



## 3.4 Micro- and Macro-Vascular Remodeling and Cognitive Function in Hypertension

Antonio Gallo<sup>1,2,\*</sup>, Etienne Charpentier<sup>2</sup>, Thomas Diertenbeck<sup>2</sup>, Antoine Dufay<sup>1</sup>, Alban Redheuil<sup>3,4</sup>, Marie Chupin<sup>2</sup>, Olivier Hanon<sup>7</sup>, Xavier Girerd<sup>1</sup>, Nadjia Kachenoura<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University Hospital Pitié-Salpêtrière, Paris, France

<sup>2</sup>Sorbonne Universités, Paris, France

<sup>3</sup>Institute of Cardiometabolism and Nutrition (ICAN), Paris, France

<sup>4</sup>Pôle Imagerie-Groupe Hospitalier Pitié-Salpêtrière, Assistance Publique-Hôpitaux de Paris, Paris, France

<sup>5</sup>AP-HB, Hôpital Broca, Service de Gériatrie, Paris, France

### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Cerebral microvascular alterations and hypoperfusion have been associated to cognitive disorder and dementia. We hypothesized that there is a direct link between retinal arteriolar remodelling, as assessed non-invasively using adaptive optics, and cognitive cerebral impairment in hypertensive patients.

**Methods:** Hypertensive patients over 65 years old with or without mild cognitive impairment were recruited. Each patient had a cognitive evaluation with MMSE; a study of retinal vasculature with adaptative optics RTX1<sup>®</sup> Camera to measure WT, internal diameter (ID), wall-to-lumen ratio (WLR) and arterio-venous ratio (AVR); an aortic, cerebral and carotid MRI to study cerebral volumes and white matter hyper-intensities (WMH) and carotid/aortic backward/forward flow (BF/FF) and distensibility. Correlations between retinal and cerebral, carotid and aortic remodelling were analysed.

**Results:** 51 treated and controlled hypertensive patients, aged of  $74 \pm 5$  years, 67% males, were able to achieve all exams. Among subjects with higher WLR, a significantly lower MMSE was found ( $p = 0.04$ ). Eye-Brain: AVR and arteriolar ID coefficient of variation were inversely related to cerebral volumes ( $r = -0.61, p = 0.01$  and  $r = -0.58, p = 0.02$ ). Eye-Carotid: AVR and arteriolar ID coefficient of variation were directly and indirectly correlated with peak BF/FF, respectively ( $r = 0.47, p = 0.005$ ;  $r = -0.39, p = 0.02$ ). Eye-Aorta: WT and AVR were inversely correlated with ascending aorta distensibility ( $r = -0.48, p = 0.003$ ;  $r = -0.47, p = 0.007$ ).

**Conclusion:** In elderly hypertensives, arteriolar retinal remodelling represents a potential marker of early cerebral atrophy, which might be linked to a cerebral microcirculation remodelling. This hypothesis is supported by the association between retinal vascular remodelling and impaired carotid flow and aortic elastic properties.

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