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Advancing Neurovascular Surgery: New Techniques for Treating Aneurysms and Stroke

Schuttler Fodale*

Department of Medical and Surgical Sciences, "Magna Graecia" University of Catanzaro, 88100 Catanzaro, Italy

Introduction

Neurovascular surgery has undergone a transformative evolution in recent decades, largely driven by advancements in technology, research, and an enhanced understanding of the pathophysiology of cerebrovascular diseases. Among the most critical and life-threatening conditions within this domain are aneurysms and strokes, which can cause profound neurological deficits or even death if not treated promptly and effectively. For years, treatment options for these conditions have been limited to traditional surgical approaches, such as craniotomy or open surgery, which often required long recovery times and presented significant risks. However, with the development of new minimally invasive techniques and improved surgical tools, the management of aneurysms and strokes has become more precise, safer, and efficient. This explores the significant advancements in neurovascular surgery, focusing on the new techniques being employed to treat aneurysms and stroke. It delves into endovascular procedures, surgical innovations, and the role of robotics and artificial intelligence (AI) in shaping the future of neurovascular surgery. By understanding these emerging methods, we gain insight into how the field is evolving to meet the growing need for advanced cerebrovascular interventions [1].

Description

Historically, treating neurovascular diseases, particularly aneurysms and stroke, involved invasive open surgeries, which were fraught with risks. In the early 20th century, craniotomy was the standard procedure to access the brain for surgery. This approach required large incisions and often led to complications such as infection, hemorrhage, and prolonged recovery times. Surgical outcomes were highly dependent on the skill of the surgeon, and the options for managing complications were limited. The advent of endovascular surgery in the late 20th century marked a paradigm shift in neurovascular treatment. Endovascular techniques, which involve accessing blood vessels through small incisions, revolutionized the way aneurysms and strokes were treated. By using catheters and advanced imaging, surgeons could now navigate blood vessels and treat aneurysms or stroke-related blockages without the need for open surgery. The success of these methods has led to an exponential rise in their adoption worldwide [2].

The progression of minimally invasive procedures represents one of the most significant developments in neurovascular surgery. Traditionally, aneurysms were treated through open surgery, where a craniotomy was performed to access the aneurysm. In contrast, modern endovascular techniques use a catheter-based approach, which requires only small incisions in the groin or wrist to access the vascular system. This method is particularly beneficial for patients with high surgical risk, as it reduces the likelihood of complications and shortens recovery times. Key innovations in this space include advancements in embolization techniques, stenting, and the use of flow-diverting stents. These procedures allow for the treatment of aneurysms and stroke-related conditions with much less trauma to the body, resulting in faster recovery and fewer complications. In addition to these improvements, enhanced imaging techniques have also played a pivotal role in allowing for more accurate diagnostics and surgical planning, leading to better outcomes [3].

Endovascular coiling is one of the most widely used techniques for treating aneurysms. This minimally invasive procedure involves inserting a catheter through the femoral artery and guiding it to the aneurysm site. Once in place, small platinum coils are deployed into the aneurysm, inducing clot formation and promoting the eventual closure of the aneurysm. This technique has been associated with lower complication rates and shorter recovery times compared to traditional open surgery. Over the years, advancements in catheter design, coil technology, and imaging have further improved the success of this technique. The ability to target aneurysms with great precision has led to better patient outcomes, and the procedure is now considered the gold standard for many intracranial aneurysms. Flow-diverting stents represent another breakthrough in the treatment of brain aneurysms. Unlike traditional stents, which are used to prop open narrowed arteries, flow-diverting stents redirect blood flow away from the aneurysm, effectively diverting the pressure that causes the aneurysm to balloon. This method promotes aneurysm thrombosis and occlusion over time, without the need to insert coils into the aneurysm itself [4].

Intrasaccular devices are newer innovations that aim to provide a more tailored approach to aneurysm treatment. These devices, which are inserted into the aneurysm sac, are designed to reduce the flow of blood into the aneurysm and promote thrombosis. Examples of such devices include the Woven Endo Bridge (WEB) device and the LiquID embolization device. The WEB device, for example, is a self-expanding mesh structure that can be deployed within an aneurysm to block off the flow of blood. These devices have shown promise in treating complex aneurysms, including wide-neck aneurysms that are difficult to manage using traditional methods. Strokes, particularly ischemic strokes, occur when there is a blockage in the blood vessels supplying the brain. This blockage can lead to irreversible brain damage if not treated swiftly. Advances in neurovascular surgery have provided new tools and techniques for managing strokes, with the aim of restoring blood flow to the brain and minimizing long-term disability [5].

Conclusion

Advancements in neurovascular surgery have significantly improved the treatment and management of aneurysms and stroke. From minimally invasive techniques like endovascular coiling and mechanical thrombectomy to the integration of robotics and AI, the field of neurovascular surgery is evolving rapidly, offering patients safer, more effective treatment options. As technology continues to advance, the future of neurovascular surgery holds the promise of even more innovative techniques that will further reduce risks and enhance recovery times for patients. These advancements not only improve the quality of life for individuals suffering from cerebrovascular diseases but also pave the way for a future where stroke and aneurysms are treated with unprecedented precision and success.

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***Address for Correspondence:** Schuttler Fodale, Department of Medical and Surgical Sciences, "Magna Graecia" University of Catanzaro, 88100 Catanzaro, Italy; E-mail: fodaleschuttler@ale.it*

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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