

Editorial



Imaging Marker for Acute Kidney Dysfunction in Patients With Heart Failure

Jin Young Kim , MD

Department of Radiology, Dongsan Hospital, Keimyung University College of Medicine, Daegu, Korea

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Address for Correspondence:

Jin Young Kim, MD

Department of Radiology, Dongsan Hospital,
Keimyung University College of Medicine, 1035
Dalgubeol-daero, Daegu 42601, Korea.

Email: jinkim0411@naver.com

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▶ See the article “Clinical and Imaging Parameters Associated With Impaired Kidney Function in Patients With Acute Decompensated Heart Failure With Reduced Ejection Fraction” in volume 31 on page 169.

The prevalence of heart failure is gradually increasing. Heart failure with reduced ejection fraction (HFrEF) accounts for approximately 50% of all heart failure cases.¹⁾ Acute decompensated HFrEF (ADHF) has been associated with simple heart dysfunction and dysfunction of systemic organs, including the kidneys, liver, and lungs.²⁾ Kidney dysfunction is common in patients with heart failure and is associated with increased mortality. Acute kidney injury is common among patients admitted for ADHF, with its incidence varying from 9.6% to 43%, and it is related to poor prognosis.³⁾ Several mechanisms have been proposed for the heart-kidney connection. For HFrEF, increased central venous pressure can decrease renal blood flow and renal perfusion pressure, activate the renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system, and increase intrarenal interstitial pressure, which may lead to renal interstitial fibrosis and reduce the estimated glomerular filtration rate (eGFR).⁴⁾ Kidney dysfunction is more likely to occur in patients with ADHF and diabetes, high baseline creatinine, high B-type natriuretic peptide (BNP) level, and hypoalbuminemia.³⁾⁵⁾ However, studies on anatomical features predictive of acute kidney dysfunction in patients with ADHF are lacking.

In a recent issue of the *Journal of Cardiovascular Imaging*, Cho and colleagues⁶⁾ published a study titled ‘Clinical and Imaging Parameters Associated With Impaired Kidney Function in Patients With Acute Decompensated Heart Failure with Reduced Ejection Fraction.’ This study was aimed at identifying the clinical and imaging parameters associated with kidney dysfunction in patients with ADHF. The authors reported that perirenal thickness assessed with computed tomography could predict acute kidney dysfunction in patients with ADHF. The measurement of perirenal fat thickness is a simple and reliable method for estimating perirenal fat mass.⁷⁾ This study found that old age, increased N-terminal proBNP, and increased perirenal fat thickness were independently associated with kidney dysfunction in patients with ADHF.⁶⁾ Perirenal fat thicknesses of > 12 mm predicted acute kidney dysfunction with a sensitivity of 55% and specificity of 83%. Subgroup analysis of the patients with ADHF and kidney dysfunction showed that right atrial pressure was significantly higher in patients with recovered kidney function than in those with persistent kidney dysfunction, without differences in perirenal fat thickness.⁶⁾

Perirenal fat is unique from other connective tissues for its complete blood supply, lymphatic fluid drainage, and innervation.⁸⁾ It includes a non-expandable complete fascia with sympathetic-independent development and is located close to the kidney.⁸⁾

A high body mass index, which traditionally suggests obesity, is associated with the development of heart, kidney, and metabolic diseases. However, a recent study showed that perirenal fat thickness is negatively correlated with eGFR, while total body fat, subcutaneous adipose tissue, and visceral fat are not.⁹⁾ Other studies have also shown that perirenal fat thickening is independently predictive of kidney dysfunction in patients with diabetes and is associated with hypertension and cardiovascular disease.¹⁰⁾ Unlike fat in other areas, perirenal fat appears to be a unique marker of kidney dysfunction. Thickened perirenal fat appears to be a potential risk factor for kidney dysfunction, and ADHF may trigger kidney dysfunction above the surface.

This was a cross-sectional, single-center study, and it did not reveal the prognostic value of perirenal fat thickness in patients with ADHF. This study showed no relationship between perirenal fat thickness and improvement in acute kidney dysfunction in ADHF patients.⁶⁾ However, kidney dysfunction is strongly associated with the outcomes of patients with heart failure.¹¹⁾ Further longitudinal studies involving larger populations are needed to investigate how perirenal fat thickness affects the prognosis of heart failure and permanent kidney dysfunction. Perirenal fat thickness has been recently associated with various diseases, and its role as an imaging marker is expected to be explored in the future.

ORCID iDs

Jin Young Kim 

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6714-8358>

Conflict of Interest

The author has no financial conflicts of interest.

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