内耳病態

本症のめまいには、難聴悪化に際して起こるものと、特定の頭位で生じるものの2種類がある。前者は圧外傷などによる膜迷路の破綻に起因する内耳電解質環境の変化などが原因と推測され、後者は拡大した前庭水管から半規管への頭蓋内圧伝播による内リンパ流動によるものと考えられる。とくに後者は前庭水管・内リンパ囊閉鎖で手術側の耳を上にしたときの頭位眼振が起こらなくなることから、主に側臥位で上になった内耳が刺激されて生じるものと推測される

一方、聴覚についてみると、本症の難聴は基本的 に感音難聴だが、詳しく診るととくに低音域で20 ~30 dB の気骨導差がある混合難聴であり、これは 過大な内リンパ量により内耳液の慣性質量が増加し てアブミ骨底板の可動性が制限されることも一因と 考えられている13. 筆者が前庭水管・内リンパ嚢閉 鎖手術を行った症例で内リンパ嚢内から採取した液 体は淡黄色透明で、電解質組成は本来なら内リンパ で高カリウムとなるべきところが、Na, K, Cl 濃 度はそれぞれ 140, 5.1, 109 (mEq/L) で, ほぼ 通常の外リンパ液に等しい低カリウム組成であった14. 症例 1 で示したように、前庭水管拡大症例の人工内 耳手術で鼓室階開窓を行うとしばらく拍動性に内耳 液が流出した後に自然に停止する. 前庭水管拡大の ない例で蝸牛を開窓しても流出する内耳液(外リン パ)量はわずかであり、拍動もないかわずかであ る. この所見は、前庭水管拡大症では後頭蓋窩から 内リンパ嚢に加わった頭蓋内圧が直接蝸牛に伝播し ていることを示しており、さらにその流出量の多さ は鼓室階の外リンパだけでは説明困難で、内リンパ 囊と前庭水管内の大量の内リンパが蝸牛内で外リン パ腔に逸脱して鼓室階から流出していることを示唆 する. また、内リンパ嚢内の液は症例1のように T2 低信号、T1 中等度信号となるような濃厚な液体 になることもあり、これが内耳障害性に働く可能性 も考えられる.

しかし、拡大している前庭水管の幅(中間部径) と聴力の長期的な悪化の程度に相関がない、つまり 前庭水管が太いほど難聴が悪化しやすいということ はないという報告がみられ³, これは前庭水管から 内耳への圧伝播や高濃度液の逆流といった物理的要 因だけでは難聴の進行が説明しきれないことを示唆 する. 前庭水管拡大症における内耳機能障害の機序 はまだ完全には解明されていない.

(内藤 泰)

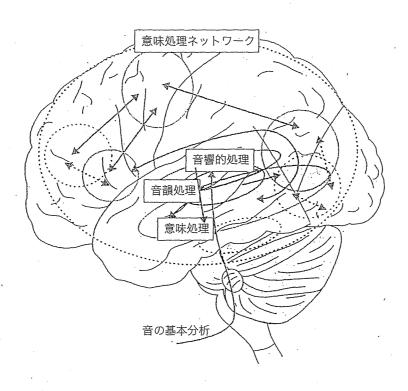
- 1) Mondini C. Anatomical surdi nedi sectio. De Bononiensi Scientiarum et Artium Instituto Arque Acadamia Commentarii, Borogna 1791; 7:419
- 2) Sennaroglu L, Saatci I. A new classification for cochleovestibular malformations. Laryngoscope 2002; 112: 2230-41.
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- 12) 内藤 泰, 高橋晴雄. 前庭水管拡大症の手術について. 耳鼻臨床 2000; 93:802-3.
- 13) Sato E, et al. Tympanometric findings in patients with enlarged vestibular aqueducts. Laryngoscope 2002; 112: 1642-6.
- 14) 内藤 泰. 前庭水管拡大症と難聴. JOHNS 1999; 15:335-8.

言語はヒトの考えや感情を一連の音声(あるいは身振り、手振り)の組合わせに符号化¹⁾ して表出するとともに、それを知覚し理解する能力であり、ヒトのコミュニケーションと思考の主要な手段である。言語には音声を介する音声言語以外にも視覚入力を用いる書字言語などもあるが、小児の発達過程をみても、またヒトの歴史をみても、音声言語が言語の基本となって、その後に書字言語が成立する。動物も鳴き声(call)でコミュニケーションを行う場合があるが、これらは例えば捕食者に対する警戒やなわばりの主張など、特定の発声が1つの事項に対応し、鳴き声の種類の数だけしか情報を伝えられない。一方、ヒトの音声言語は、一定数の音韻が基本となり、これらを組合わせて単語、さらに文が構成される。したがって、言語では音韻の数は限られているのに、これで表せる意味は無限であり、きわめて複雑・高度な内容まで構築できるという点で、動物の鳴き声と本質的に異なる。

音としての音声言語は、内耳で聴神経の神経活動に変換され、聴覚路を上行して聴皮質に到達する。言語音に対応する一連の神経信号が言語として理解されるまでには、その音響的処理に始まって、音韻処理、単語の意味処理、統辞過程など多段階の処理を経る(概念図).

音声言語の認知機構の探求は、まず脳損傷の解剖学的検討によって始められ、次いで電気生理学的手法、脳機能画像法も加わって多くの成果があげられている。本項では言語の中でも、特に音声言語について、その知覚から意味の理解に至る神経機構について概説し、さらにその障害の一例として高度難聴が音声言語の認知におよぼす影響について筆者が得た知見も含めて解説する。

概念図



音声言語の認知

1) 音の大きさ (音圧) や高さ (周波数) の処理

聴覚路のニューロンの音に対する反応は上位中枢になるほど多様になり、音の開始や終了に際してだけ活動するものから音の持続に応じて反応も持続するものまでさまざまである。一般に聴覚路のニューロンの発火頻度と入力音圧との関係は、音圧の上昇に伴って発火が増加する単調型と、ある音圧まで発火が増加して、それより大きい音では発火が減少する非単調型に分類されるが、サルの聴覚路のニューロンでは、上位になるほど非単調型が多くなり、一次聴覚野では75%以上の細胞が非単調型であるとされる²⁾³⁾.

ヒトにおいても、脳磁図によって音の入力から約100 ミリ秒後に観察され一次聴覚野近傍に局在する脳磁界 反応 (N1m) は、純音を提示した場合、約60 dBHL (これはわれわれが日常会話で使用する音声と同じ程度 の音の大きさである)までは増大するが、それより大きい音に対してはわずかな増大しかみられない⁴).また、まず持続音を呈示し、のちにその音圧を変化させる刺激パラダイムでは、音圧変化時に、音が大きくなる場合だけでなく小さくなる場合でも誘発反応 (N1m')が出現し、さらにこのN1m'の大きさは刺激 周波数によっても変化する⁵).これらはいずれも、聴皮質のニューロンの多くが、音圧の増大に伴って発火を単純に増加させるような情報処理をしているのではないことを示している.

< 10 MEIM

音刺激によって誘発される脳磁界反応のうち、刺激後、約100ミリ秒に一次聴覚野近傍で観察されるものをN1mと呼ぶ、明瞭で再現性の高い反応で、聴覚中枢機能の評価によく用いられる。

音の周波数については、音響脳磁界反応のN1mは高音が内側、低音が外側に局在すると報告され⁶⁾⁷⁾、PETでも同様の周波数に応じた脳賦活の空間的配列(tonotopicity)が示されている⁸⁾、このようなtonotopicityは蝸牛有毛細胞の配列によって厳密に規定され、脳幹の上位中枢に至るまで保たれる。脳幹聴覚路の神経細胞の周波数選択性は下丘で最も鋭くなるが、大脳皮質

では鋭い選択性のものだけでなく広く多峰性の応答野をもつものもみられる。異なる周波数をもつ複数の音のランダム刺激による脳賦活をfMRIで計測した報告では、一次聴覚野(ヘッシェル回)の外側部分が低度波数音に反応し、その前後に高周波数音に反応する領域が広がっており、ヘッシェル回を挟んで2つの周波数勾配が鏡像的に存在していることが示されているの一次聴覚野近傍の周波数マップは、さらに呈示音の音圧や周波数スペクトル構造にも影響され、多重的要素を同時に満たすため、重層的・複合的機能構造をもっていると予測される。

COMEN

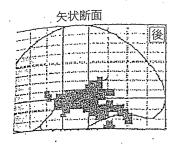
耳で聞いた音は脳幹から大脳の一次聴覚野に至る聴覚 路を上行し、音の高さや大きさを含む基本的な情報処理 を受ける.

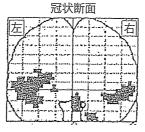
2) 言語音の音響的処理

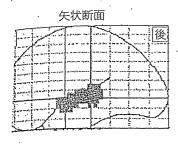
言語音の音響的処理(acoustic processing)とは、 入力音を周波数スペクトルや時間的推移に基づいて分析(spectro-temporal analysis)して、入力された複合音の中から言語音を抽出し、音韻や意味処理につなげる過程である。

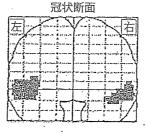
音声言語の音響処理段階を検討する1つの手法に逆回し言語音の利用がある。逆回し言語音は通常の音声を逆方向から再生した音で、周波数スペクトルや強弱の経時的変化などの音響情報の総量は順方向に再生した言語音と全く同じであるが、音韻としては通常の言語とは全く異なり、意味は理解できない。日常生活文の逆回し言語音と無音状態の間で脳賦活状況を比較すると、逆回し言語音聴取によって両側の側頭葉が賦活されるが、普通に再生した言語音による賦活範囲(図6-35A)よりは相対的に狭く、おおむね上側頭回に限局している(図6-35B)100.

逆回し言語音は、ヒトの声には聴こえるが意味は理解できないので、語彙・意味処理は働かない、音韻については微妙で、総じて聞いたこともない言語音の連続であるが、あえて聞こえた通りに文字にすることは不可能ではないので、音韻処理機構が部分的に活動している可能性はある。簡単な物語の言語音による脳賦活から逆回し音声の脳賦活を直接差し引いたクリニオ









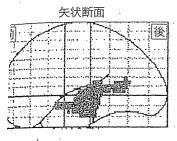




図6-35 言語音による脳の賦活

A) 日常生活文による脳賦活状況(対照は無音状態)、両側の上側頭回、上側頭溝、中側頭回、左下前頭回(ブローカ野)が有意に賦活される、濃い青が賦活範囲、B) 逆回し言語音聴取(対照は無音状態)では賦活範囲が相対的に狭く、おおむね上側頭回に限局している(文献10より転載)、C) 言語音を周波数情報のないクリック列に変換して時間情報だけで呈示しても、側頭葉で逆回し言語音より広い賦活が確認され、その範囲は上側頭溝から中側頭回を含む(文献12より転載)

ノらの報告¹¹⁾をみると、側頭葉において一次聴覚野を 束んで上側頭溝の前方と後方に2分された有意の賦活 頁域があり、賦活は左半球優位で後方では角回におよ しでいる。これらは音声言語の音韻処理以降の情報処 理を担当する部分と推測される。

矩形波のクリックは雑音に近く、特徴のない広い周 皮数成分をもつが、語音をクリック列に変換して時間 情報だけで呈示しても、ある程度「コトバ」として認 知できる、PETでみると、この条件でも側頭葉で逆回 し言語音より広い賦活が確認され、その範囲は上側頭 溝から中側頭回まで広がる(図6-35C)¹²⁾. この結果 は、言語音に含まれる周波数情報と時間情報のうち、 時間情報処理は単独でも側頭連合野を広範に駆動し、 音響処理にとどまらず音韻から、一部意味処理まで含むことがわかる。この研究は言語音の時間情報処理(temporal analysis)の皮質内での広がりを選択的に示した点で意義深い。

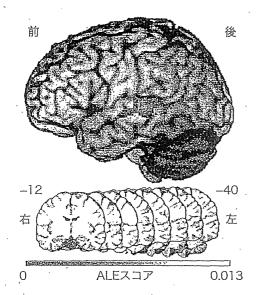
COMEN

音声言語の音響処理は上側頭回中央領域を中心とする 側頭連合野で行われる.

3) 音韻の認知

音響分析の次の段階、つまり音韻を含む語彙以前 (sublexical) の処理の脳内機構についても多くの研究 結果が報告されている. 異なる脳機能画像 (fMRI/ PET) 研究の結果を統合的に評価する手法として ALE (activation likelyhood estimation) という方法があ り13) 複数の異なる脳機能画像の研究報告の中から対 象と方法で一定の基準に合致するものを選択し、その 結果の脳賦活部位の標準座標から、それらの報告に共 通する賦活部位などを数学的に推計する. 言語の音韻 分析についての ALE を用いたメタアナリシスでは 14). 音声言語聴取と非言語音聴取との間のコントラストで 両側の上側頭回から上側頭溝に連続する広い領域と. 中前頭回の小さな領域が有意の共通賦活領域として抽 出され, 左半球側頭葉の賦活の方が右半球より2倍近 く強い、さらに、対照条件を人工音声などの、語音近 似複合音にすると、実際の語音との間に音響的差異が ほとんどなくなり、より選択的に音韻処理領域を抽出 できる. そのような比較で同定される音韻処理領域は 左側頭葉の上側頭回腹側から上側頭溝に限局し(図6-36), 有意の賦活のY座標(前後方向の座標) は-12 から-40に広がっている¹⁴⁾.一次聴覚野(ブロードマ ン第41 野:BA41)の標準脳におけるY座標はおおむ ね-15から-35であるので、この領域は側頭平面の中 央付近で一次聴覚野の外側部分とその周囲領域(BA42. 22) になる.

この比較は語音の音響的処理と音韻分析担当領域の 関係をよく明らかにしており、音響的処理は両側側頭 葉の上側頭回に広がっているのに対し、音韻分析は、 より左半球に偏して上側頭回中央領域外側から、その 腹側の上側頭溝付近に局在していると概括できる.



◎図6-36 音声言語と語音近似複合音の賦活比較によって抽出される音韻処理領域

言語音と語音近似複合音による脳賦活のコントラストでは左半球側頭葉の上側頭回腹側から上側頭溝に限局した賦活が観察される (文献14より転載)

MEMOS

音韻の分析には上側頭回中央領域の外側から上側頭溝に広がる領域が関与する.

4) 語彙·意味処理

経験により学習された対象物の形,色,材質,動き,音,匂いなど多様な知識は,言語によって記号化され、単語の意味理解の基盤を形成する.言語において、個々の単語に対応して貯蔵されている知識にアクセスする認知的行為を意味処理(semantic processing)と呼ぶ¹⁵⁾.ここでは、音声言語の認知過程で、音韻の次の段階になる単語の意味処理が脳内のどこで行われているかをみてみる.

鰯 ダマシオらの解析

脳の限局した病変、例えば脳血管障害、脳外傷、てんかんに対する手術などで言語の意味理解に障害をきたす場合がある。ダマシオら¹⁶⁾ は言語の意味理解に障害をきたした多数例の脳病変部位をテンプレート脳上で集計し、個々の患者で行った単語の意味処理(有名人の顔、動物、道具の3つのカテゴリーに属する対象物の絵を示して、その名前を回答する)の検査結果と

の関係を検討した。また、患者で行ったのと同じ検査を健常者でも行い、単語の意味処理中の脳賦活状況をPETで計測した。その結果、まず、脳病変患者では名前付けする対象物が所属するカテゴリーによって主たる病変部位が異なることが確認された(図6-37)

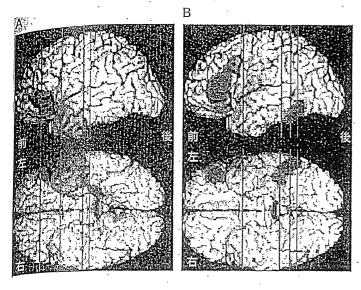
同じ検査を使用した脳賦活検査でも対象のカテコリーに応じて異なった脳領域の賦活が広範囲で観察されている(図6-37). しかし,同じカテゴリーの対象でも脳病変で名前がいえなくなっている領域と,健常者での名前付けによる賦活領域は必ずしも同じではなく,共通する部分と,全く異なる部分がある. これらの結果は,対象の性状によって単語(対象の名前)の意味処理を担当する領域が異なり,通常の言語野を越えて分布するという点で共通しているが,一方で脳病変による障害と健常者での賦活試験では意味処理の異なる側面が示される可能性も示唆している.

圖 バインダーらの解析

音声あるいは書字で提示された単語に対して、その 意味付けを行う過程を調べたfMRIあるいはPETによ る研究について、前述のALE手法を用いてバインダー らが行ったメタアナリシスの結果17)でも、言語の意味 処理に関与する領域はいわゆるウェルニッケ野や前頭 葉のブローカ野といったシルビウス裂周囲の古典的な 言語担当領域内に限局せず,大脳に広く分布するが. 明瞭に左半球に偏していることが示されている(図6-38). 多数の脳機能画像の研究結果に共通して言語の 意味処理を遂行していると推測される部位は、 ⑩頭頂 葉の後下部(角回), ②中側頭回, ③紡錘状回と海馬傍 回, 四前頭前皮質背外側部, 日下前頭回, 回前頭前皮 質腹内側部, の後帯状回, の7つの領域に分かれてい る. これらの中でものの頭頂葉後下部で四の中側頭回 につながる部分にある角回は、おおむねBA39に該当 し、ヒト以外の霊長類に比してきわめて大きく拡大し ている。この領野は脳内のほとんど全域の連合野と線 維連絡があるが、一方で一次感覚野からはほとんど人 力を受けていない、バインダーらは、角回を意味処理 機構の中で最高位に位置づけ、概念の検索、統合を行 う領野と推測している17).

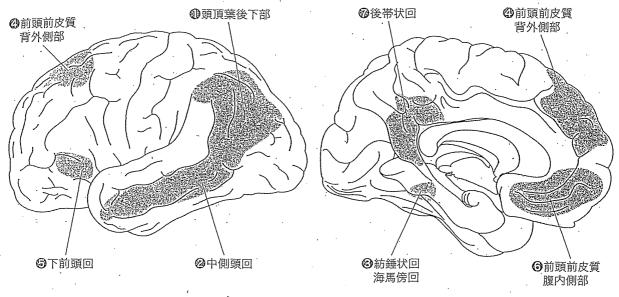
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単語の意味処理はシルビウス裂周囲の古典的な言語野 (ウェルニッケ野, ブローカ野など) に限局せず, 皮質連



参図6-37 名前付けする対象物のカテゴリーに対応する脳病変と脳賦活部位

対象のカテゴリーに応じた、名前付けの障害をきたす脳病変部位(青)と健常者における名前付けによる脳賦活部位(赤)、有名人の顔(A)と道具(B)では処理領野が異なる(文献16より転載)



愛図6-38 単語の意味処理を行う脳内の諸領域

言語の意味処理に関与する領域はいわゆるウェルニッケ野や前頭葉のブローカ野といったシルビウス裂周囲の古典的な言語 担当領域内に限局せず、大脳左半球に広く分布する(文献 17 を元に作成)

合野の多くの領域が関与し、単語の属するカテゴリーに よって担当領域が異なる.

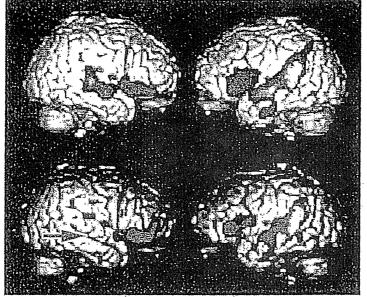
回聴覚障害の言語への影響

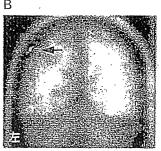
1) 感音難聴者における知見

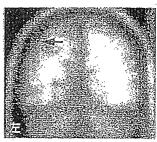
難聴,特に内耳障害による感音難聴では言葉がわかりにくくなる。ここでは補聴器適応がそろそろ検討されるレベルの中等度難聴者における単語聴取時の聴皮質反応をみてみる。中等度の内耳性難聴で語音弁別能

が低下すると、言葉の中で理解できない部分が出てくる。日常生活で常用される単語を用いて聞き取りテストを行って正答率の高い単語群と低い単語群を作成し、これらを単耳で聴取したときの脳賦活状況を観察すると、認知しやすい単語を聴取しているときには両側の上側頭回、左中側頭回、左下前頭回、左角回で有意の賦活がみられるが、認知しにくい単語聴取では同側の上側頭回と角回で有意の賦活を認めなくなる(図6-39)¹⁸)、単語の聴取では両半球聴覚野の協同と、角回での情報処理を経て正確な認知に至ると推測される。

認知しやすい 単語







認知しにくい 単語

●図6-39 中等度感音難聴者の単語聴取時の脳賦活状況 認知しやすい単語聴取しているとき(上段)には両側の上側頭回、左中側頭回、左下前頭回、左角回で有意の賦活がみられるが、認知しにくい単語聴取(下段)では同側の上側頭回(Aの青矢印)と角回(Bの赤矢印)で有意の賦活を認めなくなる(文献18より転載)

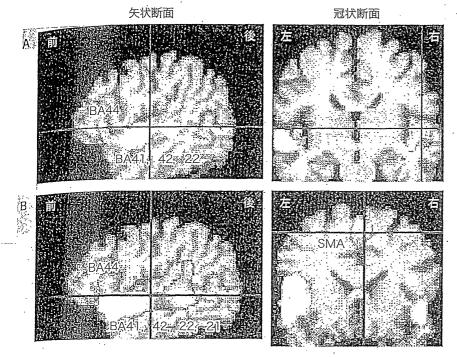
2) 高度難聴と聴皮質の可塑性

日常的な話し言葉の聴取では、健常者で両側の上お よび中側頭回とブローカ野の賦活がみられるが、中途 失聴者(正常に音声言語を習得したが、その後に聴覚 を失った難聴者)ではそれらの領域の賦活が健常者よ り強く、加えて右半球の ブローカ野相当部分、補足運 動野、前帯状回など、健常者ではみられない領域の賦 活も観察される (図6-40)19). これは人工内耳で符号 化された, 通常より情報量が少ない非生理的聴覚信号 を元に語音認知を達成するためには. 聴覚連合野の広 い領域でより多くの情報処理が行われると同時に、前 頭葉の主として言語の表出に関与する言語領域も活用 されていると解釈できる. 聴覚野とウェルニッケ野, 前頭葉のブローカ野、補足運動野の間には解剖学的に 線維連絡があり、ローランド20)はこれらの領域が協同 して、入力されたあいまいな言語信号をいったん保持 し、多くの候補の中から前後関係や文脈に照合して最 も適切な認知にいたる言語性のワーキングメモリを形 成しているのではないかとの仮説を示している.

難聴者が人工内耳で人工的に符号化された音声信号を 知覚・理解する場合、皮質の言語認知機構は再編成され、 言語の認知と表出を結ぶネットワークの活動が亢進する

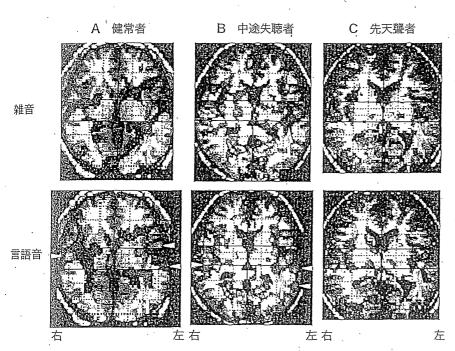
これとは対照的に先天顰で学童後期から成人にかけて人工内耳手術を受けた患者の語音弁別成績は不良で人工内耳を介する語音聴取による上および中側頭回中央領域の聴覚連合野の賦活はきわめてわずかである(図 6-41)²¹⁾. 側頭連合野の神経回路網は生後の言語音聴取に強く依存して発達し、一定の年齢域を過ぎるとその可塑性が低下して、後から音声言語刺激が入力されても発達は期待できない。

先天性高度難聴小児が聴覚活用できないまま成長した場合、側頭葉の聴覚連合野が聴覚に代わって受けもつ機能としては、まず視覚が念頭に浮かぶ、高度難聴小児においてFDG-PETで視覚的言語刺激(話をしている人の顔のビデオ画像を無音にしたもの)を課した際の脳代謝を計測すると、難聴小児群で右中心前回右中心後回、左上および下頭頂小葉、左右の上側頭回右中側頭回において、健聴成人より高い賦活が認められ、視覚情報処理の背側経路に加えて聴覚連合野である上および中側頭回が賦活されることが判明した(図6-42)²²⁾。これは、聴覚障害によって側頭連合野が聴覚野から視覚野に変化する、発達期小児における感覚の種類を越えた可塑性を初めて直接的に明らかにした



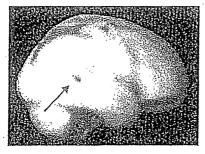
参図6-40 日常的言語聴取時の脳 賦活状況

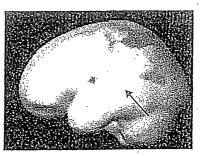
日常的な話し言葉の聴取では、健常者(A)で両側の上および中側頭回とブローカ野の賦活(黄)がみられるが、中途失聴者(B)ではそれらの領域の賦活が健常者より強く、加えて右半球のブローカ野相当部分、補足運動野、前帯状回など、健常者ではみられない領域の賦活も観察される(文献19を元に作成)



②図6-41 雑音と言語聴取時の脳賦活

健常者(A)、中途失聴者(B)、先天襲者(C)における雑音(上段)と言語聴取時(下段)の脳賦活状況(赤)を示す、言語習得前に失聴し、成人になって人工内耳手術を受けた患者の語音弁別成績は不良で、人工内耳を介する語音聴取による聴覚連合野の賦活はきわめてわずか(C: 黄矢印)である(文献21より転載)





◎図6-42 高度難聴小児の視覚的言語刺激による脳賦活 高度難聴小児では聴覚連合野(矢印)が視覚刺激で賦活される(赤い部分)

MEMOS)

先天性高度難聴小児で人工内耳などによる聴覚活用がないと,上側頭回の聴覚連合野は視覚情報処理を行う方向に分化する.

(内藤 泰)

麗文 献 顯

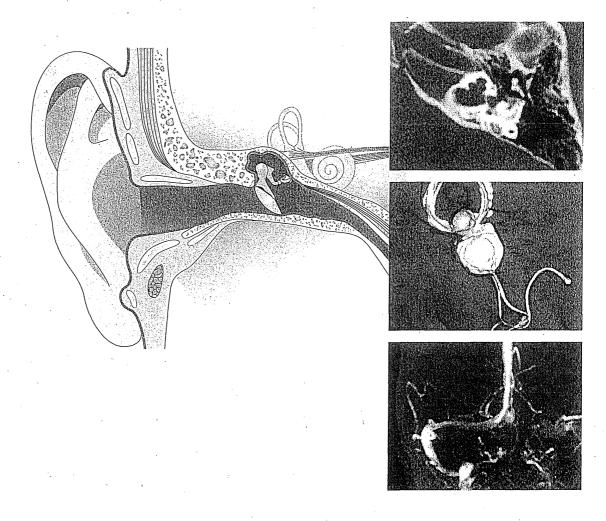
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Pediatric Ear Diseases

Diagnostic Imaging Atlas and Case Reports



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Pediatric Ear Diseases Diagnostic Imaging Atlas and Case Reports

Congenital Anomalies

In congenital anomalies in children, and particularly in infants, as a rule the patients themselves do not complain of their symptoms. This is partly because they are too young to express their disability in words, but also because it is difficult for them to recognize their condition as a disability, as they have lived with it since birth. Consequently, except in cases such as microtia in which the anomaly is externally visible, hearing loss due to defects not externally apparent may remain undetected unless either the parents notice or it is picked up in a physical exam or screening test.

Furthermore, even when hearing loss is confirmed, if there is no finding of abnormality in the tympanic membrane the patient is sometimes diagnosed as "hearing loss of unknown origin" with no further pursuit of the etiology, whereupon a hearing aid is fitted and the road to an accurate diagnosis abandoned. In such cases, even when the cause was previously thought to be unknown, CT or MRI examination of the temporal bone can reveal valuable information. For example, if malformation of the inner ear is discovered, the cause of hearing loss can be explained to the parents, and if conductive system abnormalities are detected they may be ameliorated through surgery. Congenital anomalies in children can have a profound effect on the futures of both patient and family.

It is important to conduct sufficient testing, arrive at an accurate diagnosis at an early stage, and determine an appropriate treatment strategy. Imaging diagnosis has an important role to play in this process.

- External Auditory Canal
- Auditory Ossicles and Middle Ear
- (1) Inner Ear
- (3) Internal Auditory Canal

Chapter



External Auditory Canal

EAC Atresia and Stenosis

The external auditory canal (EAC) arises from the first external branchial cleft; the auricle from the first and second branchial arches; the auditory ossicles from the first branchial arch (head of malleus, body of incus) and the second branchial arch (handle of malleus, long process of incus, superstructure of stapes); the tympanic cavity from the first pharyngeal pouch; and the tympanic membrane from the first external branchial cleft and pharyngeal pouch. The first branchial cleft is located between the first and second branchial arches. Considering these embryological origins, it is understandable how malformations of the external and middle ear combine in a variety of forms. The inner ear, on the other hand, originates in the otic vesicle, which is dorsal to the branchial cleft and branchial arch. In other words, the inner and middle ear have different origins, and therefore their malformations can arise separately, although in actuality there are cases in which the two combine, so in imaging diagnosis of pediatric hearing loss it is necessary to examine both the inner and the middle ear.

Congenital EAC atresia occurs with a frequency of approx. one case in 10,000 births, frequently with combined malformation of the auricle and middle ear, and occurs bilaterally in 15-25% of cases [1-3]. It is more common in boys and, when unilateral, occurs more frequently on the right side [1-3]. Taking influence on language development into consideration, in bilateral cases a hearing acuity assessment should be performed as early as possible and the patient directed to wear a bone conduction hearing aid. At the same time, imaging should be used to obtain a detailed grasp of the condition of the malformation and meatotympanoplasty performed on at least one side. Formation of the external auditory canal occurs in conjunction with that of the auricle, so as a rule an auriculoplasty is performed prior to meatoplasty. A bone conduction hearing aid is used until the meatotympanoplasty is performed, but the bone conduction hearing aid must be a plate-spring type device that straddles the head and holds the bone-conduction vibrator tightly against the temporal bone. Special care must be taken to fix it in place, as it can easily be dislodged during activity and many children do not like wearing it. However, even in cases of bilateral EAC atresia not accompanied by inner ear malformation, hearing loss is around 65 dB [4], so one cannot expect healthy language development without the use of a hearing aid. Conversely, where there is no inner ear dysfunction the cause of hearing loss is conductive and therefore one can expect the use of a hearing aid to be highly effective. In cases in which the external auditory canal can be formed without repositioning the auricle, meatoplasty can be performed at an early stage. Even if hearing improvement is insufficient, sufficient otoacoustic effect for spoken language acquisition may be obtained from an air conduction hearing aid. In cases of external or middle ear malformation, examination of 3-dimensional reconstructed surface rendering image of the ear in addition to temporal bone CT images facilitates an accurate grasp of the relationship between the middle ear conduction mechanism and the auricle located on the surface, which is helpful in surgical planning [5].

In malformations of the external auditory canal and middle ear, many variations are possible with respect to the degree and location of the morphological defect, making discussion of the propriety or efficacy of surgery difficult for any given case. The Jahrsdoerfer score is used to organize and assign point values for each defect to permit a numerical evaluation of the malformation's overall condition. This score adds one point for the existence of each anatomical structure, assigning two points for the stapes only, for a total of ten points (table 1) [6]. The score correlates with post-operative hearing improvement, and it has been reported that significantly beneficial results can be obtained with a score of seven or higher [7].

In cases of atresia of the bony and cartilaginous portions of the external auditory canal, the tympanic segment of the facial nerve frequently follows a lower path than normal, making ossicular chain reconstruction difficult if it overhangs the oval window. The mastoid section normally diverts posterior to the external auditory canal and descends to the stylomastoid foramen, but if there is no external auditory canal there is no constraint on this portion of the nerve's path, so in many cases it descends anterior to normal [8].

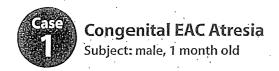
In recent years, rather than using meatotympanoplasty to treat EAC atresia, it has become increasingly common policy to secure hearing through the use of a Bone Anchored Hearing Aid (BAHA) [9], Vibrant Soundbridge [10], or other implantable hearing devices. However, because in infants development of the temporal bone is incomplete, a BAHA device cannot be anchored directly to it. The method employed instead involves pressing the BAHA oscillator against the head with an elastic belt. Reports indicate that favorable language development can be obtained with this method [11], so we can expect its use to become more widespread in cases where early-stage surgery is difficult.

In cases of unilateral EAC atresia where hearing in the healthy side is good, auriculoplasty is strongly recommended, but physicians are divided as to whether or not to perform meatoplasty or reconstructive surgery on the conductive system. This is because if the abnormality is unilateral then as a rule there is no worry of delayed language development, while one must consider the possibility of complications such as post-operative infection or tympanic membrane lateralization, or the risk of surgical damage to the facial nerve due to abnormalities in the facial nerve path within the temporal bone.

Table 1. Grading system of candidacy for surgery of congenital aural atresia

aurai atresia .	•
i ikalanetar	Politie E
Stapes present	. 2
Oval window open	1
Middle ear space	1
Facial nerve	· . · 1
Malleus/incus complex	1
Mastoid pneumatized	1
Incus-stapes connection	1 (
Round window	.1
Appearance external ear	1
Total available points	10

From Jahrsdoerfer et al [6]



M History and Clinical Findings

Bilateral microtia and EAC atresia were confirmed immediately after birth. Further examination at a pediatric hospital revealed no combined anomalies elsewhere on the body. At three weeks after birth, the ABR V-wave threshold was 80 dB in both ears. The subject was referred to our department to consider a treatment strategy. ASSR (air conduction) thresholds were about 90 dB in the right ear and 110 dB in the left ear. A bone conduction ASSR test revealed threshold values of 10 dB in the mid-to-low frequency ranges and 40 dB in the high frequency range (4,000 Hz), resulting in a diagnosis of near normal bone conduction hearing. The right ear auricle was a lobule type, in which only the lobule exists, and the left ear a concha type, in which the concha exists with the upper half mostly absent [5].

國 Patient CT Findings

The CT images are of the left temporal bone. The bone completely occludes the external auditory canal (fig. 1:1) in the area where it would normally be located (fig. 1:n1). The development of the mastoid air cells is limited, but is considerable for a newborn, and there is no soft tissue density. In the ossicular chain, a portion of the body of the incus approaches the lateral epitympanum (attic) wall nearly to the point of contact (fig. 1:1). The anterior and posterior crus (fig. 1:2) and footplate (fig. 1:3) of the stapes are all visible. The facial nerve is almost normal in the labyrinthine segment, but the tympanic segment slightly overhangs the oval window (fig. 1:3) and the mastoid segment descends slightly more anterior than normal (fig. 1:1). All corresponding structures are indicated with arrows in the normal images (fig. 1:n1-n3) for comparison.

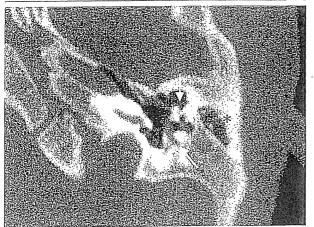
The coronal images reveal absence of the inferolateral portion of the temporal bone, with clear indication that the area where the external auditory canal would normally be located is replaced by skull-base soft tissue in this patient (fig. 2:1–3). Also, the head of the malleus and the body of the incus are in close proximity to the lateral attic wall, with almost no space between them (fig. 2:1). The incudostapedial joint is visible (fig. 2:3), with no apparent differences from the normal control (fig. 2:n3).

In the left ear, the mastoid and the epitympanum are located immediately medial to the post-tragus region, which is where the external auditory canal would normally have been located, making it possible to create the external auditory canal without moving the auricle. A meatotympanoplasty was performed at one year of age. The Jahrsdoerfer score for this case was nine, which predicts a favorable prognosis.

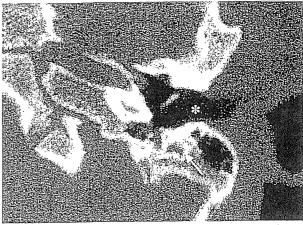
Surgical Findings

A mastoidectomy was performed as usual via postauricular incision and the atretic plate carefully removed to expose the ossicular chain. The handle of malleus was hypoplastic, with the head adhered to the atretic plate, which was surgically removed. A portion of the body of the incus also contacted the surrounding bone, limiting mobility, but was freed by removing the surrounding bone. The lenticular process of the incus was somewhat hypoplastic, but continuity of the incudostapedial joint was intact and the mobility of the stapes was normal. The tympanic membrane was formed using the temporalis fascia and a type II tympanoplasty performed, a pedicled connective tissue flap laid down on the mastoid segment, and the external auditory canal formed using a split. thickness skin graft from the inguinal region. COR (conditioned orientation response audiometry) at six months after birth exhibited 40 to 55 dB unaided hearing levels, and everyday sound recognition, response, and vocalization improved.

Patient CT Findings



1. axial image

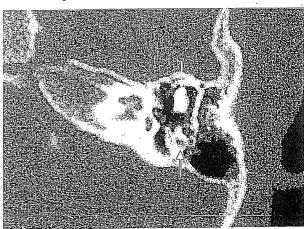


Normal Control CT Findings

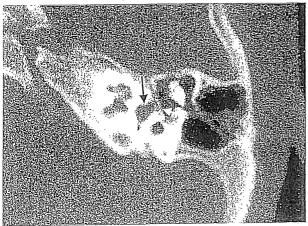
n1. axial image



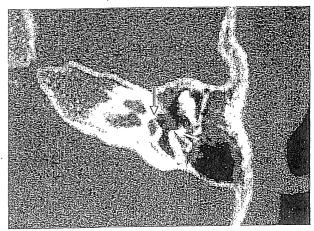
2. axial image



n2. axial image



3. axial image



n3. axial image

Fig. 1. (Case 1) Left ear CT: preoperative

[Patient CT Findings]

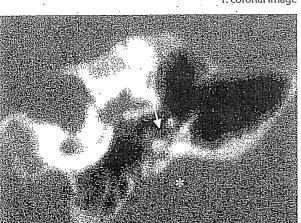
The bone completely occludes the external auditory canal in the area where it would normally be located (1: *). The development of the mastoid air cells is limited, but considerable for a newborn, and there is no soft tissue density. In the ossicular chain, a portion of the malleus and incus approaches the lateral attic wall nearly to the point of contact (1: $\frac{1}{2}$). The anterior and posterior crus (2: $\frac{1}{2}$), and footplate (3: $\frac{1}{2}$) of the stapes are all visible. The facial nerve is almost normal in the labyrinthine segment on both sides, but the tympanic segment slightly overhangs the oval window (3: $\frac{1}{2}$) and the mastoid segment descends slightly more anterior than normal (1: $\frac{1}{2}$).

《Normal Control CT Findings》

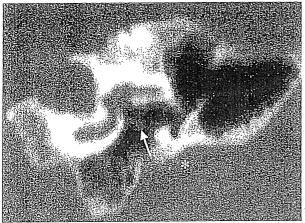
n1: \$\&\text{ external auditory canal; }\&\text{ mastoid segment of facial nerve. n2: }\&\text{ head of malleus, body of incus; }\end{align* facial nerve. n3: }\&\text{ facial nerve, tympanic segment; }\end{align* footplate of stapes.

Patient CT Findings

1. coronal image



2. coronal image



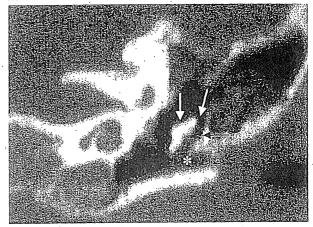
3. coronal image

Fig. 2. (Case 1) Left ear CT: preoperative

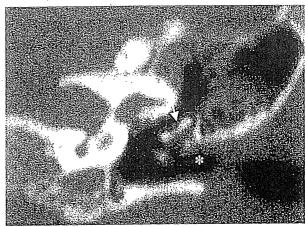
[Patient CT Findings]

The inferolateral portion of the temporal bone is absent, with clear indication that the area where the external auditory canal would normally be located is replaced by skull-base soft tissue in this patient (1–3: $\$). Also, the head of the malleus and the body of the incus are in close proximity to the lateral attic wall (1: $\$), with almost no space between them (1: $\$). Slightly posterior, the ossicular chain (2: $\$) can be observed contacting the lateral attic wall and atretic plate. In a cross-section posterior to this, the incudostapedial joint can be identified (3: $\$).

Normal Control CT Findings



n1. coronal image



n2. coronal image



n3. coronal image

《Normal Control CT Findings》

n1: A space ($\frac{3}{6}$) is visible between the malleus/body of the incus ($\frac{3}{6}$) and the lateral attic wall (\leftarrow). 3 indicates the external auditory canal. n2: There is no contact between the ossicular chain (4) and the lateral attic wall. 3 indicates the external auditory canal. n3: 4 incudostapedial joint; 4 external auditory canal.



Congenital EAC Stenosis with Cholesteatoma

Subject: female, 1 year, 8 months

Mistory and Clinical Findings

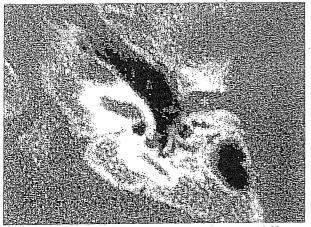
EAC stenosis was present in the left ear, with no malformation of the auricle. In the right ear, there were no abnormalities in the external auditory canal or tympanic membrane. Since one month previously the subject became upset if her left ear was touched, and since 20 days previously she exhibited swelling and redness in her left postauricular region. Two weeks previously the subject underwent incision and drainage of a postauricular abscess at her regular pediatric hospital. She received an antibiotic IV drip, but the left postauricular abscess returned and the subject was referred to our department for radical treatment. The left external auditory canal was extremely

narrow and the periphery swollen, making observation of the lumen impossible. In an ASSR test conducted by the previous physician, air conduction threshold values averaged 98 dB, while the bone conduction ASSR threshold values averaged 28 dB.

Ill Preoperative History and Patient CT Findings

The previous physician conducted a CT exam of the temporal bone at four months after birth. Even in findings at this time the external auditory canal cavity could not be confirmed due to EAC stenosis (fig. 3:1), but the image showed no osteolytic lesions, pneumatization in the middle ear was satisfactory, and there were no soft

Patient CT Findings



1. axial image



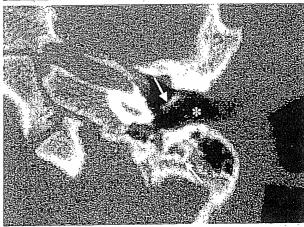
2. axial image

Fig. 3. (Case 2) Left ear CT: preoperative (4 months old)

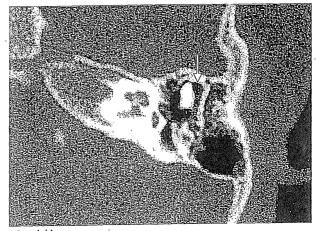
[Patient CT Findings]

The external auditory canal cavity cannot be confirmed due to EAC stenosis (1: \$\sigma\$), but the image shows no osteolytic lesions. Pneumatization in the middle ear is good and there are no soft tissue densities to suggest inflammation or cholesteatoma (1, 2). The mastoid segment of the facial nerve descends slightly anterior to normal (1: \sigma\$). The bony external auditory canal in this case is narrower than the normal control (1, n1: \sigma\$). Slightly posterior at the attic level, overall morphological abnormalities are almost imperceptible, but the space lateral to the malleus head and incus body is narrow (2: \frac{1}{2}).

Normal Control CT Findings



n1.axial image



n2. axial image

《Normal Control CT Findings》

n1: \(\) handle of malleus; \(\) external auditory canal; \(\) mastoid segment of facial nerve. n2: A space (\) exists between the ossicular chain and the lateral attic wall.

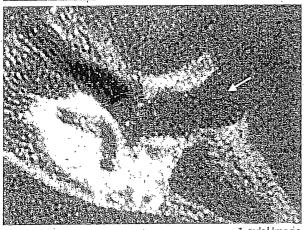
tissue densities to suggest inflammation or cholesteatoma (fig. 3:1, 2). The mastoid segment of the facial nerve descended slightly anterior (fig. 3:1) to normal (fig. 3:n1). At the level of the external auditory canal, the bony EAC in this case was clearly narrower (fig. 3:1, n1), as would be expected, but slightly posterior at the epitympanum level overall morphological abnormalities were almost imperceptible. However, the space lateral to the malleus head and incus body was narrower (fig. 3:2) than in the normal control (fig. 3:n2).

However, the temporal bone CT image taken at one year seven months (fig. 4) showed a soft tissue density mass spreading from the left external auditory canal to the tympanic cavity and a clear widening of the external auditory canal accompanying osteolysis (fig. 4:1-4), resulting in a diagnosis of external auditory canal cholesteatoma due to EAC stenosis. Figure 4, images 1 and 2 show axial sections, while 3 and 4 show coronal sections.

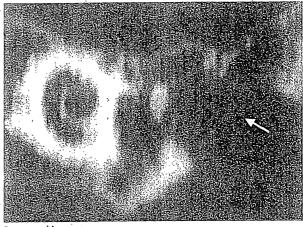
Surgical Findings

Five days after our initial examination, we performed surgery on the left external auditory canal to remove the cholesteatoma and provisionally widen the entrance. During surgery, continuous facial nerve monitoring was carried out to avoid damaging it. The bony external auditory canal entrance on the temporal bone's external surface was extremely small at 2-3 mm, but expanded medially due to osteolysis caused by the cholesteatoma. The cholesteatoma matrix contacted the medial wall of the tympanic cavity and extended posteriorly to the aditus ad antrum. The shape of the malleus was almost normal, but the long process of the incus was absent and the incudostapedial joint disrupted. The cholesteatoma had exerted pressure on the stapes, causing it to slant toward the promontory. The cholesteatoma was removed, a tympanic membrane formed using the temporalis fascia, a small piece of the auricle excised at the entrance to the external auditory canal, and the mastoid segment provisionally covered with a Palva

Patient CT Findings



1. axial image



3. coronal image

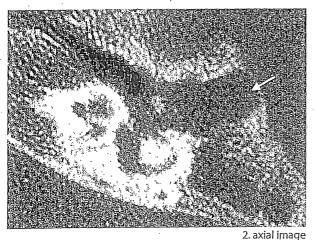
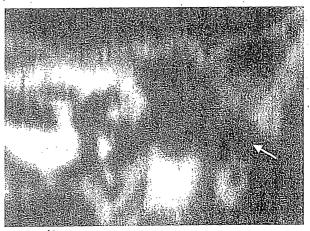


Fig. 4. (Case 2) Left ear CT: preoperative (1 year 7 months old)

[Patient CT Findings]

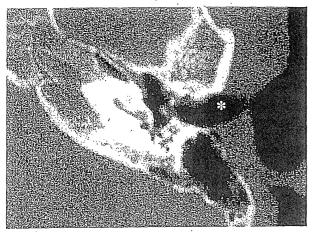
This CT is of the left temporal bone at 1 year 7 months old. Note the soft tissue density mass spreading from the external auditory canal to the tympanic cavity and a clear widening of



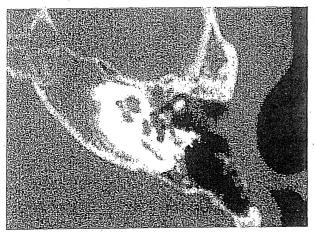
'4. coronal image

the external auditory canal accompanying osteolysis (1–4: «, ...). Images 1 and 2 are axial; images 3 and 4 are coronal.

Patient CT Findings



1. axial image



2. axial image



3. coronal image

Fig. 5. (Case 2) Left ear CT: 1 year 5 months postoperative (4 years 9 months old)

[Patient CT Findings]

The external auditory canal is wide (1, 3: \$) and there are no findings of inflammation in the mastoid. The columella is in proper position (2: \$\(\), 3: \$\(\)). The posterosuperior wall of the external auditory canal (3: \$\(\),) is reconstructed of soft tissue, but pneumatization of the mastoid segment is favorable and there is no observable retraction or enlargement of the external auditory canal wall.

flap. Approx. one year later, after waiting for complete recovery from infection and inflammation, a meatotympanoplasty was performed. The external auditory canal was formed using a split thickness skin graft from the inguinal region and a type III tympanoplasty was performed using a sculpted incus as a minor columella. (Please see p.141 for tympanoplasty classifications)

Postoperative Course and Patient CT Findings

The postoperative course went favorably, with left average air conduction hearing improving to 30.0 dB, the external auditory canal wide (fig. 5:1, 3) as shown in the follow-up temporal bone CT (axial images: fig. 5:1, 2; coronal image: fig. 5:3), and no findings of inflammation in the mastoid. It is apparent that the columella is in proper position (fig. 5:2, 3). For the external auditory canal, a canal wall down tympanoplasty with soft wall reconstruction was performed. Pneumatization of the mastoid is good and there is no retraction or enlargement of the external auditory canal wall (fig. 5:3).

Examination and Treatment of Congenital EAC Atresia and Stenosis

Schuknecht classified congenital EAC atresia into four groups [12, 13]. Type A (meatal) atresia is limited to the fibrocartilagenous part of the external auditory canal. Type B (partial) shows narrowing of the cartilaginous and bony external auditory canal. Type C (total) includes cases of totally atretic ear canal with a well-pneumatized tympanic cavity. The ossicles are fused and most probably not connected to a malformed stapes. Type D (hypopneumatic total) atresia is a total atresia with poor pneumatization, which are poor surgical candidates for hearing improvement.

In examples of (A) and (B) with stenosis in the cartilaginous part, keratinized waste products from the skin is obstructed and an external auditory canal cholesteatoma forms, sometimes progressing toward the tympanic cavity and damaging the ossicular chain. Some reports suggest that congenital EAC stenosis gives rise to external auditory canal cholesteatoma in around 10% of cases [14]. In EAC stenosis in infants, full observation of the tympanic membrane is often impossible even with using a small diameter fiberscope. In such cases, a CT exam is essential at time of initial visit and every one to several years thereafter. In cases of (B) involving stenosis of both the bony and cartilaginous parts, the tympanic membrane is present but of small diameter, with frequent malleus malformation and fixation to the lateral attic wall. Conductive hearing loss is basically common among all cases (B) to (D), but pure tone audiometry cannot be carried out until around five years of age, so it is difficult in newborns and infants to differentiate between sensorineural hearing loss and conductive hearing loss using pure-tone audiometry. In actuality, as seen both in this case and in Case 1, the anomalies in the conduction system must be determined as a result of comprehensive diagnosis of all findings,