



An Overview of Carotid Artery and its Clinical Significance

Fatma Sahin*

Department of Cardiovascular Surgery, University of Health Sciences, İstanbul, Turkey

DESCRIPTION

The carotid artery is a major blood vessel in the neck that supplies blood to the brain, neck, and face. It is one of the most significant arteries in the human body. It can lead to severe consequences, including stroke and death.

Anatomy of the carotid artery

The carotid artery is a combined blood vessel that originates from the aortic arch, which is found in the upper abdomen. It divides into two branches, the Internal Carotid Artery (ICA) and the External Carotid Artery (ECA), as it moves through the neck. The ICA and ECA have different roles and supply blood to different areas of the head and neck. The internal carotid artery is the larger of the two branches and supplies blood to the brain, including the cerebral cortex, basal ganglia, and thalamus. It enters the skull through the carotid canal and branches into smaller vessels that supply blood to the brain.

The external carotid artery supplies blood to the face, neck muscles, and scalp. It has multiple branches, including the superior thyroid artery, lingual artery, and facial artery. Particularly, the facial artery supplies blood to the lips, nose, and cheeks in the lower half of the face. The carotid artery has a thick muscular wall that allows it to endure high pressure and maintain blood flow to the brain. The muscular wall also contains nerve fibers that provide information to the brain about blood pressure and other factors that affect blood flow.

Function of the carotid artery

The carotid artery plays an important role in maintaining blood flow to the brain, which is essential for the brain's function. The

brain requires a constant supply of oxygen and glucose, which are delivered to it through the carotid artery. The carotid artery also helps to regulate blood pressure and blood flow to the brain. When blood pressure increases the carotid artery dilates, allowing more blood flow to the brain. When blood pressure decreases, the carotid artery constricts, reducing blood flow to the brain and helping to maintain blood pressure.

Clinical significance of the carotid artery

The carotid artery has clinical significance, particularly in the context of stroke. A stroke occurs when blood flow to the brain is interrupted, either by a blockage or bleeding. In many cases, the blockage occurs in the carotid artery, which can cause a stroke. Atherosclerosis is a condition in which plaque develops in the arteries; it is the most common cause of carotid artery disease. The plaque buildup can cause the artery to narrow or become blocked, reducing blood flow to the brain.

Carotid artery disease can be asymptomatic with symptoms such as dizziness, weakness, or difficulty speaking. A carotid artery ultrasound, CT scan, or MRI can be used to diagnose carotid artery disease. Treatment for carotid artery disease may include medication, lifestyle modifications, or surgery. Medications, such as antiplatelet drugs or statins, it can help to prevent the development of plaque in the artery. Lifestyle changes, such as avoided smoking or losing weight, can also reduce the risk of carotid artery disease. Surgery may be necessary in some cases of carotid artery disease, particularly if the artery is severely narrowed or blocked. The most common surgical procedure for carotid artery disease is carotid endarterectomy.

Correspondence to: Fatma Sahin, Department of Cardiovascular Surgery, University of Health Sciences, İstanbul, Turkey, E-mail: sahin.f@gmail.com

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