

Letters to the Editor

Re: “Comparison of Intravascular Injection Rate between Blunt and Sharp Needles during Cervical Transforaminal Epidural Block”

TO THE EDITOR:

We read with interest the study of Jeon et al (1) on “Comparison of Intravascular Injection Rate Between Blunt and Sharp Needles During Cervical Transforaminal Epidural Block.” In this prospective, randomized clinical trial the authors compare the difference between blunt and sharp needles in intravascular injection rates during Cervical Transforaminal Epidural Block (CTEB).

As mentioned in the Study Design and Limitations part, all 108 CTEB were performed by the same pain physician and a second one was the observer and recorder for intravascular injection and procedure timing. Both with 10 years of experience. After stating that, the study concludes there was no significant difference in intravascular injection between the blunt and the sharp needle groups (35.2% vs. 33.3%, $P > 0.05$).

A study published from our service by Akbaş et al (2) in 2009 highlighted the safety of blunt needles after performing transforaminal epidural injections in 30 patients with no complications related to its use. Another study to mention was published by Heavner et al (3) in 2003 which not only concludes, but recommends that blunt needles may be preferable to sharp ones for performing interventional pain procedures.

The second conclusion of the study in discussion was that the procedure length was longer in the blunt needle group than in the sharp needle group (101.00 ± 12.4 seconds vs. 56.67 ± 8.3 seconds, $P < 0.001$). The

author mentions two reasons for the prolonged procedure duration with blunt needles: having to exchange the stylet of the introducer to insert the blunt needle and the fact that it does not penetrate structures but displaces it, both characteristics increased the procedure time by 100%.

What was not clear in the study, with all the respect, was the previous experience in managing blunt needles of the pain physician in charge of the procedures. Emphasis in the skills and experience

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