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## Treating ED Ischemic Stroke Patients: NIHSS Approximation & Elevated BP Management



Scott Silvers, MD, FACEP



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## Scott Silvers, MD, FACEP

Assistant Professor

Co-Director Primary Stroke Center  
Department of Emergency Medicine  
Mayo Clinic College of Medicine  
Jacksonville, Florida



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## Objectives

- Improve stroke outcome
- Know how to quickly evaluate stroke pts
- Know how to use protocols
- Provide rational therapy in the ED
- Improve disposition and documentation
- Improve Emergency Medicine practice



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## Methods

- Case Presentation
- Discussion of critical questions
- Review of key learning points
- Discuss “estimating” NIHSS calculation
- Review management of elevated BP
- Review ED documentation



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## A Clinical Case

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## Clinical History

A 62 year old female acutely developed aphasia and right sided weakness while in a store. The store clerk immediately called 911. Paramedics on the scene within 9 minutes, at 6:43 pm. She arrived in the ED at 7:05 pm... completed her head CT at 7:25 pm... and a neurology consult was obtained at 7:35 pm (approximately one hour after the onset of her symptoms).

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## ED Presentation

VS: 98 F, 90, 16, 116/63, 98% RA, Wt = 50 kg  
The patient appeared alert, and was able to slowly respond to simple commands. The patient had a patent airway, no carotid bruits, clear lungs, and a regular cardiac rate and rhythm. The pupils were midpoint and reactive, and there was neglect of the R visual field. There was facial weakness of the R mouth, and R upper and lower extremity motor paralysis. DTRs were 2/2 on the L and 0/2 on the R.

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## Critical Questions

- How is the NIHSS used?
- How can an ED NIHSS be estimated?
- How can the ED neurological exam be systematically performed & documented?
- What must be documented when considering tPA use in the ED?
- How should elevated blood pressure be handled in ischemic stroke?

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## NIHSS Estimation: *The Procedure*

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## NIHSS: Driving Principles

- NIHSS: anatomic neurologic examination
- Quantification directs therapies
- Estimation helps to categorize patients
  - Low NIHSS, thrombolysis less indicated
  - Mid-range NIHSS, thrombolysis indicated
  - High NIHSS, thrombolysis less indicated
- NIHSS 10-20 optimal for thrombolysis?

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## NIHSS Estimation

- Perform a systematic neurological exam

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## NIHSS Estimation

- Perform a systematic neurological exam
- Focus on four areas of deficit:
  - Unilateral motor deficit
  - Speech and language deficit
  - CN and visual field deficit / neglect
  - Depressed level of consciousness

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## NIHSS Estimation

- Perform a systematic neurological exam
- Focus on four areas of deficit:
  - Unilateral motor deficit
  - Speech and language deficit
  - CN, neglect and visual field deficit
  - Depressed level of consciousness
- Grade/add: mild (2), mod (4), severe (8)

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## NIH Stroke Scale

- 13 item scoring system, 7 minute exam
- Integrates neurologic exam components
- CN (visual), motor, sensory, cerebellar, inattention, language, LOC
- Maximum scale score is 42
- Maximum ischemic stroke score is 31
- Minimum score is 0, a normal exam
- Scores > 15-20: severe stroke

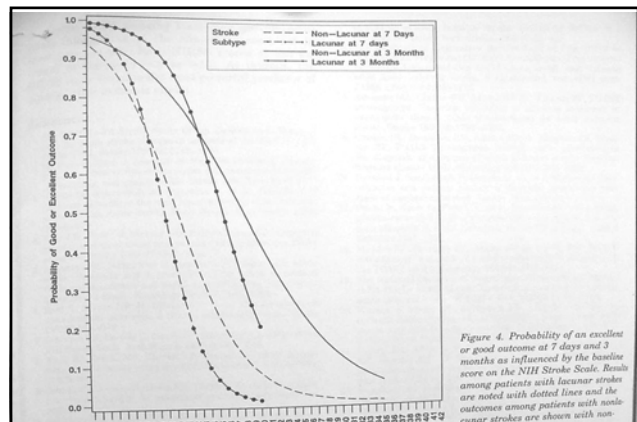
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## NIHSS & Outcome

- Does the baseline NIHSS predict outcome?
- Yes.
- Adams HP Neurology 1999;53:126-131
- Baseline NIH Stroke Scale score strongly predicts outcome after stroke (TOAST)

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## NIHSS & Outcome

- NIHSS < 12-14: 80% good, excellent outcome
- NIHSS > 20-26: < 20% good, excellent outcome
- Lacunar infarct patients: best outcomes.
- Adams HP Neurology 1999;53:126-131
- Baseline NIH Stroke Scale score strongly predicts outcome after stroke (TOAST)

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## NIHSS Composite

- CN (visual): 8
- Unilateral motor: 8
- LOC: 7
- Language: 5
- Ataxia: 2
- Sensory: 2
- Inattention: 2

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### Four Main NIHSS Areas

- **CN/Visual:** Facial, gaze palsy  
Visual field deficit
  - **Unilateral motor:** Hemiparesis
  - **LOC:** Depressed LOC, AMS
  - **Language:** Aphasia, dysarthria
- 28 total points

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### NIHSS ED Estimate

- **CN/Vision/Neglect:** 8
  - **Unilateral motor:** 8
  - **LOC:** 8
  - **Language:** 8
- **Mild: 2, Moderate: 4, Severe: 8**
- +/- Incorporates other elements

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### Case NIHSS Estimate

- **CN/Vision/Neglect:**  
R vision loss & neglect, no fixed gaze 4
  - **Unilateral motor:** complete hemiparesis 8
  - **LOC:** mild decrease in LOC 2
  - **Language:** expressive aphasia 4
- **Approx 18 points total**
- **Mod-severe stroke range, worse if MS impaired**

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### Elevated BP Therapy: *The Procedure*

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### BP Rx: Key Principles

- Identify hypertensive emergency situation
- Be aware of chronic HTN, systolic HTN
- Use BP meds that can be titrated
- Goal BP < 185 / 110
- Be more aggressive with ICH, elevated ICP
- Do not lower BP to a MAP < 110 mmHg
- Remember CPP = MAP- ICP

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### First Things First: Verify BP

- Recheck the patient's blood pressure
- Perform it yourself
- Measure after supine, arm rested
- Validate with a manual cuff
- Measure in both arms
- Recheck a second time after 10 minutes

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### Elevated BP Rx Procedure

- Establish HTN emergency: BP 230/140

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### Elevated BP Rx Procedure

- Establish HTN emergency: BP 230/140
- IV bolus medications
  - Labetalol 10-40 mg IVP
  - Hydralazine 10-20 mg IVP
  - Enalapril 0.625-1.25 IVP

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### Elevated BP Rx Procedure

- Establish HTN emergency: BP 230/140
- IV bolus medications
  - Labetalol 10-40 mg IVP
  - Hydralazine 10-20 mg IVP
  - Enalapril 0.625-1.25 IVP
- Continuous IV infusions
  - Esmolol 500 µg IV load, 50 µg/kg/min
  - Nitroprusside 0.5-10 µg/kg/min

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### Elevated BP Rx Procedure

- Consider NTG in cardiac ischemia pts
- Calcium channel blockers also useful
- Goal CPP >70 mmHg, SBP > 90 mmHg
- If hypotensive, consider NS and pressors
  - Dopamine 2-20 µg/kg/min
  - Norepinephrine 0.05-2 µg/kg/min
  - Phenylephrine 2-10 µg/kg/min

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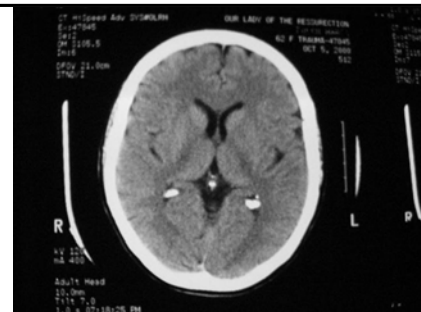


### ED Treatment and Patient Outcome

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### Clinical Case: CT Result



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### Clinical Case: ED Rx

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- CT: no low density areas or bleed
- No contraindications to tPA, BP OK
- NIH stroke scale: approx 18-20
- Neurologist said OK to treat
- tPA administered, no complications

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### tPA Use & Repeat Exam

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- tPA dosing:
  - 8:21 pm, approx 1'45" after CVA sx onset
  - Initial bolus: 5 mg slow IVP over 2 minutes
  - Follow-up infusion: 40 mg infusion over 1 hour
- Repeat neuro exam at 90 minutes:
  - Repeat Exam: Increased speech & use of R arm, decreased mouth droop & visual neglect
  - Repeat NIH stroke scale: approximately 12-14

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### ED tPA Documentation

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- With tPA, there is a 30% greater chance of a good outcome at 3 months
- With tPA use, there is 10x greater risk of a symptomatic ICH (severe bleeding stroke)
- Mortality rates at 3 months are the same regardless of whether tPA is used
- Discuss the rationale, risk/benefit assessment for using or not using tPA?
- Discuss what was done to expedite Rx... consult neurology... radiology early on?

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### Hospital Course & Disposition

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- Hospital Course: No hemorrhage, improved neurologic function
- Disposition: Rehabilitation hospital
- 3 Month Exam: Near complete use of RUE, speech & vision improved, slight residual gait deficit
- Able to live at home with assistance

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### ED Stroke Patient Rx: *A Retrospective*

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### Questions??

[www.ferne.org](http://www.ferne.org)  
[ferne@ferne.org](mailto:ferne@ferne.org)

Scott Silvers, MD  
[silvers.scott@mayo.edu](mailto:silvers.scott@mayo.edu)  
(904) 296-5741

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