence anale). Durant la grossesse, 18 à 75% des patientes souffrent

d'incontinence urinaire avec une prévalence augmentant du premier au troisième trimestre

(67). L'augmentation de l'utérus et du poids fœtal, l'étirement chronique du plancher pelvien

ou des nerfs pelviens peuvent participer à l'incontinence urinaire. Le nerf du MEA et le PHI

du fait de leur position intra-pelvienne sont à risque durant la grossesse alors que le NP est

à risque lors de l'accouchement par voie vaginale du fait de sa position infralévatorienne.

L'incontinence urinaire durant la grossesse est un risque majeur de survenue 15 ans après

(68). Donc la prévention de l'incontinence urinaire durant la grossesse pourrait avoir des

effets bénéfiques à long terme.

L'accouchement par voie vaginale est le principal facteur de risque de dysfonction du

plancher pelvien (69). Ces dysfonctions peuvent être liés à des traumatismes musculaires

du MEA (69). Une patiente sur cinq ayant accouché par voie vaginale présente des

traumatismes du muscle élévateur de l'anus (69). Les principaux facteurs de risque de

traumatisme musculaire sont l'accouchement par voie basse, l'usage de forceps, le

périmètre crânien augmenté, l'allongement de la seconde phase de travail et les lésions du

sphincter externe de l'anus (70). Dans les modèles de traumatisme musculaire par

étirement, les sites lésionnels musculaires se situent au niveau de la partie médiale du

muscle puboviscéral (71). Les avulsions du muscle puboviscéral (ou désinsertions du MEA

du pubis) sont des anomalies très fréquentes lors des imageries réalisées aux patientes en

post-partum (70). Le nerf localisé sur la face supérieure du MEA, le nerf du MEA serait donc

le plus à risque.

Concernant les traumatismes nerveux du plancher pelvien, la dénervation du MEA est

initialisée par l'accouchement voie basse et semble être entretenue par les étirements

répétés durant la poussée. Près de 25 % des patientes souffrent en post-partum de

dénervation du MEA (25). Celle-ci est le plus souvent transitoire. Mais une ré-innervation

n'est pas synonyme de fonction musculaire normale. Lors d'une dénervation du MEA, il

existe aussi une modification histologique du MEA. Les lésions nerveuses du MEA se

situent au niveau des branches postérieures du nerf pudendal (72).

D'après ces données et nos résultats, lors des accouchements par voie vaginale, les nerfs

à plus haut risque lésionnel sont les branches du nerf pudendal : les branches spécifiques

du nerf pudendal pour le MEA, le nerf rectal inferieur et la branche périnéale.

La présence de communications intralévatoriennes entre les systèmes somatique et

autonome (PHI) (54) expliquent la possibilité d'accouchement traumatique sans dysfonction

du plancher pelvien du fait de mécanismes de suppléance neurologique.

Après l'accouchement par les voies vaginales, cette dénervation du nerf pudendal associé

à l'incontinence urinaire (25). Cette dénervation peut persister et peut être responsable

d'incontinence urinaire récidivante à long terme.

5.3.3 Chirurgie pelvienne radicale

Les branches nerveuses intrapelviennes somatiques et autonomes assurant

l'innervation du MEA sont à risque lors des chirurgies pelviennes radicales.

Si beaucoup d'études existent pour préserver les nerfs autonomes du PHI, peu d'auteurs

se sont intéressés à la préservation des nerfs somatiques intra-pelviens destinées au MEA.

Ceci pourrait cependant être crucial pour diminuer les complications fonctionnelles post-

opératoires. Notre travail pourrait inciter à identifier le nerf du MEA en début de dissection

pour en assurer la préservation effective. Nous avons également illustré le fait qu'il faut le

rechercher latéralement au NSP et au PHI et au-dessus du MEA.

Durant la prostatectomie totale rétro-pubienne par voie incisionnelle ou

laparoscopique, les préservations de la fonction érectile et de l'incontinence urinaire sont de

véritables challenges (26, 27). Des études cliniques récentes ont mis en évidence que la

préservation des bandelettes neuro-vasculaires améliore aussi bien la fonction érectile que

la continence urinaire (30-32). Dans ce travail, nous avons montré que la zone

centrolévatorienne (ou muscle recto-urétral) et la zone infralévatorienne (ou le muscle

périnéal profond) du plancher pelvien sont traversées par les nerfs autonomes assurant

l'innervation des corps érectiles et l'urètre. Ces deux zones sont donc des dangers au cours

de cette chirurgie. Pour épargner ces nerfs, Takenaka recommande d'inciser le muscle

Juin 2019 78

Krystel NYANGOH TIMOH

recto-urétral près du rectum durant la prostatectomie radicale périnéale (73). Cependant il

faut faire attention au rectum. En effet nous avons démontré que le muscle recto-urétral a

pour origine le rectum. Du temps où elle était pratiquée, la prostatectomie totale par voie

périnéale pouvait être associée à une incidence de 11% de plaies rectales (74). De plus,

Uchimoto a observé que le fascia de Denonvilliers se termine au niveau du muscle recto-

urétral (75). Il recommande donc quand cela est possible de disséguer postérieurement au

fascia de Denonvillers. Enfin la zone centrolévatorienne (muscle recto-urétral) est

connectée à l'urêtre directement, ce qui peut expliquer qu'une lésion de ce muscle participe

à l'incontinence urinaire post opératoire.

La contribution du système nerveux autonome à l'innervation du SEU pourrait favoriser un

retour plus rapide à la continence urinaire (76). Le système nerveux autonome innerve aussi

le MEA et la zone centrolévatorienne (muscle recto-urétral). Ces deux muscles pourraient

avoir un rôle coordonné avec l'EUS pour la continence urinaire (29). La présence de

nombreuses fibres sensorielles au sein de l'EUS est d'une importance majeure pour

l'activité réflexe de l'EUS. La présence de fibres nerveuses très nitrergiques pourrait

expliquer la régulation de la performance musculaire striée.

Nous pouvons diviser l'innervation de l'EUS en 3 courants : 1) un contingent autonome

suivant les bandelettes neurovasculaires, 2) un contingent autonome provenant directement

du PHI et se positionnant en postéromédial au niveau de l'apex prostatique tout en restant

au-dessus et dans lemuscle recto-urétral, 3) et des nerfs somatiques issu du nerf pudendal

localisé en-dessous du muscle recto-urétral. Notre travail ajoute donc un argument

anatomique fort concernant le fait que la continence urinaire post-opératoire est mieux

conservée avec la préservation des bandelettes neuro-vasculaires. La dissection apicale de

la prostate et le décollement du muscle recto-urétral sont des temps opératoires à risque

fonctionnel. A l'inverse, de par leur position sous le muscle recto-urétral, les fibres

somatiques du sphincter ne paraissent pas particulièrement exposées lors de

prostatectomies par voie rétropublenne ou laparoscopique.

5.3.4 La rééducation pelvi-périnéale

La rééducation du post-partum utilise principalement des exercices pour tonifier les muscles

striés. Il s'agit d'exercices musculaires volontaires dont l'efficacité est importante puisque la

moitié des patientes sont guéries par la rééducation pelvi-périnéale (77, 78). Pour le

traitement des dysfonctions urinaires par lésions nerveuses post chirurgicales ou

idiopathiques, ou pour l'incontinence fécale, des techniques de neuromodulation des

racines sacrées, en particulier S3, ont des résultats intéressants (79). Du fait des

nombreuses voies de suppléance présentes dans le MEA et de l'origine du plexus sacré,

du nerf pudendal et du NEA (par l'intermédiaire du nerf pudendal) la pratique de la

neuromodulation sacrée pourrait être une piste pour traiter et prévenir l'incontinence

urinaire, les dysfonctions sexuelles et le prolapsus des organes pelviens après des

accouchements particulièrement difficiles. Il s'agit cependant d'une proposition pouvant

paraitre iconoclaste à l'heure actuelle et qui, en raison du son caractère invasif, mériterait

d'être évaluée sur des modèles expérimentaux chez l'animal. Son avantage serait de

permettre une phase de testing réversible, comme cela est déjà le cas pour l'hyperactivité

vésicale réfractaire.

Nos résultats sont cohérents avec les résultats encourageants de la rééducation du post-

partum associant exercices musculaires classiques et stimulation électrique vaginale à

basse fréquence (80). En effet, ces techniques associées augmentent de manière

importante la force musculaire en atteignant directement localement les nerfs et les cellules

musculaires.

5.4 Les limites du modèle.

Malgré ces résultats originaux, notre travail présente des limites.

Premièrement, l'utilisation d'un petit nombre de sujets fœtaux peut induire des biais.

Cependant dans ce travail, nous avons étudiés 9 sujets fœtaux (6 féminins et 3 masculins).

Il s'agit du même nombre de sujets que dans les publications internationales actuelles. Ce

faible nombre est lié à la nécessité d'obtenir un consentement des parents pour réaliser des

prélèvements à des fins scientifiques mais aussi au temps long de manipulation au

laboratoire pour chaque fœtus. Cependant chacune de nos observations était constantes

pour tous les fœtus étudiés témoignant la pertinence de nos résultats.

Secondairement, l'utilisation d'un modèle fœtal pour l'analyse du plancher musculaire,

l'innervation du plancher musculaire et l'innervation du sphincter urétral peut sembler

inapproprié. Cependant à partir de 8 semaines de grossesse, les fœtus humains sont de

bons modèles expérimentaux pour l'étude de l'anatomie et de la neuro-anatomie du

plancher pelvien (40, 61). Aussi, l'utilisation d'un modèle fœtal contrairement aux

dissections conventionnelles de sujet anatomique frais limite le risque d'artéfacts

chirurgicaux avec distorsion chirurgicale (et déplacement de structures).

Enfin, même si les techniques d'immunohistochimie apportent des informations

supplémentaires nouvelles et originales sur la nature des nerfs. L'étude du système

somatique en immunohistochimie est malaisée. En effet pour considérer un nerf comme

somatique dans notre travail, nous considérions les fibres nerveuses avec un marquage fort

par l'anticorps anti-PMP22. Cependant les fibres A delta et C du système nerveux

autonome sont myélinisées et pourraient être marqués par l'anticorps anti-PMP22. Nous

avons effectivement visualisé des fibres intra-pelviennes au sein du PHI marqués par

l'anticorps anti-PMP22. Cependant ce marquage restait faible comparé au marquage du NP

ou nerf du MEA (pris comme référence sur chaque lame marquée par l'anticorps anti-

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PMP22). Aussi la myélinisation chez le fœtus humain est un évènement tardif au cours de

la gestation (81). Il est possible que des fibres nerveuses somatiques soient passées

inaperçu du fait d'une myélinisation tardive.

5.5 Diversification du modèle.

Au-delà son intérêt morphologique, cette thèse d'Université s'inscrit dans une continuité

thématique de l'équipe de recherche. Elle participe à en développer le modèle expérimental

élaboré par le Professeur Gérard Benoît dans les années 1990 (équipe « Laboratoire de

Chirurgie expérimentale »), perfectionné sous sa direction dans les années 2000 (équipe

« Interactions cellulaires en Uro-Andrologie ») puis diversifié dans les années 2010 (équipe

« Morphologie et Régénération du Système Nerveux Autonome »). J'ai ainsi participé aux

efforts de recherche de nouveaux anticorps et d'investigation de différentes régions car nous

pensons que le modèle de dissection anatomique assistée par ordinateur fournit des

résultats utiles à la compréhension de la microanatomie nerveuse et plexique autonome.

Cet objectif de développer et perfectionner notre modèle s'illustre par une implication

personnelle dans les travaux d'autres doctorants (Mazen Zaitouna) ou étudiants en Master

2 (Maud Creze) dans des régions à proximité de mon propre sujet de recherche. Ces

collaborations ont été menées dans une perspective parfois plutôt clinique (étude de

l'innervation de l'uretère pelvien), parfois plutôt de modélisation (étude sur le nerf sciatique).

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5.5.1 Origine et nature de l'uretère pelvien.

Article 6 (annexe page 184): Zaitouna, M., Alsaid, B., Lebacle, C., Nyangoh Timoh, K.,

Benoit, G., Bessede, T. Origin and nature of pelvic ureter innervation. Neurourol Urodyn

2017;36:271-9.

CONTEXTE

Peu de données existent concernant l'anatomie de l'innervation de l'uretère pelvien et de la

jonction urétéro-vésicale (82). Pourtant l'innervation vésicale est à risque lors de chirurgie

telle que les réimplantations urétéro-vésicales ou les chirurgies abdominales majeures avec

des séquelles fonctionnelles post-opératoire (83, 84).

OBJECTIF

- Décrire précisément l'origine et la nature des nerfs innervant l'uretère (adrénergique,

cholinergique, nitrergique, somatique).

RESULTATS

L'uretère pelvien est innervé par le plexus hypogastriques supérieurs et les nerfs

hypogastriques. L'association des nerfs hypogastriques et des nerfs splanchniques pelviens

forment le plexus hypogastrique inférieur (PHI).

L'uretère distal est innervé par la partie supérieure (ou crâniale) du PHI (fibres du plexus

mésentérique inférieur) alors que le trigone vésical est innervé par la partie inférieure (ou

caudale) du PHI (fibres nerveuses des nerfs splanchniques pelviens (S2, S3 et S4)).

Le PHI donne des fibres nerveuses qui forme une lame nerveuse sous l'uretère et traverse

l'uretère. Ces fibres se distribuent pour la vessie et l'uretère pelvien d'amont (Figure 21).

Juin 2019 83

Krystel NYANGOH TIMOH

CONCLUSION

L'innervation de l'uretère distale dépends principalement du plexus hypogastrique supérieur. Cette innervation est adrénergique, cholinergique et nitrergique. L'innervation de l'uretère pelvien se fait de façon ascendante.

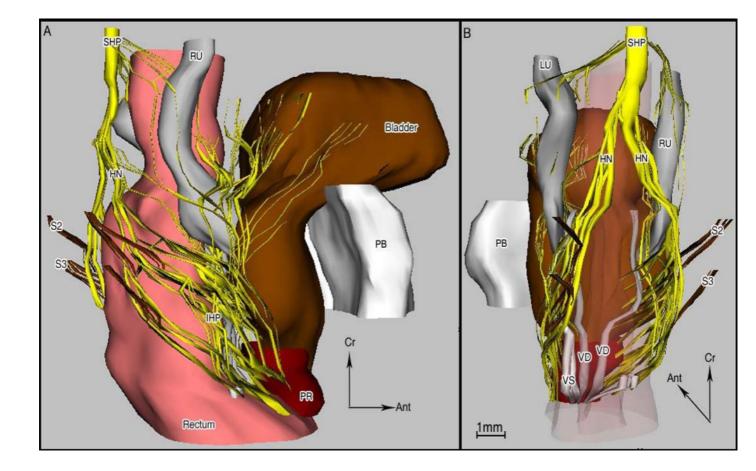


Figure 21: Dissection anatomique assisté par ordinateur (CAAD) des organes du bassin du fœtus masculin de 20 semaines de gestation montrant le trajet des nerfs et leur relation avec les organes voisins. A- Vue latérale.

B- Vue inférieure (rectum en transparence).

HN= hypogastric nerve, IHP= inferior hypogastric plexus, LU= left ureter, PB= pubic bone, PR= prostate, PSN= pelvic splanchnic nerve, RU= right ureter, SHP= superior hypogastric plexus, VD= vas deferens and VS= vesicule seminal.



5.5.2 Micro-anatomie fonctionnelle et structurelle du nerf sciatique.

Article 7 (annexe page 193): Creze, M., Zaitouna, M., Nyangoh Timoh, K., Diallo, D.,

LebacleC., Bellin, M. F., Ducreux, D., Benoit, G., Bessede, T.: Functional and structural

microanatomy of the fetal sciatic nerve. Muscle Nerve 2017;56:787-96.

CONTEXTE

Le nerf sciatique est le nerf le plus large du corps humain. De ce fait, il est le modèle

expérimental pour l'étude des nerfs périphériques le plus utilisé.

Les connaissances fonctionnelles et anatomiques du nerf sciatique ont intérêt à la fois

clinique et chirurgicale lors des réparations chirurgicales (85).

OBJECTIFS

Étudier fonctionnelles du nerf sciatique proximal (fibres autonomes et

somatiques).

RESULTATS

Le nerf sciatique a une architecture fasciculaire. Le tissu neural représente deux tiers du

nerf sciatique. Cette structure est homogène.

Les fibres nerveuses sont majoritairement autonomes (anti-VACHT+ et anti-TH+).

Par contre, on observe les fibres somatiques (PMP22 +) que dans 7% (Figure 22).

La densité des fibres nerveuses somatiques diminue progressivement du tronc lombo-

sacral à S3.

La grande fréquence des neurones cholinergiques du nerf sciatique s'explique soit par la

présence de neurones somatiques pré-synaptiques originaire de la moelle épinière soit par

Route de l'Orme aux Merisiers RD 128 / 91190 Saint-Aubin, France

la présence de neurones autonomes.

Krystel NYANGOH TIMOH

Université Paris-SaclayEspace Technologique / Immeuble Discovery

CONCLUSION

La dissection anatomique assistée par ordinateur permet une illustration de l'anatomie fasciculaire et de la nature du nerf sciatique.

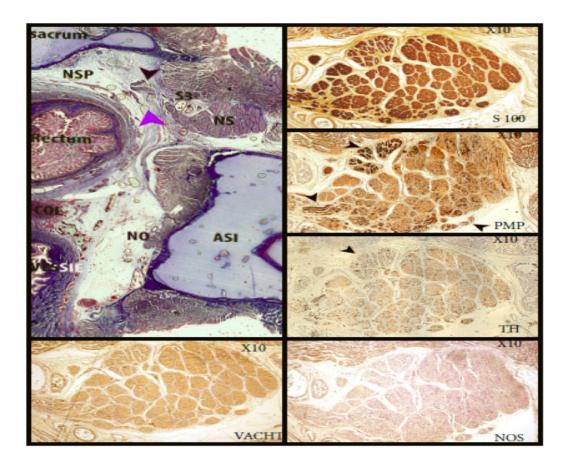


Figure 22 : Illustration immuno-histochimique du nerf sciatique (NS) chez un fœtus de 21 semaines de gestation.

La coupe de référence est traitée par le trichrome de Masson (TriM) et scannée à haute résolution (3200 dpi). Les coupes sériées suivantes au sien du NS, agrandies au microscope optique, permettent de montrer que le NS contient des fibres PMP 22+ (somatiques) et TH+ (sympathiques) et VACHT+ (parasympathique). Il n'y avait pas de fibres NOS+ (nitrergiques).



5.6 Anatomie augmentée, Réalité augmentée chirurgicale.

Depuis la seconde moitié du 20ème siècle, les techniques d'anatomie ont beaucoup

évolué. Cependant les techniques anatomiques classiques ne permettent pas d'analyser

des structures fines telles que les nerfs. Aussi, il n'est pas possible de déterminer la nature

des nerfs par simple dissection.

L'avantage principal de la DAAO est la combinaison de l'observation macroscopique

et microscopique permettant de mieux identifier les nerfs, leur nature et leur trajet près et

dans les organes. Déterminer la nature des nerfs est d'une importance majeure car cela

permet d'approcher au mieux leur rôle physiologique. Aussi la reconstruction 3D rend plus

concrètes des régions anatomiques complexes comme le petit bassin. Par son aspect

didactique, la reconstruction 3D constitue un apport pédagogique original et innovant.

Grâce à la DAAO, un niveau d'information supplémentaire est ajouté aux

informations descriptives topographiques classiques réalisant « une anatomie

augmentée ».

La « réalité augmentée » en chirurgie consiste à associé des reconstructions 3D des

patients durant l'intervention chirurgicale. Elle serait possible en incrustant virtuellement

dans la vision opératoire une représentation personnalisée des nerfs et augmentée de

données fonctionnelles pour améliorer la préservation nerveuse.

.• A

6 Conclusion



CONCLUSION

Notre étude a permis de préciser la structure du MEA, l'innervation du MEA, et du sphincter

urétral. Nous avons pu définir la nature des fibres nerveuses pelviennes somatiques ou

autonomes (sympathiques, parasympathiques et nitrergiques). Grâce à la DAAO et la

reconstruction tridimensionnelle, nous avons précisé l'origine, les trajets et les localisations

topographiques précises du système nerveux autonome et somatique pelvien.

L'anatomie des voies nerveuses destinées aux plancher pelvien s'avère plus complexe que

dans les traités d'anatomie de référence. Aussi si dans ces traités d'anatomie classique, le

MEA est décrit comme entièrement striée et innervé par le système nerveux somatique.

Nous avons identifié des zones de cellules musculaires lisses au sein du plancher pelvien

sous contrôle nerveux autonome.

La connaissance de la topographie de ces fibres nerveuses autonomes et somatiques

génère de nouvelles hypothèses sur les mécanismes de genèse de dysfonctions des

plancher pelvien au cours de la grossesse, lors l'accouchement par voie vaginale et après

chirurgie radicale pelvienne. Cette connaissance apporte donc des éléments d'amélioration

des techniques chirurgicales et de rééducation pelvi-périnéale en vue de limiter et traiter les

dysfonctions des plancher pelvien.

Des études supplémentaires chez l'adulte sont nécessaires pour comprendre le rôle des

cellules musculaires lisses dans la genèse de prolapsus. Nous avons donc réalisé un

projet clinique I-MEA dont le but est de comparer les MEA des patientes avec et sans

prolapsus en utilisant des marqueurs immunohistochimiques. Ce projet fait l'objet

d'un financement institutionnel de 39 000 euros (Bourse CORECT du CHU de

Rennes).

La DAAO apporte une plus-value aux descriptions anatomiques. A ce titre, je poursuis

cette thèse par un projet sur l'anatomie de la macro et micro-innervation de l'utérus

en utilisant la DAAO. En effet l'innervation de l'utérus est peu connue. Pourtant les

CONCLUSION

anomalies de l'innervation utérine sont impliquées dans les pathologies utérines bénignes tels que l'endométriose pelvienne profonde. Aussi la connaissance de l'innervation utérine nous permettrait de mieux comprendre les phénomènes de ré-innervation au cours des greffes utérines.



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8 ANNEXES: PRINCIPALES PUBLICATIONS

1- Article 1 : Anatomie du muscle élévateur de l'anus : Gynecol Obstet Fertil, 2015- IF : 0,6

Gynécologie Obstétrique & Fertilité 43 (2015) 84-90



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Anatomie du muscle élévateur de l'anus et applications en gynécologie obstétrique



Anatomy of the levator ani muscle and implications for obstetrics and gynaecology

K. Nyangoh Timoh a,b,*,c, T. Bessede a,b, M. Zaitouna a,b, F. Peschaud a,b, J.-M. Chevallier c, A. Fauconnier^d, G. Benoit^{a,b}, D. Moszkowicz^{a,b}

- a Inserm-UMR 1195 « petites molécules de neuroprotection, neurorégénération et remyélinisation », hôpital de Bicêtre, bâtiment Grégory-Pincus, 80, rue du
- Général-Leclerc, 94276 Le-Kremlin-Bicêtre cedex, France ^b Laboratoire de chirurgie expérimentale, faculté de médecine de l'université Paris Sud-11, 63, rue Gabriel-Péri, 94270, Le-Kremlin-Bicêtre, France ^c Unité de recherche en développement, imagerie et anatomie, EA4465 URDIA, université Paris Descartes, 45, rue des Saints-Pères, 75270 Paris cedex 06,

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RÉSUMÉ

Les dysfonctions du plancher pelvien regroupent les prolapsus urogénitaux et anorectaux, l'incontinence urinaire d'effort et fécale et concernent près de 25 % des femmes. Le traitement en est principalement chirurgical, avec un risque de récidive postopératoire élevé, notamment en cas de prolapsus pelvien. L'accouchement par voie vaginale est le principal facteur de risque de dysfonction du plancher pelvien par le biais de lésions musculaires du muscle élévateur de l'anus ou de lésions de dénervation pelvienne. Une patiente sur 5 ayant accouché par voie vaginale présente des traumatismes du muscle élévateur de l'anus. Ces traumatismes sont plus fréquents en cas d'extraction instrumentale par forceps, si la seconde phase de travail est prolongée, si le périmètre crânien fœtal est augmenté et en cas de lésions du sphincter anal associées. Par ailleurs, près d'une patiente sur 4 ayant accouché par voie vaginale présente une neuropathie périnéale. Récemment, l'IRM pelvienne avec reconstruction tridimensionnelle a contribué à mieux appréhender la morphologie et la fonction du muscle élévateur de l'anus. Cela a permis d'affiner la description et la nomenclature anatomiques de ce complexe musculaire. Des travaux radiologiques et anatomiques ont en outre permis d'explorer l'innervation du muscle élévateur de l'anus et d'émettre des hypothèses sur les mécanismes de survenue des lésions musculaires et nerveuses liées à l'accouchement. Nous avons donc réalisé une revue de littérature portant sur l'anatomie du muscle élévateur de l'anus et de son innervation afin de mieux comprendre les dysfonctions du plancher pelvien survenant après accouchement par voie basse.

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ABSTRACT

Levator ani muscle Vaginal delivery Peripheral nervous system Urinary incontinence

Pelvic floor disorders include urogenital and anorectal prolapse, urinary and faecal incontinence. These diseases affect 25% of patients. Most of time, treatment is primarily surgical with a high post-operative risk of recurrence, especially for pelvic organ prolapse. Vaginal delivery is the major risk factor for pelvic floor disorders through levator ani muscle injury or nerve damage. After vaginal delivery, 20% of patients experiment elevator ani trauma. These injuries are more common in case of instrumental delivery by forceps, prolonged second phase labor, increased neonatal head circumference and associated anal sphincter injuries. Moreover, 25% of patients have temporary perineal neuropathy. Recently, pelvic three-dimensional reconstructions from RMI data allowed a better understanding of detailed levator ani muscle morphology and gave birth to a clear new nomenclature describing this muscle complex to be developed. Radiologic and anatomic studies have allowed exploring levator ani

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d Département de gynécologie et d'obstétrique, centre hospitalier intercommunal de Poissy-Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 78300 Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France

Auteur correspondant Adresse e-mail: k.nyangoh@gmail.com (K. Nyangoh Timoh).

innervation leading to speculate on the muscle and nerve damage mechanisms during delivery. We then reviewed the levator ani muscle anatomy and innervation to better understand pelvic floor dysfunction observed after vaginal delivery.

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1. Introduction

Le muscle élévateur de l'anus (MEA) a un rôle majeur dans la statique pelvienne. Des lésions musculaires et de dénervation[1] sont fréquentes après accouchement par voie vaginale et sont responsables à court ou à long terme de dysfonctions du plancher pelvien à type de prolapsus des organes pelviens, d'incontinence urinaire et fécale. Ainsi, près de 25 % des femmes sont atteintes par une de ces pathologies[2]. Les dysfonctions du plancher pelvien tel que le prolapsus des organes pelviens nécessitent le plus souvent un traitement chirurgical avec un risque de récidive postopératoire élevé[3]. Une patiente sur 5 ayant accouché par voie vaginale présente des traumatismes du muscle élévateur de l'anus [4]. Ces traumatismes sont plus fréquent en cas d'extraction instrumentale par forceps, si la seconde phase de travail est prolongée, si le périmètre crânien fœtal est augmenté et en cas de lésions du sphincter anal associées[4]. Ces lésions musculaires sont très nettement visibles en imagerie, notamment en imagerie par résonance magnétique (IRM) pelvienne. Par ailleurs, près d'une patiente sur 4 ayant accouché par voie vaginale présente une neuropathie périnéale même transitoire [5]. La connaissance de l'anatomie du MEA et de son innervation est indispensable pour comprendre les mécanismes physiopathologiques de survenue de lésions musculaires et de dénervation lors de l'accouchement par voie vaginale et trouver de nouvelles pistes de recherche en termes de prévention et de traitement, mais aussi pour informer les patientes avant leur accouchement par voie vaginale. Ainsi, dans cette revue, nous détaillons la nomenclature anatomique moderne du MEA, puis nous développons l'aspect radio-anatomique du MEA en IRM, son histologie, son innervation ainsi que les hypothèses récentes concernant les mécanismes de survenue des lésions musculaires et nerveuses du MEA lors de l'accouchement par voie vaginale. Cette revue de la littérature a été effectuée à partir du moteur de recherche en ligne PUBMED. Les mots clés étaient les suivants: « levator ani muscle », « anatomy », « pelvic floor dysfunction », « Magnetic Resonance Imaging », « pelvic innervation ».

2. Anatomie du muscle élévateur de l'anus (MEA) : description selon la nomenclature anatomique internationale

Les viscères pelviens sont soumis à la gravité et à la pression intra-abdominale du fait de la position érigée. Le maintien des viscères pelviens à l'intérieur de la cavité pelvienne est lié à l'action conjointe d'un système de soutènement (parois osseuses, muscles, fascias pelviens), d'un système de suspension (ligaments viscéraux et fascias vésico-utérin, vésico-vaginal, urétro-vaginal et rectovaginal) et d'un système d'angulation (centré par le vagin) des viscères entre eux[6]. La statique pelvienne était explorée historiquement par les moulages vaginaux, puis le colpocystogramme[6].

Parmi les éléments musculaires, le MEA est l'élément fondamental assurant une statique pelvienne de qualité.

La description du muscle élévateur de l'anus est pourtant très hétérogène et floue dans la littérature [7]. En effet, les faisceaux musculaires ayant les mêmes origines et insertions portaient jusqu'alors des noms différents selon les auteurs. Depuis 1889[8], cette description était basée uniquement sur des données macroscopiques de dissections de sujets anatomiques adultes ou fœtaux. Une clarification a été rapportée par Kearney et al. en

2004 [9], utilisant la nomenclature anatomique internationale (Terminologia anatomica). Cette nouvelle description est basée sur des reconstructions tridimensionnelles à l'aide de données IRM et a été confrontée aux classiques descriptions purement anatomiques. Ces principaux avantages sont sa clarté, sa précision, et surtout le choix des noms des différents faisceaux du MEA en fonction de leurs origines et insertions mais aussi de leur mécanisme d'action. Par exemple, le terme de « muscle puboccocygien » y est abandonné au profit du muscle « puboviscéral », tel qu'employé par Lawson en 1974 [7]. En effet, il n'existe aucune connexion entre le pubis et le coccyx par le biais du MEA. En revanche, les faisceaux musculaires s'insérant sur le pubis ont un contact intime avec les organes pelviens et une action élévatrice justifiant l'utilisation du terme « puboviscéral ». Par ailleurs, il existait une confusion entre les termes puboanal et puborectal, le muscle puboanal s'insère entre les fibres du sphincter de l'anus tandis que le muscle puborectal réalise un véritable anneau autour du rectum.

Ainsi, le MEA est décrit comme un complexe musculaire composé de trois faisceaux musculaires principaux : faisceau puboviscéral, faisceau puborectal et faisceau lilococcygien (Fig. 1 et 2). Il délimite le hiatus urogénital (traversé par l'urètre et le vagin) et anal (traversé par le canal anal). Il forme avec les muscles coccygiens un véritable diaphragme pelvien qui constitue une cloison musculaire séparant le pelvis du périnée.

Le MEA a deux actions principales : une action statique (posture) par le biais du faisceau iliococcygien et une action de contraction rapide (faisceaux puboviscéral et puborectal) en réponse à l'élévation de la pression intra-abdominal (toux, effort).

Le faisceau puboviscéral (portion dynamique) est composé de 3 muscles qui prennent leur origine sur la partie postérieure du pubis et forme des anneaux autour des organes pelviens :

- le muscle pubopérinéal se termine sur le corps périnéal et a une activité tonique permettant de rapprocher ce corps périnéal contre le pubis;
- le muscle pubovaginal se termine dans les parois vaginales au niveau de l'urètre moyen et sa contraction permet d'élever le vagin;
- le muscle puboanal se termine entre les sphincters externe et interne et dans la peau du canal anal et sa contraction entraîne une élévation de l'anus.

Le faisceau puborectal (portion dynamique) s'insère aussi sur la partie postérieure du pubis mais latéralement par rapport au faisceau puboviscéral et forme un anneau en arrière du rectum. Sa contraction ferme l'angle anorectal.

Le faisceau iliococcygien (portion statique) a pour origine l'arc tendineux du MEA. De chaque côté, les muscles iliococcygiens fusionnent en arrière du rectum et en avant du coccyx formant ainsi le raphé anococcygien. Il réalise un véritable diaphragme supportant les organes pelviens.

3. Aspects normal et pathologique du muscle élévateur de l'anus (MEA) en IRM

L'innovation technique en IRM a permis de mieux comprendre la morphologie du MEA [10]. L'IRM du plancher pelvien utilise des images pondérées en T2, en deux dimensions, en coupes axiale,



86

K. Nyangoh Timoh et al./Gynécologie Obstétrique & Fertilité 43 (2015) 84-90

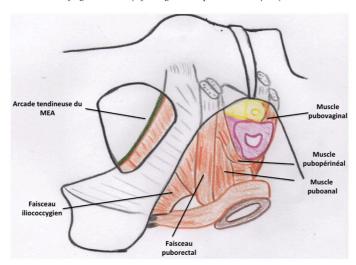


Fig. 1. Vue latérale du pelvis : aspect du muscle élévateur de l'anus. L'urètre est représenté en jaune, le vagin en violet et le rectum en marron. Le MEA forme un véritable complexe musculaire.



Fig. 2. Vue supérieure du pelvis : aspect du muscle élévateur de l'anus. L'urêtre est représenté en jaune, le vagin en violet et le rectum en marron. On observe les différents anneaux du faisceau puboviscéral autour des organes pelviens. Le faisceau puborectal réalisant un anneau en arrière du rectum. Le faisceau ilio coccygien réalise un véritable diaphragme.

sagittale, et coronale, en position allongée, avec un super-aimant. Les réglages utilisent le plus souvent des épaisseurs de coupes de 4 mm avec une distance de 1 mm. Une reconstruction en trois dimensions en couleur du MEA est possible ainsi qu'une analyse dynamique.

La coupe axiale est la coupe de choix pour visualiser le muscle puboviscéral (Fig. 3A). On observe son insertion au niveau du pubis médialement par rapport au faisceau puborectal, la terminaison intersphinctérique du puboanal, et celle du muscle pubovaginal dans les parois latérales du vagin. On observe aussi l'anneau du puborectal derrière le rectum et l'origine du muscle iliococcygien sur l'arcade tendineuse du MEA.

La coupe coronale est idéale pour observer le muscle iliococcygien (Fig. 4). Il présente un aspect typique en aile d'hirondelle ayant pour origine l'arcade tendineuse du fascia pelvien [11]. Cet aspect diffère de la description macroscopique per

opératoire ou de l'aspect en dissection de sujet anatomique. En effet, le faisceau iliococcygien a classiquement un aspect plutôt en entonnoir qu'en voûte.

La coupe sagittale est la coupe permettant de mettre en évidence le « plateau lévatorien » formé par le muscle iliococcygien. On voit aussi la direction des fibres du puboviscéral avec l'insertion du muscle pubopérinéal sur le corps périnéal et celle du puboanal au niveau du sphincter externe de l'anus. On observe enfin la direction des fibres du puborectal et sa disposition en anneau autour du rectum.

L'aspect dynamique du MEA est aussi étudié en IRM. Lors des efforts de retenue, il existe une majoration de la convexité vers le haut du faisceau iliococcygien et un rapprochement des faisceaux puboviscéraux. Par contre lors des efforts de poussée, les faisceaux puborectaux s'éloignent et les faisceaux iliococcygiens deviennent concaves.

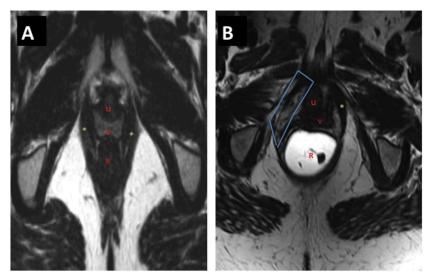


Fig. 3. Coupe axiale d'IRM pelvienne, pondérée en T2. A. Patiente nullipare avec MEA indemne. Les faisceaux puboviscéraux sont parfaitement visible et ont une bonne trophicité. Sur cette coupe, la distinction entre le muscle puboviscéral et le muscle puborectal est difficile tant ils sont intimement liés. B. Patiente multipare avec avulsion du muscle puboviscéral droit. *: correspondent aux faisceaux puboviscéraux bien insérés sur le pubis ; U : correspond à l'urètre ; V : correspond au vagin. L'avulsion du muscle puboviscéral droit est entourée en bleu.

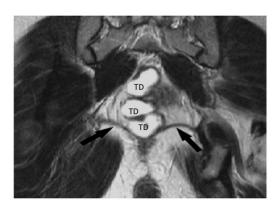


Fig. 4. Coupe coronale d'IRM pelvienne, pondérée en T2. TD : tube digestif. Le faisceau iliococcygien nait de l'arcade tendineuse du muscle élévateur de l'anus et a un aspect d'aile d'hirondelle. On visualise aussi l'attachement du muscle pubovaginal à la paroi vaginal.

Plus qu'une simple description morphologique, l'IRM permet aussi de préciser les mécanismes d'action des différents faisceaux musculaires. En effet, l'IRM avec diffusion de tension permet de mettre en évidence l'orientation des fibres musculaires. Bertschart et al. [12] ont mesuré les directions de chaque fibre musculaire du MEA sur une coupe sagittale par rapport à un axe horizontal (passant par le bord inférieur du pubis). Les angles moyens réalisés entre les fibres des faisceaux puboviscéraux, puborectaux et iliococcygiens et l'axe horizontal étaient respectivement : $41\pm 8^\circ$, -19 ± 10 ,1°, 33 ± 8 ,8° avec une différence de 60° entre les faisceaux puboviscéraux et puborectaux. Ces inclinaisons traduisent des mécanismes d'action différents de ces faisceaux. En effet, l'orientation dans laquelle les fibres musculaires se raccourcissent au maximum correspond à l'axe de leur mécanisme d'action. Le muscle puboviscéral a donc une action élévatrice et de fermeture du hiatus

urogénital et le muscle puborectal a simplement une action de fermeture du hiatus urogénital.

La frontière entre anatomie normale et pathologie du MEA est floue. En effet, de nombreuses variations anatomiques existent chez les nullipares indemnes de prolapsus, d'incontinence urinaire et d'incontinence fécale. Entre le MEA et le pubis, 10 % des patientes n'ont aucune connections unilatérale et 10 % n'ont aucune connexion bilatérale avec pour conséquence un hiatus urogénital plus grand. Cette particularité morphologique pourrait être un facteur de risque de survenue de dysfonctions du plancher pelvien. Aussi, Tunn rapporte des différences de l'ordre de deux à trois fois sur l'épaisseur, le volume et l'aire du MEA ainsi que sur le hiatus urogénital chez des patientes asymptomatiques [13].

Il existerait des variations anatomiques du MEA en rapport avec l'origine ethnique des femmes. Hoyte et al. ont rapporté que les patientes afro-américaines ont un MEA plus volumineux avec une distance entre le milieu de la symphyse pubienne et la partie la plus proximale du MEA plus courte [14]. Cependant, Handa et al. [15] n'ont pas retrouvé de différences d'épaisseur du MEA mais une mobilité plus importante des muscles du plancher pelvien chez les patientes afro-américaines.

Les anomalies du MEA sont identifiables en IRM. Elles affectent principalement le muscle puboviscéral (18 %) et plus précisément sa partie antérieure, et plus rarement le muscle iliococcygien (2 %) [16]. Les anomalies classiquement décrites sont les avulsions. Ce sont des désinsertions du MEA du pubis avec rétraction en arrière sur l'aponévrose du muscle obturateur interne [17]. Elles sont parfaitement visualisées en coupe axiale (Fig. 3B). Leur description se fait via un score ayant une bonne reproductibilité interobservateur [18]. Pour chaque patiente, chaque score unilatéral est additionné pour former un score bilatéral global : 0-normal ou pas d'avulsion, 1 à 3-avulsion mineure, 3-avulsion majeure. Une patiente avec un score à 3 unilatéral est considérée comme ayant une avulsion maieure.

D'autres anomalies du MEA sont retrouvées : aire et/ou longueur du hiatus urogénital augmentées (avec le grade du prolapsus) [19], aire de la portion ventrale du MEA [20] et

88

épaisseur du MEA diminuées, distance entre la partie proximale du faisceau puboviscéral et du pubis augmentée [21].

4. Histologie du muscle élévateur de l'anus (MEA)

Le MEA est un muscle strié. À partir de dissections réalisées chez 25 sujets anatomiques (10 fœtus et 15 adultes), Shafik [22] a mis en évidence deux parties distinctes au MEA: une partie latérale composée d'une seule couche musculaire avec des fibres de type 1 en majorité (à contraction rapide) et aussi des fibres de type 2 (à contraction lente); une partie médiale. Cette dernière serait composée de deux couches musculaires séparées par du tissu conjonctif contenant des éléments vasculonerveux: une couche musculaire profonde avec des cellules musculaires striées (action volontaire) et une couche musculaire superficielle constituée de cellules musculaires lisses. En fait, ces cellules musculaires lisses pourraient provenir d'autres organes pelviens ou des fascias [23] car le MEA est classiquement connu pour être un muscle strié. Par ailleurs, le diamètre des cellules musculaires striées serait plus important chez la femme que chez l'homme [22].

Avec l'âge et la carence en œstrogène, il existe une diminution du nombre de cellules musculaires striées et du diamètres des fibres de type 1 et 2 [24]. Ces caractéristiques sont aussi retrouvées chez les patientes incontinentes urinaires et constituent un facteur de risque de récurrence après traitement chirurgical de l'incontinence [25]. L'accouchement par voie vaginale induit aussi l'apparition de fibrose sur la partie ventrale du MEA [24].

5. Innervation du muscle élévateur de l'anus (MEA)

L'innervation du MEA est controversée. Classiquement, il est admis que le MEA a une innervation purement somatique par le nerf de l'élévateur de l'anus (NEA) naissant des racines sacrées S3 et S4 et ayant un trajet supralévatorien. La participation du nerf pudendal (NP) à cette commande nerveuse est le principal point de désaccord entre les différents auteurs. Le nerf pudendal quant à lui a un trajet infralévatorien et naît des racines sacrées S2, S3 et S4 (Fig. 5).

De nombreuses études ont apporté des arguments pour la contribution du NP dans l'innervation du MEA. Wallner et al. [26] ont réalisé des dissections de 9 fœtus masculins et féminins et ont mis en évidence une branche communicante entre le nerf du NEA et du NP formant une connexion plexiforme sur le muscle coccygien dans 50 à 60 % des cas. Ces nerfs seraient situés à une faible distance au niveau de l'épine ischiatique (6 mm) [27]. D'autres études ont montré une innervation commune entre le muscle puborectal et le sphincter externe de l'anus par le biais du nerf rectal inférieur (branche du nerf pudendal) [28]. Enfin, des arguments électrophysiologiques en faveur de la participation du NP ont été rapportés : un blocage du NP [29] induit une diminution des pressions vaginales au repos et à la toux, une augmentation de la longueur du hiatus urogénital au repos et à la toux, et une diminution des réponses aux électromyogrammes (EMG) des muscles du sphincter externe de l'anus et du muscle puborectal. Cependant, un blocage du NEA associé ne peut être exclu.

D'autres études n'ont pas retrouvé de contribution du NP à l'innervation du MEA.

Percy et al. retrouve qu'une stimulation du NP excite uniquement le muscle sphincter strié de l'anus [30]. Lors de dissections de sujets anatomiques, Barber et al. ne retrouvait pas de contribution macroscopiquement visible du NP à l'innervation du MEA [31].

Les données embryologiques attestent d'une origine différente entre le sphincter externe de l'anus et le muscle puborectal [32]. Seule la neurectomie du NEA entraîne une atrophie et une diminution du diamètre des myocytes du muscle élévateur de l'anus [33].

Shobeiri [34] est le seul à avoir étudié la micro-innervation du chaque faisceau musculaire du MEA. Dans son étude, 10 dissections macroscopiques de sujets anatomiques féminins ont été réalisées. Puis 6 hémi-MEA ont été photographiés à l'aide d'un appareil contenant un microscope digital. Pour la reconstruction finale seule les structures anatomiques observées chez plus de 50 % des sujets anatomiques étaient gardées. Le NP n'était quant à lui jamais mis en évidence.

Notre équipe a récemment montré, via la technique de dissections assistée par ordinateur de fœtus humains, des connexions au travers du MEA entre le système nerveux autonome supralévatorien (branches du plexus hypogastrique inférieur) et somatique infralévatorien (NP) permettant d'évoquer une participation autonome à l'innervation du MEA [35]. Nous n'avions pas visualisé de NEA.

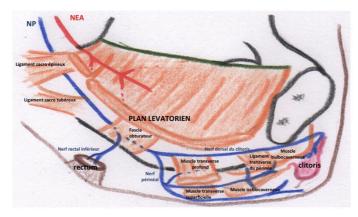


Fig. 5. Innervation somatique pelvi-périnéale. Le nerf élévateur de l'anus (NEA) a un trajet supralévatorien et innerve le MEA. Le nerf pudendal (NP) a un trajet infralévatorien. De la région sacrée, il devient glutéal en passant sous le muscle piriforme, puis périnéal en contournant le ligament sacro-épineux. Il pénètre dans le canal pudendal (dédoublement du fascia du muscle obturateur interne). Dans le canal pudendal, il émet une branche pour le rectum (nerf rectal moyen) puis il émet une branche périnéale (qui innerve les muscles transverses profonds, bulbospongieux, ischiocaverneux, et le sphincter strié de l'urêtre) et se termine par le nerf dorsal du clitoris qui chemine au dessus du ligament transverse du périnée pour se terminer dans le clitoris.

89

Ainsi, les données disponibles sur l'innervation du MEA sont conflictuelles et il n'existe aucune description détaillée de l'innervation chaque portion du MEA. Ceci est notamment dû au manque de méthode d'étude adaptée à l'étude de la microinnervation musculaire. Hors, l'innervation du MEA fait partie du mécanisme neurologique actif de la continence urinaire par le biais de la transmission de la pression intra-abdominal à l'urètre pendant l'effort. Il est démontré chez les patientes ayant une incontinence urinaire d'effort pure, un prolapsus urogénital ou ano-rectal des altérations de ces mécanismes neurologiques [36].

6. Mécanisme de survenue de lésions musculaires et nerveuses du muscle élévateur de l'anus (MEA) au cours de l'accouchement par voie vaginale

6.1. Les lésions musculaires

Lien et al. [37] ont développé un modèle de plancher pelvien féminin basé sur des données IRM afin de prédire l'étirement musculaire subi par le MEA durant l'accouchement par voie vaginale. D'après leur étude, il existe un étirement important des faisceaux musculaires du MEA proportionnel au degré de descente fœtale et qui est maximale lorsque la tête fœtale est au petit couronnement. Aussi, la portion la plus médiale du faisceau puboviscéral plus précisément le muscle pubopérinéal subit l'étirement le plus important avec un ratio d'étirement de 3,26 du fait de sa petite longueur initiale et de sa localisation médiale. Mais le rapport d'étirement maximal toléré est de 1,5 pour un muscle strié. Ces résultats sont cohérents avec la localisation des traumatismes musculaires visibles en IRM sur la portion ventrale du MEA.

Cependant, plus récemment, Hoyte et al. [38] rapportaient un étirement maximal de la portion postéromédiale du faisceau puborectal.

Les différences entre ces deux études peuvent être dues aux variations anatomiques du MEA observées à l'occasion de la manœuvre de Vasalva et aux différences de propriétés tissulaires du MEA

Les principaux facteurs de risques de traumatismes musculaires retrouvés dans la littérature sont l'accouchement par voie basse, l'usage de forceps [17], le périmètre crânien augmenté [39], la seconde phase de travail longue [40] et les lésions du sphincter externe de l'anus.

6.2. Les lésions nerveuses

L'étirement des fibres nerveuses a été étudié par Lien et al. [41] en analysant les reconstructions en trois dimensions du nerf pudendal à partir de dissections de 12 hémi-pelvis féminins. Les nerfs rectal inférieur et périnéal sont les deux branches postérieures du nerf pudendal qui subissent le plus grand étirement plaçant ces branches nerveuses à haut risque de lésions et ce tétirement est proportionnel au degré de descente de la tête fœtale. Ces données sont en accord avec la possibilité d'incontinence anale à sphincter anal externe intact après accouchement par voie vaginale.

La dénervation du MEA est initialisée par l'accouchement voie basse et semble être entretenue par les étirements répétés durant la poussée. Près de 25 % des patientes souffrent en post-partum de dénervation du MEA [5]. Celle-ci est le plus souvent transitoire. Mais une réinnervation n'est pas synonyme de fonction musculaire normale. Cette dénervation est étudiée depuis le début des années 1980 par le biais de l'étude de la latence du motoneurone du NP, par des biopsies du MEA et par des électromyogrammes globaux

du muscle. Plusieurs études ont évoqué que la neuropathie pudendale était associée à l'incontinence fécale idiopathique (à sphincter externe anal normal) et au prolapsus génito-urinaire. Lors d'une dénervation du MEA, il existe aussi une modification histologique de celui-ci avec une augmentation des fibres musculaires de type 1, une atrophie des fibres en clusters, la présence de collagène immature et le groupement des fibres de même type.

7. Dysfonctions du plancher pelvien en clinique et rôle du muscle élévateur de l'anus (MEA)

La présence d'anomalies du MEA est facteur de risque de prolapsus avec un effet particulier sur les compartiments antérieur et central [42]. Les patientes souffrant de prolapsus ont 7 fois plus de risque d'avoir des avulsions du MEA (55 % versus 16 %). Les avulsions du MEA sont non seulement un facteur de risque de mauvaise fonction postopératoire précoce [43] mais aussi un facteur de risque de récidive après chirurgie du prolapsus [44,45]. Par ailleurs, il n'est pas retrouvé d'association entre traumatisme musculaire du MEA et incontinence urinaire [46]. Les lésions musculaires du MEA sont associées aux déchirures sphinctériennes anales et la prévalence d'avulsion est plus fréquente chez les patientes ayant une déchirure sphinctérienne[47]. Par ailleurs, l'association lésions du MEAdéchirure sphinctérienne favorise l'apparition d'incontinence anale[46]. Enfin, la force musculaire du plancher pelvien est diminuée chez les patientes présentant des traumatismes musculaires du MEA [48].

8. Conclusion

Le MEA a une importance majeure dans la statique pelvienne de la femme. Les traumatismes musculaires directs et les lésions de dénervation sont associés aux dysfonctions du plancher pelvien et à la diminution de la force musculaire du plancher pelvien. Le MEA est divisé en 3 faisceaux principaux : le faisceau puboviscéral, le faisceau puborectal et le faisceau iliococcygien. Classiquement, il est admis que le MEA est innervé par le nerf élévateur de l'anus. La participation du nerf pudendal ou du système végétatif autonome reste débattue. Durant l'accouchement par voie vaginale des lésions musculaires sont principalement visibles sur la portion ventrale du muscle puboviscéral. Les modélisations de l'accouchement concluent à un étirement maximal localisé au niveau du faisceau puboviscéral pour certains et au niveau de la partie postéromédiale du faisceau puborectal pour d'autres. L'étirement des fibres nerveuses semble être maximal au niveau des branches postérieures du nerf pudendal (nerf périnéal et nerf rectal inférieur). Les reconstructions tridimensionnelles pelviennes d'après des données IRM et de dissections ont permis d'améliorer la connaissance de l'anatomie et de la neuro anatomie du MEA. Cependant, d'autres études utilisant des techniques plus adaptées doivent être réalisées pour clarifier les données concernant notamment la micro-innervation du MEA et les mécanismes de survenue des lésions musculaires et nerveuses. Ceci permettrait d'explorer de nouvelles pistes de recherche sur la prévention et le traitement des dysfonctions du plancher pelvien mais aussi pour mieux informer les patientes avant accouchement par voie basse.

Déclaration d'intérêts

Les auteurs déclarent ne pas avoir de conflits d'intérêts en relation avec cet article.



K. Nyangoh Timoh et al. / Gynécologie Obstétrique & Fertilité 43 (2015) 84-90

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90

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2- Article 2 : Innervation du muscle élévateur de l'anus : Neurourol Urodyn , 2017- IF : 3,3

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ORIGINAL BASIC SCIENCE ARTICLE



Levator ani muscle innervation: Anatomical study in human fetus

Krystel Nyangoh Timoh^{1,2} | Thomas Bessede^{1,3} | Cedric Lebacle¹ | Mazen Zaitouna¹ | Jelena Martinovic⁴ | Djibril Diallo¹ | Maud Creze¹ | Jean-Marc Chevallier² | Emile Darai⁵ | Gérard Benoît¹ | David Moszkowicz^{1,2}

UMR 1195, Université Paris-Sud, INSERM, Université Paris-Saclay, Le Kremlin-Bicetre, France ² EA4465 URDIA, University Paris Descartes, Paris,

³ Department of Urology, Hopitaux Universitaires Paris-Sud, Le Kremlin-Bicetre, France

⁴ Department of Fetal Pathology, Hopitaux Universitaires Paris-Sud, Clamart, France

⁵ Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Tenon University Hospital, France Research Unit S938, Pierre and Marie Curie University, Paris, France

Correspondence

Krystel Nyangoh Timoh, MD, INSERM-UMR 1195, Hôpital de Bicêtre, Bâtiment Grégory Pincus, 80 rue du Général Leclerc, 94276 Le Kremlin-Bicêtre

Email: k.nyangoh@gmail.com

AIMS: To characterize the nature and function of the levator ani muscle innervation pathways and to perform a comprehensive three-dimensional reconstruction of female pelvic innervation.

METHODS: A computer-assisted anatomical dissection protocol was applied to seven female human fetuses, after approval from the national biomedicine agency. Specimens were serially sectioned and immunostained for overall (antibody against protein \$100), somatic (antibody against peripheral myelin protein 22), adrenergic (antibody against tyrosine hydroxylase), cholinergic (antibody against vesicular acetylcholine transferase), and nitrergic (antibody against the neural isoform of nitric oxide synthase) nerve fibers. Slides were digitized for three-dimensional reconstructions using WinSurf®.

RESULTS: Three main nerve pathways to the levator ani muscle were observed: the levator ani nerve, the pudendal nerve, and the inferior hypogastric plexus. The pudendal nerve was both somatic and autonomic, located below the levator ani muscle (infralevator pathway), supplying innervation to the inferior aspect of the levator ani muscle. The levator ani nerve was solely somatic, located above the levator ani muscle (supralevator pathway), supplying innervation to the superior aspect of the levator ani muscle. The inferior hypogastric plexus nerve fibers were solely autonomic, located in between the levator ani muscle and pelvic organs (endolevator pathway), supplying innervation to the medial portion of the levator

CONCLUSIONS: Our study provides a new representation of levator ani muscle innervation with three nerve pathways, and the levator ani muscle itself as an anatomical landmark.

anatomy, fetus, innervation, levator ani muscle, pelvic floor dysfunction

1 | INTRODUCTION

The levator ani muscle (LAM) is the major component of the pelvic floor. 1 Alteration in LAM function has been suggested as the primum movens of pelvic floor dysfunction mainly

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related to muscle injury. Moreover, previous studies have demonstrated that urinary incontinence (UI) after vaginal delivery is linked to pudendal nerve (PN) injury,2-5 suggesting that LAM innervation plays a crucial role in the pelvic floor dysfunction. Previous anatomical studies have demonstrated the implication of the levator ani nerve (LAN) in LAM innervation⁶⁻⁸. Nevertheless, controversies exist on nerve distribution, nerve nature (somatic or autonomic), and

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NYANGOH TIMOH ET AL.

participation of the PN) in LAM innervation. As previously described by our team, a dual somatic and autonomic innervation in rectum, urethra, and erectile bodies involving communicating neural loops within the LAM, autonomic contribution from the inferior hypogastric plexus in LAM innervation cannot be excluded. So far, no functional analysis of LAM innervation has been conducted.

Our aim was to realize a functional and topographic study of LAM innervation using conventional staining, immunolabeling, and three-dimensional reconstruction (computerassisted anatomical dissection [CAAD]) on female human fetuses.

2 | MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 | Human fetuses

The study was approved by the French Biomedicine Agency (PFS15-011). The work conformed to the provisions of the 1995 Declaration of Helsinki, as revised in 2013. The fetal specimens were obtained from late miscarriages. All parents gave written consent and authorization for the scientific use of the cadaver. Only specimens without maceration neither macroscopic abnormality on pathology examination were used.

Seven female fetuses were studied with a crown-rump length (CRL) of 110–310 mm. Fetuses had a gestational age of between 18 weeks and 31 weeks, as determined from the CRL and fetal heel-to-toe length, corrected for the first-trimester ultrasound CRL measurement and was confirmed on a post-mortem examination by estimating organ maturation. ¹⁰ The external body aspect was carefully restored out of respect, and in case parents expressed a wish to see their fetus after the autopsy.

2.2 | Macroscopic dissection

The entire pelvis was removed en-bloc with the pelvic organ and pelvic bone, and was fixed in formalin (10% formaldehyde) for 48 h. Tissues were then cut into transverse slices at 4-mm intervals. The tissue slices were placed in baskets, processed, and embedded in cardboard molds filled with paraffin. To avoid alteration to the visceral topographical relationship, the slices were kept warm and then mounted whole on Superfrost glass slides. They were then dried at 37°C overnight. Series of 5-µm-thick sections were then realized without intervals. We obtained a total of 150–320 sections from each fetus, depending on the age and size of each specimen.

2.3 | Staining and immunolabeling

The first transverse section of each level was the reference and was stained with Masson's trichrome. It provided information about the topography and localization of muscles, connective tissue, and collagen fibers (collagen tissue in dark blue, cytoplasm in red, nucleuses in black).

Neuronal markers were detected with polyclonal antibodies against protein S100 (PS100), peripheral myelin protein (PMP 22), tyrosine hydroxylase (TH), vesicular acetylcholine transferase (VACht), and the neural isoform of nitric oxide synthase (nNOS) (Supplementary Table S1).

Protein S100 identifies nucleus and cytoplasm of Schwann cells mainly corresponding to peripheral nerve fibers. 11

PMP22 is a 22-kDa glycoprotein produced by myelinating Schwann cells in the compact myelin of the somatic peripheral nervous system. ¹²

TH is involved in converting tyrosine to dopamine and labels adrenergic neurons. 13

VACht immunostaining is a specific label of cholinergic neurons. 13

The nNOS is generated in human erectile bodies and is mostly found in the cavernous tissue of the clitoris and penis, particularly in the pro-erectile nerve bundles and vascular and sinusoidal endothelium. nNOS antiserum labels a 155-kDa peptide on Western blots of mouse brain (quality control data).¹⁴

The avidin-biotin-peroxidase detection procedure was carried out with a Vectastain ABC kit (ref. PK6100; Vector Laboratories, Burlingame, CA). Chromogenic detection was performed with a DAB detection kit (DAB, ref. SK-4100; Vector Laboratories). As a control for all the immunohistochemical analyses, we used non-immune serum or IgG at an equivalent dilution.

2.4 | Histological examination

Serial-stained and immunolabeled two-dimensional sections were used for three-dimensional reconstructions. Using high magnification (×4 to ×40) analyses of Masson's trichromestained sections, it was possible to identify the various anatomical structures (organs, bones, fascia). Subsequent sections, treated with an antibody against S100, were used to identify pelvic-perineal nerves and communicating branches. By comparing Masson's trichrome-stained sections with sections stained with antibodies against S100, TH, VACht, TH, PMP22, and nNOS allow determining the nature of the nerve fibers identified: that is, somatic (PMP22), autonomic (TH, VACht), or nitriergic (nNOS).

The sections were taken at almost the same level, with a negligible interval between sections ($5\,\mu m$). The computer system comprised a personal laptop computer (Windows XP) equipped with an Epson Perfection V750 digitization system, Silverfast AI digitization software (Ref B11B178071), Adobe Photoshop image-processing software, and Surfdriver software for Windows (Winsurf image reconstruction software, version 4.3). All the sections were digitized at a



NYANGOH TIMOH ET AL. 3

resolution of 4800 dots per inch, and the images were then stacked and aligned. The brightness and contrast of the histological tissue images were adjusted in Adobe Photoshop. The pelvic anatomical structures and nerve fibers were outlined manually on all histological sections. A three-dimensional analysis of the location, course, and distribution of the nerve fibers was then carried out along the *x*- and *y*-axes to generate a movie.

3 | RESULTS

3.1 | Bidimensional analyses

3.1.1 Pudendal nerve contribution

The PN comes from the ventral roots of S2, S3, and S4. In the pelvis, it forms a large trunk, laterally to the splanchnic nerves and the pelvic sympathetic trunk, and medially to the sciatic nerve. It runs between the piriformis and coccygeus muscles, and crosses the spine of the ischium. It is immediately localized under the LAM and joins the pudendal canal (Alcock's canal) where it is accompanied by internal pudendal vessels. Being localized under the LAM, the PN is an infralevator pathway. PN gives no branches in the Alcock's canal.

The PN provides some branches to the puborectal and iliococcygeal muscles. It then initiates the inferior rectal nerve, which provides innervation to the rectum, perianal skin, and puborectal muscle.

The PN terminates as the perineal nerve and the dorsal clitoris nerve. The perineal nerve provides innervation to the perineal, puborectal, and pubovaginal muscles.

The PN contains TH+ (sympathetic), VACHT+ (parasympathetic), and nNOS+ (nitriergic) fibers, but only 30% are somatic fibers (Fig. 1).

3.1.2 | Contribution of the levator ani nerve

Nerve fibers originating from the PN and directly from the sacral roots (S2, S3, and S4) form the LAN.

They course horizontally in the pelvis, and then laterally to the rectum, the inferior hypogastric plexus, and the uterus. The LAN is a supralevator pathway. It provides innervation to the superior/visceral part of the LAM, the coccygeal muscle, and the posterior parts of the pubovaginal and puborectal muscles. It is mainly PMP22+ (somatic) and contains few TH + (adrenergic) fibers (Fig. 2).

3.1.3 | Contribution of the inferior hypogastric plexus

The inferior hypogastric plexus (IHP) results from an association between the hypogastric and pelvic splanchnic nerves.

The distal part of the IHP is localized in a triangular zone formed by the LAM, the vagina, and rectum. At this level, neurovascular bundles originating from the distal part of the IHP innervate the vagina and erectile bodies. Some fibers innervate the internal/medial part of the pubovaginal and the puborectal part of the LAM. Being initially located above the LAM, the IHP can first be considered a supralevator pathway. Thereafter, its fibers split off into the LAM between the lateral aspect of the pelvi-perineal viscera and the medial aspect of the pelvic side wall. The IHP is mainly an endolevator pathway (Fig. 3). Its fibers are TH+ (sympathetic), VACHT+

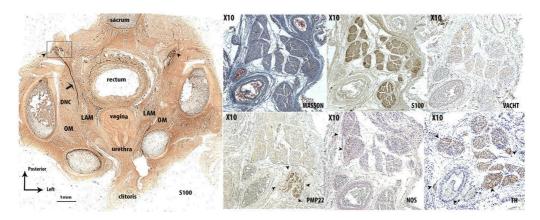


FIGURE 1 Serial transverse sections of a 21-week-old female fetus. It was stained with Masson's trichrome and immunolabeled with S100, VACHT, TH, NOS, PMP22 antibodies, and scanned at an optical resolution of 4800 dpi showing the microscopic appearance of the nerve. Only 30% of the pudendal nerve (PN) fibers were somatic. Black arrowshead shows PN. In the left image, right PN gave a fiber corresponding to right DNC. PN, pudendal nerve; DNC, dorsal nerve clitoris; LAM, levator ani muscle; OM, obturator internus muscle

4 | NYANGOH TIMOH ET AL.

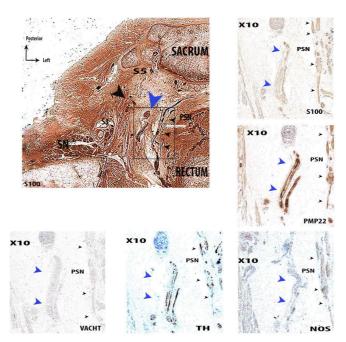


FIGURE 2 Serial transverse sections of a 21-week-old female fetus. It was stained with antibodies against S100, VACHT, TH, NOS, and PMP22, and scanned at an optical resolution of 4800 dpi showing the microscopic appearance of the nerve. The levator ani nerve (LAN) was mainly somatic. It courses horizontally in the pelvis, medially to sacral roots (the third root [S3], and sciatic nerve [SN]), and then laterally to the rectum, the inferior hypogastric plexus with pelvic splanchnic nerves (PSN) shown by small black arrowsheads, and the uterus. Blue arrowshead shows LAN. The large black arrowshead shows pelvic PN origin

(parasympathetic), and NOS+ (nitriergic). The IHP does not contain somatic fibers.

anatomical landmark of its own innervation supply. These results are summarized in Fig. 5.

3.2 | Tridimensional analyses

Using CAAD technique, we observed that the anatomical relationships between the pelvic viscera, LAM, and pelvic nerves coursing as supralevator, endolevator, and infralevator pathways (Fig. 4A, B, and C). The LAM serves as an

4 | DISCUSSION

This study provides information on the topography and nature of LAM innervation. Three nerve structures supply innervation to the LAM: (i) the LAN is a supralevator and purely

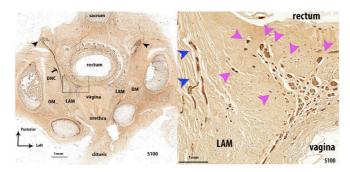


FIGURE 3 A transverse section of a 21-week-old female fetus immunostained with S100 antibodies. Some lateral fibers of the inferior hypogastric plexus (IHP) supply innervation to the levator ani muscle (LAM). Pink arrowsheads show IHP. Blue arrowsheads show LAN giving innervation for LAM. PN, pudendal nerve; DNC, dorsal nerve clitoris; LAM, levator ani muscle; OM, obturator internus muscle



NYANGOH TIMOH ET AL. 5

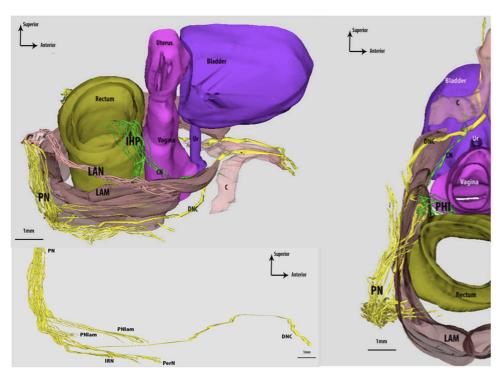


FIGURE 4 Computer-assisted anatomical dissection (CAAD). CAAD of the pelvic structure in a 21-week-old female fetus, shown in lateral view. The pudendal nerve (PN): infralevator; the levator ani nerve (LAN): supralevator; and the inferior hypogastric plexus (IHP): supra- and endolevator; supply innervation to the levator ani muscle (LAM). CAAD of the PN in a 21-week-old female fetus PN divides into inferior rectal nerve (IRN), perineal branch of pudendal nerve (PNper), dorsal nerve of clitoris (DNC), and provides some specific branches to the LAM (PNlam). CAAD of the pelvic structure in a 21-week-old female fetus, shown in inferior view. The PN: infralevator; and the inferior hypogastric plexus (IHP): supra and endolevator; are represented and supplied innervation to the levator ani muscle (LAM). PN, pudendal nerve; PNper, perineal branch of the pudendal nerve; PNlam, specific branches coming from PN for LAM; DNC, dorsal nerve of the clitoris; C, clitoris; Ur, urethra; LAM, levator ani muscle; LAN, levator ani nerve; CN, cavernous nerve; IHP, inferior hypogastric plexus

somatic; (ii) the IHP is a supra- and endolevator, and is purely autonomic; and (iii) the PN is an infralevator and is autonomic-somatic. The LAN and the IHP are located above the LAM.

In our study, we observed a somatic nerve (LAN) in the pelvic cavity that gave innervation to the LAM. Classically, autonomic nerves have been described above the LAM and somatic ones below. Some authors have previously described an intra-pelvic somatic nerve above the LAM. However, the function of this nerve has not been assessed previously and its eventual somatic nature had not been investigated. By using a specific antibody against myelin (PMP 22-antibody), we observed mainly somatic nerve fibers within the LAN. In a previous study, authors found that the LAN came from the intra-pelvic PN or sacral roots, and supplied the LAM or urethra. 6,16,18,19

We have recently described dual autonomic (IHP) and somatic control (PN) of pelvic viscera with a communicating loop within the LAM. In the present study, we observed that lateral distal branches of the IHP innervated the medial part of

the LAM. Distal branches of the IHP then subdivide into three main pathways: a dorsal pathway, with an internal rectal plexus to the rectum; a ventral pathway, with the neurovascular bundles reaching the urethra and erectile bodies; and a lateral pathway to the LAM.

A debate exists on the PN's contribution to LAM innervation. Recently, in a human fetus study, Wallner et al⁶ described participation of the PN to LAM innervation in 56% of 10 cases through specific branch nerves and the inferior rectal nerve. These authors also showed a communicating branch between the PN and LAN.⁶ The PN is located below the LAM and is thought to supply only somatic impulses toward the perineum and external genital structures.⁹ But no PN function was assessed with immunolabeling. In all fetuses in our study, we confirmed that the PN is the principal nerve for pelvic floor muscle and participated in LAM innervation through specific collateral branches. Our results emphasizes also that it gave innervation for anal sphincter (via NRI), for perineal muscle (via the perineal nerve), and for clitoris (via the dorsal nerve of clitoris). We

NYANGOH TIMOH ET AL

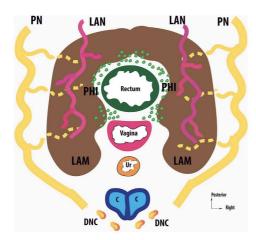


FIGURE 5 Synthesis results. The levator ani muscle (LAM) is an anatomic landmark for its own innervation. The LAM neural supply is organized into three compartments: (i) The pudendal nerve (PN) is both autonomic and somatic; this is an infralevator pathway. (ii)The levator ani nerve (LAN) is purely somatic; this is a supralevator pathway. (iii) The IHP is purely autonomic; this is an infra- and endolevator pathway. PN, pudendal nerve; PNper, perineal branch of the pudendal nerve; PNlam, specific branches coming from PN for LAM; DNC, dorsal nerve of the clitoris; C, clitoris; Ur, Urethra; LAM, levator ani muscle; LAN, levator ani nerve; CN, cavernous nerve; IHP, inferior hypogastric plexus

also noted an important number of autonomic fibers within the PN and its branches. Using immunolabeling, we also observed that the PN appeared to be both autonomic and somatic (with 30% of somatic fibers). Moreover, the current study is the first demonstrating that LAM gets autonomic innervation from both the sacral plexus and inferior hypogastric plexus.

Another concern of the present study is the choice of antibodies used. We used polyclonal antibodies against PS100, TH, VACHT, PMP22, and nNOS because of their validity. Indeed, we already demonstrated the internal validity with a high reproducibility. 9,13,14,20 Moreover, external validity of these antibodies has been also demonstrated by others teams.^{21–23} For PS100, Schwann cell is the preponderant cell type of peripheral nerve; hence, we considered that it labeled the vast majority of peripheral nerve fibers.²⁴ PMP22 is a glycoprotein of compact peripheral nerve system myelin that plays a crucial role in formation and maintenance of the myelin, 12 but is not specific of peripheral somatic nerves and is observed in other tissues such as heart, gut, and lung. 12 However, somatic nerves contain greater compact myelin than autonomic nerves. Furthermore, in our study, autonomic nerves (such as inferior hypogastric plexus) were not labeled by PMP22 antibody, whereas human sciatic nerve (positive control) was labeled. Only a previous study depicted somatic nature of nerve by identifying myelin using classic coloration (luxol fast blue). ¹⁷

As sympathetic neurons use adrenaline and that TH is involved in converting tyrosine to dopamine, we used this antibody to identify sympathetic nerve fibers.²⁵ VACHT antibodies identify parasympathetic neurons. VACHT ARNm is expressed in preganglionic sympathetic terminals in pre- and paravertebral sympathetic ganglia, in the adrenal medulla, as well as in postganglionic cholinergic neurons in the paravertebral chain. But, other structures of peripheric nervous system, such as cholinergic terminals of sudomotor and vasomotor nerves of skeletal muscle, also used VACHT. Therefore, although VACHT antibody is suitable for parasympathetic neurons, interpretation of labeling remains questionable²⁶ as it is impossible to claim that all VACHT positive nerve fibbers are parasympathetic. Finally, nNOS is a marker of parasympathetic pro-erectile fibers²² previously used to describe dorsal nerve of clitoris, and cavernous nerve pathways (positive control in our study) justifying its use in the current study.14

From clinical view-point, our results support the crucial role of both autonomic and somatic nerve preservation of LAM implicated in pelvic-floor stability, micturition-urinary continence, defecation-anal continence, and orgasm. One can hypothesize that autonomic input may participate in tonus, whereas somatic input may determine contractions of the LAM, but further functional studies are required. During pregnancy, 18.6-75% of patients suffer of UI, a prevalence that increases from the first to the third trimester.²⁷ UI during pregnancy is also a major risk factor for re-occurrence of UI 15 years later. 28 Thus, prevention of UI during pregnancy may have significant long-term benefits. It also suggests that uterus length and fetus weight, and chronic stretching of the pelvic-floor muscle or nerve, can participate in UI. Although many mechanisms are involved in the occurrence of UI during pregnancy (hormonal changes or mechanical change with displacement of the urethra), 27 denervation of the pelvicfloor muscles has been less studied. Some electrophysiological studies have established that, after vaginal delivery, pudendal denervation is associated with UI.²⁻⁴ A recent study concluded that, after simulated vaginal delivery, neurogenic deficiency may persist and lead to delayed recurrence of stress UI with increased age.29 These studies have, however, not demonstrated pudendal denervation during pregnancy itself.2,4,30 Patients undergoing a cesarean section before labor do not have PN denervation, which reinforces our hypotheses. Because of their intrapelvic and supralevator position, the LAN and IHP may be at risk of chronic stretching during pregnancy. Conversely, the PN could be damaged during vaginal delivery because of its infralevator

From physiopathological view-point, pelvic-floor muscle strength may not be the only mechanism of UI. With new anatomical insights, nerve-based rehabilitation strategies, such as sacral neuromodulation, may be developed. A recent study shows good results for electrical stimulation of

NYANGOH TIMOH et al... 7

the PN after simulated childbirth injury in an animal model.³¹ Theoretically, targeting both the LAN and NP could improve the function of a well-coordinated LAM. The three-way innervation of the LAM may also support adaptive mechanisms that could explain the absence of pelvic-floor dysfunction after vaginal delivery. As autonomic nerve preservation has become the standard of care in many pelvic surgeries, preservation of somatic nerves, such as the LAN, could be of surgical and functional interest to avoid LAM palsy and pelvic-floor disorders. Functional studies are required to better describe the clinical implications for urinary or fecal continence and the pelvic-floor statics related to pregnancy, delivery, and pelvic surgery.

Nevertheless, our study presents some limitations. First, the small sample size of the present study cannot exclude bias. Second, the analysis of innervation in fetuses could be considered inappropriate to evaluate nerve distribution in adults. However, mature fetuses are classically considered good experimental models for pelviperineal anatomic and physiological studies. ^{32,33} Second, we used fetuses instead of fresh adult cadavers that could also be a potential bias. Also, en-bloc dissection, instead of a classical fresh cadaver adult dissection, avoided distortion of the anatomical structures and aided identification of small nerve fibers. The use of adult enbloc dissection is time consuming because of the large tissue size.

Finally, although PN is well described in literature as a mixed nerve (containing both autonomic and somatic fibers), to date, no immunohistochemical study could establish the relative percentage of both somatic and autonomic nerve fibers. Our results are then somehow surprising. One limitation is that our study is based on fetal material and myelination may not be achieved before childbirth, although previous papers confirmed earliness of the nervous system development.³³

5 | CONCLUSION

This study provides a new representation of LAM innervation that involves the autonomic and somatic systems. The superior or visceral side of the LAM receives somatic innervation from the LAN and autonomic innervation from the distal part of the IHP. The inferior side of the LAM receives both autonomic and somatic innervation only from the PN. The clinical role of the LAM may need to be reconceptualized with regard to its revised anatomical nerve supply.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Nothing to disclose.

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 Innervation of the female human urethral sphincter: 3D



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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional Supporting Information may be found online in the supporting information tab for this article.



3- Article 3 : Structure musculaire du muscle élévateur de l'anus : AJOG, 2018- IF : 5,7

Original Research

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GYNECOLOGY

Detailed muscular structure and neural control anatomy of the levator ani muscle: a study based on female human fetuses

Krystel Nyangoh Timoh, MD; David Moszkowicz, MD, PhD; Mazen Zaitouna, MD; Cedric Lebacle, MD; Jelena Martinovic, MD, PhD; Djibril Diallo, MD, PhD; Maud Creze, MD; Vincent Lavoue, MD, PhD; Emile Darai, MD, PhD; Gérard Benoit, MD; Thomas Bessede, MD, PhD

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BACKGROUND: Injury to the levator ani muscle or pelvic nerves during pregnancy and vaginal delivery is responsible for pelvic floor dysfunction.

OBJECTIVE: We sought to demonstrate the presence of smooth muscular cell areas within the levator ani muscle and describe their

localization and innervation.

STUDY DESIGN: Five female human fetuses were studied after approval from the French Biomedicine Agency. Specimens were serially sectioned and stained by Masson trichrome and immunostained for striated and smooth muscle, as well as for somatic, adrenergic, cholinergic, and nitriergic nerve fibers. Slides were digitized for 3-dimensional reconstruction. One fetus was reserved for electron microscopy. We explored the structure and innervation of the levator ani muscle.

RESULTS: Smooth muscular cell beams were connected externally to the anococcygeal raphe and the levator ani muscle and with the longitudinal anal muscle sphincter. The caudalmost part of the pubovaginal muscle was found to bulge between the rectum and the vagina. This

bulging was a smooth muscular interface between the levator ani muscle and the longitudinal anal muscle sphincter. The medial (visceral) part of the levator ani muscle contained smooth muscle cells, in relation to the autonomic nerve fibers of the inferior hypogastric plexus. The lateral (parietal) part of the levator ani muscle contained striated muscle cells only and was innervated by the somatic nerve fibers of levator ani and pudendal nerves. The presence of smooth muscle cells within the medial part of the levator ani muscle was confirmed under electron microscopy in 1 fetus. **CONCLUSION:** We characterized the muscular structure and neural control of the levator ani muscle. The muscle consists of a medial part containing smooth muscle cells under autonomic nerve influence and a lateral part containing striated muscle cells under somatic nerve control. These findings could result in new postpartum rehabilitation techniques.

Key words: anatomy, innervation, levator ani muscle, pelvic floor, smooth muscle cells

Introduction

Pelvic floor dysfunction affects nearly 25% of all women and is responsible for altered quality of life. It might be the consequence of injury to the levator ani muscle or pelvic nerves during pregnancy and vaginal delivery. Improved knowledge of the structure and innervation of the pelvic floor muscles may have clinical and therapeutic consequences.

In 2004, Kearney et al⁵ published a new anatomical description of the levator ani muscle following a literature review. The resulting nomenclature is based on origin-insertion pairs and describes 3 components: (1) the

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0002-9378/\$36.00 © 2017 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajog.2017.09.021 pubovisceral muscle composed of 3 bundles called the puboperineal, pubovaginal, and puboanal muscles; (2) the puborectal muscle; and (3) the iliococcygeal muscle. This description has the advantage of clarifying the nomenclature of the levator ani muscle, but is not based on its structure. Furthermore, the review does not provide a full description of the levator ani muscle.

We have previously described dual autonomic (inferior hypogastric plexus) and somatic (pudendal nerve) control of pelvic viscera with a communicating loop within the levator ani muscle. Subsequently, we introduced a new concept of levator ani muscle innervation based on female human fetuses and using 3-dimensional (3D) reconstruction in a recent study. In this study, autonomic nerve fibers were identified as arising from the inferior hypogastric plexus and reaching the medial part of levator ani muscle,7 supporting the possible existence of smooth muscle cells within the levator ani muscle. However, to date, classic anatomical literature textbooks describe the levator ani muscle as an entire striated muscle. Even though some authors have reported the existence of smooth muscle cells in the pelvic floor, 1-11 data about the exact relation between the levator ani muscle and these smooth muscle cells remain scarce. Moreover, few studies have focused on the organization and innervation of smooth muscle cell areas within the pelvic floor.

Hence, the aim of this study was to demonstrate the presence of smooth muscle cell areas within the levator ani muscle, and to clarify their localization and innervation.

Materials and Methods Human fetuses

The fetal specimens were obtained from late miscarriages. All parents gave written consent and authorization for the scientific use of the cadaver. Only specimens without maceration and without morphological or neurological macroscopic abnormalities on pathology examination were used. No infectious

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conditions were reported and no abnormalities of the central nervous system were observed during the autopsy of the fetuses.

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The French Biomedicine Agency approved the study (PFS15-011). The work was compliant with the provisions of the 2013 revised version of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Five female fetuses were studied with a crown-rump length (CRL) of 150-185 mm. Fetuses had a gestational age of between 18-22 weeks, as determined from the CRL and fetal heel-to-toe length, corrected for the first-trimester ultrasound CRL measurement and confirmed by postmortem examination estimating organ maturation. 12 Fetuses A, B, C, D, and E were at 19, 19, 21, 21, and 22 weeks of gestation, respectively (Supplemental Figures 1 and 2). The external body aspect of each fetus was carefully restored after the autopsy out of respect and in case parents expressed a wish to see their fetus once more.

Macroscopic dissection

The entire pelvis was removed en-bloc with the pelvic organ and pelvic bone, and was fixed in formalin (10% formaldehyde) for 48 hours. Tissues were then cut into transverse or sagittal slices at 4-mm intervals. The tissue slices were placed in baskets, processed, and embedded in cardboard molds filled with paraffin. To avoid alteration of the visceral topographical relationship, the slices were kept warm in water at 37°C and then mounted whole on Superfrost glass slides. They were then dried at 37°C overnight. Series of 5 μ m-thick sections were then created without intervals. We obtained a total of 150-320 sections from each fetus, depending on the age and size of the specimen.

Staining and immunolabeling

The first section of each level was taken as the reference and stained with Masson trichrome or hematoxylin-eosin to provide information about the topography and localization of anatomical structures (collagen tissue in dark blue, cytoplasm in red, nucleuses in black). Smooth muscles were detected with polyclonal

antibodies against alpha smooth muscle actin (SMA)¹³ and striated muscle with antibodies against myogenin (anti-myogenin)¹⁴ (Supplemental Table).

Neuronal markers were detected with polyclonal antibodies against protein S100 for labeling all nerves, peripheral myelin protein (PMP22) for the somatic peripheral nervous system, 15 tyrosine hydroxylase (TH) for adrenergic nerves, 16 vesicular acetylcholine trans-(VAChT) for cholinergic neurons, 17 and the neural isoform of nitric oxide synthase (nNOS) for bundles18 the proerectile nerve (Supplemental Table).

The avidin-biotin-peroxidase detection procedure was carried out with a Vectastain ABC kit (reference PK6100; Vector Laboratories, Burlingame, CA). Chromogenic detection was performed with a DAB detection kit (DAB, reference SK-4100; Vector Laboratories). Nonimmune serum or IgG at an equivalent dilution was used as a control for all the immunohistochemical analyses.

Histological examination

Serial stained and immunolabeled 2-dimensional sections were used for 3D reconstruction. Using highmagnification (×4-40) analyses of the Masson trichrome- and hematoxylineosin-stained sections, it was possible to identify the various anatomical structures (organs, bones, and fascia). Subsequent sections, treated with an antibody against \$100, were used to identify pelvic-perineal nerves and communicating branches. By comparing the Masson trichrome-stained sections with sections stained with specific antibodies against SMA, myogenin, S100, TH, VAChT, PMP22, and nNOS, it was possible to determine the structure of muscle (smooth [SMA] or striated [myogenin]) and the nature of the nerve fibers identified: ie, somatic (PMP22), autonomic (TH, VAChT), or nitriergic (nNOS).

The sections were taken at almost the same level with a negligible interval between sections (5 μ m). The computer system comprised a personal laptop computer (Windows XP, Microsoft, Redmond, WA) equipped with a digitization system (Perfection V750, Epson), digitization software (Silverfast AI, reference B11B178071), image-processing software (Photoshop, Adobe), and Surfdriver software for Windows (Winsurf image reconstruction software, Version 4.3). All sections were digitized at a resolution of 4800 dpi, and the images were then stacked and aligned. The brightness and contrast of the histological tissue images were adjusted using Photoshop (Adobe). The pelvic anatomical structures and nerve fibers were outlined manually on all histological sections. A 3D analysis of the location, course, and distribution of the nerve fibers and muscle structure was then carried out.

Electron microscopy

An additional fifth fetus was reserved for electron microscopy. The entire pelvis was removed en-bloc including the pelvic organ and pelvic bone. The bony pelvis was then separated from other muscular and fatty tissue using a binocular magnifying glass. The sample was sectioned in 4 parts: right anterior, left anterior, right posterior, and left posterior. Pelvic viscera (bladder, rectum, vagina) were removed.

The fragments were postfixed in 1% osmium tetroxide in buffer for 3 hours at 4°C and embedded in Epon. We Q6 used 1 μ m-thick cross sections stained with thionin. Then ultrathin sections were stained with uranyl acetate and lead citrate. Electron microscopy was then performed to identify smooth actin. The positive control was human colon

Results

Global morphology

The levator ani muscle inserted onto the pubis with an anteroposterior course and ended on the vaginal wall (for the pubovaginal muscle component of the pubovisceral muscle) and behind the rectum (for the puborectal muscle) describing muscular bundles. The iliococcygeal muscle joined via the anococcygeal raphe posterior to the rectum Q5 (Figure 1, A). [F1]

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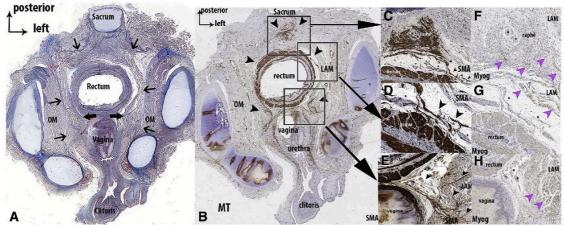
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Serial transverse sections of 21-week-old female fetus scanned at optical resolution of 4800 dpi



A, Stained with Masson trichrome (MT). Levator ani muscle (LAM) (small arrows) in relation laterally with obturator muscle (OM) and medially with urethra, vagina, and rectum. Bulging (bold arrows) formed by LAM between vagina and rectum forming triangular space. B-E, Stained with anti-smooth muscle actin (SMA) antibody. Bulging (arrows) formed by LAM between vagina and rectum. Asterisks show nerves. B, Smooth muscle within LAM (arrowheads) localized in anococcygeal raphe, medial part of LAM, and bulge. C, Smooth muscle cells (arrowheads) in anococcygeal raphe running with inferior hypogastric plexus through medial part of levator ani. D, Smooth muscle cells (arrowheads) from medial part of LAM penetrating rectal wall. E, Smooth muscle in bulge and inserted into vaginal wall (arrowheads). Smooth muscle fibers were localized in anococcygeal raphe and medial part of pubovisceral muscle (large arrowhead) inserted into rectal and vaginal walls. F-H, Stained with anti-myogenin (Myog) antibody. Striated muscle cells within LAM (arrowheads). Striated muscle was abundant in lateral part of LAM. Asterisks show nerves.

Nyangoh Timoh et al. Muscular structure and neural control of levator ani muscle. Am J Obstet Gynecol 2017.

Pubovisceral muscle

In all the fetuses, the pubovaginal muscle inserted into the pubis and ended on the vaginal wall. Muscle bundles arose from the pubovaginal muscle, which can be likened to a posterovaginal strap (Figure 1, A). The caudalmost part of the pubovaginal muscle formed a bulge between the rectum and the vagina, delineating a triangular space for the inferior hypogastric plexus (Figure 1, A). Smooth muscle cell beams arose from this bulge and were connected to the levator ani muscle laterally and to the longitudinal anal muscle internally (Figures 1 and 2). The pubovaginal muscle also gave rise to muscular fibers that inserted into the lateral vaginal wall in an oblique axis (Figure 1). The lateral part of the pubovaginal muscle was composed of striated muscle cells (positive antimyogenin antibody) (Figure 1). In contrast, its medial part, which bulged between the rectum and the vagina, contained smooth muscle cells (positive anti-SMA

antibody). These smooth muscle cells were randomly arranged and the smooth muscular bulges were connected to levator ani muscle and to the rectal and vaginal walls. The urethra lay on the vagina and was connected to the levator ani muscle via the vagina (Figure 1).

The puboanal muscle had a vertical axis. It was exclusively composed of smooth muscle cells (positive anti-SMA antibody) and connected to the longitudinal anal muscle sphincter (Figures 1 and 2).

Puborectal muscle (Figure 1)

In all the fetuses, the puborectal muscle inserted into the pubis and can be likened to a strap behind the rectum (Figure 1). The puborectal muscle was exclusively composed of striated muscle cells (negative for antimyogenin antibody) (Figure 1).

lliococcygeal muscle

In all the fetuses, the iliococcygeal muscle was also exclusively composed of striated muscle cells (Figure 1) and joined via the anococcygeal raphe behind the rectum.

Anococcygeal raphe

In all the fetuses, some muscle fibers of the anococcygeal raphe were exclusively composed of smooth muscle cells (positive anti-SMA antibody). The anococcygeal raphe and the medial part of the levator ani muscle were connected to the longitudinal anal muscle sphincter by smooth muscle cell beams forming an acute angle between the anococcygeal raphe (horizontal plane) and longitudinal anal muscle sphincter (longitudinal plane) (Figures 1 and 2).

Smooth muscle cell area confirmed by electron microscopy

Electron microscopy data observed smooth actin within the medial part of the levator ani muscle. Figure 3 shows [F3] nonstriated tube.

MONTH 2017 American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology 1.e3

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FIGURE 2

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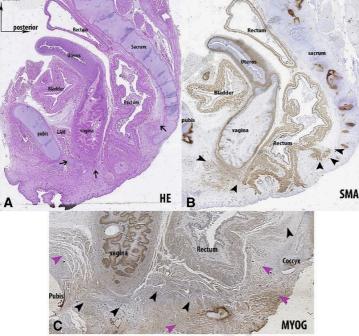
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Serial sagittal section of 21-week-old female fetus stained with A, hematoxylin-eosin (HE); B, anti-smooth muscle actin (SMA) antibody; and C, anti-myogenin (MYOG) antibody scanned at optical resolution of



A, Levator ani muscle (LAM) (small arrows). B, Smooth muscle fibers were localized in anococcygeal raphe and medial part of pubovisceral muscle (large arrowhead), inserted into anal and vaginal walls. C, Striated muscle (purple arrowhead) and smooth muscle (black arrowhead).

Nyangoh Timoh et al. Muscular structure and neural control of levator ani muscle. Am J Obstet Gynecol 2017.

Nerve supply of smooth and striated muscle fibers

The visceral medial aspect of the levator ani muscle

In all the fetuses, medial posterior smooth muscle cells (from the puboanal muscle and anococcygeal raphe) were in close relation with the inferior rectal plexus that arose from the inferior hypogastric plexus, ie, autonomic sympathetic (TH+) and parasympathetic (VAChT+ and NOS+) nerves. These smooth muscle fibers were connected to the puboanal muscle externally and the longitudinal anal muscle internally.

In all the fetuses, medial anterior smooth muscle cells from the

pubovaginal muscle were located within the bulge of the levator ani muscle. It delineated a triangular space formed by the vagina, rectum, and levator ani muscle where the inferior hypogastric plexus coursed. Smooth muscle cells were connected to the pubovaginal muscle externally and to the longitudinal anal muscle and vagina internally. They were composed of the autonomic sympathetic (TH+) and sympathetic (VAChT+ and NOS+) nerve fibers of the inferior hypogastric plexus. These nerve fibers were also parallel to the smooth muscle bundles that penetrated the vaginal wall (Figure 4).

The lateral parietal aspect of the levator ani muscle

In all the fetuses, the lateral aspect of the levator ani muscle consisted of striated muscle only. It was innervated by somatic (PMP22+, TH-, VAChT-) fibers coming from the pudendal nerve and the levator ani nerve (Figure 5).

Synthesis

Three large areas of smooth muscle cells were identified (Figures 6 and 7): (1) the [F6] superficial part of the anococcygeal [F7] raphe; (2) both the left and right bulge (between the rectum and vagina); and (3) the visceral medial part of the levator ani muscle (pubovaginal and puboanal muscles).

These areas were located on the medial sides of the levator ani muscle, in contact with the pelvic viscera. They determined interfaces between the levator ani muscle and the pelvic organs.

Comment

This study demonstrates that the visceral medial levator ani muscle insertions are mainly composed of smooth muscle cells. These smooth muscle fibers create an interface and connect the levator ani muscle to the rectum or vagina and are accompanied by autonomic nerves of the inferior hypogastric plexus.

Human fetal tissue has previously been used for pelvic innervation and pelvis muscle studies as pelvic innervation is fully developed at 8 weeks of gestation. This was reported in a fetus study by Fritsch, 19 and later observed by Arango-Toro and Domenech-Mateu²⁰ in an anatomical study of 15 human embryos and 2 fetuses ranging in size from 4-132 mm CRL: the pelvic plexus was fully developed by Carnegie stage 23. Consequently, pelvic neuroanatomy is stable and comparable with that of the adult >8 weeks of gestation with no further fundamental changes occurring during fetal growth and postfetal development. Ultimately, in accordance with previous studies, mature fetuses are considered as valid and reliable experimental models for pelviperineal anatomical and physiological studies. Moreover, the use of fetal tissue has several advantages. First, en-bloc [F4]

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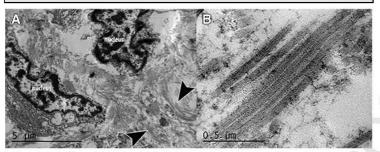
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FIGURE 3 Electron microscopy images from 21-week-old female fetus showing cells with smooth actin on levator ani muscle



A. Smooth actin filament (arrowheads), B. Enlargement of smooth actin filament. Nyangoh Timoh et al. Muscular structure and neural control of levator ani muscle. Am J Obstet Gynecol 2017.

pathology processing with mega cassette embedding is easier than with adult tissue avoiding the data loss and reconstruction bias that occurs with adult tissues. Second, the nerve diameter/body circumference ratio is larger in fetuses than in adults, facilitating identification of pelvic nerves. Another important advantage of using fetal tissue in our institution is that the time between death and tissue sampling is shorter with fetuses than with adult anatomical bodies due to technical and administrative procedures. This optimizes the specificity and precision of immunochemistry to identify and locate muscular cell types, and their relation to specific nerves. Immunochemistry is often less feasible in adult tissues because proteins alter over time. Fresh fetal material also allows the use of electron microscopy to confirm the presence of smooth muscle cells within the levator ani muscle. Finally, adult tissues are often from elderly subjects and data about parity, which is important for pelvic floor anatomy analysis, are often missing. Classically, autonomic nerves are described as running above the levator ani muscle and somatic nerves below. In a previous study, our team described dual autonomic (inferior hypogastric plexus) and somatic (pudendal nerve) control of pelvic viscera with a communicating loop within the levator ani muscle.6 We later described a new representation of levator ani

muscle innervation based on the anatomy of human fetuses.21 identified 3 innervation pathways for the levator ani muscle: (1) a somatic supralevator pathway via the levator ani nerve; (2) an infralevator pathway via the pudendal nerve that was both autonomic and somatic; and surpris-(3) an autonomic supraendolevator pathway via the inferior hypogastric plexus.²¹ In the current study, we demonstrated that the visceral medial insertions of the levator ani muscle are mainly composed of smooth muscle cells. This is consistent with our previous description of the levator ani muscle innervation.21

Shafik²² called visceral insertions of the levator ani muscle the "hiatal ligament." In his study, he concluded that structures were essentially composed of collagen and that they connect the levator ani fascia and intrahiatal structures.²² Petros Woodman²³ in their integral theory, stated that pelvic organ prolapse and abnormal pelvic symptoms are mainly caused by connective tissue laxity in the vagina or its supporting ligaments. According to the latter author, the supporting tissue does not contain any smooth muscle cells. In the present study, we report the presence of smooth muscle cells on supportive tissue connecting the medial aspects of the levator ani muscle and pelvic viscera. A few other studies have observed the presence

of smooth muscle cells. 9-11,24 Hinata and Murakami¹¹ and Macchi et al¹⁰ performed immunohistochemical studies on cadavers from elderly subjects and Hinata and Murakami¹¹ studied samples from a small series of 3 women limiting interpretation. Neither Kinugasa et al nor Macchi et al10 described smooth muscle in relation to pelvic innervation. Shafik et al²⁴ did not use immunohistochemistry, and none of these studies gave a 3D representation of anatomical data. The present study is the first to associate immunohistochemistry, the relationship of smooth muscle cells with innervation, and 3D reconstruction.

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In the literature, the origin and structure of the longitudinal anal muscle is unclear. Some authors have described it as potentially originating from levator ani muscle and/or the anococcygeal ligament. We agree with Kinugasa et al, who used a fetal human model and observed the origin of smooth muscle cells from the superficial ventral side of the anococcygeal ligament, and we also observed some smooth muscle cells connecting the medial part of the levator ani muscle to the longitudinal anal

There are conflicting findings about the anterior visceral insertions of the levator ani muscle as to whether it is connected to the urethra or vagina. Wallner et al²⁶ described a connection via the conjunctive tissue of the urethra. In contrast, Hinata and Murakami¹¹ did not find any connection between the urethral rhabdosphincter and the levator ani muscle because of the existence of the vagina. Kinugasa et al9 also concluded that levator ani muscle was far from the urethra. In the present study, we observed: (1) a connection composed of smooth muscle cell fibers between the levator ani muscle on the vaginal wall; and (2) no direct connection between the urethra and levator ani muscle. Furthermore, we found smooth muscle fibers connecting the pubovaginal muscle and the longitudinal anal

From a physiopathological point of view, the smooth muscle cell interface between the viscera and the levator ani muscle could have a protective role.¹¹

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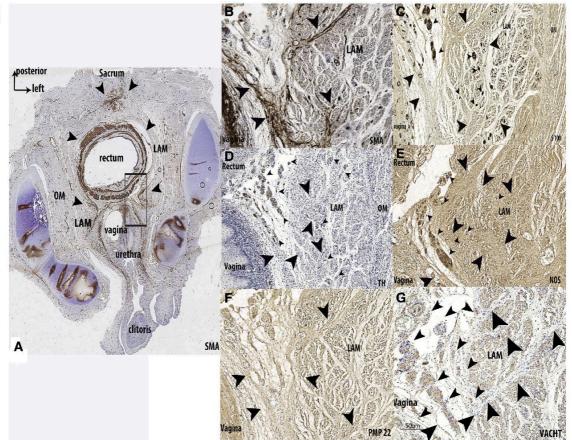
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FIGURE 4

Serial transverse sections of 21-week-old female fetus stained with: A and B, smooth muscle actin (SMA); C, S100; D, tyrosine hydroxylase (TH); E, nitric oxide synthase (NOS); F, vesicular acetylcholine transferase (VACHT); and G, peripheral myelin protein (PMP22) and at optical resolution of 4800 dpi showing microscopic appearance of nerve fibers



A, Proximity of smooth muscle cells (large arrowheads) coming from levator ani muscle (LAM). Small arrowheads show all C, nerves; D, autonomic sympathetic; E, nitriergic; and F, parasympathetic fibers coming from inferior hypogastric plexus.

Nyangoh Timoh et al. Muscular structure and neural control of levator ani muscle. Am J Obstet Gynecol 2017.

Smooth muscle cells also raise the possibility of regeneration, notably after vaginal delivery, and could be more resistant to long-term stress. Hinata and Murakami¹¹ stated that the random arrangement of the smooth muscle cells makes it improbable that they act under nerve or hormone impulses. However, Tan and De Vita²⁷ proposed a structural constitutive model with smooth muscle

cells as the active component. Shafik hypothesized that the increasing electromyography activity of the levator ani muscle in response to intraabdominal pressure activity was related to the presence of smooth muscle cells in the medial part of the levator ani muscle. In this study, although we found that these smooth muscle cells were close to autonomic innervation, it is difficult to

conclude that they are innervated by autonomic nerve fiber. However, this Q8 hypothesis cannot be excluded and deserves to be confirmed by electrophysiological studies.

Therefore, smooth muscle cells could play an active role under autonomic impulses with a capacity of regeneration, rather than a passive one merely providing elasticity.

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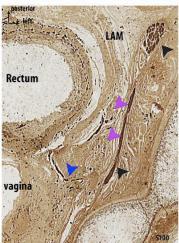
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FIGURE 5 Transverse section of 21-weekold female fetus immunostained with S100 antibodies



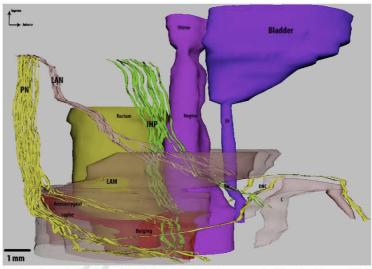
Some fibers of inferior hypogastric plexus supply innervation to medial part of levator ani muscle (LAM). Lateral side of LAM is innervated by somatic fibers coming from pudendal nerve (PN) and levator ani nerve. Inferior hypogastric plexus (pink arrowheads). Levator ani nerve (blue arrowheads) giving innervation for LAM. PN and dorsal nerve of clitoris (gray arrowheads).

Nyangoh Timoh et al. Muscular structure and neural control of levator ani muscle. Am J Obstet Gynecol 2017.

From a clinical point of view, the levator ani muscle plays a critical role for pelvic status while connecting the viscera both to the bone and to themselves. For example, for Petros and Woodman,23 the longitudinal anal muscle is part of the crucial level 3 in the integrated theory. The orientation of the puboanal muscle is downward, which is consistent with the theory that it participates in narrowing the anorectal angle along with longitudinal anal muscle. Furthermore, smooth muscle cells do not penetrate the urethral wall but the urethra lies on vagina forming a complex. The levator ani muscle could thus contribute to urinary continence confirming the findings from previous studies.^{22,2} Finally, the penetration of smooth muscle fibers into the vaginal wall also explains how the levator ani muscle is involved in

FIGURE 6

Computer-assisted anatomical dissection of pelvic structure in 21-week-old female fetus, lateral view



Levator ani muscle (LAM) neural supply is organized into 3 components: (1) pudendal nerve (PN) is both autonomic and somatic, infralevator pathway; (2) levator ani nerve is purely somatic, supralevator pathway; (3) inferior hypogastric nerve is purely autonomic, infralevator and endolevator pathway. Smooth muscle cells in red within LAM get innervation from autonomic fibers. Not all inferior hypogastric nerve fibers were represented for more clarity.

C. clitoris: DNC. dorsal nerve of clitoris; IHP, inferior hypogastric plexus; Ur, urethra.

Nyangoh Timoh et al. Muscular structure and neural control of levator ani muscle. Am J Obstet Gynecol 2017.

sexuality. Shafik³⁰ has previously described how the vaginal tube opens, elongates, narrows, and straightens during sexual intercourse along with elevation of the uterus. He calls these manifestations the vaginolevator reflex and hypothesizes that it facilitates adaptation of the vagina for the penis, and increases penis rigidity and the widening of the vaginal introitus.30 Our findings provide a possible anatomical rationale for this reflex by identifying smooth muscle cells between the vagina and the levator ani muscle.

Our results are consistent with a study that demonstrated improved postpartum rehabilitation results after direct low-voltage/lowfrequency electric stimulation of the vagina.31 This implies that stimulation of the smooth muscle cells should be included in pelvic floor muscle reeducation following childbirth.

Despite the use of an original model, our study has some limitations. First, the small sample size of the present study cannot exclude bias. However, smooth muscle cells were found within the levator ani muscle in all 4 fetuses, which supports its relevance. Second, the analysis of muscle structure in fetuses could be considered inappropriate in adults. However, as previously mentioned, mature fetuses are classically considered good experimental models for pelviperineal anatomy and physiological studies. Third, the fetuses were obtained from miscarriages that were probably mainly due to genetic abnormalities. However, this is not thought to fundamentally alter these anatomical factors. Fourth, due to the expense of the technique, electron microscopy was used in 1 fetus only (fetus D, specifically reserved for this analysis) to confirm the morphological ultrastructure found by

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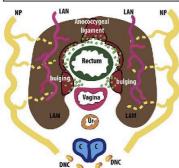
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FIGURE 7	
Synthetic results. Trans	verse
representation of levato	
muscle (LAM) innervation	on and
structure	



LAM is anatomical landmark for its own innervation. Three large areas of smooth muscle cells were identified: (1) superficial part of anococcygeal raphe, (2) both left and right bulge (between rectum and vagina), and (3) visceral medial part of LAM. Medial smooth muscle cells in red within LAM get innervation from autonomic fibers coming from inferior hypogastric nerve. Lateral striated smooth muscles in brown get innervation from somatic fibers coming from pudendal nerves and levator ani nerves (LAN). C, clitoris; DNC, dorsal nerve of clitoris; Ur, urethra

Nyangoh Timoh et al. Muscular structure and neural control of levator ani muscle. Am J Obstet Gynecol 2017.

immunochemistry in 3 fetuses (B, C, and E). Anti-SMA antibody testing was not done for fetus A because of insufficient remaining sample. Finally, the origin (levator ani muscle or pelvic viscera) of the smooth muscle cells is debatable. Our evidence is purely visual. However, visual analysis of immunohistochemistry and 3D reconstruction revealed consistent differences between the orientation, structure, presentation, and density of the smooth fibers in the medial levator ani muscle and the rectum/vagina, which point towards the concept of a medial levator ani muscle enriched in smooth muscle. Furthermore, the presence of autonomic innervation in the medial levator ani muscle is consistent with this concept.

Conclusion

We describe a new concept of the levator ani muscle based on smooth cell areas and innervation. We identified: (1) a medial visceral interface zone with smooth cells in relation to pelvic viscera innervated by autonomic nerves, and (2) a lateral parietal zone with striated muscle cells in relation to the bony pelvis and innervated by the pudendal nerve and levator ani nerve. The smooth levator ani muscle forms a visceral interface accompanied by autonomic

Acknowledgment

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Author and article information

From UMR 1195, University Paris Sud, INSERM, Université Paris-Saclay, Le Kremlin-Bicetre (Drs Nyangoh Timoh, Moszkowicz, Zaitouna, Lebacle, Diallo, Creze, Benoit, and Bessede); Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Hopital Universitaire de Rennes, University Rennes 1, Rennes (Drs Nyangoh Timoh and Lavoue); Department of Fetal Pathology, Hopitaux Universitaires Paris-Sud, APHP, Clamart (Dr Martinovic); Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Tenon University Hospital,

Assistance Publique des Höpitaux de Paris, UMR-S 938, Pierre and Marie Curie University, Paris (Dr Darai), and Urology Department, Hopitaux Universitaires Paris-Sud, Q2 APHP, Le Kremlin-Bicetre (Dr Bessede), France.

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Corresponding author: David Moszkowicz, MD, PhD.

k.nyangoh@gmail.com

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Original Research GYNECOLOGY

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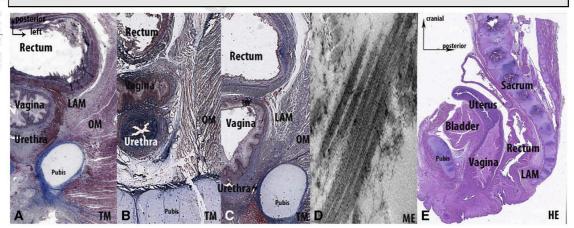
SUPPLEMENTAL FIGURE 1 Macroscopic view of all 5 fetuses



Pelvis of: A, fetus 1 (19 weeks of gestation); B, fetus 2 (19 weeks of gestation); C, fetus 3 (21 weeks of gestation); D, fetus 4 (21 weeks of gestation) sectioned in 4 parts: right anterior, left anterior, right posterior, and left posterior; and E, fetus 5 (22 weeks of gestation).

Nyangoh Timoh et al. Muscular structure and neural control of levator ani muscle. Am J Obstet Gynecol 2017.

SUPPLEMENTAL FIGURE 2 Morphological view of all of 5 fetuses



Transversal section of: A, fetus 1 stained in Masson trichrome (MT) (19 weeks of gestation); B, fetus 2 stained in MT (19 weeks of gestation); and C, fetus 3 stained in MT (21 weeks of gestation). D, Electron microscopy (EM) image of fetus 4 (21 weeks of gestation). E, Sagittal section of fetus 5 stained in hematoxylin-eosin (HE) (22 weeks of gestation).

LAM, levator ani muscle; OM, obturator muscle

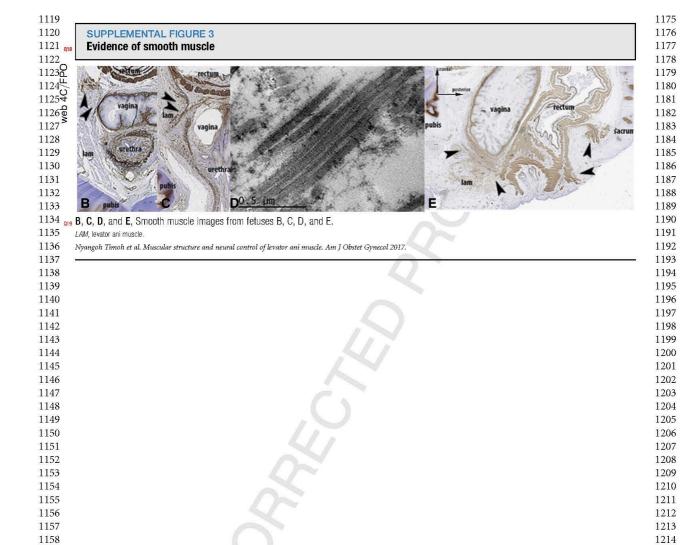
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Tissue target

Autonomic parasympathetic

Autonomic sympathetic

Somatic peripheral nerves

Proerectile nerves

Smooth muscle

Striated muscle

All nerves

Code

Z0311

ab112

160870

ab61220

ab15267

Nyangoh Timoh et al. Muscular structure and neural control of levator ani muscle. Am J Obstet Gynecol 2017.

IS067

ab68984

SUPPLEMENTAL TABLE
Primary polyclonal antisera

Antigen (abbreviation)

Protein S100 (PS100)

Tyrosine hydroxylase (TH)

synthase (nNOS)

Myogenin (MYOG)

Neural isoform of nitric oxide

Smooth muscle actin (SMA)

Peripheral myelin protein (PMP22)

Antigen retrieval

Citrate buffer

Citrate buffer

Citrate buffer

Nο

No

No

Positive control

Sacral plexus

Adrenal gland

Human adult

cavernous nerve

Human thyroid

Human colon

Human myotubes

Incubation

1 h

12 h

12 h

12 h

12 h

12 h

10 min

Dilution

1/400

1/2000

1/750

1/200

1/100

1/150

1/80

Provider

Dako, Denmark

Abcam, Cambridge, MA

Abcam, Cambridge, MA

Cayman, Ann Arbor, MI

Abcam, Cambridge, MA

Abcam, Cambridge, MA

Dako, Denmark

Species

Rabbit

Rabbit

Rabbit

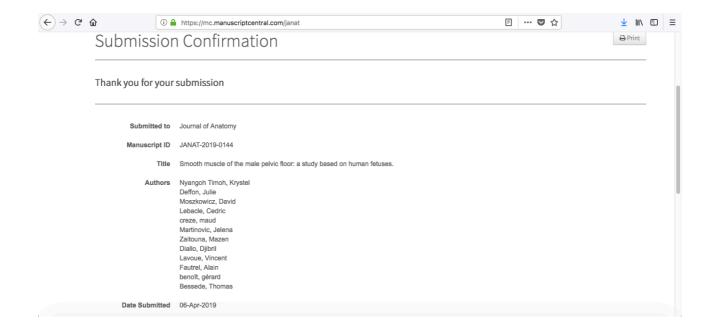
Rabbit

Rabbit

Mouse

1288 299 1390 1390 1391 1391 1391 1391 1391 13
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4-Article 4 : Innervation et structure musculaire du muscle élévateur de l'anus chez le fœtus masculin, Soumis à J Anat, IF= 2,5





ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Smooth muscle of the male pelvic floor: a study based on human fetuses.

Krystel Nyangoh Timoh^{1,2}*, M.D, Julie Deffon¹ *, David Moszkowicz¹, M.D, Cédric Lebacle^{1,3}, M.D, Maud Creze¹, M.D, PHD, Jelena Martinovic⁴, M.D, PHD, Mazen Zaitouna¹, M.D, PHD, Djibril Diallo¹, M.D, PHD Vincent Lavoue², M.D, PHD, Alain Fautrel⁵, M.D, PHD, Gerard Benoit¹, M.D, PHD, Thomas Bessede^{1,3}, M.D, PHD.

Affiliations

- ¹ UMR 1195, University Paris Sud, INSERM, Université Paris-Saclay, 94270, Le Kremlin-Bicetre, France
- ² Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Hopital Universitaire de Rennes, university Rennes 1, Rennes, France.
- ³Urology Department, Hopitaux Universitaires Paris-Sud, APHP, 94270, Le Kremlin-Bicetre, France
- ⁴ Department of Fetal Pathology, Hopitaux universitaires Paris-Sud, APHP, 92140, Clamart, France ⁵Université de Rennes 1, Rennes, France; INSERM, UMR991 Liver Metabolism and Cancer, Rennes, France.

Corresponding author:

Krystel NYANGOH TIMOH, MD.

INSERM-UMR 1195 Hôpital de Bicêtre, Bâtiment Grégory Pincus, 80 rue du Général Leclerc, 94276

Le Kremlin-Bicêtre Cedex, France

Tel: 033 1 49 59 18 83; E-mail: k.nyangoh@gmail.com



Abstract

Genito-urinary dysfunctions, such as erectile dysfunction and urinary incontinence, are common clinical side

effects of radical prostatectomy. They may be induced by lesions of the cavernous nerves or of the nerves that

supply the urethra after passing through rectourethral muscle. Knowledge of the anatomy of the male pelvic

floor is thus important to avoid damaging the pelvic floor muscles during surgery. We set out to explore the

structure and innervation of the smooth muscle of the whole pelvic floor using male fetuses and specific

muscular and neuronal antibody markers with 3D reconstruction. We removed en-bloc the entire pelvis of

three fetuses. The specimens were serially sectioned before being stained with Masson's trichrome and Eosin

Haematoxylin, and immunostained for striated muscle, and somatic, adrenergic, sensory and nitrergic nerve

fibers. Slides were digitized for 3D reconstruction. We individualized a middle compartment that contains

smooth muscle (SM) cells. This compartment is in close relation with the levator ani muscle (LAM), rectum,

and urethra. We describe a posterior contingent of the middle compartment from the sacrum to the rectum

posterior to the rectal wall and an anterior contingent anterior to the rectal wall. The anterior contingent is split

into 1) a centro-levator area or "core" of SM cells localized between the right and left LAM in the transversal

plane, and between the rectum and urethra in the sagittal plane, 2) an endo-levator area that upholsters the

internal aspect of the LAM, and 3) an infra-levator area below the LAM and infero-posterior to the endo-

levator area. All these areas are innervated by autonomic nerves coming from the inferior hypogastric plexus.

The posterior contingent is innervated by retro-rectal nerves and the endo-levator area by latero- rectal nerves.

The core and the infra-levator area receive the cavernous nerve and nerves supplying the urethra. According

to literature, the posterior contingent, endo-levator area, infra-levator area and centro-levator area correspond

to the anococcygeal raphe, to the medial part of the levator ani muscle, to the deep transverse perineal muscle

and to the rectourethral muscle.

We thus demonstrate that these muscular structures are smooth and under autonomic influence. They are also

closely linked to each other and with pelvic viscera and striated muscle forming an entity: the smooth muscle

of the middle compartment.

Key words: anatomy – innervation- pelvic floor - smooth muscle cells.

Introduction

Genito-urinary dysfunctions, such as erectile dysfunction and urinary incontinence, occur respectively in 10 to 46% and 16% of patients after radical prostatectomy(Ficarra, Novara, Ahlering, *et al.*, 2012; Ficarra, Novara, Rosen, *et al.*, 2012). They may be induced by lesions of the cavernous nerves or of the nerves that supply the urethra after passing through the rectourethral muscle(Strasser *et al.*, 2000; Costello, Brooks and Cole, 2004; Takenaka *et al.*, 2005). Knowledge of the anatomy of the male pelvic floor is thus important to avoid damaging the pelvic floor muscles during surgery. Recently, two anatomical studies described the presence of smooth muscle (SM) within the male pelvic floor (Muro *et al.*, 2018; Wu *et al.*, 2018). Wu introduced the concept of "the smooth muscle of the middle compartment" (SMMC) in the urogenital triangle, i.e., between the urethra and the rectum(Wu *et al.*, 2018).

However, complete studies of the whole male pelvic floor (i.e., laterally and posteriorly to the rectum) are lacking. Moreover, to date no study has detailed the innervation of the SMMC with a view to clarifying its function.

Classically, autonomic nerves are reported to run above the levator ani muscle (LAM) and somatic nerves below(Benoit *et al.*, 1999). We have previously described communications between pudendal nerve and IHP(Alsaid *et al.*, 2011), and dual autonomic (inferior hypogastric plexus (IHP)) and somatic control (pudendal nerve) of pelvic viscera with a communicating loop within the LAM(Alsaid *et al.*, 2011). Subsequently, in two previous studies based on female human fetuses with 3D reconstruction, our team reported that the medial and posterior part of the LAM was smooth and under autonomic nerve control coming from the IHP(Nyangoh Timoh *et al.*, 2017, 2018).

Therefore, we hypothesized that the SMMC within the male pelvic floor muscle is extensive and controlled by the autonomic system.

Thus, the aim of the present study was to describe the SMMC and detail its innervation using specific muscular and neuronal antibody markers with 3D reconstruction.



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Methods

Material and Methods

Human fetuses

The fetal specimens were obtained from late miscarriages. All parents gave written consent and authorization for the scientific use of the cadaver. Only specimens without maceration and without morphological or neurological macroscopic abnormalities on pathology examination were used. No infectious conditions were reported and no abnormalities of the central nervous system were observed during the autopsy of the fetuses.

The French Biomedicine Agency approved the study (PFS15-011). The work was compliant with the provisions of the 2013 revised version of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Three male fetuses were selected for study. Fetal age was determined from the crown rump length (CRL) and fetal heel-to-toe length, corrected for the first-trimester ultrasound CRL measurement and confirmed by postmortem examination estimating organ maturation. We analyzed the whole pelvis of three male human fetuses with a CRL of 150–185 mm. Fetuses A and B were at 23 weeks of gestation, and fetus C at 40 weeks of gestation.

The external body aspect of each fetus was carefully restored after the autopsy out of respect and in case parents expressed a wish to see their fetus once more.

Macroscopic dissection

The entire pelvis was removed en-bloc with the pelvic organ and pelvic bone, and was fixed in formalin (10% formaldehyde) for 48 h. The tissues were then cut into transverse or sagittal slices at 4-mm intervals. The tissue slices were placed in baskets, processed, and embedded in cardboard molds filled with paraffin. To avoid alteration of the visceral topographical relationship, the slices were kept warm in water at 37°C and then mounted whole on Superfrost glass slides. They were then dried at 37°C overnight. Series of 5 µm-thick sections were then created without intervals. We obtained a total of 150–320 sections from each fetus, depending on the age and size of the specimen.

Staining and immunolabeling

The first section of each level was taken as the reference and was stained with Masson's trichrome or Eosin Hematoxylin to provide information about the topography and localization of anatomical structures. Smooth muscles were detected with polyclonal



antibodies against alpha-Smooth Muscle Actin (α-SMA)(Kobayashi et al., 2005) (Table 1).

Neuronal markers were detected with polyclonal antibodies against protein S100 (PS100) for all nerves and peripheral myelin protein (PMP 22) for the somatic peripheral nervous system(Bremer et al., 2010); tyrosine hydroxylase (TH) for adrenergic nerves(Butler-Manuel et al., 2002); the neural isoform of nitric oxide synthase (nNOS) for the pro-erectile nerve bundles; and the calcitonin gene-related peptide (CGRP) for primary sensory neuropeptide immunolabelling (Moszkowicz et al., 2011) (Table 1).

The avidin-biotin-peroxidase detection procedure was carried out with a Vectastain ABC kit (ref. PK6100; Vector Laboratories, Burlingame, CA, USA). Chromogenic detection was performed with a DAB detection kit (DAB, ref. SK-4100; Vector Laboratories, Burlingame, CA, USA). Non-immune serum or IgG at an equivalent dilution was used as a control for all the immunohistochemical analyses.

Histological examination

Serial stained and immunolabeled two-dimensional (2D) sections were used for three-dimensional (3D) reconstruction. The various anatomical structures (organs, bones, and fascia) were visible under high magnification (4× to 40×) analyses of the Masson's trichrome and Eosin Hematoxylin-stained sections. Subsequent sections, treated with an antibody against S100, were used to identify the pelvic-perineal nerves and communicating branches. By comparing the Masson's trichrome-stained sections with sections stained with specific antibodies against α-SMA, S100, TH, PMP22, nNOS, and CGRP it was possible to determine the structure of muscle (smooth (SMA) or striated (myogenin)) and the nature of the nerve fibers identified: i.e., somatic (PMP22), autonomic (TH, VAChT), or nitrergic (nNOS).

The sections were taken at almost the same level with a negligible interval between sections (5 µm). The computer system comprised a personal laptop computer (Windows XP) equipped with an Epson Perfection V750 digitization system, Silverfast AI digitization software (Ref B11B178071), Adobe Photoshop image-processing software, and Surfdriver software for Windows (Winsurf image reconstruction software, version 4.3). All sections were digitized at a resolution of 4800 dots per inch, and the images were then stacked and aligned. The brightness and contrast of the histological tissue images were adjusted using Adobe PhotoshopTM. The pelvic anatomical structures and nerve fibers were outlined manually on all histological sections. A 3D analysis of the location, course, and distribution of the nerve fibers and muscle structure was then carried out.



Results

Global anatomy of the male pelvic floor muscles

The pubovisceral and puborectal part of the LAM are attached anteriorly to the pubis. The puborectal part of the LAM forms a muscle loop behind the rectum. A bulge of the medial aspect of each pubovisceral muscle between the urethra and rectum is medially linked to the contralateral bulge by a central SM mass that is located between the urethra and the rectum

(Fig1 and Fig 2).

The iliococcygeal part of the LAM is attached to the internal obturator muscle by the

conjunctive tissue of the tendinous arch of the LAM (Fig 1A, 1B, and 1C).

The deep perineal muscle lays below the LAM. The superficial perineal muscle is anterior to

the deep perineal muscle and lateral to the bulbospongiosus muscle.

Spatial distribution of smooth muscle areas within the male pelvic floor

We individualized a middle compartment that contains SM cells. This compartment is in close

relation with the LAM, rectum, and urethra (Fig 1A, 1B, 1C, and 1D). We will describe it

posteriorly and anteriorly to the anterior rectal wall:

The posterior contingent of the middle compartment:

From the sacrum to the rectum, an SM layer upholsters the internal aspect of the LAM with SM

digitations into the rectal wall. Laterally, this layer is continuous with the anterior contingent

of the middle compartment, and more specifically with the endo-levator area (Fig1 and Fig 2).

The anterior contingent of the middle compartment:

Using the LAM as an anatomical landmark, three areas can be described:

1. The centro-levator area. A "core" of SM cells is localized between the right and left

LAM in the transversal plane, and between the rectum and urethra in the sagittal plane.

At its cranial pole, the core is in continuity with the external circular layer of the rectum

(Fig1 and Fig 2).

2. The endo-levator area. An SM layer upholsters the internal aspect of the LAM. On both

sides of the SM layer, digitations anchor the layer within the rectum internally and

within the LAM externally. The endo-levator area corresponds to the medial part of the

LAM and to the external anal sphincter (Fig1 and Fig 2).

3. The infra-levator area. SM cells lie in a fan shape below the LAM and infero-posteriorly

to the endo-levator area (Fig1).

Ventrally to the "SM-core" (sagittal and transversal sections), these three areas merge in the

extension of the bulbospongiosus muscle and of the urethral sphincter. (Fig 2 and Fig 3)



Laterally to the "SM-core" (coronal reconstruction and transversal sections) the endo- and infralevator areas cover the LAM (Fig1 and Fig 2). These SM expansions can be described to fins of the SM-core (Fig1).

All of the above-described SM structures of the anterior and posterior contingent are in continuity with each other and can be defined as a "smooth muscle middle compartment" (SMMC) of the male pelvic floor.

Innervation of the smooth muscle area

The SM areas are innervated by autonomic nerves which arise from the IHP. The IHP is comprised of hypogastric and pelvic splanchnic nerves. It is possible to individualize retrorectal, latero-rectal, inter-prostato-rectal, latero-prostatic, and antero-prostatic fibers (Fig 4A et Fig 5D).

The distal part of the IHP is localized in a triangular zone between the LAM laterally, the urethra anteriorly and the rectum posteriorly. All of the following nerves (positive S100 antibody labeling) are: sympathetic (positive TH antibody), sensory (positive CGRP antibody), and nitrergic (positive NOS antibody). There are no somatic nerves (negative PMP22 antibody) (Fig 5).

The posterior contingent of the SMMC

The nerves of the posterior contingent of the SMMC are retro-rectal and come from the IHP. Some fibers continue to the rectum and some others terminate in the posterior contingent (Fig. 5 and Fig 6).

The anterior contingent of the SMMC

Nerves fibers come from IHP complex.

- 1. The centro-levator area: Inter-prostato-rectal and latero-prostatic nerves pass through the endo-levator area of the anterior contingent of the SMMC (Fig 5C, 6A, 6B, and 6D). The area is characterized by dense innervation: several nerves pass through this region to reach the posterior face of the urethral sphincter or continue towards the erectile bodies. (Fig 4C, 4D, 6A, 6B and 6D)
- 2. The endo-levator area: Nerve fibers are latero-rectal. Some provide innervation to the rectum following digitations of the endo-levator area within the rectum. Others innervate the prostate. (Fig 5G and 5H).
- 3. The infra-levator area: Nerve fibers are latero-rectal, inter-prostato-rectal and lateroprostatic. Some provide innervation for the rectum. Some nerves pass through this



region to reach the posterior face of the urethral sphincter or continue towards the erectile bodies. Others innervate the infra-levator area. (Fig 4D and 6C).

Innervation of striated muscles

The striated muscle is innervated by the pudendal nerve and the levator ani nerve.

Contribution from the pudendal nerve

The pudendal nerve passes through the pudendal canal.

Proximally, the pudendal nerves are somatic (positive PMP22 antibody) and sympathetic (positive TH antibody), but not CGRP or NoS positive.

The perineal branches of the pudendal nerve innervate the inferior part of the puborectal, pubovisceral and iliococcygeal muscles, the ischiocavernosus muscle and the bulbospongiosus muscle as well as the superficial transverse perineal muscle (Fig5). Terminal perineal branches of the pudendal nerve are sympathetic (positive TH antibody), and somatic (positive PMP22 antibody). They are also nitrergic (positive NOS antibody) and sensory (positive CGRP antibody) (Fig7).

Contribution from the levator ani nerve

The fibers run horizontally in the pelvis and then vertically to take a pre-rectal and lateroprostatic pathway. They innervate the superior part of the LAM. (Fig7)

The fibers are somatic (positive PMP22 antibody), sympathetic (positive TH antibody), sensory (positive CGRP antibody), and nitrergic (positive NOS antibody) (Fig7).

Summary

The SMMC of the male pelvic floor is a continuous area surrounding the pelvic organs. It is anchored laterally into the striated muscular structures and medially into the pelvic and perineal viscera. The SMMC is under autonomic influence contrary to the lateral striated muscles that are under somatic control. We provide a video of the male pelvic floor of the fetus B (supporting information)



Discussion:

The findings of the current study support the existence of the SMMC: a middle muscle compartment formed by smooth muscle behind (posterior contingent) and in front of (anterior contingent) the rectum. These smooth muscles are continuous and connected to the LAM, the rectum and the urethral sphincter. The present study also suggests that the SMMC contains a high density of autonomic nerves coming from IHP.

The human fetal model has previously been used to study pelvic muscle and neuroanatomy. This model offers many advantages over surgical dissection. First, the small size of the fetus pelvis enables en-bloc removal and en-bloc processing with mega-cassette embedding, and data loss and structure displacement is limited. Consequently, the whole neuro-anatomy and muscular pelvic floor (i.e., anterior and posterior to the rectum) can be studied as muscular insertions are preserved. Moreover, 3D reconstruction is easier and faster and there is less reconstruction bias. Second, the nerve diameter/body ratio is higher in the fetus versus the adult thus simplifying neuroanatomy observations. Third, the use of very fresh tissue means that multiple specific muscular and neuronal markers can be used to provide functional results.

In an effort to systematize our description, we considered the SMMC as a whole and named its different contingents according to their relation with the LAM. This topographic denomination illustrates and highlights the common histology of these structures. However, when referring to anatomical literature, which includes several descriptions of the muscular architecture of the male urogenital region, one has to make the connection with other terminologies (Smith, 1908; Brooks, Eggener and Chao, 2002; Aigner *et al.*, 2004; Porzionato *et al.*, 2005; Nakajima *et al.*, 2007; Zhai *et al.*, 2011; Muro *et al.*, 2018; Wu *et al.*, 2018).

Similarly to previous authors, we observed a central mass coming from the anterior longitudinal layer of the rectum. We chose to describe this mass as a "centro-levator area" because of its very central position between the two sides of the LAM or a "core" in relation to its compact aspect. Due to the presence of a loose smooth muscle cell connection between this "centro-levator area" and the external and internal urethral sphincter, bulbar glands and bulbospongiosus muscle, the centro-levator area may correspond a structure that has successively been called: the rectourethral muscle (Brooks, Eggener and Chao, 2002; Porzionato *et al.*, 2005; Uchimoto *et al.*, 2007), recto-perineal muscle (Aigner *et al.*, 2004; Sebe *et al.*, 2005) or deep transverse perineal muscle (Oelrich, 1980).

We also observed SMs running antero-inferiorly to the LAM which we describe as an "infra-levator area". They are linked to "the centro-levator area" and connected to the external wings

of the urethral sphincter (Nakajima et al., 2007), the bulbar gland, and the bulbospongiosus muscle. Muro described a lateral extension of the rectourethral muscle located antero-inferiorly to the LAM as the deep transverse perineal muscle (Muro et al., 2018). Our results illustrate that the "infra-levator area" does indeed correspond to the deep transverse perineal muscle. Although many discrepancies remain about the smooth or skeletal nature of the muscle and about the existence of the deep transverse perineal muscle (Kokoua et al., 1993; Murakami et al., 2002; Nakajima et al., 2007; Uchimoto et al., 2007; Zhai et al., 2011), our description is consistent with Henle, Muro, and Zhai (Henle, 1866; Zhai et al., 2011; Muro et al., 2018).

We describe the SM located medially to the LAM and to the external anal sphincter as an "endolevator area". We have already referred to this structure in the female as the medial part of the LAM(Nyangoh Timoh et al., 2018). This area directly connects the rectum and the LAM. Shafik called it the hiatal ligament (Shafik, 1999), and Arakawa the smooth muscle-mediated interface (Arakawa et al., 2010).

The contingent posterior to the rectum, the posterior contingent, also contained smooth muscle cells and forms the posterior part of the endo-levator area. It corresponds to the anococcygeal ligament that goes from the coccyx to the anus between the slings of the LAM(Shafik, 1975; Kinugasa et al., 2011, 2012).

As Muro and al., we preferred not to use the term "perineal body" in the results section, as we considered that it probably refers to the region between the urethra and rectum rather than a structure per se (Larson et al., 2010; Muro et al., 2018).

Most studies to date describe the pelvic floor smooth muscle area separately, sometimes using different terms for the same structure. Few report smooth muscle cells behind the rectum. Here, we provide evidence for continuous abundant smooth muscle fibers within the whole pelvic floor (in front of and behind the rectum).

A few authors have published data about the innervation of the muscles of the pelvic floor (Strasser et al., 2000; Costello, Brooks and Cole, 2004; Takenaka et al., 2005). Classically, the somatic nerves are reported to run below the LAM and the autonomic nerve above(Benoit et al., 1999). However, our team have already provided data about autonomic-somatic communications within the LAM(Alsaid et al., 2011). Moreover, we recently published data about autonomic innervation of the medial and posterior part of the female LAM(Nyangoh Timoh et al., 2017). Here, we provide evidence for autonomic innervation coming from the IHP of the SMMC in the male. The posterior contingent is innervated by retro-rectal nerves and the endo-levator contingent by latero-rectal nerves. More interestingly, the centro-levator and infra-levator areas (i.e., rectourethral muscle and deep transverse perineal muscle) are important nerve pathways supplying the urethral sphincter and erectile bodies (cavernous nerves) as suggest by Strasser. Our results are consistent with the study of Takenaka et al.(Takenaka et al., 2005). However, unlike the study we present here, none of these previous authors used specific neuronal markers. We were able to distinguish autonomic sensory and highly nitrergic nerves supplying the SMMC.

From a physiopathological point of view, the presence of abundant SM linking the external striated mucles of the pelvic viscera and the pelvic viscera itself may not be circumstantial. The close connection to the LAM suggests that it may be part of a mechanism playing a major role in pelvic floor stability (DeLancey, 1993) by providing lifting power. Furthermore, as the SMMC comes from the anterior longitudinal layer of the rectum in the sagittal direction, we can hypothesize that it participates in the anorectal flexure (Wesson, 1922) and consequently to fecal continence. Moreover, the SMMC is innervated by autonomic nerves from IHP. These data point towards the possibility that the SMMC plays a dynamic role with simultaneous contraction under autonomic nerve impulse leading to urinary and fecal continence. Finally, we cannot exclude the possibility that the SMMC plays a protective or regenerative role (Arakawa *et al.*, 2004).

From a clinical point of view, we believe that a better understanding of the path of the cavernous nerve and the nerve supplying the urethral sphincter is of importance for pelvic surgeons. In the field of urology, protecting erectile function and urinary continence during radical prostatectomy is a challenge. A recent study highlighted that cavernous nerve preservation improves both erectile function and urinary continence(Reeves et al., 2015). Because the centro- and infra-levator areas (i.e., the rectourethral muscle and deep perineal muscle) are crossed by both the cavernous nerve and the nerve supplying the urethra, these areas are veritable minefields during radical prostatectomy. In order to spare these nerves, Takenaka recommends incising the rectourethral muscle close to the rectum during perineal prostatectomy, and near the prostatic apex during retropubic prostatectomy (Takenaka et al., 2005). However, surgeons must be aware that the rectouretralis muscle comes from the anterior extension of the rectal wall. Indeed up to 11% of rectal injuries occur during radical perineal prostatectomy(Lassen and Kearse, 1995). Nerve sparing is also a challenge in the field of abdominal surgery. In his study, Uchimoto observed that Denonvilliers' fascia ended in the rectouretralis muscle, and thus proposes taking the surgical plane behind Denonvilliers' fascia when possible(Uchimoto et al., 2007).

Knowing that both the rectourethral and deep transverse perineal muscles are SM that are connected with the urethra is also of major importance: damage to these muscles may result in post-operative urethral incontinence.

Despite these results, this study has some limitations which are mainly linked to the use of the fetal model. For example, one could argue that the pelvic structure is not fully formed in the fetus. However, previous studies have reported that the pelvic muscular and neuroanatomy of fetus is mature at 8 weeks of gestation(Fritsch, 1989; Arango-Toro and Domenech-Mateu, 1993). Second, the small size of the samples could lead to bias. However, we used three fetuses with different axes of section (two sagittal and one axial) to add different observation angles. Moreover, the results were consistent in all three fetuses.



Conclusion

We provide evidence that the rectourethral muscle, deep perineal muscle and anococcygeal raphe have common features: they are of smooth muscle nature and autonomic innervation, and they are closely linked to each other and with the pelvic viscera and striated muscle – thus forming an anatomic and functional entity which can be called the SMMC. Nevertheless, the precise function of the SMMC remains to be defined.



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Authors contribution:

Gerard Benoit, Thomas Bessede and Krystel Nyangoh Timoh designed the project. Krystel Nyangoh Timoh, Cedric Lebacle, Mazen Zaitouna, Djibril Diallo and Maud Creze collected the data.

Krystel Nyangoh Timoh, Alain fautrel, Thomas Bessede and Gerard Benoit interpret the data. Krystel Nyangoh Timoh, Thomas Bessede, Gerard Benoit, David Moszkowicz and Vincent Lavoué draft manuscript.

Krystel Nyangoh Timoh, Thomas Bessede, Gerard Benoit, David Moszkowicz, Jelena Martinovic and Vincent Lavoué criticized revision of the manuscript and approved of the article.



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Table 1: Primary polyclonal antisera

Antigen (abbreviation)	Code	Tissue target	Antigen retrieval	Incuba- tion	Positive Control	Species	Dilution	Provider
Protein S100 (PS100)	Z0311	All nerves	non	1h	Sacral plexus	rabbit	1/400	Dako; Denmark
calcitonin gene related peptide (CGRP)	03- 16008	Sensory nerves	Citrate buffer	12h	Human thyroid	rabbit	1/200	ARP, American research products, USA
Tyrosine Hydroxylase (TH)	ab112	Autonomic Sympathetic nerves	Citrate buffer	12h	Adrenal gland	rabbit	1/750	abcam; USA
The neural isoform of nitric oxide synthase (nNOS)	160870	Pro-erectile nerves	no	12h	Human adult cavernous nerve	rabbit	1/200	Cayman; USA
Peripheral Myelin Protein (PMP 22)	ab61220	Somatic peripheral nerves	no	12h	Human thyroid	rabbit	1/100	abcam; USA
Smooth muscle actin (SMA)	ab15267	Smooth muscle	no	10 min	Human colon	rabbit	1/150	abcam; USA



Figure Legends:

Figure 1: Serial sagittal sections of a 23-week-old male fetus and serial transverse sections of another 23-week-old male fetus. It was scanned at an optical resolution of 4800 dpi.

- (A) Serial sagittal section stained with Eosin Haematoxylin.
- (B), (C) Serial sagittal section stained with anti-smooth muscle actin antibody.
- (C) is the same section as (B) with legends.

The levator ani muscle (in orange) is attached anteriorly to the pubis. The pubo-rectal part of the levator ani muscle forms a muscle loop behind the rectum (orange dotted arrow).

The centro-levator area or the "core" of smooth muscle cells (in light green) is in continuity with external circular layer of the rectum and localized between the rectum and the urethra. The endo-levator area (in purple) upholsters the internal aspect of the levator ani muscle. The infra-levator area (in light blue) is located below the levator ani muscle.

(D), (E), (F), (G) Serial transverse sections stained with anti-smooth muscle actin antibody.

Sequential sections from cranial (D) to distal (F) poles showing the emergence of the centro-levator area, "the core" (light green arrows).

(G) is the same section as (F) with legends.

A bulge of the medial aspect of each pubo-visceral part of the levator ani muscle (in orange) between the urethra and the rectum is medially linked to the contralateral bulge by a central smooth muscle mass (the core, in light green) located between the urethra and the rectum and coming from the rectum.

The endo-levator area possesses digitations that anchor the layer within the rectum internally and within the levator ani muscle externally. This corresponds to the medial part of the levator ani muscle and the external anal sphincter. The infra-levator area spreads into a fan shape. Code: the endo-levator area (ENDO) is in purple; the centro-levator area (CENTRO) in light green; the infra-levator in light blue; the piriformis muscle (PM) and obturator internal muscle (OIM) in dark brown; the bladder in yellow; the urethra (ur) in yellow, the levator ani muscle (LAM) in orange; the external anal sphincter (EAS) in dark blue; the prostate in dark red; the



rectum in beige; the bulbourethral gland in grey; and the bulbospongiosus muscle in pink.

Figure 2: Computer-assisted anatomical dissection (CAAD) of the morphologic pelvic structure in a 23-week-old male fetus.

(B)(B) Reconstruction of the SMMC

The SMMC is reconstructed with the endo-levator area (in purple), the centro-levator area or "the core" (in light green) and the infra-levator area (in light blue).

The posterior contingent of the SMMC (in purple) is in continuity with the endo-levator area (in purple.

(C) Reconstruction of the SMMC and levator ani muscle.

The posterior contingent of the SMMC (in purple) and the endo-levator area (in purple) upholsters the internal aspect of the levator ani muscle. This corresponds to the medial part of the levator ani muscle and to the external anal sphincter.

(D) Reconstruction of the SMMC, the rectum, the bulbospongiosus muscle (BSM), the external anal sphincter (EAS), the levator ani muscle, the urethral sphincter and the prostate. The core is in continuity with the rectum. SMMC is in the extension of the bulbospongiosus muscle

- (E) Right lateral view of the three-dimensional reconstruction.
- (F) Superior view of the three-dimensional reconstruction.

The SMMC is connected to the levator ani muscle, the rectum, and the urethra and in continuity with urethral sphincter.

Code: the endo-levator area and the posterior contingent are in purple; the centro-levator area in light green; the infra-levator area in light blue; the levator ani muscle (LAM) in orange; the external anal sphincter (EAS) in dark blue; the prostate in dark red; the rectum in beige; the bulbospongiosus muscle (BSM) in pink; and the urethral sphincter (US) in light purple.



Fig 3: Serial sagittal sections of a 23-week-old male fetus

- (A), (B), (C), (C1), (C2) Serial sagittal section stained with anti-smooth muscle actin antibody.
- (B) is the same section as (A) with legends.
- (C2) is the same section as (C1) with legends.

The SMMC merges in the extension of the internal smooth urethral sphincter (A), (B) and the bulbospongiosus muscle (C), (C1), (C2)

Code: the centro-levator area (centro) is in light green; the infra-levator (infra) in light blue; the levator ani muscle (LAM) in orange; the external anal sphincter (EAS) in dark blue; the external urethral sphincter (EUS) in light purple; the prostate in dark red; the rectum in beige; and the internal urethral sphincter (IUS) in dark purple.



Fig 4: Serial transverse sections of a 23-week-old male fetus

(A), (A bis) Transverse sections stained with anti-S100 antibody.

Within the inferior hypogastric plexus, we identified retro-rectal ("RETRO-RECTAL" in

dark purple), latero-rectal (in beige), inter-prostato-rectal ("INTER-PROSTATO-

RECTAL" in purple), latero-prostatic ("LATERO-PROSTATIC" in orange), and antero-

prostatic fibers ("ANTERO-PROSTATIC" in light beige).

(B) (Bbis) Transverse sections stained with anti-SMA antibody.

(C)(Cbis) (D) (Dbis)Transverse sections stained with anti-SMA antibody.

Code: the endo-levator area is in purple; the centro-levator area in light green; the levator

ani muscle (LAM) in orange; the rectum in beige; and the urethral sphincter in light purple.

(D)(Dbis) are magnifications of (C).

Nerves from IHP (light yellow) provide innervation for the endo_levator area and the

centro-levator area. Numerous nerves coming from IHP travel through this area and

reach the posterior face, the urethral sphincter or continue towards erectile bodies.

Perineal branches of pudendal nerve (dark green) provide innervation for the inferior

part of the levator ani muscle.

Code: the centrolevator area is in light green; the endo-levator in pink; the levator ani muscle

(LAM) in orange; the external urethral sphincter in light purple; the rectum in beige; the internal

urethral sphincter in dark purple; and the urethra in pink.

Fig 5: Serial sagittal sections of a 23-week-old male fetus

(A) (B) (A1) (B1) Sagittal sections stained with anti-SMA antibody.



The SMMC is represent with the endolevator area (in purple), the centrolevator area or "the core" (in light green) and the infralevator area (in light blue).

Code: the endolevator area (ENDO) in purple; the centrolevator area (CENTRO) in light green; the infralevator are in light blue; piriformis muscle (PM) and obturator internal muscle (OIM) in dark brown; bladder in yellow; Levator ani muscle (LAM) in orange; external anal sphincter (EAS) in dark blue; prostate in dark red; rectum in beige; bulbospongiosus muscle in pink.

(C) (C1) (D) (D1) Sagittal sections stained with anti-S100antibody.

A lot of autonomic nerves gave innervation for the anterior contingent of the SMMC and travelled through.

Within the inferior hypogastric plexus, we identified retro-rectal ("RETRO-RECTAL" in dark purple), inter-prostato-rectal ("INTER-PROSTATO-RECTAL" in purple), latero-prostatic ("LATERO-PROSTATIC" in orange), and antero-prostatic fibers ("ANTERO-PROSTATIC" in light beige).

- (E) (E1) Sagittal section stained with anti-PMP22 antibody.
 - (F) (F1) Sagittal section stained with anti-TH antibody.
 - (G) (G1) Sagittal section stained with anti-NOS antibody.
 - (H) (H1) Sagittal section stained with anti-CGRP antibody.
 - (A1) (B1) (C1) (D1) (E1) (F1) (G1) (H1) are magnifications of (A) (B) (C) (D) (E) (F)
 - (G) (H) respectively.

Black arrowheads show somatic nerves (E) (E1), autonomic sympathetic nerves (F)

(F1), nitrergic nerves (G), (G1) and sensitive nerves (H), (H1).

Fig 6: Computer-assisted anatomical dissection (CAAD) of the morphologic pelvic structure and the innervation in a 23 weeks-old male fetus.



(A), (B) Reconstruction of the SMMC (endolevator area, centrolevator area and infralevator area), levator ani muscle, autonomic and somatic innervation.

(A) Anterior view and (B) right lateral view.

(C), (D) Reconstruction of the SMMC (endolevator area, centrolevator area and infralevator area), levator ani muscle, prostate and urethral sphincter autonomic and somatic innervation.

(C) Posterior view and (D) superior view.

Autonomic nerve (yellow) coming from IHP gave innervation for the inner part of levator ani muscle (i.e endolevator area, purple) and the centrolevator (light green) area and infra levator area (light blue).

A lot of nerves travel through the centro-levator area to reach urethral sphincter and erectile bodies.

Pudendal nerve (green) gave innervation for the inferior part of the levator ani muscle, external anal sphincter.

Levator ani nerve (blue) gave innervation for the superior part of the levator ani muscle,

Retrorectal fibers coming from IHP gave innervation for rectum and for the posterior contingent of the SMMC.

Code: the endolevator area the posterior contingent are in purple; the centrolevator area in light green; the infralevator are in light blue; levator ani muscle in orange; external anal sphincter in dark blue; prostate in dark red; rectum in beige; bulbospongiosus muscle in pink; urethral sphincter in light purple;

Fig 7: Serial sagittal sections of a 23-week-old male fetus

(A) (B) (A1) (B1) (A2) (B2) Sagittal sections stained with anti-S100 antibody.

The levator ani nerve (blue) gave innervation for the superior part of levator ani muscle.



The pudendal nerve (green) gave innervation for the inferior part of the levator ani muscle.

Code: Levator ani muscle (LAM) in orange; rectum in beige;

- (C) (C1) (C2) Sagittal section stained with anti-PMP22 antibody.
 - (D) (D1) (D2) Sagittal section stained with anti-TH antibody.
 - (E) (E1) (E2) Sagittal section stained with anti-NOS antibody.
 - (F) (F1) (F2) Sagittal section stained with anti-CGRP antibody.
 - (A1) (B1) (C1) (D1) (E1) (F1) are magnifications of (A) (B) (C) (D) (E) (F) respectively showing the levator ani nerve.
 - (A2) (B2) (C2) (D2) (E2) (F2) are magnifications of (A) (B) (C) (D) (E) (F) respectively showing the pudendal nerve.

Black arrows show somatic nerves (E) (E1), autonomic sympathetic nerves (F) (F1), nitrergic nerves (G), (G1) and sensitive nerves (H), (H1).

Supporting information: Movie File of the pelvic floor of fetus B.

Code: the centro-levator area (centro) is in light green; the infra-levator (infra) in light blue; the levator ani muscle in orange; the external anal sphincter in dark blue; the external urethral sphincter in light purple; the prostate in dark red; the rectum in beige; and the internal urethral sphincter in dark purple; the bulbospongiosus muscle in pink; the levator ani nerve in green; the pudendal nerve in blue; the inferior hypogastric plexus in yellow,.



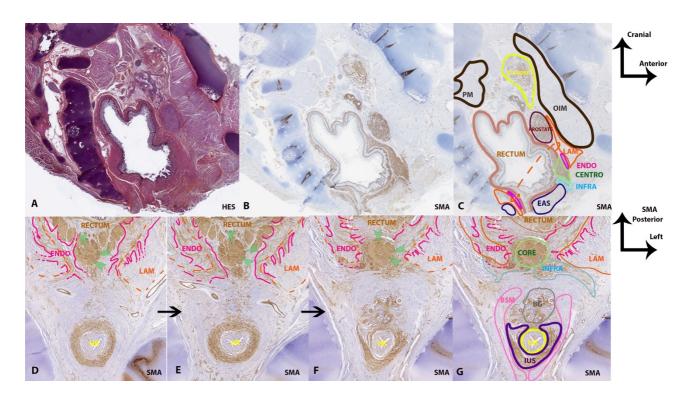


Fig 1

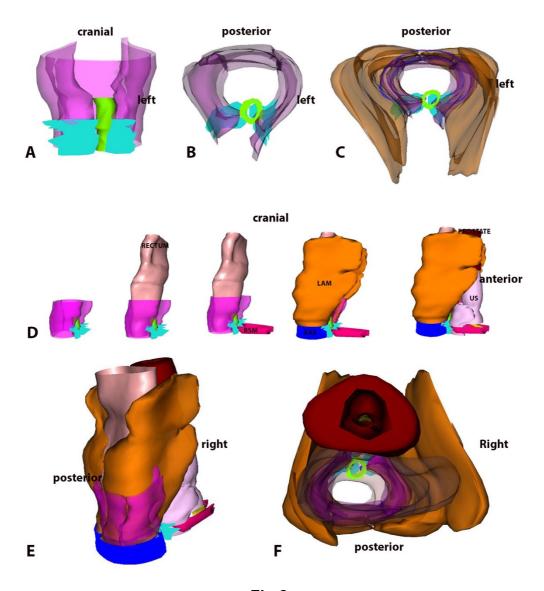


Fig 2



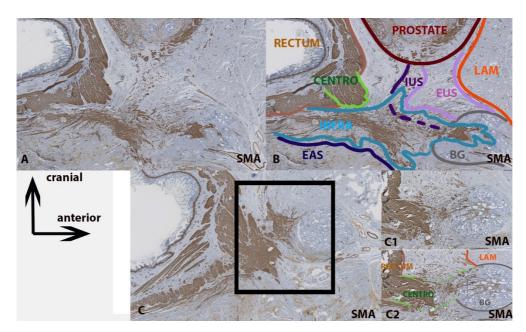


Fig 3

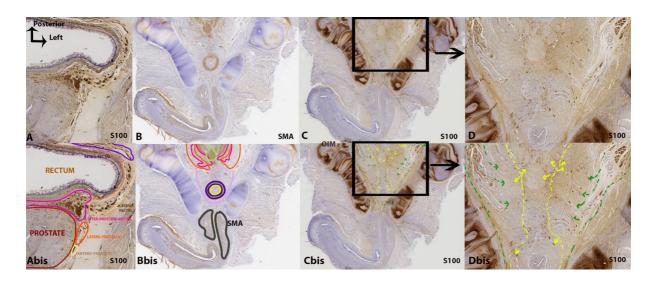


Fig 4

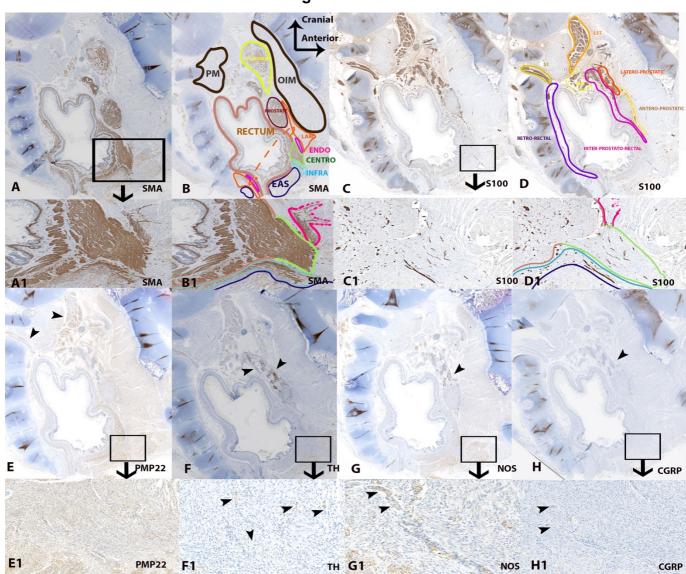


Fig 5

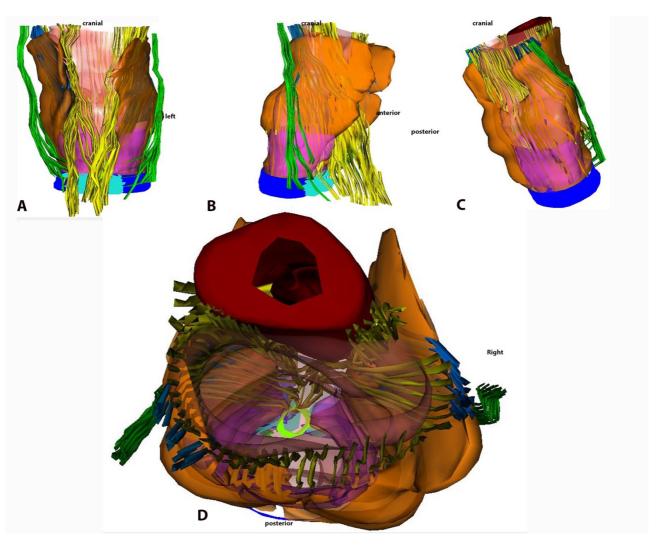


Fig 6

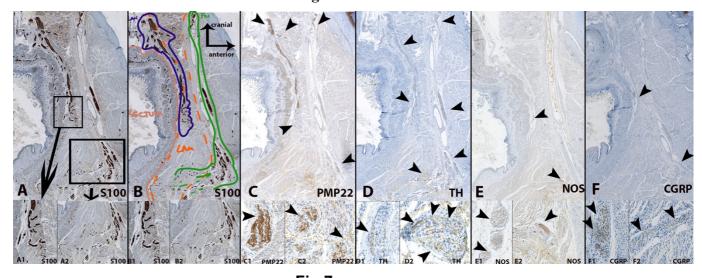


Fig 7



5-Article 5 : Innervation du sphincter urétral chez le fœtus masculin, Soumis à J Urol, IF= 5,4.

The Journal of Urology

Anatomical evidence for an autonomic innervation of the male urethral sphincter: a study of human fetuses --Manuscript Draft--

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First Author:	Krystel Nyangoh Timoh, M.D				
Corresponding Author:	Krystel Nyangoh Timoh, M.D University Paris Sud, University Paris Saclay Le Kremlin Bicetre, France FRANCE				
Corresponding Author E-Mail:	k.nyangoh@gmail.com				
Corresponding Author's Institution:	University Paris Sud, University Paris Saclay				
Order of Authors:	Krystel Nyangoh Timoh, M.D				
	David Moszkowicz				
	Maud Creze				
	Mazen Zaitouna				
	Margaux Felber				
	Cédric Lebacle				
	Djibril Diallo				
	Jelena Martinovic				
	Ashutosh Tewari				
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	Thomas Bessede				
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Abstract:	Purpose To describe autonomic urethral sphincter (US) innervation using specific muscular and neuronal antibody markers and 3D reconstruction. Material and Methods We performed en-bloc removal of the entire pelvis of three male human fetuses between 18 and 40 weeks. Serial whole mount sections (5µm intervals) were stained and investigated. The sections were stained with Masson's trichrome and Eosin Haematoxylin, and immunostained with: anti-SMA antibody for smooth muscle; anti-S100 antibody for all nerves; and anti-PMP22 antibody, anti-TH antibody, anti-CGRP antibody, anti-NOS antibody for somatic, adrenergic, sensory and nitrergic nerve fibers, respectively. The slides were digitized for 3D reconstruction to improve topographical understanding. An animated reconstruction of the autonomic innervation of the US was generated.				

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	Results The external and internal US are innervated by autonomic nerves of the inferior hypogastric plexus (IHP). These nerves are sympathetic (positive anti-TH antibody), sensory (positive anti-CGRP antibody), and nitrergic (positive anti-NOS antibody). Some autonomic fibers run within the neurovascular bundles, posterolaterally. Others run from the IHP to the posteromedial aspect of the prostate apex, above an through the rectourethral muscle. The external US is also innervated by somatic nerves (positive anti-PMP22 antibody) arising from the pudendal nerve, joining the median line but remaining below the rectourethral. Conclusion This study provides anatomical evidence of an autonomic component in the innervation of the external US that travels in the neurovascular bundle. During radical prostatectomy, the rectourethral muscle and the neurovascular bundles are to be preserved, particularly during apical dissection.
Author Comments:	
Suggested Reviewers:	
Opposed Reviewers:	

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Anatomical evidence for an autonomic innervation of the male urethral sphincter: a study of human fetuses.

Krystel Nyangoh Timoh^{1,2}, David Moszkowicz¹, Maud Creze¹, Mazen Zaitouna¹, Margaux Felber¹, Cédric Lebacle^{1,3}, Djibril Diallo¹, Jelena Martinovic⁴, Ashutosh Tewari⁵, Vincent Lavoué², Gevorg Ghukasyan⁶, Gerard Benoit¹, Thomas Bessede^{1,3}.

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Affiliations

- ¹ UMR 1195, University Paris Sud, INSERM, Université Paris-Saclay, 94270, Le Kremlin-Bicetre, France
- ² Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Hopital Universitaire de Rennes, university Rennes 1, Rennes, France.
- ³Urology Department, Hopitaux Universitaires Paris-Sud, APHP, 94270, Le Kremlin-Bicetre, France
- ⁴ Department of Fetal Pathology, Hopitaux universitaires Paris-Sud, APHP, 92140, Clamart, France
- ⁵ Department of Urology, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, NY, USA. ⁶Université de Rennes 1, Rennes, France; INSERM, UMR991 Liver Metabolism and Cancer, Rennes, France.

Corresponding author:

Krystel NYANGOH TIMOH, MD.

INSERM-UMR 1195 Hôpital de Bicêtre, Bâtiment Grégory Pincus, 80 rue du Général Leclerc,

94276 Le Kremlin-Bicêtre Cedex, France

Tel: 033 1 49 59 18 83; E-mail: k.nyangoh@gmail.com



ANNEXES: PRINCIPALES PUBLICATIONS

Abstract:

Purpose: To describe autonomic urethral sphincter (US) innervation using specific muscular

and neuronal antibody markers and 3D reconstruction.

Material and Methods: We performed en-bloc removal of the entire pelvis of three male

human fetuses between 18 and 40 weeks. Serial whole mount sections (5µm intervals) were

stained and investigated. The sections were stained with Masson's trichrome and Eosin

Haematoxylin, and immunostained with: anti-SMA antibody for smooth muscle; anti-S100

antibody for all nerves; and anti-PMP22 antibody, anti-TH antibody, anti-CGRP antibody, anti-

NOS antibody for somatic, adrenergic, sensory and nitrergic nerve fibers, respectively. The

slides were digitized for 3D reconstruction to improve topographical understanding. An

animated reconstruction of the autonomic innervation of the US was generated.

Results: The external and internal US are innervated by autonomic nerves of the inferior

hypogastric plexus (IHP). These nerves are sympathetic (positive anti-TH antibody), sensory

(positive anti-CGRP antibody), and nitrergic (positive anti-NOS antibody). Some autonomic

fibers run within the neurovascular bundles, posterolaterally. Others run from the IHP to the

posteromedial aspect of the prostate apex, above an through the rectourethral muscle. The

external US is also innervated by somatic nerves (positive anti-PMP22 antibody) arising from

the pudendal nerve, joining the median line but remaining below the rectourethral.

Conclusion: This study provides anatomical evidence of an autonomic component in the

innervation of the external US that travels in the neurovascular bundle. During radical

prostatectomy, the rectourethral muscle and the neurovascular bundles are to be preserved,

particularly during apical dissection.

Key words: anatomy-innervation- urethral sphincter- autonomic



Introduction

Radical prostatectomy is responsible for erectile dysfunction in around 10 to 46% of patients and for urinary incontinence in around 16% ^{1,2}. With a view to improving postoperative erectile function Walsh described a nerve-sparing radical prostatectomy procedure aimed at preserving the neurovascular bundles (NVB) ³. Furthermore, several recent clinical studies suggest that preservation of the NVB is associated with improved postoperative urinary continence after radical prostatectomy ^{4,5,6}. Postoperative urinary continence is multifactorial, but the urethral sphincter (US), and in particular the external US (EUS), are major actors of urinary continence ⁷. However, even if some authors suggest that the autonomic supply for the US is similar to the neural pathway of the erectile bodies ^{8,9}, anatomical evidence based on specific neuronal markers is lacking. Classically, autonomic nerves are described to run above the levator ani muscle while somatic nerves run below. In a previous study using immunohistochemistry and three-dimensional reconstruction, our team described the innervation of the medial part of the levator ani muscle by autonomic nerves ¹⁰.

Therefore, we hypothesized that the innervation of the US and specifically of the EUS, is supplied by autonomic innervation using the same pathway that NVB.

The aim of the present study was to describe autonomic US innervation using specific muscular and neuronal antibody markers and 3D reconstruction.



Material and Methods

Human fetuses

The fetal specimens were obtained from late miscarriages. All parents gave written consent and

authorization for the scientific use of the cadaver. Only specimens without maceration and

without morphological or neurological macroscopic abnormalities on pathology examination

were used.

The study was approved by the French Biomedicine Agency (PFS15-011). The work was

compliant with the provisions of the 2013 revised version of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Three human male fetuses had a gestational age of between 18 and 40 weeks, as

determined from the crown-rump length¹².

Macroscopic dissection

The entire pelvis was removed en-bloc with the pelvic organ and pelvic bone, and was

fixed in formalin (10% formaldehyde) for 48 h. Tissues were then cut into transverse or sagittal

slices at 4-mm intervals. The tissue slices were placed in baskets, processed, and embedded in

cardboard molds filled with paraffin. To avoid alteration of the visceral topographical

relationship, the slices were kept warm in water at 37°C and then mounted whole on Superfrost

glass slides. They were then dried at 37°C overnight. Series of 5 µm-thick sections were

subsequently created without intervals.

Staining and immunolabeling (Table 1).

The first section of each level was taken as the reference and was stained with Masson's

trichrome or eosin and hematoxylin to provide information about the topography of anatomical

structures. Smooth muscles were detected with polyclonal antibodies against alpha-smooth

muscle actin (SMA) 11.

Neuronal markers were detected with polyclonal antibodies against protein S100 (PS100) for

labeling all nerves, peripheral myelin protein (PMP 22) ¹² for the somatic peripheral nervous

system, tyrosine hydroxylase (TH) for adrenergic nerves 12, the neural isoform of nitric oxide

synthase (nNOS) for the pro-erectile nerve bundles, and the calcitonin gene-related peptide

(CGRP) for primary sensory neuropeptide immunolabeling ¹³.

The avidin-biotin-peroxidase detection procedure was carried out with a Vectastain ABC kit

(ref. PK6100; Vector Laboratories, Burlingame, CA, USA). Chromogenic detection was

performed with a DAB detection kit (DAB, ref. SK-4100; Vector Laboratories). Non-immune

Krystel NYANGOH TIMOH

Université Paris-Saclay

Juin 2019 162

serum or IgG at an equivalent dilution was used as a control for all the immunohistochemical analyses.

Histological examination

Serial stained and immunolabeled two-dimensional (2D) sections were used for three-dimensional (3D) reconstruction. Using high magnification (4× to 40×) analyses of the Masson's trichrome and eosin and hematoxylin-stained sections, it was possible to identify the various anatomical structures (organs, bones, and fascia). Subsequent sections, treated with an antibody against S100, were used to identify pelviperineal nerves and communicating branches. By comparing the Masson's trichrome-stained sections with sections stained with specific antibodies against SMA, S100, TH, PMP22, CGRP and nNOS, it was possible to determine the structure of muscle (smooth (SMA)) and the nature of the nerve fibers identified: i.e., somatic (PMP22), autonomic (TH, VAChT), sensory (CGRP) or nitrergic (nNOS).

The sections were taken at almost the same level with a negligible interval between sections (5 μ m). The computer system comprised a personal laptop computer (Windows XP) equipped with an Epson Perfection V750 digitization system, Silverfast AI digitization software, Adobe Photoshop image-processing software, and Surfdriver software for Windows (Winsurf image reconstruction software, version 4.3). All sections were digitized at a resolution of 4800 dots per inch, and the images were then stacked and aligned. The pelvic anatomical structures and nerve fibers were outlined manually on all histological sections. A 3D analysis of the location, course, and distribution of the nerve fibers and muscle structure was then carried out. An animated reconstruction was generated.



Results

Global morphology of the urethral sphincter (US)

The US is composed of a deep internal smooth muscle layer and a superficial external striated muscle

layer.

External US (EUS)

The EUS contains striated muscle cells only. It is circular, completely surrounds the urethra (Fig 1B1,

1B2, 1B3 and Fig2), and is in continuation with the musculus vesicoprostaticus above (Fig 1A1, 1A2,

1A3 and Fig 3).

Cranially, the anterior wall of the EUS is thicker than its posterior wall with transversal sections

showing a signet-ring appearance (Fig 1B1, 1B2, and 1B3).

Caudally, and as it approaches the bulb of the penis, the posterior wall of the EUS thins and fades

along the median line whereas it thickens into two pillars or wings laterally (Fig 1C1, 1C2, 1C3 and

Fig 2). At this posterior opening of the EUS, glands, vessels and nerves penetrate into the US. This

opening is also where the smooth muscle central compartment attaches to the IUS (Fig 1C1, 1C2,

1C3 and Fig4).

Internal US (IUS)

The IUS contains smooth muscle cells only. It is composed of three layers: a thin longitudinal

superficial layer, a dense circular layer and a thin longitudinal deep layer (Fig 1B1, 1B2, and 1B3).

Cranially, the IUS is in continuation with smooth muscle (anti-SMA positive) areas within the

prostate that correspond to McNeal's zones: ventrally with the anterior fibromuscular stroma of the

prostate, and dorsally with the peripheral zone of the prostate (Fig 1B1, 1B2, 1B3, Fig 3, Fig 4B2 and

4B3).

Caudally, the posterior aspect of the IUS is attached to the smooth muscle central compartment (Fig.

3B1, and 3B2) and also receives nerves and vessels that reach the urethral wall or the cavernous and

spongiosis corpus (Fig 4D and Fig 5).

6

Juin 2019 164

Innervation of the US

Autonomic system

Smooth muscle areas are innervated by nerves arising from the inferior hypogastric plexus (IHP).

The IHP consists of hypogastric and pelvic splanchnic nerves. It is possible to distinguish retrorectal,

laterorectal, interprostatorectal, lateroprostatic, and anteroprostatic fibers (Fig 4A).

The distal part of the IHP is localized in a triangular zone between the levator ani muscle laterally,

the urethra anteriorly and the rectum posteriorly. The nerves (S100 positive) are: sympathetic (anti-

TH positive), sensory (anti-CGRP positive), nitrergic (anti-NOS positive) (Fig 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D, 4E,

4F and 4G). There are no somatic (anti-PMP22 negative) nerves (Fig 4G).

Urethral innervation is supplied by lateroprostatic and prerectal nerve fibers all of which pass through

the recto-urethral muscle between the rectum and the urethra (Fig 6), and then through the middle of

the US opening. Some fibers then penetrate the urethra along the median line in the ventral direction,

while others curve around the bulb and penetrate the urethral wall at 3 and 9 o'clock (Fig 5 and Fig

6).

Nerve fibers spread into the EUS, the IUS and the urethral submucosa (Fig 5). The autonomic system

therefore innervates both the striated EUS and the smooth IUS.

The nitrergic fibers originate from the NVB and innervate the EUS and IUS. These fibers also supply

innervation for the erectile bodies. (Fig 5).

Somatic system

After branching off to form the dorsal nerve of the penis, the pudendal nerve (PN) gives nerve fibers

that curve medially to the EUS at the level of the wings. These nerves are thus perineal and they

penetrate the EUS at its posterior aspect. The nerves are somatic (anti-PMP22 positive). No pelvic

somatic nerves are observed for the EUS (Fig 7).

Discussion

We demonstrate that both the EUS and IUS are innervated by autonomic and somatic nerves. The autonomic nerves supplying the urethra: 1) run within the NVB, and 2) arise from the IHP to run at the posteromedial aspect of the prostate apex and through the recto-urethral muscle.

Human fetal material is a good model to study pelvic muscle anatomy and neuroanatomy ^{10, 14}. First, the small size of fetus pelvis enables en-bloc removal and processing with mega-cassette embedding which limits data loss and structure displacement compared to surgical dissection. Therefore, the whole neuroanatomy and muscular pelvic floor anatomy is preserved. Second, the small size of the fetus pelvis also makes 3D reconstruction easier. Third, as the nerves are relatively larger in the fetus as opposed to the adult, the neuroanatomy is more easily visualized. Finally, the use of multiple specific muscular and neuronal markers is more feasible with fresh materials.

Literature about the neuroanatomy of the US remains controversial. Numerous discrepancies exists about the involvement of autonomic nerves from the IHP to the EUS.

Classically, the striated muscle EUS is described as being innervated by somatic nerve fibers, and the smooth muscle IUS innervated by autonomic nerves 5, 15. However, our team has already demonstrated: 1) the existence of autonomic (IHP) and somatic (PN) communications within the levator ani muscle ¹⁶, and 2) that the medial part of the levator ani muscle is innervated by nerves arising from the IHP ¹⁰. In 1987, Kumagai already observed unmyelinated axons in the EUS ¹⁷. Some authors then went on to provide evidence of the involvement of pelvic branches for US innervation using conventional dissection. These pelvic branches were described as somatic nerves coming from the PN or from the levator ani nerve ^{9,18}, or as autonomic nerves from the IHP ^{8,19,20}. Such controversy highlights the limitation of gross anatomy dissection studies in the field of nerve characterization⁷. In the present study using specific neuronal markers, we observed autonomic nerves arising from the IHP and supplying innervation to the EUS. These findings are consistent with the study of Hinata et al. reporting the presence of NOS+ nerve fibers within the EUS 8. Hinata concluded that the external US is innervated from the IHP 8. Another controversy remains about the exact location of fibers that supply the US. In the present study, we observed that autonomic nerves supplying the US are located posterolaterally at mid-prostate, then shift to a posteromedial position to join the prostate apex, pass through the smooth rectourethral muscle, and innervate the US before ultimately continuing towards the erectile bodies. In past we have shown that peri prostatic nerves rather form a hammock and it converges in the mid line near the apex²¹. Ganzer also observed pelvic nerves running towards the dorsal region of the EUS ²². This posteromedial position of autonomic nerves supplying the EUS



represents a functional risk during apical dissection ²³ and the retrourethral detachment of rectourethral muscle fibers.

The classic anatomical description of the NVB indicates that they contain cavernous nerves which are located in the posterolateral aspect of the prostate. Recent studies have suggested that the cavernous nerves do not strictly follow the course of the NVB, do not form a fascicle and have a fan-like distribution at several levels^{20, 24, 25}. In the present study, we demonstrated that autonomic fibers from the NVB supply innervation to the EUS (Fig 6A and 6B). This anatomical evidence underpins clinical observations that preserving the NVB may limit urinary incontinence ⁴⁻⁶.

The origin of the somatic control of the EUS is also a matter of debate. It has been reported that the pelvic somatic nerves supplying innervation to the EUS come from the intrapelvic PN and/or from the levator ani nerve ¹⁹. Using luxol fast blue, Karam observed intrapelvic supralevator somatic nerve fibers supplying the urethra²⁶. However, luxol fast blue is not as effective as neuronal markers. In the present study using anti-myelin markers, we did not observe any somatic fibers within the IHP that would supply nerves to the EUS. However, we did observe an infralevator perineal branch coming from the PN and supplying the EUS. These findings are consistent with Strasser, Narayan, and Jueneman^{15, 27, 28}. Moreover, we located this perineal branch below the rectourethral muscle, which suggests that it is not in the surgical field of retropubic or laparoscopic radical prostatectomy. On the other hand, this somatic pathway is exposed during perineal prostatectomy.

From a physiopathological point of view, autonomic nerves in the EUS may help early return of urinary continence ⁸. These branches also innervate the medial part of the levator ani muscle and the rectourethral muscle which may indicate a coordinating role. Moreover, the high density of sensory nerves is of major importance for the reflex activity of the EUS. Similarly, the high density of NOS fibers may help regulate striated muscle performance⁸.

From a clinical point of view, we can systematize three nerve pathways to the EUS: 1) autonomic nerves running within the NVB, 2) autonomic nerves running from the IHP to the posteromedial aspect of the prostate apex and remaining above and through the rectourethral muscle and, 3) somatic nerves arising from the PN, joining the median line but remaining below the rectourethral muscle. As mentioned above, recent clinical studies suggest that preserving the NVB during surgery improves postoperative continence after radical prostatectomy ⁴⁻⁶. The present study provides anatomical evidence for this hypothesis. Using neuronal markers, we observed autonomic nerves, sympathetic, sensory and highly nitrergic coming from the IHP and supplying the urethra. These nerves also innervate and pass through the rectourethral muscle which should be considered as a structure to be preserved by a cautious peeling during the retroapical dissection. Ultimately, our results demonstrate

that autonomic nerve fibers of the US are more exposed than its somatic fibers during retropubic or laparoscopic radical prostatectomy.

Despite these results, our study has some limitations.

Although the fetal model is a mature and established model for neuroanatomical study, its use can be criticized. However, at the end of the embryonic period, the pelvic anatomy is comparable to that in adults ^{29, 30}. Second, the small sample size could lead to bias. However, the same anatomic observations were established for the three fetuses. Moreover, the axis sections were different (axial and sagittal) so as to provide several views. Finally, the absence of a somatic intrapelvic branch may be related to the fact that myelinization is a late event during fetal development. However, we were able to identify the somatic control of the EUS coming from perineal branch of PN. Moreover, as the total pelvis was removed en-bloc and we took continuous serial sections at 4 μm intervals, we were able to strictly follow the course of the nerves.

Conclusion

This study provides anatomical evidence of autonomic control of the EUS.



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Table 1: Primary polyclonal antisera

Antigen (abbreviation)	Code	Tissue target	Antigen retrieval	Incubation	Positive Control	Species	Dilution	Provider
Protein S100 (PS100)	Z0311	All nerves	non	1h	Sacral plexus	rabbit	1/400	Dako; Denmark
calcitonin gene related peptide (CGRP)	03- 16008	Sensory nerves	Citrate buffer	12h	Human thyroid	rabbit	1/200	ARP, American research products, USA
Tyrosine Hydroxylase (TH)	ab112	Autonomic Sympathetic nerves	Citrate buffer	12h	Adrenal gland	rabbit	1/750	abcam; USA
The neural isoform of nitric oxide synthase (nNOS)	160870	Pro-erectile nerves	no	12h	Human adult cavernous nerve	rabbit	1/200	Cayman; USA
Peripheral Myelin Protein (PMP 22)	ab61220	Somatic peripheral nerves	no	12h	Human thyroid	rabbit	1/100	abcam; USA
Smooth muscle actin (SMA)	ab15267	Smooth muscle	no	10 min	Human colon	rabbit	1/150	abcam; USA

Figure legends

Figure 1: Serial transverse sections of a 21-week-old male fetus scanned at an optical resolution of 4800 dpi, at the levels of: prostate apex (A, B, C), cranial membranous urethra (D, E, F) and caudal membranous urethra (G, H, I).

Prostate apex: (A, A1) Transverse section stained with Masson's Trichrome. (A2) (A3) Transverse section stained with anti-SMA antibody. (A3) is the same section than (A2) with legends.



The prostate apex is sectioned with the anterior fibromuscular stroma of the prostate (anti-SMA positive, dark green area), transitional zone (dark blue) and the musculus vesicoprostaticus above

(anti-SMA negative, dark red area).

Cranial membranous urethra: (B,B1) Transverse section stained with Hematoxylin's eosin. (B2) (B3)

Transverse section stained with anti-SMA antibody. (B3) is the same section than (B2) with legends.

The EUS (light purple, anti-SMA negative) is circular, completely surrounds the urethra and is in

continuation with the musculus vesicoprostaticus above.

The internal US (dark purple, anti-SMA positive) is composed of three layers: from superficial to

deep: a thin longitudinal layer, a dense circular layer and another thin longitudinal layer. It continues

with the anterior fibromuscular stroma of the prostate ventrally, and dorsally with the peripheral zone

of the prostate.

Caudal membranous urethra: (C,C1) Transverse section stained with Masson's Trichrome. (C2) (C3)

Transverse section stained with anti-SMA antibody. (C3) is the same section than (C2) with legends

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Caudally the posterior wall of the external US thickens into 2 pillars posterolaterally. This opening

allows attachment of the smooth muscle central compartment to the internal US.

Color code: Urethra (Ur, yellow), prostate with the anterior fibromuscular stroma of the prostate

(AFMS, dark green area) transitional zone (TZ, dark blue) and the musculus vesicoprostaticus above

(MVP, dark red area).

internal urethral sphincter (IUS, dark purple), external urethral sphincter (EUS, light purple), levator

ani muscle (LAM, orange), rectum (beige), smooth muscle cells of the middle compartment (SMMC)

with the core (or recto-urethral muscle, light green), the endolevator area (or medial part of the levator

ani, endo, pink).

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Figure 2: Computer-assisted anatomical dissection (CAAD) of the pelvic structure in a 21-weekold male fetus.

A to C: Structures are revealed on right lateral views.

A:

The internal US (in dark purple) surrounds the urethra (yellow) down to the urethral bulb

The external US (in semi-transparent light purple) surrounds the internal US.

Appearance of the bulbospongiosus muscle (BSM, pink)

Appearance of the smooth muscle middle compartment (SMMC) with the core (or rectourethral muscle, light green), the endolevator area (or medial part of the levator ani muscle dark pink), the infralevator area (or deep transverse perineal muscle, light blue).

B:

The rectum is surrounded by the SMMC

C:

Levator ani muscle (LAM, orange) and external anal sphincter (EAS, dark blue)

D: Oblique view. Caudally the external US opens in its posterior aspect.

E: Superior view.

Smooth muscle cells from smooth muscle central (in green) compartment attached to the internal US. This 3D reconstruction shows the relation of the US to other pelvic structures.

Color code: Urethra (yellow), prostate (dark red), internal urethral sphincter (dark purple), external urethral sphincter (dark purple), levator ani muscle (LAM, orange), rectum (beige), smooth muscle cells compartment (core or rectourethral muscle in green, infralevator area or deep transverse perineal muscle in light blue and endolevator area or medial part of the levator ani muscle in light purple), external anal sphincter (EAS, dark blue).



Figure 3: Sagittal (A, B, C) and parasagittal (D, E, F) sections of a 21-week-old male fetus scanned at an optical resolution of 4800 dpi.

Sagittal: Sections are stained with hematoxylin and eosin (A), anti-SMA antibody (A1 and A2). (A2) is the same section than (A1) with legends.

External US continues the musculus vesicoprostaticus (anti-SMA negative, dark red area) above. Internal US continues with smooth muscle (ant-SMA positive) areas within the prostate.

Parasagittal: Sections are stained with Masson's trichrome (B), anti-SMA antibody (B1 and B2). (B2) is the same section than (B1) with legends.

The posterior aspect of the internal US (dark purple) receives smooth muscle cells from the smooth muscle of the middle compartment (infralevator area, light blue, anti-SMA positive).

Color code: prostate with the anterior fibromuscular stroma of the prostate (AFMS, dark green area) transitional zone (TZ, dark blue), central zone (ZC, light red) and the musculus vesicoprostaticus above (MVP, dark red area), external urethral sphincter (EUS, light purple), internal urethral sphincter (IUS, dark purple), levator ani muscle (LAM, orange), rectum (beige), smooth muscle cells of the middle compartment (infra levator area, light blue), obturator internal muscle (OIM, brown).



Figure 4: Sagittal sections of a 21-week-old male fetus scanned at an optical resolution of 4800 dpi.

ABCD

- (A) Transversal section showing nerves localization of the inferior hypogastric plexus (IHP).
- (B) Sagittal section stained with anti-S100 antibody
- (B1) Sagittal section stained with hematoxylin and eosin
- (B2, B3) Sagittal sections stained with anti-SMA antibody
- (B3) is the same section than (B2) with legends.

The posterior aspect of the internal US (light purple) smooth muscle cells from the smooth muscle of the middle compartment (infralevator area, light blue, anti-SMA positive).

(C, D, E, F, G) are magnified views from rectangle in (B) with various staining.

All the nerves (anti-S100 positive, fig. B) are: sympathetic (anti-TH positive, fig. D), nitrergic (anti-NOS positive, Fig. E) and sensory (anti-CGRP positive, Fig. G). They are not somatic (anti-PMP22 negative, Fig. G).

Staining positivity is shown by arrowheads.

Color code: prostate with the anterior fibromuscular stroma of the prostate (AFMS, dark green area) transitional zone (TZ, dark blue), central zone (ZC, light red) and the musculus vesicoprostaticus above (MVP, dark red area), external urethral sphincter (EUS, light purple), internal urethral sphincter (IUS, dark purple), levator ani muscle (LAM, orange), rectum (beige), smooth muscle cells of the middle compartment (infra levator area, light blue), obturator internal muscle (OIM, brown).

(B3) and (C) demonstrate that autonomic nerves travel through the smooth muscle of the middle compartment (SMMC) to innervate the external US.



Figure 5: Transverse sections of a 21-week-old male fetus scanned at an optical resolution of 4800 dpi at the levels of: cranial membranous urethra (A, B, C) and caudal membranous

urethra (D, E, F):

Sections (A) and (B) are stained with hematoxylin and eosin.

Sections (A1) and (B1) are stained with anti-S100 antibody. Sections (A2) and (B2) are stained with

anti-NOS antibody.

Nerves for the urethra pass through the smooth muscle of the middle compartment (yellow

arrowhead) between the rectum and the urethra. Some fibers penetrate the urethra at 3 and 9 o'clock

whereas others penetrate the median line in the ventral direction.

Pudendal nerve is shown with green arrowhead.

Nerve fibers spread into the external US, the internal US and the urethral submucosa.

The nitrergic nerves (anti-NOS positive) coming from the inferior hypogastric plexus (IHP) (black

arrowhead) innervate the external and the internal US and also supply innervation for the erectile

bodies.

Color code: External urethral sphincter (EUS, light purple), internal urethral sphincter (IUS, dark

purple), levator ani muscle (LAM, orange), rectum (beige), smooth muscle cells of the middle

compartment (the core or rectourethral muscle in green, endolevator area or medial part of the levator

ani muscle in pink and infralevator area or deep transverse perineal muscle, light blue), and cavernous

corpus (CC, red).

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Figure 6: Computer-assisted anatomical dissection (CAAD) of the pelvic structure in a 21-

week-old male fetus:

(A) Right lateral views.

(B, C, D, E) Superior views. Nerves for the urethra are lateroprostatic and prerectal. They are

localized in a triangular zone between urethra, rectum and levator ani muscle. All of the urethral

fibers pass through a smooth muscle area (smooth muscle cell compartment) between the rectum

and the urethra.

Nerves penetrate the urethra at 3 and 9 o'clock or on the median line in the ventral direction.

Some nerves come from the neurovascular bundles and innervate the external and the internal US

and the erectile bodies

Urethra (yellow), prostate (dark red), internal urethral sphincter (dark purple), external urethral

sphincter (dark purple), levator ani muscle (LAM, orange), rectum (beige), smooth muscle cell

compartment (the core or recto-urethral muscle in green, endolevator area or medial part of the

levator ani muscle in pink and infralevator area or deep transverse perineal muscle, light blue),

external anal sphincter (EAS, dark blue), plexus hypogastric (yellow fibers).

Figure 7: Transverse sections of a 23-week-old male fetus scanned at an optical resolution of

4800 dpi at the levels of caudal membranous urethra (A, B, B1, B2).

Sections (A) is stained with Masson's trichrome.

Sections (B) and (B1) are stained with anti-S100 antibody.

Sections (B2) is stained with anti-PMP22 antibody.

(B1, B2) are magnified views from rectangle in (B) with anti- S100 and anti-PMP22 staining.

The pudendal nerve is shown with green arrowhead.

The pudendal nerve gives perineal nerve fibers that curve medially to the EUS at the level of the

wings. These nerves are somatic (positive anti-PMP22) (black arrowhead in (B2).

Color code: External urethral sphincter (EUS, light purple), internal urethral sphincter (IUS, dark purple), levator ani muscle (LAM, orange), rectum (beige), smooth muscle cells of the middle compartment (the core or rectourethral muscle in green, endolevator area or medial part of the levator ani muscle in pink and infra levator area or deep transverse perineal muscle, light blue), and cavernous

(CC, red).

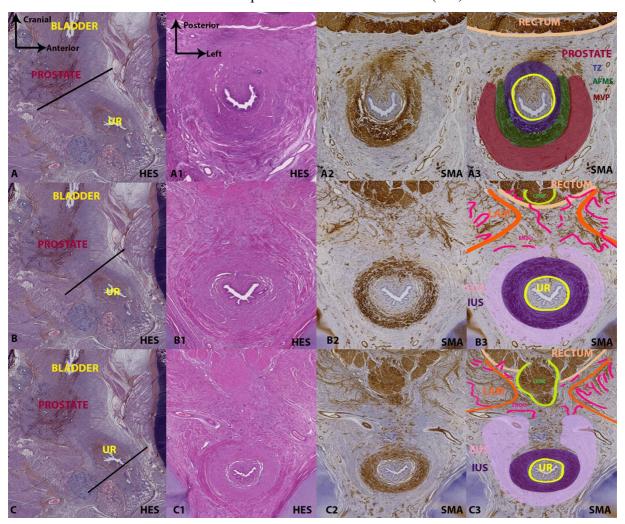


Fig 1



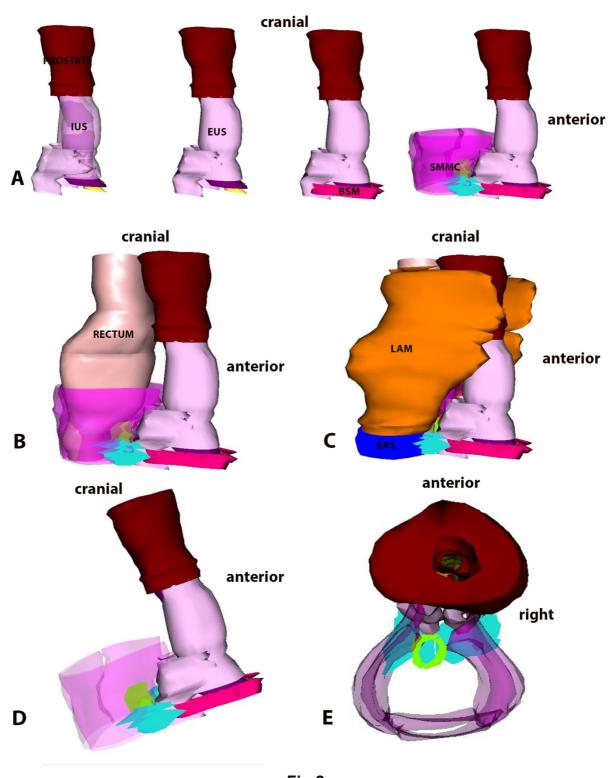


Fig 2



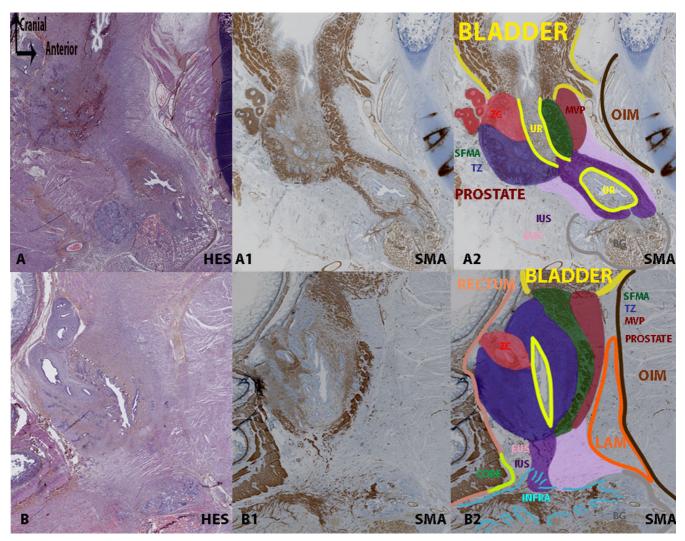


Fig 3



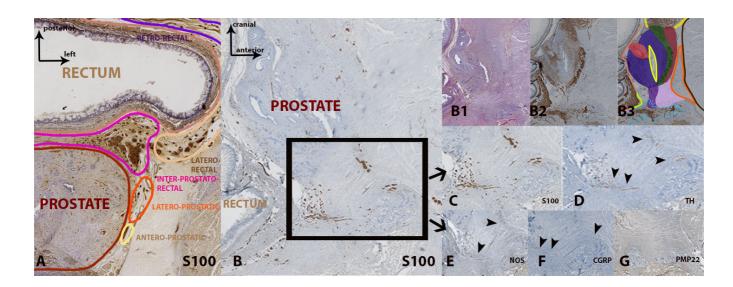


Fig 4

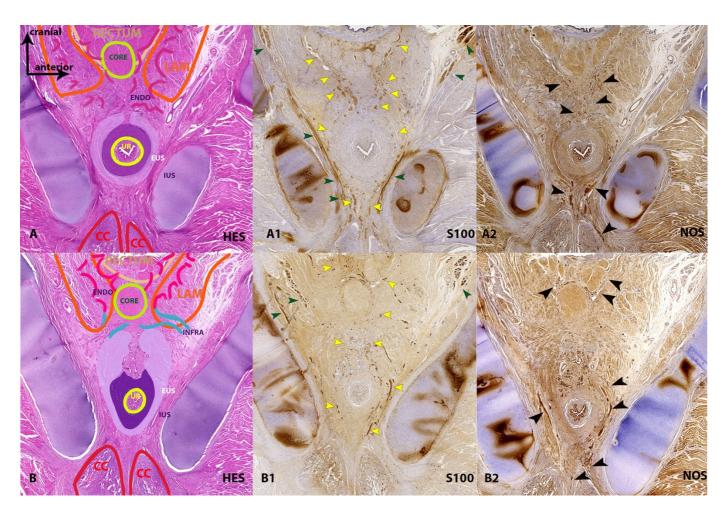
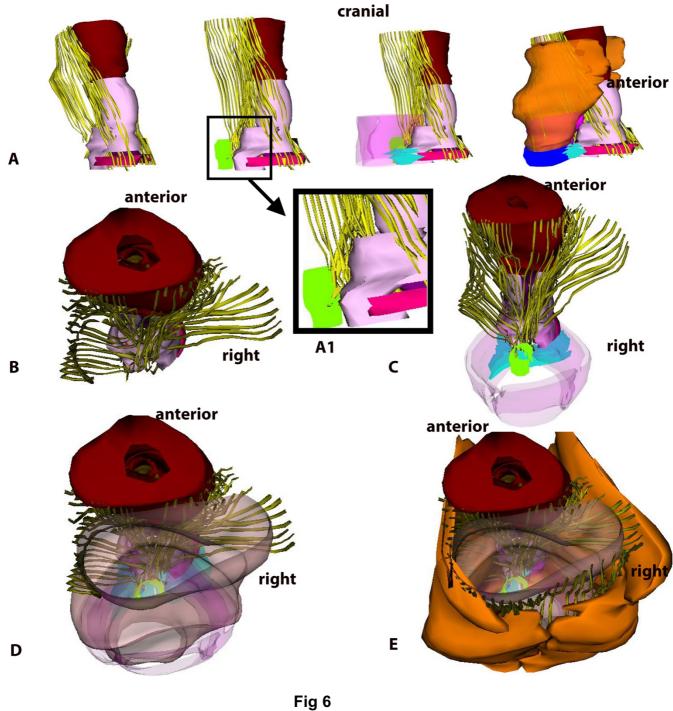


Fig 5





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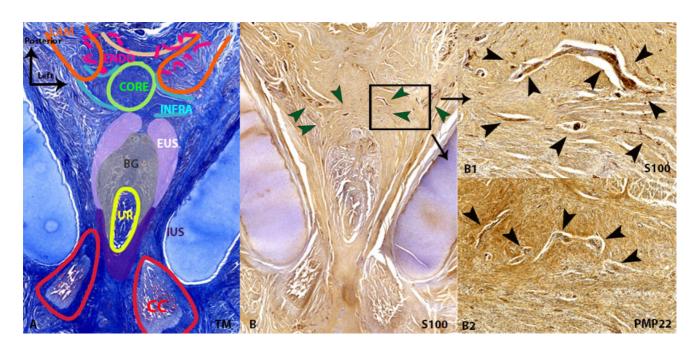


Fig 7



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Neurourology and Urodynamics 36:271-279 (2017)

Origin and Nature of Pelvic Ureter Innervation

Mazen Zaitouna,^{1,2,3}* Bayan Alsaid,^{1,2} Cédric Lebacle, Krystel Nyangoh Timoh, Gérard Benoît, and Thomas Bessede^{1,3}

¹U1195, University Paris-Sud, INSERM, University Paris-Saclay, Le Kremlin Bicêtre, France ²Laboratory of Anatomy, Faculty of Medicine, University of Damascus, Damascus, Syria ³Urology Department, G.H. Paris Śud, APHP, Paris Sud University, Le Kremlin Bicêtre, France

Aims: Innervation of the pelvic ureter traditionally comes from the pelvic plexus. This innervation is independent: adrenergic and cholinergic. The purpose of this study was to describe more precisely the origin and nature of its innervation (adrenergic, cholinergic, nitrergic, and somatic). Methods: Six specimens of normal human fetal pelvis (four male and two female) from 20 to 30 weeks gestation were studied. The sections of these fetuses, carried out every 5 µm $without \, interval, \, were \, treated \, with \, Hematoxylin \, Eosin \, (HE), \, with \, Masson's \, trichrome \, (TriM), \, immunolabeling \, of \, smooth \, interval \, (TriM) \, and \, the following \, of \, smooth \, (TriM) \, and \, the following \, of \, smoot$ muscle cells with smooth anti-actin, of nerves with anti-S100 protein, anti-tyrosine hydroxylase, anti-VAChT, antinNOS, and with anti- peripheral myelin protein 22 (PMP 22). The slides were scanned and two-dimensional images reconstructed in 3D, and analyzed. Results: The terminal pelvic ureter travels above and inside the inferior hypogastric plexus (IHP). The nerve fibers that innervate the ureterovesical junction come mainly from the superior hypogastric plexus (SHP) which gives off the hypogastric nerves and pelvic branches of the sacral plexus that form the IHP. Most nerve fibers meet below the ureter, behind the bladder to form an ascending bundle, which innervates the pelvic ureter. Immunohistochemical analysis shows that the nerves of the pelvic ureter consist of adrenergic, cholinergic, and nitrergic fibers. Conclusion: The innervation of the distal ureter depends mainly on the SHP. This innervation is adrenergic, cholinergic, and nitrergic. It innervates the pelvic ureter in an ascending manner. This anatomical information can change rectal resection and ureteral reimplantation techniques and drug treatments for pelvic ureter stones. Neurourol. *Urodynam.* 36:271–279, 2017. © 2015 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

Key words: anatomy; computer-assisted anatomic dissection; pelvic ureteral stones; postoperative voiding dysfunction; ureteral reimplantation; ureterovesical junction

INTRODUCTION

Innervation of the pelvic ureter traditionally comes from the inferior hypogastric plexus (IHP) (pelvic plexus). This innervation is independent: adrenergic and cholinergic. The adrenergic innervation comes from the superior hypogastric plexus (SHP), and the cholinergic innervation comes from the pelvic splanchnic nerves. The topographical description and determination of the nature of the fibers innervating the distal ureter are not accessible to conventional anatomical methods.² They have not established the respective importance of these nerves

Several authors have reported a high rate of postoperative functional bladder problems due to bladder innervation impairment during ureterovesical reimplantations,^{4–5} or after major abdominal surgery.^{6–7} The pelvic ureter is the seat of congenital or acquired disease, reflux or nephrolithiasis,^{8–9} with clinical studies demonstrating the efficacy of α -1 adrenergic receptor antagonists for the expulsion of the pelvic ureter stones. ¹⁰⁻¹¹

The aim of this work is to describe more precisely the origin

and nature (adrenergic, cholinergic, nitrergic, and somatic) of the autonomic innervation of the human fetus distal ureter, in particular to investigate the role of the caudal hypogastric plexus and of nitrergic innervation ¹² using immunohistochemical methods, and computer-assisted anatomic dissection techniques (CAAD). 13

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Specimens

Six normal human fetal pelvises (four male and two female) from 20 to 30 weeks gestation were studied under the

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authorization of the Biomedicine agency and the Paris-Sud University. The specimens contained all of the structures from

the pelvis of the sacrum to the pubic symphysis.

The samples were set in 10% formalin for 24–48 hr and then sectioned into blocks (one block every four mm) before being embedded in paraffin. Using a manual microtome, the sectioning of these blocks was carried out every 5 µm without interval.

Histological Study

The sections were treated according to the following sequence (Table I):

- (1) The first section was stained with hematoxylin eosin (HE) or with Masson's trichrome (TriM) to view all parenchymal anatomical structures.
- The second was used to study smooth muscle with a smooth anti-actin polyclonal antibody.

Prof. Christopher Chapple led the peer-review process as the Associate Editor responsible for the paper.
Potential conflicts of interest: Nothing to disclose.

The specimens of normal human fetus studied in this article have been approved

by the appropriate ethics committee. Author's Contribution: M Zaitouna: Protocol/project development, data collection or management, data analysis and article writing. B Alsaid: Protocol develop C Lebacle and K Nyangoh Timoh: Data analysis, G Benoit and T Bessede: Final approval of the article.

*Correspondence to: Mazen Zaitouna, U1195, University Paris-Sud INSERM,

University Paris-Saclay, Le Kremlin Bicêtre, France E-mail: mzaitouna@yahoo.fr Received 7 July 2015; Accepted 9 October 2015

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272 Zaitouna et al.

- (3) The third was used to study nerves by immunolabeling with anti-protein S100, obtained by immunizing rabbits.(4) The fourth was used to study nerves by immunolabeling
- (4) The fourth was used to study nerves by immunolabeling with anti-tyrosine hydroxylase antibody (TH), obtained by immunizing rabbits.
- (5) The fifth was used to study nerves by immunolabeling with an anti-vesicular acetylcholine transporter (anti-VAChT), obtained by immunizing rabbits.
- (6) The sixth was used to study nitrergic fibers by immunolabeling with the Nitric Oxide Synthase (n-NOS), obtained by immunizing rabbits.
- (7) The seventh was used to study nerves by immunolabeling somatic nerve fibers (by anti- peripheral myelin protein 22 (PMP 22)), obtained by immunizing rabbits.

The slides were incubated with biotinylated secondary antibody (goat anti-rabbit) (code 401313, Calbiochem, US and Canada) diluted at 1/200 for 90 min in a humid chamber at room temperature. The slides were then treated with the avidin-biotin complex (ABC) kit for 60 min, a few drops of diaminobenzidine (DAB) were added to reveal the ABC, the DAB incubation lasted from 3 to 10 min and the slides were controlled under microscopy.

During each manipulation, we carried out a positive control to confirm the specificity of the reagents and a negative control to eliminate false negative results.

TABLE I. Summary of Characteristics of Primary Polyclonal Antibodies

Antigen	Code	Dilution	Unmasking	Duration of incubation	Positive control
Smooth anti-actin	ab15267 Abcam, USA	1/150	no	10 min	Colon
Anti-protein S100	ab15520 Abcam, USA	1/400	no	1 h (amb. temp.)	Sacral plexus
Anti-TH	ab112 Abcam, USA	1/750	Enzymatic digestion (trypsin at 37°)	12h at 4°	Adrenal
Anti-VAChT	V 5387 Sigma, USA	1/2000	Enzymatic digestion (trypsin at 37°)	12h at 4°	Colon
Anti-nNOS	160870 Cayman, USA	1/200	no	12h at 4°	Corpus cavernosum
Anti-PMP 22	ab61220 Abcam, USA	1/100	no	12h at 4°	Sacral plexus

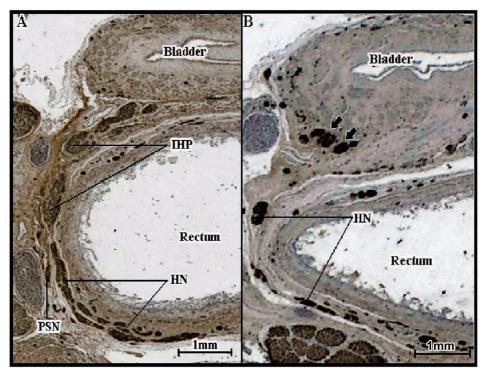


Fig. 1. (A) Histologic section of a 20-week old male fetus treated with anti-S100 protein and scanned at 3200 dpi optical resolution below the ureteral-vesical junction. The fibers of the pelvic splanchnic nerves (PSN) join the hypogastric nerve (HN) to form the inferior hypogastric plexus (IHP) that develops between the bladder and the rectum. (B) Histological section stained with anti-S100 at the end of the left ureteral-vesical junction of the same fetus. Most nerve fibers are grouped on the lateral-lower side of the junction (arrows).



TABLE II. Number and Nature of Nerve Fibers in the Hypogastric Nerve (HN), the Pelvic Splanchnic Nerves (S3) and the Inferior Hypogastric Plexus (IHP)

	No. of nerve fibers (anti S100+)	No. of adrenergic fibers (anti-TH+)	No. of cholinergic fibers (anti VAChT+)	No. of nitrergic fibers (anti nNOS+)	No. of somatic fibers (anti PMP22+)
HN	56 (± 11)	30 (± 7)	32 (±9)	15 (±4)	0
IHP	115 (±16)	54 (±3)	51 (±6)	23 (±4)	0
S3	27 (±9)	12 (±6)	12 (±4)	5 (±2)	0

For the positive control, a section containing a known member immunolabeling with the studied antibody was used (Table I). On the other hand, a negative control was carried out on a slide on which the first antibody was not applied. The remainders of the protocol were applied as previously mentioned.

Three-Dimensional Reconstruction

The serial sections (two-dimensional) were studied after different staining and immunohistochemical markers. The preliminary microscopic examination of all the slides in the optical microscope made it possible to identify the different anatomical structures and nerve fibers of a diameter greater than 20 μ m. Anatomical images were processed with <code>WinSurf</code> software to build an interactive 3D model. 14

TABLE III. Number and Nature of Nerve Fibers Around the Ureter

	No. of adrenergic fibers (TH)	No. of cholinergic fibers (VAChT)	No. of nitrergic fibers (nNOS)	No. of somatic fibers (PMP22)
Medial bundle	17 (± 5)	15 (±4)	8 (±4)	0
Lateral bundle	11 (\pm 2)	11 (±3)	5 (±2)	0

Quantitative Study

A quantitative study of adrenergic, cholinergic, nitrergic, and somatic nerve fibers was carried out in the inferior hypogastric plexus (IHP), from the hypogastric nerves (HNs) to the ureterovesical junction (UVI).

Quantification was performed manually on the screen using the images grouped at selected levels.

RESULTS

Two-Dimensional Microscopic Immunohistochemical Study

To follow the course of the nerves, we describe the results in a caudo-cranial direction.

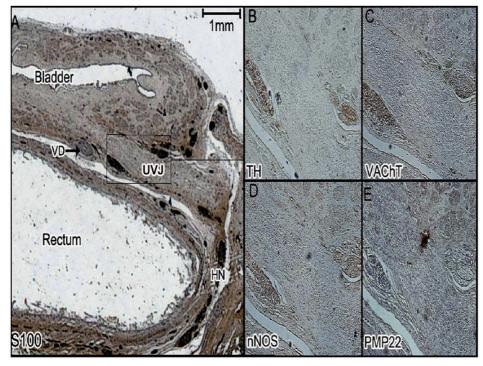


Fig. 2. (A) Histological section stained with anti-S100 at the ureteral-vesical junction right (UVJ) of a 23-week old male fetus. The nerve trunk is divided into two nerve bundles (frame) on both sides of the junction. Nerve fibers of the hypogastric nerve (HN) extend towards the medial bundle. Very fine fibers accompany the ureter into the bladder muscle. (B) Microscopic appearance of the two nerve bundles (x 10) stained with anti-TH. (C) The same bundles stained with anti-VAChT. (D) The same bundles stained with anti-PMP 22.



274 Zaitouna et al.

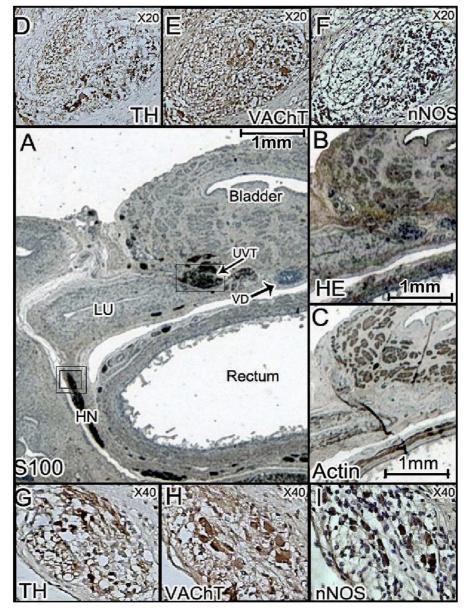


Fig. 3. (A)Histological section of a 20-week old male fetus treated with anti-protein S100 and scanned at 3200 dpi optical resolution, at the left distal ureter: the uretero-vesical nerve truck (UVT) between the bladder and ureter (box) and the left hypogastric nerve (HN) bypass the rectum and supply fibers to the distal ureter (double box). (B and C) The following two sections (5 μ interval) were treated with HE and smooth anti-actin show that UVT is situated outside the adventitia layer of the ureter and the bladder. (D, E, and F) The following serial sections in UVT (in box A) treated with anti-TH and anti-VAChT and anti-nNOS and magnified with an optical microscope (x20) show the coexistence of adrenergic and cholinergic fibers with a few nitrergic fibers in the UVT. (G, H, and F). The same serial sections, magnified with an optical microscope (x 40), within the SHN fibers illustrate that the SHN is mixed (adrenergic and cholinergic\nitrergic\). VD, vas deferens.



Origin and Nature of Pelvic Ureter Innervation

Below the Ureterovesical Junction (UVJ)

The IHP travels along the lateral surfaces of the rectum, prostate, uterus, bladder, and continues to the erectile organs. The IHP receives the hypogastric nerve (HN) terminal branch of the SHP on its upper edge and the pelvic splanchnic nerves from the sacral roots (S2, S3, and S4) (Fig. 1A). The cranial (upper) part of this plexus gives most of the nerve fibers back up to the UVI towards the ureter (Fig. 1B).

In immunohistochemistry, these fibers take the anti-TH (about 50%) and anti-VAChT (about 50%) labeling, 50% of which are nitrergic. The same labeling was observed in the nerve fibers within the detrusor muscle. The distribution of these three types of fibers was identical in the HN, the pelvic splanchnic nerves, and the IHP (Table II).

At the Ureterovesical Junction (UVJ)

The nerve fibers from the IHP come together into a subureteral nerve trunk, which is divided into two beams (medial and lateral) on either side of the urethra, forming a loop that traverses the ureter. Each of these nerve bundles travels outside of the adventitia of the ureter and is distributed in very fine fibers for the bladder and the pelvic ureter upwards (Fig. 2A).

The HN gives off nerve branches towards the medial aspect of the ureter and the vas deferens duct in males. It receives previously described fine fibers of the medial nerve bundle inside the UVJ (Fig. 2A).

These fiber bundles contain adrenergic and cholinergic (including nitrergic) fibers without somatic fibers (Table III).

At the Distal Ureter

At the fourth sacral vertebra, both nerve bundles come together just above the UVJ between the ureter and bladder: they re-form a nerve trunk. Several fibers enter the detrusor muscle. We found that the HNs join the nerves of the ureter (Fig. 3A, B, and C).

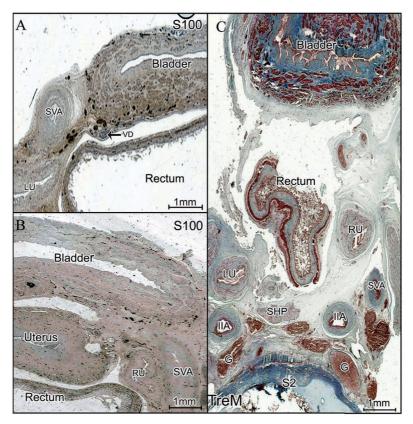


Fig. 4. (A) Histological section of the 24-week old male fetus treated with anti-protein S100 and scanned at 3200 dpi optical resolution at the third sacral vertebra shows the innervation of the bladder, left ureter (LU) and the left vas deferens (VD). (B) Histological section of the 27-week old female fetus treated with antiprotein S100 and scanned at 3200 dpi optical resolution with a third level sacral vertebra illustrates the path of the right ureter (RU) that makes its way towards the lateral side of the rectum and uterus and inside the superior vesical artery. The sections A and B show that the nerve fibers are grouped into the space between the bladder and the ureter. The number of nerve fibers innervating the bladder decreases towards the medial line. (C) Histological section of a 20-week old male fetus stained with Masson's trichrome (TriM) and scanned at 3200 dpi optical resolution (at the second sacral vertebra); showing the relationship between the ureters with the rectum, the blood vessels and the superior hypogastric plexus (SHP). G, ganglion, IIA, internal iliac artery; SVA, superior vesical artery.

276 Zaitouna et al.

The immunohistochemical staining shows that the nature of these nerve fibers is identical to that of HN (Fig. 3. from D to F). We found the coexistence of adrenergic (102 \pm 13 fibers stained with anti-TH immunolabeling) and cholinergic nerve fibers (93 \pm 9 fibers stained with anti-VAChT immunolabeling) in this bundle. It also contains nitrergic fibers (69 \pm 16 fibers stained by anti-nNOS immuno-marking) that are part of the cholinergic quota (Fig. 3. D, E, and F). We did not find any somatic fibers in the pelvic ureter nerves (anti-PMP 22 negative).

At the 3rd sacral vertebra, the ascending nerve fibers are finer and rarer. Numerous nerve fibers join the lateral and posterior wall of the bladder. The number of these fibers decreases from the lateral sides of the bladder to the medial line where they are almost non-existent. Many enter the detrusor muscle (Fig. 4A and B). Others join the vas deferens, especially on its front side (Fig. 4A)

At the second sacral vertebra, the ureters located on the posterolateral sides of the rectum are joined by thin ascending nerve fibers (Fig. 4C).

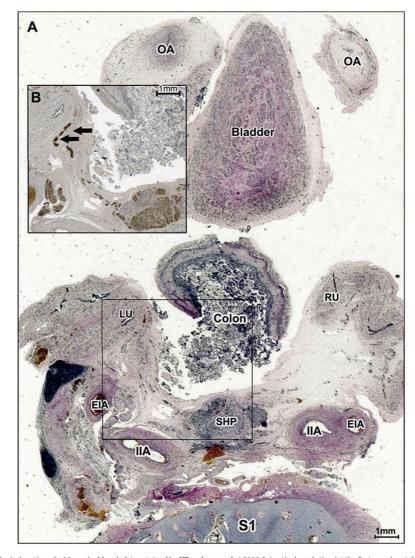


Fig. 5. (A) Histological section of a 30-week old male fetus stained by HE and scanned at 3200 dpi optical resolution (at the first sacral vertebra S1); it shows the location of the right (RU) and left (LU) ureter and the superior hypogastric plexus (SHP) at the bifurcation of the common iliac arteries. (B) The following section (5 µm interval) treated with anti-protein S100 shows the fascia between the SHP and the RU (box in A) and nerve fibers that come from the SHP towards the LU. EIA, external iliac artery; IIA, internal iliac artery; UA, umbilical artery.



Fig. 6. Computer-assisted anatomic dissection (CAAD) 20-week old male fetus organs showing the nerve pathway and their relationship with adjacent organs. (A) Lateral view (B) Lower view (rectum transparency). HN, hypogastric nerve; IHP, inferior hypogastric plexus; LÚ, left ureter; PB, pubic bone; PR, prostate; PSN, pelvic splanchnic nerve; RU, right ureter; SHP, superior hypogastric plexus; VD, vas deferens and VS, seminal vesicle.

At the first sacral vertebra, the ureters receive independent transverse nerve fibers from IHP fibers, which come from the SHP. These fibers make their way in the fascia, which extends between the ureter and the SHP and are concentrated on the postero-medial aspect of the ureters, outside their adventitia

The Three-dimensional Reconstruction

Histological sections were reconstructed in three dimensions to illustrate the origin of these nerves, their path and their relationship with neighboring organs (Fig. 6).

Nerve fibers that innervate the lower ureter come from HN

We can divide the fibers innervating the UVJ according to

(1) Upper fibers (cranial) coming mainly from the fibers of the SHP have an antegrade route and innervate the upper pelvic (2) Lower fibers (caudal), coming mainly from the upper half of the IHP (Fig. 6 and 8) and making their way towards the intramural portion of the distal ureter, bladder, deferent ducts and seminal vesicles.

,1mm,

Fibers, coming from, via the lower half of the IHP, pelvic splanchnic nerves from S2, S3, and S4 and making their way towards the bladder trigone, prostate and erectile bodies. The two parts of the IHP, largely anastomosed, contain an equal share of adrenergic, cholinergic and nitrergic fibers (Fig. 7).

The ureter traverses the ascending fibers of the IHP that eventually separate on either side of the ureter, providing branches which penetrate the ureter wall and the bladder (Fig. 8).

Above the UVJ, the nerve fibers gather upwards to innervate

the distal portion of the ureter and the bladder wall (Fig. 6 and 8). The periuterine fibers become rare upwards where they join the transverse nerve fibers that come from the SHP (Fig. 6).

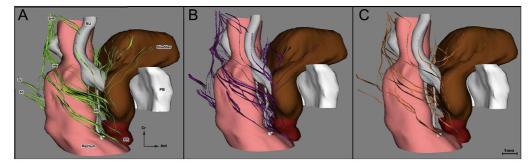


Fig. 7. CAAD in a 20-week old fetus. (A) Lateral view shows just the adrenergic fibers (in green) (other fibers are cleared) in the superior hypogastric plexus (SHP), the hypogastric nerves (HN), the inferior hypogastric plexus (IHP) and the sacred splanchnic nerves (S2 and S3). (B) Same view with adrenergic fibers cleared, we can only see the cholinergic fibers (in purple). (c) Same view with nitrergic fibers only (in orange).

Neurourology and Urodynamics DOI 10.1002/nau



190

278 Zaitouna et al

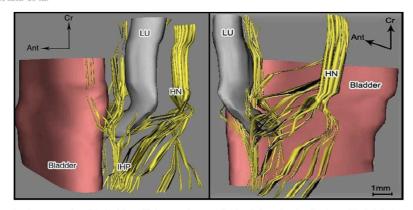


Fig. 8. Three-dimensional reconstruction of the bladder and left ureter of a 23-week old male fetus showing the shape of the inferior hypogastric plexus (IHP) and its two parts and innervation of the ureterovesical junction and the pathway of the nerve fibers innervating the uretero-vesical junction between the bladder and the left ureter (LU). HN, hypogastric nerve.

DISCUSSION

In this study, we described the innervation of the pelvic ureter (origin, course and nature of these nerve fibers) in the human fetus. The findings were the same in all six specimens and there was no difference between male and female fetuses

The fetus was chosen because its innervation is easily identifiable and the sections fit into a slide, which facilitates the image collection for their reconstruction. The fetuses studied were between 20 and 30 weeks old, because from the 23rd Carnegie-stage of embryonic development (8 weeks old) the morphology of intra-pelvic nerve structures undergoes no further change 15 further change.

Anatomically: Our work demonstrates the important role of the SHP and HN in the innervation of the pelvic ureter.

These HNs join the IHP, and innervate the pelvic ureter from bottom to top. Yucel and Baskin¹⁶ found nerve trunks on the medial aspect of the distal ureter, making their way down to the UVJ. Takenaka et al. 17 reported that the detrusor nerves of the bladder focused on the dorsal surface of the bladder within the UVJ. Fritsch¹⁸ reported that the nerve fibers were located on the medial and ventral surface of the distal ureter, which we confirm. We have already shown that some fibers come from the HN, and enter the wall of the bladder at the UVJ.19

The development of the bladder and ureter occurs from the 4th to the 7th week of embryonic gestation, ²⁰ but the maturation of the UVJ occurs during infancy. ²¹ Its innervation contributes to this maturation and the disappearance of vesicoureteral reflux, 22 but in our study we found that the innervation of the UVJ was not accompanied with the ureter in the muscle layer of the bladder, and therefore it might not affect this maturation.

The immunohistochemical study confirmed that the nerves of the pelvic ureter coming from the HN and IHP consist of adrenergic (positive anti-TH) and cholinergic (positive anti-VAChT) fibers. Among these cholinergic fibers, 50% are nitrergic (positive anti-nNOS), which we already found at the SHP and this ²³ We also demonstrated that the IHP of male fetuses was made up of anti-TH, anti-VAChT or both together. ²⁴

Clinically, voiding disorders are common after rectal surgery,⁶ which damages the HNs from the SHP. These nerves travel along the anterior surface of the aortic bifurcation, then in the mesorectum. Their preservation in rectal cancer surgery merits discussion

Neurourology and Urodynamics DOI 10.1002/nau

The treatment of vesicoureteral reflux is today based on subpunctal injections that are at a distance from extra adventitial nerves.²⁵ However, a lesion of the nerve fibers during ureteral reimplantation seems possible during dissection around the ureter, especially in contact with its upper and lower faces where the nerve fibers are concentrated. This may explain the high rate of postoperative voiding dysfunctions with extravesical approaches.

The rich innervation of the UVJ, half of which is adrenergic fibers, supports the use of α -1 adrenergic receptor antagonists and maybe nitric oxide receptors agonists to facilitate spontaneous expulsion of distal ureter stones.

After the success in nerve transfer experiments on cadavers from several sources (the ilioinguinal, iliohypogastric or femoral nerves),^{27,28} knowing the origin, location and the nature of nerve fibers within the detrusor muscle may support and contribute to further development of those techniques to restore function to the bladder.

CONCLUSION

The innervation of the distal ureter comes from the SHP, HN, and IHP, with an adrenergic, cholinergic, and nitrergic mix. The frequency of bladder retentions after rectal surgery is explained by potential upper hypogastric nerve lesions and should lead to preserving these nerves in the mesorectum. Because the nerve fibers around the UVJ are located outside of the adventitia of the ureter, the technique of intravesical ureteral reimplantation gives a more reliable rate of complications compared to extravesical techniques. In the case of lower ureter stones, nitric oxide agonists could be justified.

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Origin and Nature of Pelvic Ureter Innervation

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7-Article 7 : Le nerf sciatique : Muscle Nerve -IF= 2,5

FUNCTIONAL AND STRUCTURAL MICROANATOMY OF THE FETAL **SCIATIC NERVE**

MAUD CREZE, MD,1 MAZEN ZAITOUNA, MD,1 NYANGOH TIMOH KRYSTEL, MD,1 DJIBRIL DIALLO, PhD,1 CÉDRIC LEBACLE, MD,1 MARIE-FRANCE BELLIN, PhD,2 DENIS DUCREUX, PhD,3 GÉRARD BENOIT, PhD,1 and THOMAS BESSEDE, PhD1

ABSTRACT: Introduction: The ultrastructure of a nerve has implications for surgical nerve repair. The aim of our study was to characterize the fascicular versus fibrillar anatomy and the autonomic versus somatic nature of the fetal sciatic nerve (SN). Methods: Immunohistochemistry for vesicular acetylcholine transporter, tyrosine hydroxylase, and peripheral myelin protein 22 was performed to identify cholinergic, adrenergic, and somatic axons, respectively, in the human fetal SN. Twodimensional (2D) analysis and 3D reconstructions were per-formed. Results: The fetal SN is composed of one-third stromal tissue and two-thirds neural tissue. Autonomic fibers are predominant over somatic fibers within the neural tissue. The distribution of somatic fibers is initially random, but then become topographically organized after intra- and interfascicular rearrangements have occurred within the nerve. The fetal model presents limitations but enables illustration of the nature of the nerve fibers and the 3D fascicular anatomy of

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The sciatic nerve (SN) is a sensorimotor nerve with connective tissue and an as-yet unquantified autonomic component. The somatic fibers are responsible for conscious innervation while the autonomic component innervates vascular, glandular, and integumentary structures of the posterior compartment of the lower limb. Somatic fibers are large and surrounded by compact myelin; autonomic fibers are unmyelinated (C-fibers) and are often named "small fibers". The connective tissue consists of fibroblasts, fat cells, collagen fibers, and vessels and displays concentric laminar structures which circumscribe bundles of fibers or fascicles. It is possible to investigate the functional and

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of this article.

Abbreviations: 2D, two-dimensional; CAAD, computer-assisted anatomical dissection; HE, hematoxylin and eosin; LST, lumbosacral trunk; MR, magnetic resonance; PMP22, peripheral myelin protein 22; RC, rami communicantes; SN, sciatic nerve; TH, thyrosine hydroxylese; VAChT, vesicular acetylcholine transporter

Key words: autonomic fibers: fascicular anatomy: human: PMP22: sciatve: somatic fibers

Conflicts of Interest: None of the authors has any conflict of interest

Correspondence to: Maud Creze, Hôpital Bicêtre, 78 rue du Général Leclerc, 94275 Le Kremlin-Bicetre; e-mail: maud2602@hotmail.frwe

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Fetal Sciatic Microanatomy

organizational differences of such a major element of the peripheral nervous system with clinical, experimental, or imaging techniques.

In the field of nerve repair, fascicles are currently the anatomical unit to restore, but thinner ultrastructures may also have relevant regenerative properties.^{2,3} Neuroregeneration, which involves axons and connective tissue, is a complex phenomenon wherein biochemical events and inflammation can lead to glial scar and nonfunctional repair. It may also depend on the function, the myelination, and the neurochemical properties of the axons: nerve regeneration appears to be less prolific in adrenergic than in cholinergic fibers. 4-6 The connective tissue also plays a role in nerve repair and the spread of inflammation.

Previous studies have focused on the topography of the motor, adrenergic, or cholinergic fibers of the SN as well as its fascicular or functional organization (the latter in animals). However, sufficient data are not available to understand the organization and path of the somatic and vegetative fibers in the course of the SN.

To study the nature of nerve fibers in the peripheral nervous system, computer-assisted anatomical dissection (CAAD) in the fetus provides an interesting anatomical model. There is little adipose tissue and related artifacts, larger regions can be included in toto without loss of proportions or relations, and several subjects can be studied in a reasonable amount of time to address the variability of structures.^{7,8} In the pelvis, complete development of the plexus is achieved in Carnegie stage 23 (8 weeks of gestation). In the SN, morphological changes are considered to be complete at the end of premyelination (seventeenth week of gestation), whereas biochemical changes would occur during myelination (seventeenth to twentieth weeks of gestation). 10

The aim of this study was to perform immunochemical mapping of the somatic and autonomic components of the proximal SN and to describe the main features of the neural tissue and stroma to clarify the autonomic and somatic intraneural pathway. A secondary objective was to perform a



U1195, INSERM, University of Paris Sud, France

²Department of Radiology, University of Paris Sud, University Hospital Bicêtre, AP-HP, France

³ Department of Neuroradiology, University of Paris Sud, University Hospital Bicêtre, AP-HP, France Accepted 19 December 2016

Table 1. Characteristics of the fetuses*				
Fetus	Gender	Age (GW)	CRL (mm)	Time to fixation (days
1	М	20	190	T
2	F	30	305	2
3	M	16	130	2
4	М	14	85	1
5	M	20	190	2
6	F	20	190	3
7	F	23	220	2
8	F	24	245	3

*F, female; M, male; GW, gestational weeks; CRL, crown-rump length.

three-dimensional (3D) reconstruction of the ultrastructure (fascicular and fibrillar) in the SN.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Fetal Tissue. SN specimens were obtained from 8 fetuses of women who had miscarried at a gestational age between 14 and 30 weeks (Table 1). The SNs were dissected during a diagnostic autopsy with parental consent, and the study obtained authorization from the French Biomedical Agency (Research Protocol PFS09-005, May 2009) and was in accordance with French legislation (L.1232-2 articles, L1241-6, L1241-5 of the Code of public Health). Additional parental consent was obtained to use the tissue for research purposes. The pelvic content was procured en-bloc and fixed in formalin (10% formaldehyde) for 24h. The external body aspect was carefully restored out of respect and in the event that parents would express the wish to see their fetus after the autopsy. The tissue was cut into 4-mm blocks and embedded in paraffin. A series of $5-\mu$ m-thick sections was then prepared every $150-200\,\mu\mathrm{m}$: 1500 sections were obtained for each fetus.

Histological Examination. The first transverse section of each level was the reference and was stained with hematoxylin and eosin (HE). We set out to detect the following neuronal markers: protein S100 (PS100), vesicular acetylcholine transferase (VAChT), tyrosine hydroxylase (TH), and peripheral myelin protein 22 (PMP22). PS100 is a general immunolabeling marker for all nerves and specifically identifies the nucleus and cytoplasm of Schwann cells in formalin-fixed paraffin-embedded nerve tissue. 11 VAChT is a functional transporter for the acetylcholine neurotransmitter and is expressed in all the main cholinergic neurons known in the nervous system. 12 TH is involved in the conversion of phenylalanine to dopamine and is used as a marker for adrenergic neurons. Finally, PMP22 is found in compact myelin of peripheral nerves and is used as a marker of the motor

788 Fetal Sciatic Microanatomy

neuron and somatic fibers involved in touch and proprioception.¹³ We indentified autonomic fibers as cholinergic or adrenergic without PMP22 positivity. On inspection, these fibers occupied the whole nerve section, except the perineurium in contrast to the somatic fibers.

The neuronal markers were detected with the following polyclonal antibodies: rabbit anti-cow protein S100, code no. Z0311, diluted 1/400; rabbit anti-rat VAChT, code no. V 5387 (4 fetuses), and rabbit anti-rat VAChT code no. Ab68984 (4 fetuses) diluted 1/2,000; rabbit anti-rat tyrosine hydroxylase, TH, code no. Ab112, diluted 1/750; and rabbit anti-rat PMP22, code no. Ab61220, diluted 1/100 (Supplementary Table S1, which is available online).

Immunohistochemical Protocol. The immunohistochemical protocol has been described previously and is available in the supplementary materials of the study (available on line). 14 Briefly, the slides were heated to remove the paraffin, washed in xylene, and then rehydrated in ethanol baths before being rinsed. Antigen retrieval consisted of enzymatic digestion by trypsin, endogenous peroxidase inactivation, primary antibody incubation (60 min at room temperature for anti-S100, 12 h at 4°C for anti-PMP22, and 1 night at 4°C for anti-VACHT and anti-TH) and secondary antibody incubation and detection by the avidin-biotinperoxidase complex method (Vectastain ABC kit, Vector Laboratories) and addition of diaminobenzidine under microscopic control (between 3 and 10 min). The slides were counterstained in Mayer hematoxylin solution (Sigma, Code No. MHS32) and finally dried and covered using glycerol gelatin aqueous mounting medium.

Negative Controls. The specificity of each reagent was confirmed in negative control slides by replacing each diluted primary antibody by a diluent only, all other parameters remaining unchanged.

Positive Controls. The sensitivity of each reagent was confirmed in positive control slides: human or rat gastrointestinal tract or spinal cord slides were used as anti-VAChT positive controls, adrenal gland slides as anti-TH positive controls, gastrointestinal tract and rat SN as anti-PMP22 positive controls.

2D Analysis. The SN was studied at the level of the infrapiriformis foramen, the sacral roots, and the lumbosacral trunk (LST). Slides were examined with a standard light microscope at $\times 4, \times 10$, and $\times 20$ magnifications.

The fascicular structure of the SN, sacral roots, and LST was studied: the number (mean and interquartile range) and the surface of the fascicles were quantified on the HE-stained slides, and the percentage of nerve surface occupied by

MUSCLE & NERVE October 2017



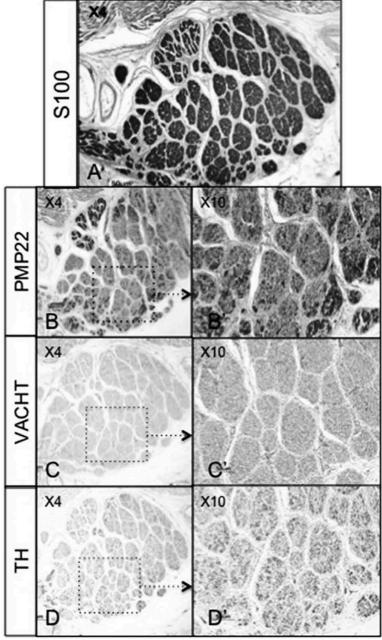


FIGURE 1. Immunohistochemical labeling for S100 protein (A, dark gray), PMP22 (B,B', dark gray), VAChT (C,C', light gray), and TH (D,D', dark gray) of the SN.

perineurium and the ratio of areas between the smallest and largest fascicles were determined with ImageJ® software.

The nature and distribution of the fibers was studied: for each label (PMP22, VAChT, TH), the number of labeled fibers and the percentage of

Fetal Sciatic Microanatomy

MUSCLE & NERVE October 2017 789



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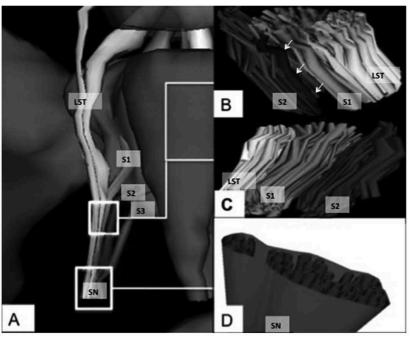


FIGURE 2. CAAD: Anteromedial view (A). Medial (B) and lateral view (C) of the fascicles at the fusion of the LST with S1 and S2; Anterosuperior view of the SN (D). Fetal sciatic artery is shown by white arrows.

labeled surface was determined with ImageJ® software. For each of the spinal nerves involved in the SN, we investigated the contribution of the rami communicantes (RC): the nature (label), the number of rami, and the percentage of labeled surface (as compared to the total surface of the nerve structure under consideration) were determined on the HE-stained slides.

3D Reconstruction. The stained and labeled serial sections were used for 3D reconstructions. The anatomical structures were identified on the HEstained sections. The interval between the stained and the immuno-labeled slides was negligible $(5 \,\mu\text{m})$, and their data were merged to identify the nature of the nerve fibers, cholinergic, myelinated, and/or adrenergic. The computer and software was a personal computer (Windows XP), Epson perfectionV750 digitalization system, SILVERFAST AI digitalized software, ADOBE PHOTOSHOP image processing software, and WINSURF image reconstruction software, version 4.3. The sections were digitized at a 4,800 dots per inch 1 resolution. The images were stacked and aligned. The pelvic anatomical structures and the nerve fibers were manually outlined in all sections. A 3D analysis of the location, course and distribution of the

790 Fetal Sciatic Microanatomy

nerve fibers was performed in the x- and y-axes as an animated motion picture.

RESULTS

The characteristics and measurements of the 8 fetuses are summarized in Table 1.

Fascicles. In the sacral roots, LST, and SN, the perineurium accounts for 42% of the nerve surface and yields a fascicular architecture (Figs. 1 and 2). The LST and the SN are composed of 30 and 54 fascicles, respectively (Table 2). Apart from nerve communications and divisions, the fascicular

Table 2. Fascicular organization of the SN* Fascicle Perineurial area Ratio 30.22 (5.47) 1:13.54 LST 31.76 (4.48) 32.13 (3.21) 21.28 (3.49) 1: 11.64 52 33.77 (3.18) 13.42 (1.51) 1:12.97 S3 32.51 (3.58) 11.33 (1.50) 1:9.01 SN 41.88 (5.35) 53.87 (5.96) 1:15.12

cross-sectional area of the perineurium in percentage with respect to the total nerve area; n, number of fascicles in the nerve; Ratio, area ratio between the smallest and the largest fascicle in the nerve section.

MUSCLE & NERVE October 2017



^{*}The results are shown as mean (SD)

	Table 3. Nature	e of nerve fibers of the	SN*
(-	PMP	VACHT	TH
LST	6.97 (1.99)	50.26 (11.93)	12,37 (3.54)
S1	6.30 (1.54)	54.15 (11.05)	17,19 (2.82)
S2	4.37 (1.51)	58.57 (1.42)	11.47 (2.8)
S3	2.79 (0.96)	51.91 (7.04)	13.10 (3.71)
SN	7.04 (1.79)	59.16 (12.54)	15.00 (3.51)

*The results are shown as mean (SD). LST, S1, S2, S3 and proximal part of the SN. cross-sectional area of the PMP22-, VACHT-, and TH-labeled fibers in percentage with respect to the total nerve area.

topography is regular. At the point where the LST and sacral roots merge, or immediately before the SN division, the fascicular distribution is difficult to systematize and has a plexiform appearance with an extensive mixing where fascicles branch off, split, or re-merge. There is little perineurium in the preforaminal sacral roots, where no clear fascicular structure is visible, except in its ventral part. The cross-sectional area of the fascicles varies in at least a 1: 9 ratio in the SN and its roots. The smallest fascicles are those most likely to be exclusively autonomic or somatic.

Fibers. All of the fibers were intensely labeled with S100.

Autonomic Fibers. VAChT + and TH + fibers are observed in 59% and 15%, respectively, of the cross-sectional area of the SN (Table 3). VAChT + fibers are densely and evenly distributed in all fascicles. TH + fibers are evenly distributed in the PMP22- fascicles, but are clustered in the PMP22 + fascicles. Some fascicles are exclusively autonomic (Fig. 1).

Somatic Fibers. PMP22 + fibers are observed in 7% of the cross-sectional area of the SN (Table 3 and Fig. 3). At the origin of the SN, they are

Table 4.	Nature of the nerve fibers of intraforaminal spinal roots		
92	PMP22	VAChT	TH
L4	40.55	80.00	0
L5 S1	37.15	75.00	0
S1	21.40	60.21	0
S2	12.13	56.72	0
S3	3.68	52.54	0

*Distribution is expressed in percentage of the cross-sectional area of the nerve, which is labeled by PMP22, VACHT, and TH. Total may exceed 100% because of overlapping areas.

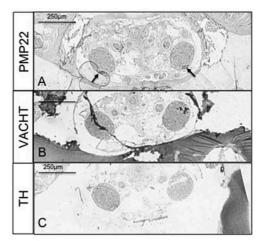


FIGURE 4. Transverse sections of the preforaminal S3 labeled with PMP22 (**A**, anterior dark gray labeling, arrows), VAChT (**B**, diffuse light gray labeling), and TH (**C**, no dark gray labeling).

mostly in the peripheral fascicles. Toward the nerve divisions, the layout changes, and PMP22+fibers either occupy the whole of a peripheral fascicle or are scattered among several

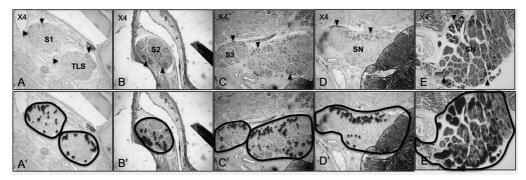


FIGURE 3. Somatic fibers within the SN. Transverse sections of the SN labeled with PMP22 (arrowhead) at 5 different levels, from the LST (A-A') to the SN (E-E'): (A) S1 and LST above their communication. (B) S2 in the greater sciatic foramen. (C) S3 and the incomplete SN (LST, S1, and S2). (D) Communication of S3 with the incomplete SN (LST, S1, and S2). (E) complete SN (LST, S1, S2, and S3) just below the piriformis muscle. (A'-E') Figures emphasize the epineurium (outline) and PMP surface (black blots).

Fetal Sciatic Microanatomy



Table 5. Contribution of paravertebral trunk to the SN* Labeling Material Ratio VAChT TH PMP22 L4 19.2 L5 22.6 S1 2.7 (0.5) 47.2 +++ +++ 2.8 (0.3) S2 35.8 S3 2.4 (0.4) 32.7

*Intensity of PMP22, VACHT, and TH staining in the RC: + low intensity, + +medium intensity, + ++high intensity.

N,: mean number of RC (SD); Ratio, percentage of nerve cross-section.

central fascicles of the nerve. Overall, PMP22 + fibers are rare and lie at the periphery of the SN section.

Postforaminal spinal nerves and the LST. Here, the fiber distribution can change according to the root level. The PMP22+ area gradually decreases from the LST (7% of nerve surface) to S3 (3%). For autonomic fibers, the area percentage is broadly constant at all levels of the roots. For VAChT+ fibers and most of the TH+ and PMP22+, the intraneural distribution is homogeneous. Occasionally, loose bundles of TH+ or PMP22+ fibers can be discerned.

Preforaminal spinal nerves. Here, PMP22 + fibers lie in the anterior portion of the root (Table 4 and Fig. 4). The PMP22 + area gradually decreases from L4 (41% of nerve surface) to S3 (4%). Along the foraminal course, PMP22 + fibers scatter into small groups, which predominantly lie at the periphery of the nerve. The VAChT + area decreases from L4 (80% of the nerve) to S3 (52%). TH + fibers are absent or very rare.

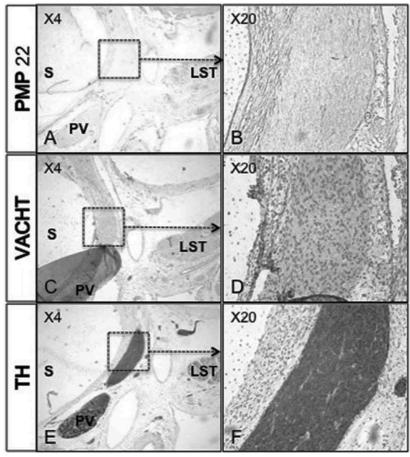


FIGURE 5. Transverse section of the RC for S1 labeled with PMP22 (A,B), VAChT (C,D) (diffuse light gray labeling), and TH (E,F), diffuse dark gray labeling). S = sacrum; PV = paravertebral trunk.

792 Fetal Sciatic Microanatomy

MUSCLE & NERVE October 2017



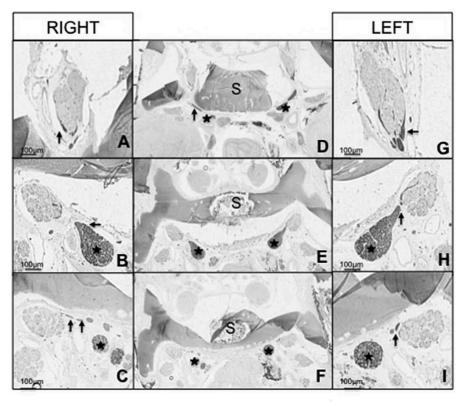


FIGURE 6. Transverse sections of the RC for S1 at 3 different levels, labeled with TH (dark gray labeling). Reference sections scanned (D-F); RC (arrows) on the right (A-C) and the left (G-I). S = sacrum; black star = paravertebral trunk.

Rami Communicantes. There were 2 to 3 RC for each spinal nerve (Table 5). Sacral roots have more fibers arising from RC (32 to 47%) than lumbar roots (19 to 22%). Positive labeling was intense for TH and VAChT in the RC, but low for PMP22 (Figs. 5–7).

3D Analysis. The 3D reconstructions illustrate the plexiform fascicular anatomy of the sacral roots, the LST, and the SN (Figs. 2 and 7). It was possible to reconstruct several communicating branches including those of the L4 and L5 roots. The sympathetic trunk was located anteriorly to the lateral side of the spine, and RCs had outward oblique paths that were almost vertical. There was always a first branch that reached the spinal nerve at its proximal portion (intra-foraminal) and a second at the end of its foraminal course. The accessory ganglia of the RC communicated with the spinal nerve at its extraforaminal part.

DISCUSSION

In this study of SN dissections from human fetuses, we demonstrate that two-thirds of SN cross-

Fetal Sciatic Microanatomy

sectional area fibers are labeled as cholinergic or adrenergic. This information suggests a major autonomic role of the SN and supports several observations in animal models. In rodents, it has been demonstrated that sympathetic fibers sprout in the sciatic territory after nerve injury. 15 In humans, it has been hypothesized that a lower limb would permanently provide autonomic adaptation of the body to movement-related effort. 16 Autonomic functions have been extensively assessed in neuroregeneration experiments, including the SN.17 Sympathetic nerve activity has been demonstrated in rodent experiments, and correlations with neuropathic pain, nerve regeneration, or collateral reinnervation are under investigation in animals. 18,19 Although we did not measure autonomic functions, a qualitative and quantitative description of the autonomic nervous system within the SN of a human fetus provides new data to assess a potential participation in the process of neuroregeneration.

In terms of microanatomy, the number of fascicles and the abundance of perineurium in the



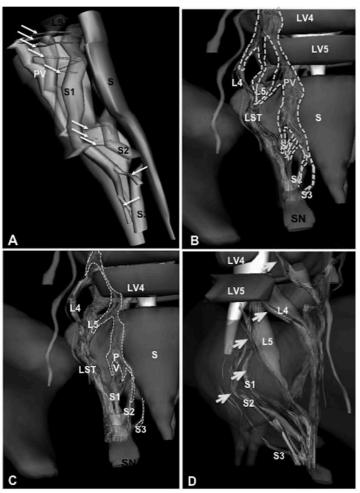


FIGURE 7. CAAD: Lateral view of the RC (arrows) (A). anterior view of adrenergic (B) and cholinergic (C) fibers coming from the RC of the paravertebral trunk (surrounded by dashed line). Posterolateral view: cholinergic fibers coming from the spinal cord. LV4 = fourth lumbar vertebra; LV5 = fifth lumbar vertebra; PV = paravertebral trunk; S = sacrum.

SNs, the LSTs, and the postforaminal spinal nerves were consistent with results in adults and fetal specimens. ^{3,20,21} Intraneural fiber distribution and quantitative data were similar between fetuses. In preforaminal spinal nerves, we did not observe a fascicular pattern such as in the rootlets and the ventral and dorsal roots in adults. ^{22,23} During the second and third trimesters, the thickness of fascicles and the number of perineurial layers dramatically increase in peripheral nerve trunks, but the direction in which perineurium grows remains unknown. ²⁴ In our study, the lack of fascicular organization in the preforaminal spinal nerves, the

794 Fetal Sciatic Microanatomy

uncompleted nerve maturation (fewer, smaller, and unmyelinated axons) reflects the existence of differences in the SN between fetuses and adults. 25,26 Because of incomplete maturation, the use of fetal nervous tissue is a limitation of our model of the SN. However, myelination of the SN in our fetuses had already started and had largely advanced, as had protein maturation (TH, VACHT, S100, PMP22). 10,25,27-29

We have observed heterogeneity in the intraneural distribution and the pathway of the PMP22 + fibers in the proximal SN. Only a few studies have analyzed the PMP22 distribution in

MUSCLE & NERVE October 2017



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human nerve. Haney et al. have observed that, in the sural nerve, a small proportion of PMP22 + fibers were distributed within the nerve. 30 In the peripheral nervous system, PMP22 is a glycoprotein of compact myelin. Nevertheless, this somatic biomarker has some limitations. First, it is present in other tissues such as the heart, gut, and lung. Second, some thin sensory fibers (C- fibers) are not PMP22 positive.

Badia and colleagues published images of the VAChT distribution in SN of rats at mid-thigh, and there is consistency with our observations in the proximal SN of human fetuses. 31 This similarity suggests that animal models with autonomic measurements are representative of human nerve physiology. However, the significance of the large amount of autonomic fibers in the SN may deserve comprehensive in vivo studies with both healthy and dysautonomic subjects to allow for further comparison. It is important to consider that cholinergic axons of the SN are known to arise from 2 sources: (1) somatic - myelinated neurons originating from the spinal cord (motor neuron); (2) autonomic - unmyelinated sympathetic axons originating from the spinal cord and the paravertebral sympathetic trunk.^{32,33} Thus, in the proximal part of spinal nerves, complex rearrangements of cholinergic neurons arising from both origins make it difficult to distinguish somatic and autonomic fibers among the cholinergic neurons. After rhizotomy and/or lumbar sympathectomy in rats, it has been demonstrated that the somatic input of cholinergic fibers is functionally more significant than its autonomic component, but that both play a role in SN physiology.35

The spatial distribution of adrenergic fibers (TH) was consistent with previous results in human fetal and adult SN except that we found only a few adrenergic fibers in the perineurium.2 Similar proportions and spatial distributions of adrenergic fibers have been described in the radial nerve of adults. 34

In our observations of nerve ultrastructure, the proportions and microanatomical distributions of cholinergic and adrenergic fibers are homogeneous throughout the SN and its roots. In contrast, the distribution of somatic fibers is not uniform. They mostly arise from the upper roots of the SN (L4-L5-S1), and their position along the course changes from the periphery to a more diffuse distribution within the SN and its fascicles. These observations and the finding that some fascicles are devoid of any somatic fibers are compatible with a recent magnetic resonance (MR) neurography investigation of somatotopic fascicular organization of the human SN.35 With clinical applications in radiculopathies and metabolic or

Fetal Sciatic Microanatomy

inflammatory neuropathies, basic fascicular anatomy of peripheral nerves becomes essential before MR imaging can supplement or even supplant electrodiagnostic examinations.

An application of the CAAD technique is 3D reconstruction, which provides comprehensive insight into fiber rearrangement along the nerve course. Reconstructions also illustrate the "cablelike" structure of the proximal SN, as recently described with MR neurography.35 Distally, reconstructions illustrate plexiform inter-fascicular rearrangements of the different contingents of fibers that constitute a technical difficulty for imaging reconstruction. The transition from a "cable-like to a plexiform fiber organization is a challenge for modeling and intraneural imaging. However, with 42% of perineum in the SN, connective tissue may help determine reliable boundaries between fascicles, which could stand as a primary entity of neuroregeneration imaging. §6 Diffusion tensor MRI, also known as tractography, has been validated in the central nervous system in the last decade. Today, high-field coils enable us to trace nerve fibers in the peripheral nervous system. This suggests that promising results will arise in the study of nerve regeneration in animals.³⁷ In this regard, intraneural anatomical studies detailing isotropic and anisotropic structures with histological correlations, which are rare, become valuable to supply an MRI-semiology before there can be clinical use of tractography in the peripheral nervous system.

In conclusion, in the SN of the fetus, connective tissue accounts for one-third of the crosssectional area, and neural tissue has a "cable-like" organization. Autonomic fibers prevail over somatic fibers within the neural tissue of the SN. The CAAD technique enables 3D reconstructions of the SN and illustrates its plexiform fascicular anatomy with its communications with the paravertebral

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