Stroke neurorehabilitation: Targeting CNS neural mechanisms of gait

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ABSTRACT

Human gait is intricately controlled by the Central Nervous System (CNS), which also includes neural connections between the brain and spinal cord, interhemispheric communication, affective ascending neural pathways, descending cortical regulation, and whole brain networks of functional connectivity. The administration of gait training utilising externally targeted techniques, such as the treadmill, weight support, over-ground gait coordination training, functional electrical stimulation, bracing, and walking assistance, was the subject of numerous significant studies in the past. Neurorehabilitation gait training has yet to be accurately focused and measured in accordance with the CNS source of gait control, despite the fact that the phenomena of CNS activity-dependent plasticity has served as the foundation for more recently developed gait training techniques.

Key Words: *CNS, Stroke; Brain imaging; Gait training*

INTRODUCTION

The complex motor function of the gait pattern is controlled by the Central Nervous System (CNS), which also coordinates interactions with the peripheral musculoskeletal system and feedback loops from the visual, vestibular, and proprioceptive systems. It is generally established that the CNS uses gravity, human body architecture, rotational forces at limb joints (torque or moment of force), and physiological muscle activation processes to optimise the energy needed for human gait. A increasing corpus of research is describing the neuronal networks and mechanisms in the brain and spinal cord that regulate the coordinated gait pattern. First, basal ganglia, thalamus, cerebellum, and cortical areas (primary motor cortex, premotor cortex, supplementary motor cortex, somatosensory cortex, and prefrontal cortical areas) are key CNS structures for controlling gait. Second, the prefrontal cortex initiates the desire to cause volitional movement, which instructs the motor cortical regions to generate a motor signal. Third, the CNS undergoes two modifications before being transferred to the periphery. The motor signal is sent to the basal ganglia by projections from the cortex along the corticostriatal pathway.

With this evidence of the complex interactions of brain and spinal cord networks that control gait coordination, it is reasonable to consider the need for a paradigm shift in gait training methods in stroke neurorehabilitation. Future research must take into account the neural control of normal gait, the disruption of neural pathways following a stroke, and the neuroplastic mechanisms of motor relearning. The nigrostriatal route, which connects dopaminergic neurons in the substantia nigra to the basal ganglia, amplifies the direct and indirect pathways' ability to modify the motor signal within the basal ganglia. The ventral anterior and ventral lateral thalamic nuclei subsequently transmit the modified motor signal from the basal ganglia back to the cortex. It is thought that this basal ganglia-based signal modulation affects both the beginning of desired movement and the inhibition of unwanted movement. Additionally, the cerebellum receives the cortical motor signal through the cortico-pontine-cerebellar tracts, refines it by combining it with data from incoming afferent pathways of the visual, proprioceptive, and vestibular systems, and then sends it back to the cortex

The state-of-the-art research does not result in the recovery of normal gait coordination, which is the current position in the neurorehabilitation of gait coordination after stroke. Chronic gait dyscoordination does not react adequately to typical practise approaches. Consequently, in order to create training for gait coordination for stroke survivors that is effective.

Neurorehabilitation research is starting to benefit from longitudinal neuroimaging studies that span the recovery phase following stroke by identifying the CNS regions essential to recovery. For instance, motor control is severely impacted when the ipsilesional corticospinal trac is damaged. The recovery of gait function has really been successfully predicted by the accuracy of the ipsilesional CST. The integrity of the ipsilesional cortico-reticulospinal tract and contralesional superior cerebellar peduncle tracts, in addition to the ipsilesional CST, have recently been shown to be predictors of walking performance, even

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two years after a stroke. Other descending tracts also play a role in gait control.

A post-stroke aberrant balance of cortical excitability has been noted by certain researchers, with increased contralesional signal and decreased ipsilesional excitability. The ipsilesional hemisphere may typically resist the inhibitory signals produced by the contralesional hemisphere, but this unbalanced balance could lead to an increase of these signals. The contralesional inhibitory signals may further impair muscle activation processes in the presence of neural damage in the ipsilesional hemisphere. After a stroke, there may be a complex transcallosal interaction that depends on how much of the corticospinal tract has been damaged.

The research that has been done to characterise disruption in brain structures, circuits, and functional activation during dyscoordinated gait after stroke must be taken into account and incorporated moving forward. More precise CNS function measurements, CNS function targeting in treatment approaches, and the use of legitimate study designs will all help to ensure meaningful outcomes.

The classification of gait "tasks" is crucial because it shows how the "high-level" gait components including gait initiation, steady-state walking, and asymmetrical gait tasks have different brain activation patterns. Within the force-of-gravity environment and the related biomechanical principles regulating whole-body movement, these can be regarded as gait whole-body movement tasks. Being more precise in identifying the brain control of the gait coordination components of both the stance and swing phases, as well as dynamic balance control, is crucial in light of this key emerging evidence.

Targeting CNS structures, pathways, and mechanisms would bring gait therapies following stroke to a new level of academic excellence, according to the available evidence. The existing body of research confirms the need for more exact non-invasive ways for measuring, analysing, and stimulating the brain signals. If the latest findings in cutting-edge research on neural function can be used to create novel gait training regimens, it will be extremely beneficial for stroke survivors.