**Lower limb arterial duplex scanning protocol**

**a) Thigh arteries**

Probe types – 12-3 MHz linear array2,4,6.

Measurements – velocities in centimetres per second, diameter (anterior-posterior AP, medial-lateral ML) in centimetres, length of disease in centimetres1,2.

Patient lies supine1,7. Due to the intimate nature of the scan, a chaperone should be offered25.

The common femoral artery is visualised in the groin and followed proximal to the inguinal ligament1,2.

The common femoral artery is then traced distally to the bifurcation and the profunda femoris and superficial femoral arteries are identified. The superficial femoral is traced along its length and through the adductor canal, visualisation is improved by flexing the leg at the knee to a 45 degree angle and turning the knee outwards1,2,7.

Peak velocity readings and waveform shape and quality are recorded in the common femoral, at the profunda origin and at the superficial femoral origin, and at the proximal, mid and distal SFA2,8.

If an area of stenosis is identified a peak velocity reading is taken immediately proximal, within and immediately distal to the diseased section. The colourflow and Doppler assessments are used to decide whether the disease is a stenosis or complete occlusion. The disease length and the distance from the medial malleolus is recorded. Any collateral vessels are noted. It should be stated whether the disease appears acute or chronic. It should be made clear in the report whether the distal superficial femoral reforms a disease free segment above the knee7,8.

If there is a significant stenosis present, measure the maximum PSV through the stenosis (V2) and the PSV just proximal to the stenosis as a "normal" reference velocity (V1), to enable calculation of the velocity ratio V2/V1. Note that at the SFA and PFA origins it may not be possible to obtain a V1 measurement; the absolute PSV will then be used to grade the % stenosis. If within the SFA, mark the position and length of any significant stenosis with a single-use surgical marker pen and measure the distance to the medial malleolus3,5.

Also remember to scan contralateral CFA when performing lower limb arterial assessments. In addition to our standard protocol if a patient has an iliac occlusion/severe disease (CIA, EIA or both) please scan contralateral iliac system. This may save the patient coming to VSU twice and speeds up the whole patient management process9.

For assessment of the popliteal artery, the patient sits with legs dependent or lies flat with the leg slightly flexed at the knee and externally rotated1,2. Alternatively, having the patient lie on their side can allow a good view of the popliteal artery.

The popliteal artery is identified behind the knee and traced proximally ensuring that the full length of artery through the adductor canal is visualised and assessed2,5.

The first arterial branch of the trifurcation is the anterior tibial (may not be viewed). The tibio-peroneal trunk is traced into the upper calf until it bifurcates into the posterior tibial and peroneal arteries. Waveforms are recorded and the velocities are measured in the popliteal and at each of the run-off artery origins and in any area where a stenosis is identified2,11,12. The number of run-off vessels viewed should be documented (0-3).

Velocity ratios:

Comparing Peak Systolic Velocity (PSV) in reference segment proximal to lesion (V1) with maximum stenotic jet PSV (V2) gives a V2:V1 ratio (namely V2/V1) which can be used as follows1,2,10.27,28,29:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Classification  (diameter reduction) | Velocity Ratio | Disease level |
| 0-49% | <2.0 | Mild |
| 50-74% | ≥2.0 | Moderate |
| 75-99% | ≥4.0 | Severe |

Absolute velocities:

For use when it is not possible to obtain a suitable reference V1:24

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| artery | mean PSV (cm/s) | SD (cm/s) |
| Aorta | 76 | 17 |
| CIA | 111 | 17 |
| EIA | 112 | 49 |
| CFA | 90 | 41 |
| SFA prox | 89 | 23 |
| SFA mid | 83 | 25 |
| SFA distal | 74 | 21 |
| Popliteal | 59 | 12 |

* The above table shows peak systolic velocities for normal legs.
* For a normal distribution, 99% of observations will fall within the range of the mean +/- 2 standard deviations.

For example, if the iliac arteries are largely obscured by bowel gas, but an isolated section of flow is seen in the EIA with a velocity of 300cm/s we can suggest that significant disease is likely. Using the mean velocity in the table above as V1, we can use the same ratio criteria to stratify the severity of disease, e.g. ≥4 would indicate severe disease.

Ankle brachial pressure indices are performed. (See Peripheral waveform assessment)

**b) Calf arteries** – Calf vessels should be scanned along their length26.

Probe types – 12-3 MHz linear array/ if needed – 5-1 MHz curved array2,4

Measurements – velocities in centimetres per second, length of disease in centimetres1,5.

Patient lies supine or sits on the edge of the bed with their legs dependent (aids visualisation with severe disease, and allows venous filling which can be used to map the course of the arteries)2.

The posterior tibial artery is identified posterior to the medial malleolus and is traced proximally. The peroneal artery is visualised deep to the posterior tibial artery (both arteries can be assessed throughout the length of the calf). If unable to visualise the peroneal artery with 12-3MHz – then you must try the 2-5 curved array, or attempt to view from an anterior approach2,12,13.

The anterior tibial artery is identified on the anterio-lateral aspect of the ankle (do not apply too much pressure as the artery may be occluded by the transducer) and should be traced to the upper calf12,13.

Velocities and waveforms are recorded from all the calf arteries at the ankle and proximal calf and also at any site of stenosis.

In the presence of proximal disease, calf velocities can be unreliable and disease should be graded mild, moderate, severe or occluded1,8.

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