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The decrement in the documentation of neurological findings in acute ischaemic
stroke patients: Do physicians learn about neurology by studying stroke patients?
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20	ABSTRAC	CT

21	Objective: To evaluate temporal differences in the documentation of neurological
22	findings by the same physicians in ischaemic stroke patients while in hospital. We also
23	investigated differences in rate of documentation of neurological findings in stroke
24	patients between internists and neurosurgeons.
25	Design: A retrospective medical chart review.
26	Participants: Hospitalized adult patients with acute ischaemic stroke who stayed seven
27	or more days in our hospital. Neurosurgeons (n=8) and internists (n=19) caring for those
28	patients (including up to 10 patients per physician).
29	Main outcome measures: The documentation rate of any neurological finding in the
30	patients on each day (from day 1 to 7 and on discharge). The documentation rates of
31	eight neurological finding components (consciousness, mental status, cranial nerves,
32	motor function, sensory function, coordination, reflexes, and gait). We included only
33	documentation by the same physician. Fisher's exact test was used to evaluate
34	differences in outcomes between neurosurgeons and internists.
35	Results: During the study period, we identified 172 stroke patients who were cared for
36	by 27 physicians. The documentation rates of any neurological finding were 94% (day
37	1), 58% (day 2), 35% (day 3), 40% (day 4), 32% (day 5), 30% (day 6), and 23% (day 7).
38	On discharge, all eight neurological finding components were documented in fewer than
39	10% of all cases. The documentation rate was significantly higher by internists than
40	neurosurgeons on each day but not on discharge.
41	Conclusions: The documentation rate of neurological findings by physicians during
42	usual stroke care decreased to less than 50% after the third hospital day. Given the

importance of temporal changes in the neurological symptoms of stroke patients, further

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	3
44	study is needed to determine whether this low documentation rate after the third hospital
45	day was due to a lack of physician interest in neurological findings or other factors.
46	day was due to a lack of physician interest in hearological findings of other factors.
47	Key words: Documentation, Neurology, Stroke
48	
49	Strengths and limitations of this study
50	• This is the first study to evaluate temporal differences in the documentation of
51	neurological findings by the same physicians in acute stroke patients.
52	 An association between documentation and patient outcomes was not
53	evaluated.
54	• This study was conducted in only a single hospital in Japan in a small sample
55	of patients.
56	
	This study was conducted in only a single hospital in Japan in a small sample of patients.

INTRODUCTION

The renowned stroke neurologist C. Miller Fisher said that we learn about neurology stroke by stroke. The development of imaging tests has improved our ability to localize neurological symptoms, particularly in stroke patients, compared to previous decades.¹ The continuing development of more accurate neurological examination techniques allows us to learn symptomatology from stroke patients. Nonetheless, physicians, particularly non-neurologists, often omit important neurological examinations²³ and tend to depend on brain imaging during routine stroke care. 4 Furthermore, despite an emphasis on observations of temporal changes in neurological findings in stroke patients, ⁵⁻⁸ physicians often lose interest in such neurological signs in these patients, particularly after a definite diagnosis is achieved, potentially reducing the documentation of neurological findings. This is problematic because temporal changes in neurological symptoms are key to predicting a prognosis. Moreover, given the limitations of brain imaging for diagnosing acute ischaemic stroke, 10 it is important to determine the typical clinical course in acute stroke patients. Nonetheless, no studies have evaluated the speed at which the documentation of neurological findings in stroke patients decreases after admission, whereas recent studies have evaluated the speed of consumption of chocolate in hospital wards¹¹ and of the disappearance of magazines in waiting rooms. 12 Hence, we evaluated temporal changes in the documentation rate of neurological findings by the same physician in ischaemic stroke patients during hospital stays. We also evaluated differences in the documentation rate of any neurological finding in stroke patients between internists and neurosurgeons. Given their specialty training and interest in neurology, neurosurgeons might document neurological findings more frequently than internists.

METHODS

Study design and participants

A retrospective medical chart review was conducted to assess data obtained between September 1, 2014 and June 30, 2017 at Tochigi Medical Center, a 350-bed acute care hospital in the Tochigi prefecture of Japan. Since September 2014, our hospital has used electronic medical records. We chose a retrospective study design because prospective research can introduce the Hawthorne effect. 13 which affects physicians' documentation in medical records. All consecutive patients aged 18 years old or older who were admitted with acute ischaemic stroke as a primary diagnosis, survived and stayed in our hospital at least seven days were included. We excluded patients who died because of other factors, such as non-neurological disease and terminal care, which might affect the documentation of neurological findings. Patients whose principal physicians changed during the hospital stay were also excluded. Up to 10 patients per physician were included. The purpose of the study was to characterize temporal changes in the documentation rate of neurological findings in ischaemic stroke patients by a single principal physician during a hospital stay. We also evaluated differences in the documentation rate of neurological findings between internists and neurosurgeons on each hospital day.

In our hospital, acute ischaemic stroke patients are randomly admitted to either the internal medicine or neurosurgical ward. However, stroke patients requiring surgery or interventional radiology are admitted to the neurosurgery ward. In most cases, these stroke patients are treated by a single principal internal medicine or neurosurgery physician without handoffs from admission to discharge. Additional physicians rarely

examine or document neurological findings in these stroke patients. Therefore, we could evaluate temporal changes in the documentation rate of neurological findings by a single physician. Furthermore, in Japan, the mean length of hospital stay among acute stroke patients is approximately 30 days, ¹⁴ which is longer than in other countries. ¹⁵ Thus, in most stroke patients, we could also evaluate temporal changes in the documentation rate of neurological findings during at least seven consecutive days. We assumed that the documentation rate would dramatically decrease after the second day and would thereafter change at a lower rate. Hence, even a short-term observation period was enough to evaluate the documentation rate of neurological findings. To reduce the effect of the day of the week at admission. 16 we selected a seven-day evaluation period.

Characteristics

Patient information, including age, sex, culprit lesion of stroke, and duration of hospital stay, was retrieved from medical records obtained at the time of each patient's admission. Physician-related information, including age, sex and specialty, was also retrieved from the database of Tochigi Medical Center.

Outcome measures

One of authors (J.K.) evaluated the medical records of all included patients. The primary outcome was the documentation rate of any neurological finding in ischaemic stroke patients by physicians on each hospital from the day of admission to the seventh day. We also evaluated the documentation rate of neurological findings at discharge (within the 24 hours before discharge). Neurological findings were classified as one of

eight categories (consciousness, mental status, cranial nerves, motor function, sensory function, coordination, reflexes, and gait) based on a previous study.² We allowed any documentation of neurological findings regardless of the quality of the examination.

However, some documentations, such as "no change in neurological findings" and "no change", were not allowed because they often lacked information regarding which neurological findings were not different and to the extent of the examination.

Documentation such as "no change for right hemiplegia" was allowed though it was low quality because it lacked the quantity of neurological findings. Furthermore, documentation of only a total score on the National Institute of Health Stroke Scale (NIHSS) was not allowed, although documentation of the detailed contents of NIHSS was allowed. Documentation of neurological findings by health care providers, including physicians, other than the principal physician was excluded because we sought to evaluate only documentation by a single principal physician.

Statistical analysis

We did not formally calculate sample size because the primary objective was to define the characteristics of neurological documentations by physicians in ischaemic patients. However, we expected a dramatic reduction in the documentation of neurological findings and therefore selected 10 patients per physician. Assuming that the documentation rate of any neurological finding would be 95% on admission and lower than 40% after the second hospital day, approximately 10 patients per physicians was needed to achieve a significance level of 0.05 with a power of 0.8. To minimize the effect on outcomes of a few physicians caring for many patients, only up to 10 patients per physician were included.

The baseline and demographic characteristics of patients and physicians were summarized using standard descriptive summaries. For the primary objective, we determined the documentation rate of any neurological finding in ischaemic stroke patients on each hospital day. For outcomes on each hospital day, 95% confidence intervals (CIs) were calculated. For the secondary objective, to evaluate the difference in the documentation rate of neurological findings on each hospital day between internists and neurosurgeons, we used Fisher's exact test. These analyses were performed using the Excel statistical software package version 2.11 (Bellcurve for Excel; Social Survey Research Information Co., Ltd., Tokyo, Japan), and the level of significance was set at 5%.

Patient involvement

No patients were involved in determining the research question or outcome measures nor were they involved in developing plans to design or implement the study. No patients were asked for advice during the interpretation or writing up of the results. There are no plans to disseminate the results of this research to study participants or the relevant patient community.

RESULTS

We identified 474 consecutive acute ischaemic stroke patients who were cared for by 29 physicians during the study period. Of these, 172 who were cared for by 27 physicians (19 internists and 8 neurosurgeons) met our inclusion criteria. Among these 172 patients, 105 were discharged to home, 40 to rehabilitation facilities, and 27 to other hospitals or

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long-term care facilities. The baseline characteristics of the patients and physicians are presented in Table 1.

Figure 1 shows the temporal changes in the documentation rate of any neurological finding in all patients according to the specialty of their principal physician. The documentation rate of any neurological finding was 94% (95% CI 91 to 98) at admission and 58% (95% CI 50 to 65) on day 2. However, the average documentation rate of any neurological finding from the third to seventh day was lower than 40%. Furthermore, the documentation rate was only 14% within 24 hours of discharge. The documentation rate of any neurological finding was significantly lower in the neurosurgeon-treated group than in the internal medicine-treated group on each hospital day but not at discharge.

Among the eight neurological finding categories, motor function was the most frequently documented during the initial seven hospital days (Table 2). Mental status, reflexes and gait were documented in fewer than 50% of all patients during the same period. Furthermore, after the third hospital day, these three components were documented in fewer than 10% of all patients. At discharge, all categories of neurological findings were documented in fewer than 10% of all patients.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the documentation rate of neurological findings by principal physicians decreased to lower than 50% after the third hospital day during stroke care. Furthermore, the documentation of mental status, reflexes and gait was often omitted by principal physicians during routine stroke care, and the documentation rate of these three categories was astronomically low after the third day. These results indicate that

physician interest in neurological findings in stroke patients dramatically decreases after the third hospital day. This reduction in the documentation of neurological findings seems faster than the reduction in the effect of Pokémon GO on physical activity, ¹⁷ although it is unclear whether these temporal reductions reflect a loss of interest in neurological findings or Pokémon GO, respectively.

Among 8 categories of neurological findings, motor function was the most frequently documented in this study, is consistent with the results of previous studies. 18-20 Mental status and gait were documented less frequently, perhaps because the stroke textbook states that these important neurological assessment can be omitted. Because cognitive impairment frequently occurs in stroke patients²¹ and can be effectively treated with rehabilitation, ^{22 23} the low documentation rate of mental status by principal physicians is problematic, although such documentation may not reflect physician awareness.

We did not expect that neurological findings would be more frequently documented in stroke patients in our hospital by internists than by neurosurgeons, and this result should be interpreted cautiously. Unlike in the internal medicine ward, in the neurosurgery ward of our hospital, trained nurses often document NIHSS every day during routine stroke care, and such thorough assessment by other health providers might lower the need for neurosurgeons to document neurological findings. Furthermore, we did not evaluate the quality or volume of neurological findings. Given their specialty in neurology, neurosurgeons might be more likely than internists to document more detailed and important neurological findings. Further study is needed to investigate whether a physician's specialty affects documentation.

Strengths and weaknesses of the study

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to evaluate temporal changes in the documentation of neurological findings by the same physician in stroke patients. In our hospital, in most cases, a single principal physician cares for each acute ischaemic stroke patient. This allowed us to evaluate temporal changes in medical record documentation by the same physicians.

Its major limitation is that the extent of documentation does not necessarily reflect the interest of the recorder. Furthermore, in stroke patients, it is impossible to distinguish an interest in neurological findings from interest in a prognosis. In addition, the role of clinical documentation has changed in the modern era, and billing and quality indicators affect medical record documentation. However, the documentation of neurological findings during stroke care does not affect medical fees and is not considered a quality indicator in Japan. Therefore, billing for inpatient hospital care, litigation, and quality indicators have few effects on the documentation of neurological findings by physicians. Furthermore, documentation itself is also important. As William Osler said, "observe, record, tabulate, communicate". We were unable to retrospectively learn or perform detailed discussions about brain function without access to the sequential documentation of neurological findings, and physicians who are more interested in neurological findings will more thoroughly document them.

Other limitations include the following. First, this study included a small sample size and was limited to a single centre. Second, it is uncertain whether a higher rate of documentation of neurological findings is associated with higher clinical skill. However, interest in stroke is associated with the more accurate clinical diagnosis of lacunar stroke.²⁷ Third, we did not evaluate outcomes between the eighth hospital day and

discharge, but given the very low rate of documentation of neurological findings within 24 hours of discharge, we are confident that the documentation of neurological findings continued to gradually decrease after the eighth hospital day. Fourth, we did not individually evaluate the documentation of other important neurological signs, such as neuro-ophthalmic findings and visual problems, ⁷ and we did not evaluate the thoroughness of medical histories, which is important. As C. Miller Fisher showed, in ischaemic stroke patients, the frequency and importance of transient ischaemic attacks can be determined from a thorough history of prodromal symptoms.²⁸ Fifth, a single observer evaluation might introduce bias and affect our results. However, past studies reported good inter-rater reliability in audits of neurological finding documentation. 16 20 Sixth, the prevalence of inappropriate copying and pasting²⁹ suggests that we might have overestimated clinically meaningful documentation. Seventh, we regarded two or more documentations per day as one documentation per day. Hence, we might have underestimated documentation by physicians. Finally, although a higher patient volume is associated with a lower rate of documentation of important information, ³⁰ we did not consider the effect of work load on outcomes.

Meaning of findings

Several factors could have caused the observed reduction in the documentation of neurological findings after the third hospital day. First, the low documentation rate of neurological findings after the third hospital day might derive from the initial stable course of stroke patients rather than a loss of physician interest in neurological findings. 18 However, because neurological findings often change day by day in the early course of acute stroke, 31 32 this possibility seems unlikely. Second, the temporal changes

in the documentation of neurological findings, especially by neurosurgeons, are similar to the decreasing response to 3-Hz repetitive nerve stimulation observed in myasthenia gravis³³ (Figure 1). The decrement in the documentation of neurological findings by neurosurgeons was higher but not maximal on the third hospital day, and thereafter, this rate slightly increased from the fourth to sixth hospital day but not in a typical U-shape.³⁴ Therefore, a fatigue phenomenon similar to the loss of acetylcholine receptor function observed in myasthenia gravis might occur in physicians. If so, a similar phenomenon could occur in the documentation of non-neurological findings in non-neurological disease. Third, spending more time communicating, such as during neurological examinations of patients, is of utmost importance for learning about neurology and might reduce the documentation of neurological findings after the third hospital day. However, a previous study demonstrated acceptable concordance between documentation in medical records and actual performance during direct observations.³⁵ Furthermore, in previous studies, time spent communicating with patients and direct patient care were not affected by time spent during medical record documentation. 36 37 Fourth, participation in annual meetings during conferences and holidays could affect medical record documentation. Although these factors might have affected our findings, physicians interested in

neurological findings are more likely to frequently document neurological signs regardless of their fatigue, and the temporal reduction in documentation observed in our study is considered a reflection of loss of physician interest. Nonetheless, further study is needed to determine whether the low documentation rate after the third hospital day is truly due to a lack of physician interest in neurological findings.

Implications for clinical practice

C. Miller Fisher described many syndromes and mechanisms using thorough neurological examinations and observations of stroke patients. 38 One of his significant contributions was an understanding of the relationship between carotid artery disease and ischaemic stroke. Before his work, approximately 55% of ischaemic strokes were thought to be caused by vasospasm.³⁹ When the first key patient who gave him an initial clue died while he was away for a weekend, the resident on call for the patient did not request an autopsy. When Fisher asked the medical staff why they did not request an autopsy, he was amazed that the resident on call did not consider it necessary. 28 This episode reflects a gap in interest in stroke patients between Fisher and the resident. Unlike Fisher's era, modern imaging tests provide us a more detailed localization of neurological symptoms, especially in stroke patients. Hence, our findings are disappointing even if they truly indicate a rapid loss of post-admission interest in stroke patients by physicians. We propose that now is the time for physicians to relearn about neurology stroke by stroke.⁴⁰

Conclusions

The documentation rate of neurological findings by physicians in usual stroke care decreased to lower than 50% on the third hospital day and subsequently continued to decrease. Given the importance of learning and monitoring temporal changes in neurological symptoms in stroke patients, further study is needed to determine whether the low documentation rate after the third hospital day was caused by a lack of physician interest in neurological findings or other factors.

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322	clarity of the manuscript.
323	
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339	that could appear to have influenced the submitted work.
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341	Ethics approval
342	This study was approved by the Medical Ethical Committee of Tochigi Medical Center
343	(protocol No. 29-14) and was performed in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki.

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This study was also conducted in accordance with the Ethical Guidelines for
Epidemiological Research in Japan. We were not required to obtain individual informed
consent because we used de-identified data obtained from medical records and did not
contact the patients. According to Japanese Ethical Guidelines, we did display a poster
in the waiting room of the hospital to provide information about the collection and use
of data for this study and the protection of personal information.

Data sharing

Data sharing is not applicable because we did not receive informed consent for data sharing from the participants. The datasets generated and analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Transparency

The lead author (JK) affirms that this manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study being reported, that no important aspects of the study have been omitted, and that any discrepancies from the study originally planned have been explained.

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- Fig 1. Temporal changes in the documentation rate of any neurological findings in 172 ischaemic stroke patients during hospital stay.
- *p-value < 0.05



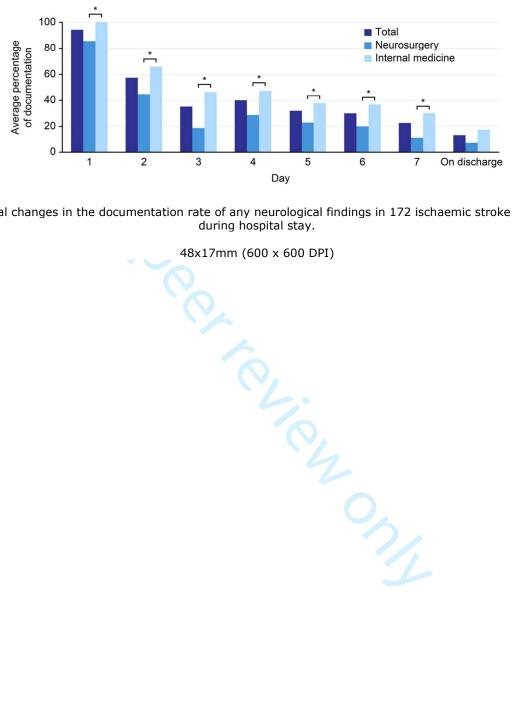
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Table 1. Characteristics of patients with acute ischemic stroke and physicians. Valuesare shown as numbers (percentages) unless stated otherwise.

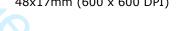
	Total	Neurosurgery	Internal Medicine
Physicians, n = 27			
Mean (SD) age (years)	35.5 (7.8)	41.9 (11.0)	32.8 (3.8)
Men	22 (81.5)	7 (87.5)	15 (78.9)
Patients, $n = 172$			
Mean (SD) age (years)	75.1 (11.5)	74.9 (11.6)	75.3 (11.5)
Men	93 (54.1)	38 (55.1)	55 (53.4)
Admission day of week			
Weekday	155 (90.1)	63 (91.3)	92 (89.3)
Weekend	17 (9.9)	6 (8.7)	11 (10.7)
Mean (SD) length of hospital stay (days)	27.1 (18.5)	25.3 (19.0)	28.4 (18.1)

Table 2. Temporal changes in the documentation rates of 8 categories of neurological findings. Values are shown as percentages (95% confidence intervals).

				BMJ Open				Page 2
							26	
481	Table 2. Tem	poral changes	s in the docun	nentation rate	es of 8 catego	ories of neuro	ological	
482	findings. Valu	ues are shown	as percentag	es (95% con	fidence interv	vals).		
				Day of ho	spital stay			Pro
	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	On cotoctectes*
any neurological	94 (91 to 98)	58 (50 to 65)	35 (28 to 43)	40 (33 to 48)	32 (25 to 39)	30 (23 to 37)	23 (16 to 29)	13 (8 to 19)
evel of onsciousness	80 (74 to 86)	23 (16 to 29)	17 (11 to 23)	13 (8 to 19)	13 (8 to 19)	12 (7 to 16)	8 (4 to 12)	13 (8 to Copyright, including for 6 (2 to go for
Mental status	46 (38 to 53)	12 (7 to 17)	9 (5 to 14)	5 (1 to 8)	6 (3 to 10)	6 (3 to 10)	4 (1 to 7)	3 (1 to E
Cranial nerves	84 (79 to 90)	35 (28 to 43)	19 (13 to 24)	22 (15 to 28)	15 (9 to 20)	13 (8 to 19)	10 (5 to 14)	6 (2 to 👼
Motor function	92 (88 to 96)	45 (38 to 53)	28 (21 to 35)	31 (24 to 38)	22 (16 to 28)	22 (15 to 28)	16 (10 to 21)	7 (3 to 1 🕏)
ensory function	58 (51 to 66)	17 (12 to 23)	12 (7 to 17)	10 (6 to 15)	5 (2 to 9)	7 (3 to 11)	7 (3 to 11)	2 (0 to 48)
Coordination	51 (44 to 59)	13 (8 to 19)	9 (4 to 13)	6 (2 to 9)	5 (1 to 8)	3 (0 to 5)	5 (1 to 8)	3 (0 to <u>3</u>
eflex	45 (37 to 52)	5 (1 to 8)	4 (1 to 7)	2 (0 to 4)	2 (0 to 5)	2 (0 to 5)	1 (-1 to 2)	1 (-1 to 2)
Gait	17 (11 to 23)	5 (1 to 8)	3 (0 to 5)	4 (1 to 7)	4 (1 to 7)	4 (1 to 6)	2 (0 to 4)	3 (0 to §
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Temporal changes in the documentation rate of any neurological findings in 172 ischaemic stroke patients



STROBE (Strengthening The Reporting of OBservational Studies in Epidemiology) Checklist

A checklist of items that should be included in reports of observational studies. You must report the page number in your manuscript where you consider each of the items listed in this checklist. If you have not included this information, either revise your manuscript he fore submitting or note N/A.

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		Item Recommendation		
Title and Abstract	1	(a) Indicate the study's design with a commonly used term in the title or the abstract	Page Not including	
		(b) Provide in the abstract an informative and balanced summary of what was done and what was found	En E	
Introduction			seig s rei	
Background/Rationale	2	Explain the scientific background and rationale for the investigation being reported	nement that detection to	
Objectives	3	State specific objectives, including any prespecified hypotheses	ext and	
Methods			eur (
Study Design	4	Present key elements of study design early in the paper	ta min	
Setting	5	Describe the setting, locations, and relevant dates, including periods of recruitment, exposure, follow-up, and data collection	ing, Al ti	
Participants	6	(a) Cohort study—Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of selection of participants. Describe methods of follow-up Case-control study—Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of case ascertainment and control selection. Give the rationale for the choice of cases and controls Cross-sectional study—Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of selection of participants (b) Cohort study—For matched studies, give matching criteria and number of exposed and unexposed Case-control study—For matched studies, give matching criteria and the number of controls per case	Al training, and similar technologies.	
Variables	7	Clearly define all outcomes, exposures, predictors, potential confounders, and effect modifiers. Give diagnostic criteria, if applicable		

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Section and Item	Item No.	Recommendation	Reported or Page No.
Data Sources/	8*	For each variable of interest, give sources of data and details of methods of	
Measurement		assessment (measurement). Describe comparability of assessment methods if	
		there is more than one group	
Bias	9	Describe any efforts to address potential sources of bias	7
Study Size	10	Explain how the study size was arrived at	rotect
Quantitative Variables	11	Explain how quantitative variables were handled in the analyses. If applicable,	d d
		describe which groupings were chosen and why	by сор
Statistical Methods	12	(a) Describe all statistical methods, including those used to control for	yrig
		confounding) , i
		(b) Describe any methods used to examine subgroups and interactions	Protected by copyright, including for
		(c) Explain how missing data were addressed	ng for
		(d) Cohort study—If applicable, explain how loss to follow-up was addressed	uses related to
		Case-control study—If applicable, explain how matching of cases and controls was	relat
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		Cross-sectional study—If applicable, describe analytical methods taking account of	te
		sampling strategy	xt and
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Participants	13*	(a) Report numbers of individuals at each stage of study—eg numbers potentially	, ≥
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		completing follow-up, and analysed	ining
		(b) Give reasons for non-participation at each stage	g, and
		(c) Consider use of a flow diagram	simila
Descriptive Data	14*	(a) Give characteristics of study participants (eg demographic, clinical, social) and	
·		information on exposures and potential confounders	chnol
		(b) Indicate number of participants with missing data for each variable of interest	technologies
		(c) Cohort study—Summarise follow-up time (eg, average and total amount)	
Outcome Data	15*	Cohort study—Report numbers of outcome events or summary measures over time	
		Case-control study—Report numbers in each exposure category, or summary	
		measures of exposure	
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Main Results 16	Section and Item	Item No.	Recommendation	Reported o
were adjusted for and why they were included (b) Report category boundaries when continuous variables were categorized (c) If relevant, consider translating estimates of relative risk into absolute risk for a meaningful time period Other Analyses 17 Report other analyses done—eg analyses of subgroups and interactions, and sensitivity analyses Discussion Key Results 18 Summarise key results with reference to study objectives Limitations 19 Discuss limitations of the study, taking into account sources of potential bias or imprecision. Discuss both direction and magnitude of any potential bias or imprecision. Discuss both direction and magnitude of any potential bias or imprecision. Discuss from similar studies, and other relevant evidence Generalisability 21 Discuss the generalisability (external validity) of the study results Other Information Funding 22 Give the source of funding and the role of the funders for the present study and, if applicable, for the original study on which the present article is based Give information separately for cases and controls in case-control studies and, if applicable, for exposed and unexposed groups report and cross-sectional studies.	Main Results	16	(a) Give unadjusted estimates and, if applicable, confounder-adjusted estimates	
(b) Report category boundaries when continuous variables were categorized (c) If relevant, consider translating estimates of relative risk into absolute risk for a meaningful time period Other Analyses 17 Report other analyses done—eg analyses of subgroups and interactions, and sensitivity analyses Discussion Key Results 18 Summarise key results with reference to study objectives Limitations 19 Discuss limitations of the study, taking into account sources of potential bias or imprecision. Discuss both direction and magnitude of any potential bias Interpretation 20 Give a cautious overall interpretation of results considering objectives, limitations, multiplicity of analyses, results from similar studies, and other relevant evidence Generalisability 21 Discuss the generalisability (external validity) of the study results Other Information Funding 22 Give the source of funding and the role of the funders for the present study and, if applicable, for the original study on which the present article is based Give information separately for cases and controls in case-control studies and, if applicable, for exposed and unexposed groups content and cross-sectional studies.			and their precision (eg, 95% confidence interval). Make clear which confounders	
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Temporal changes in the documentation of neurological findings among acute ischaemic stroke patients in a single centre in Japan: a retrospective cross-sectional study

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 Primary Subject Heading :	Neurology
Secondary Subject Heading:	Neurology, Medical education and training
Keywords:	Neurology < INTERNAL MEDICINE, Stroke < NEUROLOGY, Adult neurology < NEUROLOGY

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Temporal changes in the documentation of neurological findings among acute ischaemic stroke patients in a single centre in Japan: a retrospective cross-sectional study Junpei Komagamine, MD¹; Tomoko Komagamine, MD, PhD² ¹Department of Internal Medicine, Tochigi Medical Center, 1-10-37, Nakatomatsuri, Utsunomiya, Tochigi 3208580, Japan. E-mail: junpei0919@yahoo.co.jp ²Department of Neurology, Dokkyo Medical University, 880, Kitakobayashi, Mibu, Shimotsuga, Tochigi 3210293, Japan. E-mail: tkoma@dokkyomed.ac.jp Running title: Documentation rate of neurological findings Corresponding author: Junpei Komagamine, MD, Department of Internal Medicine, Tochigi Medical Center, 1-10-37, Nakatomatsuri, Utsunomiya, Tochigi 3208580, Japan. Tel.: +81-28-622-5241, E-mail: junpei0919@yahoo.co.jp

17 ABSTRACT

- **Objective:** To evaluate temporal differences in the documentation of neurological
- 19 findings by the same physicians in ischaemic stroke patients while in hospital. We also
- 20 investigated differences in the rate of documentation of neurological findings in stroke
- 21 patients between internists and neurosurgeons.
- **Design:** A retrospective medical chart review.
- **Participants:** Hospitalized adult patients with acute ischaemic stroke who stayed seven
- or more days in our hospital. Neurosurgeons (n=8) and internists (n=19) caring for these
- 25 patients (including up to 10 patients per physician).
- 26 Main outcome measures: The documentation rate of any neurological finding in the
- 27 patients on each day (from day 1 to 7 and on discharge). The documentation rates of
- 28 eight neurological finding components (consciousness, mental status, cranial nerves,
- 29 motor function, sensory function, coordination, reflexes, and gait). We included only
- 30 documentation by the same physician. Fisher's exact test was used to evaluate
- 31 differences in outcomes between neurosurgeons and internists.
- **Results:** During the study period, we identified 172 stroke patients who were cared for
- by 27 physicians. The documentation rates of any neurological findings were 94% (day
- 34 1), 58% (day 2), 35% (day 3), 40% (day 4), 32% (day 5), 30% (day 6), and 23% (day 7).

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35	On discharge, all eight neurological finding components were documented in fewer than
36	10% of all cases. The documentation rate was significantly higher by internists than that
37	by neurosurgeons on each day but not on discharge.
38	Conclusions: The documentation rate of neurological findings by physicians during
39	usual stroke care decreased to less than 50% after the third hospital day. Given the
40	importance of temporal changes in the neurological symptoms of stroke patients, further
41	study is needed to determine whether this low documentation rate after the third hospital
42	day was due to a lack of physician interest in neurological findings or other factors.
43	
44	Key words: Documentation, Neurology, Stroke
45	

Strengths and limitations of this study

- This is the first study to evaluate temporal differences in the documentation of
 neurological findings by the same physicians in acute stroke patients.
- An association between documentation and patient outcomes was not
 evaluated.
 - This study was conducted in only a single hospital in Japan in a small sample of patients.

INTRODUCTION

The renowned stroke neurologist C. Miller Fisher said that we learn about neurology stroke by stroke. The development of imaging tests has improved our ability to localize neurological symptoms, particularly in stroke patients, compared to previous decades.[1] The continuing development of more accurate neurological examination techniques allows us to learn symptomatology from stroke patients. Nonetheless, physicians, particularly non-neurologists, often omit important neurological examinations[2, 3] and tend to depend on brain imaging during routine stroke care.[4] Furthermore, despite an emphasis on observations of temporal changes in neurological findings in stroke patients, [5-8] physicians often lose interest in such neurological signs in these patients, particularly after a definite diagnosis is achieved, [9] potentially reducing the documentation of neurological findings. This is problematic because temporal changes in neurological symptoms are key to predicting a prognosis and a need for intervention.[10-13] Moreover, given the limitations of brain imaging for diagnosing acute ischaemic stroke, [14] it is important to determine the typical clinical course in acute stroke patients. Nonetheless, no studies have evaluated the speed at which the documentation of neurological findings in stroke patients decreases after admission. Hence, we evaluated temporal changes in the documentation rate of

neurological findings by the same physician in ischaemic stroke patients during hospital stays. We also evaluated differences in the documentation rate of any neurological finding in stroke patients between internists and neurosurgeons. Given their specialty training and interest in neurology, neurosurgeons might document neurological findings more frequently than internists.

METHODS

Study design and participants

A retrospective medical chart review was conducted to assess data obtained between September 1, 2014 and June 30, 2017 at Tochigi Medical Center, a 350-bed acute care hospital in the Tochigi prefecture of Japan. Since September 2014, our hospital has used electronic medical records. We chose a retrospective study design because prospective research can introduce the Hawthorne effect,[15] which affects physicians' documentation in medical records. All consecutive patients aged 18 years old or older who were admitted with acute ischaemic stroke as a primary diagnosis, survived and stayed in our hospital at least seven days were included. We excluded patients who died because of other factors, such as non-neurological disease and

terminal care, which might affect the documentation of neurological findings. Patients
whose principal physicians changed during the hospital stay were also excluded. Up to
10 patients per physician were included. The purpose of the study was to characterize
temporal changes in the documentation rate of neurological findings in ischaemic stroke
patients by a single principal physician during a hospital stay. We also evaluated
differences in the documentation rate of neurological findings between internists and
neurosurgeons on each hospital day.

Usual care

In our hospital, consultation with a neurologist (T.K.) from an academic hospital once per week is possible; however, there is no ward neurologist. Therefore, either internists or neurosurgeons care for most acute ischaemic stroke patients without consultation with neurologists. All internists included in this study had received formal training for neurology during one or two months while in their junior residency. No internists included in this study had received additional formal training for neurology. However, all of the internists had cared for stroke patients on a regular basis in usual care. These practices are common in Japan, and approximately half of hospitals in Japan have no neurologists, even in certified training institutions such as the Japan

Neurosurgical Society, the Japanese Society of Neurology, and/or the Japan Stroke Society.[16] Furthermore, non-neurologists often care for acute ischaemic stroke patients even in hospitals with neurologists in Japan. During this study period, the average hospital stay of acute ischaemic patients (excluding those with a transient ischemic attack) was 25.1 days, and their in-hospital mortality was 7.0%. These rates were similar to those in other Japanese hospitals.[16, 17] This mortality in acute ischemic stroke patients was also similar to data from other countries.[18] In our hospital, acute ischaemic stroke patients are randomly admitted to either the internal medicine or neurosurgical ward. However, stroke patients requiring surgery or interventional radiology are admitted to the neurosurgery ward. In most cases, these stroke patients are treated by a single principal internal medicine or neurosurgery physician without handoffs from admission to discharge. Additional physicians rarely examine or document neurological findings in these stroke patients. Therefore, we could evaluate temporal changes in the documentation rate of neurological findings by a single physician. Furthermore, in Japan, the mean length of hospital stay among acute stroke patients is approximately 30 days, [16, 17] which is longer than in other countries.[18] Thus, in most stroke patients, we could also evaluate temporal changes in the documentation rate of neurological findings during at least seven consecutive days.

We assumed that the documentation rate would dramatically decrease after the second day and would thereafter change at a lower rate. Hence, even a short-term observation period was enough to evaluate the documentation rate of neurological findings. To reduce the effect of the day of the week at admission,[19] we selected a seven-day evaluation period.

Characteristics

Patient information, including age, sex, and duration of hospital stay, was retrieved from medical records obtained at the time of each patient's admission.

Physician-related information, including age, sex and specialty, was also retrieved from the database of Tochigi Medical Center.

Outcome measures

One of authors (J.K.) evaluated the medical records of all included patients. The primary outcome was the documentation rate of any neurological finding in ischaemic stroke patients by physicians on each hospital from the day of admission to the seventh day. We also evaluated the documentation rate of neurological findings at discharge (within the 24 hours before discharge). Neurological findings were classified as one of

eight categories (consciousness, mental status, cranial nerves, motor function, sensory function, coordination, reflexes, and gait) based on a previous study.[2] We allowed any documentation of neurological findings regardless of the quality of the examination. However, some documentations, such as "no change in neurological findings" and "no change", were not allowed because they often lacked information regarding which neurological findings were not different and to the extent of the examination. Documentation such as "no change for right hemiplegia" was allowed though it was low quality because it lacked the quantity of neurological findings. Furthermore, documentation of only a total score on the National Institute of Health Stroke Scale (NIHSS) was not allowed, although documentation of the detailed contents of NIHSS was allowed. Documentation of neurological findings by health care providers, including physicians, other than the principal physician was excluded because we sought to evaluate only documentation by a single principal physician.

Statistical analysis

We did not formally calculate sample size because the primary objective was to define the characteristics of neurological documentations by physicians in ischaemic patients. However, we expected a dramatic reduction in the documentation of

neurological findings and therefore selected 10 patients per physician. Assuming that the documentation rate of any neurological finding would be 95% on admission and lower than 40% after the second hospital day, approximately 10 patients per physicians was needed to achieve a significance level of 0.05 with a power of 0.8. To minimize the effect on outcomes of a few physicians caring for many patients, only up to 10 patients per physician were included.

The baseline and demographic characteristics of patients and physicians were summarized using standard descriptive summaries. For the primary objective, we determined the documentation rate of any neurological finding in ischaemic stroke patients on each hospital day. For outcomes on each hospital day, 95% confidence intervals (CIs) were calculated. For the secondary objective, to evaluate the difference in the documentation rate of neurological findings on each hospital day between internists and neurosurgeons, we used Fisher's exact test. These analyses were performed using the Excel statistical software package version 2.11 (Bellcurve for Excel; Social Survey Research Information Co., Ltd., Tokyo, Japan), and the level of significance was set at 5%.

Patient involvement

No patients were involved in determining the research question or outcome measures nor were they involved in developing plans to design or implement the study. No patients were asked for advice during the interpretation or writing up of the results. There are no plans to disseminate the results of this research to study participants or the relevant patient community.

RESULTS

We identified 474 consecutive acute ischaemic stroke patients who were cared for by 29 physicians during the study period. Forty-six patients (9.7%), including nine patients who had died, were excluded due to discharge before the seventh hospital stay. Of the remaining 428 patients, 172 who were cared for by 27 physicians (19 internists and 8 neurosurgeons) met our inclusion criteria. Among these 172 patients, 105 were discharged to home, 40 to rehabilitation facilities, and 27 to other hospitals or long-term care facilities. The baseline characteristics of the patients and physicians are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of patients with acute ischemic stroke and physicians. Values are shown as numbers (percentages) unless stated otherwise.

	Total	Neurosurgery	Internal Medicine
Physicians, n = 27			
Mean (SD) age (years)	35.5 (7.8)	41.9 (11.0)	32.8 (3.8)
Men	22 (81.5)	7 (87.5)	15 (78.9)
Mean (SD) experience of doctor (years)	8.5 (7.5)	14 (10.9)	6.2 (3.3)
Patients, $n = 172$			
Mean (SD) age (years)	75.1 (11.5)	74.9 (11.6)	75.3 (11.5)
Men	93 (54.1)	38 (55.1)	55 (53.4)
Admission day of week			
Weekday	155 (90.1)	63 (91.3)	92 (89.3)
Weekend	17 (9.9)	6 (8.7)	11 (10.7)
Mean (SD) length of hospital stay (days)	27.1 (18.5)	25.3 (19.0)	28.4 (18.1)

Figure 1 shows the temporal changes in the documentation rate of any neurological finding in all patients according to the specialty of their principal physician. The documentation rate of any neurological finding was 94% (95% CI 91 to 98) at admission and 58% (95% CI 50 to 65) on day 2. However, the average documentation rate of any neurological finding from the third to seventh day was lower than 40%. Furthermore, the documentation rate was only 14% within 24 hours of discharge. The documentation rate of any neurological finding was significantly lower in the neurosurgeon-treated group than in the internal medicine-treated group on each hospital day but not at discharge.

Among the eight neurological finding categories, motor function was the most frequently documented during the initial seven hospital days (Table 2). Mental status,

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Table 2. Temporal changes in the documentation rates of 8 categories of neurological

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Level of	80 (74 to 86)	23 (16 to 29)	17 (11 to 23)	13 (8 to 19)	13 (8 to 19)	12 (7 to 16)	8 (4 to 12)	5 (1 to 35.8
consciousness								
Mental status	46 (38 to 53)	12 (7 to 17)	9 (5 to 14)	5 (1 to 8)	6 (3 to 10)	6 (3 to 10)	4 (1 to 7)	3 (1 to 🕰
Cranial nerves	84 (79 to 90)	35 (28 to 43)	19 (13 to 24)	22 (15 to 28)	15 (9 to 20)	13 (8 to 19)	10 (5 to 14)	6 (2 to 3).
Motor function	92 (88 to 96)	45 (38 to 53)	28 (21 to 35)	31 (24 to 38)	22 (16 to 28)	22 (15 to 28)	16 (10 to 21)	7 (3 to 16)
Sensory function	58 (51 to 66)	17 (12 to 23)	12 (7 to 17)	10 (6 to 15)	5 (2 to 9)	7 (3 to 11)	7 (3 to 11)	2 (0 to 2
Coordination	51 (44 to 59)	13 (8 to 19)	9 (4 to 13)	6 (2 to 9)	5 (1 to 8)	3 (0 to 5)	5 (1 to 8)	3 (0 to §
Reflex	45 (37 to 52)	5 (1 to 8)	4 (1 to 7)	2 (0 to 4)	2 (0 to 5)	2 (0 to 5)	1 (-1 to 2)	1 (-1 to 5)
Gait	17 (11 to 23)	5 (1 to 8)	3 (0 to 5)	4 (1 to 7)	4 (1 to 7)	4 (1 to 6)	2 (0 to 4)	3 (0 to §
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DISCUSSION 218

In this study, the documentation rate of neurological findings by principal physicians decreased to lower than 50% after the third hospital day during stroke care. Furthermore, the documentation of mental status, reflexes and gait was often omitted by principal physicians during routine stroke care, and the documentation rate of these three categories was extremely low after the third day. These results indicate that physician interest in neurological findings in stroke patients dramatically decreases after the third hospital day. Among 8 categories of neurological findings, motor function was the most frequently documented in this study, is consistent with the results of previous studies.[20-22] Mental status and gait were documented less frequently, as the stroke textbook describes that these important neurological assessments are unfortunately often omitted in routine care. [7] Because cognitive impairment frequently occurs in stroke patients[23] and can be effectively treated with rehabilitation, [24, 25] the low documentation rate of mental status by principal physicians is problematic, although such documentation may not reflect physician awareness. We did not expect that neurological findings would be more frequently

documented in stroke patients in our hospital by internists than by neurosurgeons, and

this result should be interpreted cautiously. Unlike in the internal medicine ward,

trained nurses often document NIHSS every day during routine stroke care in the neurosurgery ward of our hospital, and such thorough assessment by other health providers may reduce the need for neurosurgeons to document neurological findings. Furthermore, we did not evaluate the quality or volume of neurological findings. Given their specialty in neurology, neurosurgeons might be more likely than internists to document more detailed and important neurological findings. Further study is needed to investigate whether a physician's specialty affects documentation.

Strengths and weaknesses of the study

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to evaluate temporal changes in the documentation of neurological findings by the same physician in stroke patients. In our hospital, in most cases, a single principal physician cares for each acute ischaemic stroke patient. This allowed us to evaluate temporal changes in medical record documentation by the same physicians.

Its major limitation is that the extent of documentation does not necessarily reflect the interest of the recorder. Furthermore, in stroke patients, it is impossible to distinguish an interest in neurological findings from interest in a prognosis. In addition, the role of clinical documentation has changed in the modern era, and billing and

quality indicators affect medical record documentation. [26-28] However, the documentation of neurological findings during stroke care does not affect medical fees and is not considered a quality indicator in Japan. Therefore, billing for inpatient hospital care, litigation, and quality indicators have few effects on the documentation of neurological findings by physicians. Furthermore, documentation itself is also important. As William Osler said, "observe, record, tabulate, communicate". [27] We were unable to retrospectively learn or perform detailed discussions about brain function without access to the sequential documentation of neurological findings, and physicians who are more interested in neurological findings will more thoroughly document them.

Other limitations include the following. First, this study included a small sample size and was limited to a single centre in which stroke patients are admitted to neurosurgeons or internists. Therefore, our findings may not be applicable to hospitals in which stroke patients are admitted to a neurology ward. However, this practice is common in Japan, [16] and a previous German study also reported that acute ischemic stroke patients were admitted in the internal medicine ward in approximately half of 225 acute care hospitals that participated in a stroke registry. [29] Moreover, given that the number of neurologists is not sufficient worldwide, [30] our findings for

non-neurologists are important. Nonetheless, these findings should be confirmed in other settings, such as neurology ward in other countries. Second, it is uncertain whether a higher rate of documentation of neurological findings is associated with higher clinical skill and better patient outcomes. However, interest in stroke is associated with a more accurate clinical diagnosis of lacunar stroke.[31] Furthermore, poor documentation may mean poor monitoring, which causes a delay in awareness of acute changes in patient status. Therefore, poor documentation may result in worse patient outcomes because a delay in the response to an acute change in patient status is associated with increased mortality.[10] Third, we did not evaluate outcomes between the eighth hospital day and discharge, but given the very low rate of documentation of neurological findings within 24 hours of discharge, we are confident that the documentation of neurological findings continued to gradually decrease after the eighth hospital day. Fourth, we did not individually evaluate the documentation of other important neurological signs, such as neuro-ophthalmic findings and visual problems, [7] and we did not evaluate the thoroughness of medical histories, which is important. As C. Miller Fisher showed, in ischaemic stroke patients, the frequency and importance of transient ischaemic attacks can be determined from a thorough history of prodromal symptoms. [32] Fifth, a single observer evaluation might introduce bias and

affect our results. However, past studies reported good inter-rater reliability in audits of neurological finding documentation.[19, 22] Sixth, the prevalence of inappropriate copying and pasting[33] suggests that we may have overestimated clinically meaningful documentation. Seventh, we regarded two or more documentations per day as one documentation per day. Hence, we might have underestimated documentation by physicians. Finally, although a higher patient volume is associated with a lower rate of documentation of important information, [34] we did not consider the effect of work load on outcomes.

Meaning of findings

Several factors could have caused the observed reduction in the documentation of neurological findings after the third hospital day. First, the low documentation rate of neurological findings after the third hospital day might derive from the initial stable course of stroke patients rather than a loss of physician interest in neurological findings. [20] However, because neurological findings often change day by day in the early course of acute stroke, [35, 36] this possibility seems unlikely. Second, fatigue might occur in the documentation of neurological findings by physicians. If so, a similar phenomenon could occur in the documentation of non-neurological findings in

non-neurological disease. Third, spending more time communicating, such as during neurological examinations of patients, is of utmost importance for learning about neurology and might reduce the documentation of neurological findings after the third hospital day. However, a previous study demonstrated acceptable concordance between documentation in medical records and actual performance during direct observations.[37] Furthermore, in previous studies, time spent communicating with patients and direct patient care were not affected by time spent during medical record documentation.[38, 39] Fourth, participation in annual meetings during conferences and holidays could affect medical record documentation.

neurological findings are more likely to frequently document neurological signs regardless of their fatigue, and the temporal reduction in documentation observed in our study is considered a reflection of loss of physician interest. Nonetheless, further study is needed to determine whether the low documentation rate after the third hospital day is truly due to a lack of physician interest in neurological findings.

Implications for clinical practice

C. Miller Fisher described many syndromes and mechanisms using thorough neurological examinations and observations of stroke patients.[40] One of his significant contributions was an understanding of the relationship between carotid artery disease and ischaemic stroke. Before his work, approximately 55% of ischaemic strokes were thought to be caused by vasospasm.[41] When the first key patient who gave him an initial clue died while he was away for a weekend, the resident on call for the patient did not request an autopsy. When Fisher asked the medical staff why they did not request an autopsy, he was amazed that the resident on call did not consider it necessary. [32] This episode reflects a gap in interest in stroke patients between Fisher and the resident. Unlike Fisher's era, modern imaging tests provide us a more detailed localization of neurological symptoms, especially in stroke patients. Hence, our findings are disappointing even if they truly indicate a rapid loss of post-admission interest in stroke patients by physicians. We propose that now is the time for physicians to relearn about neurology stroke by stroke.[42]

CONCLUSIONS

The documentation rate of neurological findings by physicians in usual stroke care decreased to lower than 50% on the third hospital day and subsequently continued

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344	to decrease. Given the importance of learning and monitoring temporal changes in
345	neurological symptoms in stroke patients, further study is needed to determine whether
346	the low documentation rate after the third hospital day was caused by a lack of
347	physician interest in neurological findings or other factors.
348	
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351	
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354	manuscript. All authors gave final approval for the submission of this revised version
355	for consideration for publication.
356	
357	Competing interests: All authors have completed the ICMJE unified disclosure from
358	competing interest form at www.icmje.org/coi_disclosure.pdf (available on request from
359	the corresponding author). All authors declare they have no financial relationships with
360	any organisations that might have an interest in the submitted work and no other
361	relationships or activities that could appear to have influenced the submitted work.

362	
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365	
366	Ethics approval: This study was approved by the Medical Ethical Committee of
367	Tochigi Medical Center (protocol No. 29-14) and was performed in accordance with the
368	Declaration of Helsinki. This study was also conducted in accordance with the Ethical
369	Guidelines for Epidemiological Research in Japan. We were not required to obtain
370	individual informed consent because we used de-identified data obtained from medical
371	records and did not contact the patients. According to Japanese Ethical Guidelines, we
372	did display a poster in the waiting room of the hospital to provide information about the
373	collection and use of data for this study and the protection of personal information.
374	
375	Data sharing: Data sharing is not applicable because we did not receive informed
376	consent for data sharing from the participants. The datasets generated and analysed
377	during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable
378	request.

380	Transparency: The lead author (JK) affirms that this revised manuscript is an honest,
381	accurate, and transparent account of the study being reported, that no important aspects
382	of the study have been omitted, and that any discrepancies from the study originally
383	planned have been explained.

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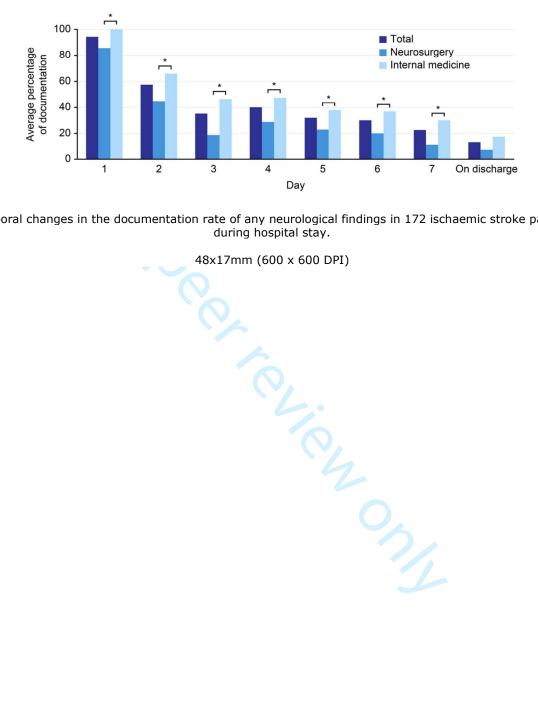
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Fig 1. Temporal changes in the documentation rate of any neurological findings in 172 ischaemic stroke patients during hospital stay.

*p-value < 0.05





Temporal changes in the documentation rate of any neurological findings in 172 ischaemic stroke patients

STROBE (Strengthening The Reporting of OBservational Studies in Epidemiology) Checklist

A checklist of items that should be included in reports of observational studies. You must report the page number in your manuscript where you consider each of the items listed in this checklist. If you have not included this information, either revise your manuscript accordingly before submitting or note N/A.

Note: An Explanation and Elaboration article discusses each checklist item and gives methodological background and published examples of transparent reporting. The STROBE checklist is best used in conjunction with this article (freely available on the Webber sites of PLoS Medicine at http://www.annals.org/, and Epidemiology at http://www.annals.org/, and Epidemiology at http://www.annals.org/, and Epidemiology at http://www.annals.org/. Information on the STROBE Initiative is available at www.strobe-statement.org/.

Section and Item	Item No.	Recommendation	Reportedion Page Ng.
Title and Abstract	1	(a) Indicate the study's design with a commonly used term in the title or the abstract	, including for
		(b) Provide in the abstract an informative and balanced summary of what was done and what was found	Enseig g for uses rel
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Study Design	4	Present key elements of study design early in the paper	(ABES
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Participants	6	(a) Cohort study—Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of selection of participants. Describe methods of follow-up Case-control study—Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of case ascertainment and control selection. Give the rationale for the choice of cases and controls Cross-sectional study—Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of selection of participants (b) Cohort study—For matched studies, give matching criteria and number of exposed and unexposed Case-control study—For matched studies, give matching criteria and the number of controls per case	Al training, and similar technologies.
Variables	7	Clearly define all outcomes, exposures, predictors, potential confounders, and effect modifiers. Give diagnostic criteria, if applicable	

Section and Item	Item No.	Recommendation	Reported on Page No.
Data Sources/ Measurement	8*	For each variable of interest, give sources of data and details of methods of assessment (measurement). Describe comparability of assessment methods if there is more than one group	Partie line
Bias	9	Describe any efforts to address potential sources of bias	
Study Size	10	Explain how the study size was arrived at	rotect
Quantitative Variables	11	Explain how quantitative variables were handled in the analyses. If applicable, describe which groupings were chosen and why	Protected by copyright, including for
Statistical Methods	12	(a) Describe all statistical methods, including those used to control for confounding	Protected by copyright, including for
		(b) Describe any methods used to examine subgroups and interactions	ncludin
		(c) Explain how missing data were addressed	g for
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Participants	13*	(a) Report numbers of individuals at each stage of study—eg numbers potentially eligible, examined for eligibility, confirmed eligible, included in the study, completing follow-up, and analysed	g, Al training
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Descriptive Data	14*	(a) Give characteristics of study participants (eg demographic, clinical, social) and information on exposures and potential confounders	r technologies
		(b) Indicate number of participants with missing data for each variable of interest	logies
		(c) Cohort study—Summarise follow-up time (eg, average and total amount)	9, 6
Outcome Data	15*	Cohort study—Report numbers of outcome events or summary measures over time	
		Case-control study—Report numbers in each exposure category, or summary measures of exposure	ogies.
		Cross-sectional study—Report numbers of outcome events or summary measures	5

Section and Item	Item No.	Recommendation	Reported Page No
Main Results	16	(a) Give unadjusted estimates and, if applicable, confounder-adjusted estimates	
		and their precision (eg, 95% confidence interval). Make clear which confounders	
		were adjusted for and why they were included	
		(b) Report category boundaries when continuous variables were categorized	
		(c) If relevant, consider translating estimates of relative risk into absolute risk for a	
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Other Analyses	17	Report other analyses done—eg analyses of subgroups and interactions, and	- 5
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Key Results	18	Summarise key results with reference to study objectives	
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Limitations	19	Discuss limitations of the study, taking into account sources of potential bias or imprecision. Discuss both direction and magnitude of any potential bias	2
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Interpretation	20	Give a cautious overall interpretation of results considering objectives, limitations,	0 10
		multiplicity of analyses, results from similar studies, and other relevant evidence	1000
Generalisability	21	Discuss the generalisability (external validity) of the study results	10
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BMJ Open

Temporal changes in the documentation of neurological findings among acute ischaemic stroke patients in a single centre in Japan: a retrospective cross-sectional study

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Secondary Subject Heading:	Neurology, Medical education and training
Keywords:	Neurology < INTERNAL MEDICINE, Stroke < NEUROLOGY, Adult neurology < NEUROLOGY

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Temporal changes in the documentation of neurological findings among acute ischaemic stroke patients in a single centre in Japan: a retrospective cross-sectional study Junpei Komagamine, MD¹; Tomoko Komagamine, MD, PhD² ¹Department of Internal Medicine, Tochigi Medical Center, 1-10-37, Nakatomatsuri, Utsunomiya, Tochigi 3208580, Japan. E-mail: junpei0919@yahoo.co.jp ²Department of Neurology, Dokkyo Medical University, 880, Kitakobayashi, Mibu, Shimotsuga, Tochigi 3210293, Japan. E-mail: tkoma@dokkyomed.ac.jp Running title: Documentation rate of neurological findings Corresponding author: Junpei Komagamine, MD, Department of Internal Medicine, Tochigi Medical Center, 1-10-37, Nakatomatsuri, Utsunomiya, Tochigi 3208580, Japan. Tel.: +81-28-622-5241, E-mail: junpei0919@yahoo.co.jp

17 ABSTRACT

- **Objective:** To evaluate temporal differences in the documentation of neurological
- 19 findings by the same physicians in ischaemic stroke patients while in hospital. We also
- 20 investigated differences in the rate of documentation of neurological findings in stroke
- 21 patients between internists and neurosurgeons.
- **Design:** A retrospective medical chart review.
- **Participants:** Hospitalized adult patients with acute ischaemic stroke who stayed seven
- or more days in our hospital. Neurosurgeons (n=8) and internists (n=19) caring for these
- 25 patients (including up to 10 patients per physician).
- 26 Main outcome measures: The documentation rate of any neurological finding in the
- 27 patients on each day (from day 1 to 7 and on discharge). The documentation rates of
- 28 eight neurological finding components (consciousness, mental status, cranial nerves,
- 29 motor function, sensory function, coordination, reflexes, and gait). We included only
- 30 documentation by the same physician. Fisher's exact test was used to evaluate
- 31 differences in outcomes between neurosurgeons and internists.
- **Results:** During the study period, we identified 172 stroke patients who were cared for
- by 27 physicians. The documentation rates of any neurological findings were 94% (day
- 34 1), 58% (day 2), 35% (day 3), 40% (day 4), 32% (day 5), 30% (day 6), and 23% (day 7).

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35	On discharge, all eight neurological finding components were documented in fewer than
36	10% of all cases. The documentation rate was significantly higher by internists than that
37	by neurosurgeons on each day but not on discharge.
38	Conclusions: The documentation rate of neurological findings by physicians during
39	usual stroke care decreased to less than 50% after the third hospital day. Given the
40	importance of temporal changes in the neurological symptoms of stroke patients, further
41	study is needed to determine whether this low documentation rate after the third hospital
42	day was due to a lack of physician interest in neurological findings or other factors.
43	
44	Key words: Documentation, Neurology, Stroke
45	

Strengths and limitations of this study

- This is the first study to evaluate temporal differences in the documentation of
 neurological findings by the same physicians in acute stroke patients.
- An association between documentation and patient outcomes was not
 evaluated.
 - This study was conducted in only a single hospital in Japan in a small sample of patients.

INTRODUCTION

The renowned stroke neurologist C. Miller Fisher said that we learn about neurology stroke by stroke. The development of imaging tests has improved our ability to localize neurological symptoms, particularly in stroke patients, compared to previous decades.[1] The continuing development of more accurate neurological examination techniques allows us to learn symptomatology from stroke patients. Nonetheless, physicians, particularly non-neurologists, often omit important neurological examinations[2, 3] and tend to depend on brain imaging during routine stroke care.[4] Furthermore, despite an emphasis on observations of temporal changes in neurological findings in stroke patients, [5-8] physicians often lose interest in such neurological signs in these patients, particularly after a definite diagnosis is achieved, [9] potentially reducing the documentation of neurological findings. This is problematic because temporal changes in neurological symptoms are key to predicting a prognosis and a need for intervention.[10-13] Moreover, given the limitations of brain imaging for diagnosing acute ischaemic stroke, [14] it is important to determine the typical clinical course in acute stroke patients. Nonetheless, no studies have evaluated the speed at which the documentation of neurological findings in stroke patients decreases after admission. Hence, we evaluated temporal changes in the documentation rate of

neurological findings by the same physician in ischaemic stroke patients during hospital stays. We also evaluated differences in the documentation rate of any neurological finding in stroke patients between internists and neurosurgeons. Given their specialty training and interest in neurology, neurosurgeons might document neurological findings more frequently than internists.

METHODS

Study design and participants

A retrospective medical chart review was conducted to assess data obtained between September 1, 2014 and June 30, 2017 at Tochigi Medical Center, a 350-bed acute care hospital in the Tochigi prefecture of Japan. Since September 2014, all medical records have been electronic in our hospital. We chose a retrospective study design because prospective research can introduce the Hawthorne effect,[15] which affects physicians' documentation in medical records. All consecutive patients aged 18 years old or older who were admitted with acute ischaemic stroke as a primary diagnosis, survived and stayed in our hospital at least seven days were included. We excluded patients who died because of other factors, such as non-neurological disease

and terminal care, which might affect the documentation of neurological findings.

Patients whose principal physicians changed during the hospital stay were also excluded.

Up to 10 patients per physician were included. The purpose of the study was to characterize temporal changes in the documentation rate of neurological findings in ischaemic stroke patients by a single principal physician during a hospital stay. We also evaluated differences in the documentation rate of neurological findings between internists and neurosurgeons on each hospital day.

Usual care

In our hospital, consultation with a neurologist (T.K.) from an academic hospital once per week is possible; however, there is no ward neurologist. Therefore, either internists or neurosurgeons care for most acute ischaemic stroke patients without consultation with neurologists. All internists included in this study had received formal training for neurology during one or two months while in their junior residency. No internists included in this study had received additional formal training for neurology. However, all of the internists had cared for stroke patients on a regular basis in usual care. These practices are common in Japan, and approximately half of hospitals in Japan have no neurologists, even in certified training institutions such as the Japan

Neurosurgical Society, the Japanese Society of Neurology, and/or the Japan Stroke Society.[16] Furthermore, non-neurologists often care for acute ischaemic stroke patients even in hospitals with neurologists in Japan. During this study period, the average hospital stay of acute ischaemic patients (excluding those with a transient ischemic attack) was 25.1 days, and their in-hospital mortality was 7.0%. These rates were similar to those in other Japanese hospitals.[16, 17] This mortality in acute ischemic stroke patients was also similar to data from other countries.[18] In our hospital, acute ischaemic stroke patients are randomly admitted to either the internal medicine or neurosurgical ward. However, stroke patients requiring surgery or interventional radiology are admitted to the neurosurgery ward. In most cases, these stroke patients are treated by a single principal internal medicine or neurosurgery physician without handoffs from admission to discharge. Additional physicians rarely examine or document neurological findings in these stroke patients. Therefore, we could evaluate temporal changes in the documentation rate of neurological findings by a single physician. Furthermore, in Japan, the mean length of hospital stay among acute stroke patients is approximately 30 days, [16, 17] which is longer than in other countries.[18] Thus, in most stroke patients, we could also evaluate temporal changes in the documentation rate of neurological findings during at least seven consecutive days.

We assumed that the documentation rate would dramatically decrease after the second day and would thereafter change at a lower rate. Hence, even a short-term observation period was enough to evaluate the documentation rate of neurological findings. To reduce the effect of the day of the week at admission,[19] we selected a seven-day evaluation period.

Characteristics

Patient information, including age, sex, and duration of hospital stay, was retrieved from medical records obtained at the time of each patient's admission.

Physician-related information, including age, sex and specialty, was also retrieved from the database of Tochigi Medical Center.

Outcome measures

One of authors (J.K.) evaluated the medical records of all included patients. The primary outcome was the documentation rate of any neurological finding in ischaemic stroke patients by physicians on each hospital from the day of admission to the seventh day. We also evaluated the documentation rate of neurological findings at discharge (within the 24 hours before discharge). Neurological findings were classified as one of

eight categories (consciousness, mental status, cranial nerves, motor function, sensory function, coordination, reflexes, and gait) based on a previous study.[2] We allowed any documentation of neurological findings regardless of the quality of the examination. However, some documentations, such as "no change in neurological findings" and "no change", were not allowed because they often lacked information regarding which neurological findings were not different and to the extent of the examination. Documentation such as "no change for right hemiplegia" was allowed though it was low quality because it lacked the quantity of neurological findings. Furthermore, documentation of only a total score on the National Institute of Health Stroke Scale (NIHSS) was not allowed, although documentation of the detailed contents of NIHSS was allowed. Documentation of neurological findings by health care providers, including physicians, other than the principal physician was excluded because we sought to evaluate only documentation by a single principal physician.

Statistical analysis

We did not formally calculate sample size because the primary objective was to define the characteristics of neurological documentations by physicians in ischaemic patients. However, we expected a dramatic reduction in the documentation of

neurological findings and therefore selected 10 patients per physician. Assuming that the documentation rate of any neurological finding would be 95% on admission and lower than 40% after the second hospital day, approximately 10 patients per physicians was needed to achieve a significance level of 0.05 with a power of 0.8. To minimize the effect on outcomes of a few physicians caring for many patients, only up to 10 patients per physician were included.

The baseline and demographic characteristics of patients and physicians were summarized using standard descriptive summaries. For the primary objective, we determined the documentation rate of any neurological finding in ischaemic stroke patients on each hospital day. For outcomes on each hospital day, 95% confidence intervals (CIs) were calculated. For the secondary objective, to evaluate the difference in the documentation rate of neurological findings on each hospital day between internists and neurosurgeons, we used Fisher's exact test. These analyses were performed using the Excel statistical software package version 2.11 (Bellcurve for Excel; Social Survey Research Information Co., Ltd., Tokyo, Japan), and the level of significance was set at 5%.

Patient involvement

No patients were involved in determining the research question or outcome measures nor were they involved in developing plans to design or implement the study.

No patients were asked for advice during the interpretation or writing up of the results.

There are no plans to disseminate the results of this research to study participants or the relevant patient community.

RESULTS

We identified 474 consecutive acute ischaemic stroke patients who were cared for by 29 physicians during the study period. Forty-six patients (9.7%), including nine patients who had died, were excluded due to discharge before the seventh hospital stay. Of the remaining 428 patients, 172 who were cared for by 27 physicians (19 internists and 8 neurosurgeons) met our inclusion criteria. Among these 172 patients, 105 were discharged to home, 40 to rehabilitation facilities, and 27 to other hospitals or long-term care facilities. The baseline characteristics of the patients and physicians are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of patients with acute ischemic stroke and physicians. Values are shown as numbers (percentages) unless stated otherwise.

	Total	Neurosurgery	Internal Medicine
Physicians, n = 27			
Mean (SD) age (years)	35.5 (7.8)	41.9 (11.0)	32.8 (3.8)
Men	22 (81.5)	7 (87.5)	15 (78.9)
Mean (SD) experience of doctor (years)	8.5 (7.5)	14 (10.9)	6.2 (3.3)
Patients, $n = 172$			
Mean (SD) age (years)	75.1 (11.5)	74.9 (11.6)	75.3 (11.5)
Men	93 (54.1)	38 (55.1)	55 (53.4)
Admission day of week			
Weekday	155 (90.1)	63 (91.3)	92 (89.3)
Weekend	17 (9.9)	6 (8.7)	11 (10.7)
Mean (SD) length of hospital stay (days)	27.1 (18.5)	25.3 (19.0)	28.4 (18.1)

Figure 1 shows the temporal changes in the documentation rate of any neurological finding in all patients according to the specialty of their principal physician. The documentation rate of any neurological finding was 94% (95% CI 91 to 98) at admission and 58% (95% CI 50 to 65) on day 2. However, the average documentation rate of any neurological finding from the third to seventh day was lower than 40%. Furthermore, the documentation rate was only 14% within 24 hours of discharge. The documentation rate of any neurological finding was significantly lower in the neurosurgeon-treated group than in the internal medicine-treated group on each hospital day but not at discharge.

Among the eight neurological finding categories, motor function was the most frequently documented during the initial seven hospital days (Table 2). Mental status,

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209	reflexes and gait	were documented	in fewer	than 50% of	all patients	during the same

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209	reflexes and g	ait were docu	ımented in fe	wer than 50%	% of all patier	nts during the	same	
210	period. Furthe	rmore, after t	the third hosp	oital day, thes	e three comp	onents were		Prote
211	documented in	n fewer than	10% of all pa	tients. At dis	charge, all ca	tegories of		Protected by copyright, including for uses
212	neurological f	indings were	documented	in fewer than	n 10% of all p	oatients.		соругід
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214	Table 2. Temp	ooral changes	in the docur	nentation rate	es of 8 catego	ries of neuro	logical	of Buipr
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	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	On O o o
ny neurological	94 (91 to 98)	58 (50 to 65)	35 (28 to 43)	40 (33 to 48)	32 (25 to 39)	30 (23 to 37)	23 (16 to 29)	13 (8 to B 2)
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evel of	80 (74 to 86)	23 (16 to 29)	17 (11 to 23)	13 (8 to 19)	13 (8 to 19)	12 (7 to 16)	8 (4 to 12)	5 (1 to 8].
onsciousness								ing,
lental status	46 (38 to 53)	12 (7 to 17)	9 (5 to 14)	5 (1 to 8)	6 (3 to 10)	6 (3 to 10)	4 (1 to 7)	3 (1 to 🕰
ranial nerves	84 (79 to 90)	35 (28 to 43)	19 (13 to 24)	22 (15 to 28)	15 (9 to 20)	13 (8 to 19)	10 (5 to 14)	6 (2 to 🕞
lotor function	92 (88 to 96)	45 (38 to 53)	28 (21 to 35)	31 (24 to 38)	22 (16 to 28)	22 (15 to 28)	16 (10 to 21)	7 (3 to 頃)
ensory function	58 (51 to 66)	17 (12 to 23)	12 (7 to 17)	10 (6 to 15)	5 (2 to 9)	7 (3 to 11)	7 (3 to 11)	2 (0 to 49
oordination	51 (44 to 59)	13 (8 to 19)	9 (4 to 13)	6 (2 to 9)	5 (1 to 8)	3 (0 to 5)	5 (1 to 8)	3 (0 to §
eflex	45 (37 to 52)	5 (1 to 8)	4 (1 to 7)	2 (0 to 4)	2 (0 to 5)	2 (0 to 5)	1 (-1 to 2)	1 (-1 to 👿
ait	17 (11 to 23)	5 (1 to 8)	3 (0 to 5)	4 (1 to 7)	4 (1 to 7)	4 (1 to 6)	2 (0 to 4)	3 (0 to 💆
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DISCUSSION

In this study, the documentation rate of neurological findings by principal physicians decreased to lower than 50% after the third hospital day during stroke care. Furthermore, the documentation of mental status, reflexes and gait was often omitted by principal physicians during routine stroke care, and the documentation rate of these three categories was extremely low after the third day. These results indicate that physician interest in neurological findings in stroke patients dramatically decreases after the third hospital day. Among 8 categories of neurological findings, motor function was the most frequently documented in this study, is consistent with the results of previous studies.[20-22] Mental status and gait were documented less frequently, as the stroke textbook describes that these important neurological assessments are unfortunately often omitted in routine care. [7] Because cognitive impairment frequently occurs in stroke patients[23] and can be effectively treated with rehabilitation, [24, 25] the low documentation rate of mental status by principal physicians is problematic, although such documentation may not reflect physician awareness. We did not expect that neurological findings would be more frequently

documented in stroke patients in our hospital by internists than by neurosurgeons, and

this result should be interpreted cautiously. Unlike in the internal medicine ward,

trained nurses often document NIHSS every day during routine stroke care in the neurosurgery ward of our hospital, and such thorough assessment by other health providers may reduce the need for neurosurgeons to document neurological findings. Furthermore, we did not evaluate the quality or volume of neurological findings. Given their specialty in neurology, neurosurgeons might be more likely than internists to document more detailed and important neurological findings. Further study is needed to investigate whether a physician's specialty affects documentation.

Strengths and weaknesses of the study

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to evaluate temporal changes in the documentation of neurological findings by the same physician in stroke patients. In our hospital, in most cases, a single principal physician cares for each acute ischaemic stroke patient. This allowed us to evaluate temporal changes in medical record documentation by the same physicians.

Its major limitation is that the extent of documentation does not necessarily reflect the interest of the recorder. Furthermore, in stroke patients, it is impossible to distinguish an interest in neurological findings from interest in a prognosis. In addition, the role of clinical documentation has changed in the modern era, and billing and

quality indicators affect medical record documentation. [26-28] However, the documentation of neurological findings during stroke care does not affect medical fees and is not considered a quality indicator in Japan. Therefore, billing for inpatient hospital care, litigation, and quality indicators have few effects on the documentation of neurological findings by physicians. Furthermore, documentation itself is also important. As William Osler said, "observe, record, tabulate, communicate". [27] We were unable to retrospectively learn or perform detailed discussions about brain function without access to the sequential documentation of neurological findings, and physicians who are more interested in neurological findings will more thoroughly document them.

Other limitations include the following. First, this study included a small sample size and was limited to a single centre in which stroke patients are admitted to neurosurgeons or internists. Therefore, our findings may not be applicable to hospitals in which stroke patients are admitted to a neurology ward. However, this practice is common in Japan, [16] and a previous German study also reported that acute ischemic stroke patients were admitted in the internal medicine ward in approximately half of 225 acute care hospitals that participated in a stroke registry. [29] Moreover, given that the number of neurologists is not sufficient worldwide, [30] our findings for

non-neurologists are important. Nonetheless, these findings should be confirmed in other settings, such as neurology ward in other countries. Second, it is uncertain whether a higher rate of documentation of neurological findings is associated with higher clinical skill and better patient outcomes. However, interest in stroke is associated with a more accurate clinical diagnosis of lacunar stroke.[31] Furthermore, poor documentation may mean poor monitoring, which causes a delay in awareness of acute changes in patient status. Therefore, poor documentation may result in worse patient outcomes because a delay in the response to an acute change in patient status is associated with increased mortality.[10] Third, we did not evaluate outcomes between the eighth hospital day and discharge, but given the very low rate of documentation of neurological findings within 24 hours of discharge, we are confident that the documentation of neurological findings continued to gradually decrease after the eighth hospital day. Fourth, we did not individually evaluate the documentation of other important neurological signs, such as neuro-ophthalmic findings and visual problems, [7] and we did not evaluate the thoroughness of medical histories, which is important. As C. Miller Fisher showed, in ischaemic stroke patients, the frequency and importance of transient ischaemic attacks can be determined from a thorough history of prodromal symptoms. [32] Fifth, a single observer evaluation might introduce bias and

affect our results. However, past studies reported good inter-rater reliability in audits of neurological finding documentation.[19, 22] Sixth, the prevalence of inappropriate copying and pasting[33] suggests that we may have overestimated clinically meaningful documentation. Seventh, we regarded two or more documentations per day as one documentation per day. Hence, we might have underestimated documentation by physicians. Finally, although a higher patient volume is associated with a lower rate of documentation of important information, [34] we did not consider the effect of work load on outcomes.

Meaning of findings

Several factors could have caused the observed reduction in the documentation of neurological findings after the third hospital day. First, the low documentation rate of neurological findings after the third hospital day might derive from the initial stable course of stroke patients rather than a loss of physician interest in neurological findings. [20] However, because neurological findings often change day by day in the early course of acute stroke, [35, 36] this possibility seems unlikely. Second, fatigue might occur in the documentation of neurological findings by physicians. If so, a similar phenomenon could occur in the documentation of non-neurological findings in

non-neurological disease. Third, spending more time communicating, such as during neurological examinations of patients, is of utmost importance for learning about neurology and might reduce the documentation of neurological findings after the third hospital day. However, a previous study demonstrated acceptable concordance between documentation in medical records and actual performance during direct observations.[37] Furthermore, in previous studies, time spent communicating with patients and direct patient care were not affected by time spent during medical record documentation.[38, 39] Fourth, participation in annual meetings during conferences and holidays could affect medical record documentation.

neurological findings are more likely to frequently document neurological signs regardless of their fatigue, and the temporal reduction in documentation observed in our study is considered a reflection of loss of physician interest. Nonetheless, further study is needed to determine whether the low documentation rate after the third hospital day is truly due to a lack of physician interest in neurological findings.

Implications for clinical practice

C. Miller Fisher described many syndromes and mechanisms using thorough neurological examinations and observations of stroke patients.[40] One of his significant contributions was an understanding of the relationship between carotid artery disease and ischaemic stroke. Before his work, approximately 55% of ischaemic strokes were thought to be caused by vasospasm.[41] When the first key patient who gave him an initial clue died while he was away for a weekend, the resident on call for the patient did not request an autopsy. When Fisher asked the medical staff why they did not request an autopsy, he was amazed that the resident on call did not consider it necessary. [32] This episode reflects a gap in interest in stroke patients between Fisher and the resident. Unlike Fisher's era, modern imaging tests provide us a more detailed localization of neurological symptoms, especially in stroke patients. Hence, our findings are disappointing even if they truly indicate a rapid loss of post-admission interest in stroke patients by physicians. We propose that now is the time for physicians to relearn about neurology stroke by stroke.[42]

CONCLUSIONS

The documentation rate of neurological findings by physicians in usual stroke care decreased to lower than 50% on the third hospital day and subsequently continued

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344	to decrease. Given the importance of learning and monitoring temporal changes in
345	neurological symptoms in stroke patients, further study is needed to determine whether
346	the low documentation rate after the third hospital day was caused by a lack of
347	physician interest in neurological findings or other factors.
348	
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351	
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354	manuscript. All authors gave final approval for the submission of this revised version
355	for consideration for publication.
356	
357	Competing interests: All authors have completed the ICMJE unified disclosure from
358	competing interest form at www.icmje.org/coi_disclosure.pdf (available on request from
359	the corresponding author). All authors declare they have no financial relationships with
360	any organisations that might have an interest in the submitted work and no other

relationships or activities that could appear to have influenced the submitted work.

362	
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364	the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.
365	
366	Ethics approval: This study was approved by the Medical Ethical Committee of
367	Tochigi Medical Center (protocol No. 29-14) and was performed in accordance with the
368	Declaration of Helsinki. This study was also conducted in accordance with the Ethical
369	Guidelines for Epidemiological Research in Japan. We were not required to obtain
370	individual informed consent because we used de-identified data obtained from medical
371	records and did not contact the patients. According to Japanese Ethical Guidelines, we
372	did display a poster in the waiting room of the hospital to provide information about the
373	collection and use of data for this study and the protection of personal information.
374	
375	Data sharing: Data sharing is not applicable because we did not receive informed
376	consent for data sharing from the participants. The datasets generated and analysed
377	during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable
378	request.

380	Transparency: The lead author (JK) affirms that this revised manuscript is an honest,
381	accurate, and transparent account of the study being reported, that no important aspects
382	of the study have been omitted, and that any discrepancies from the study originally
383	planned have been explained.

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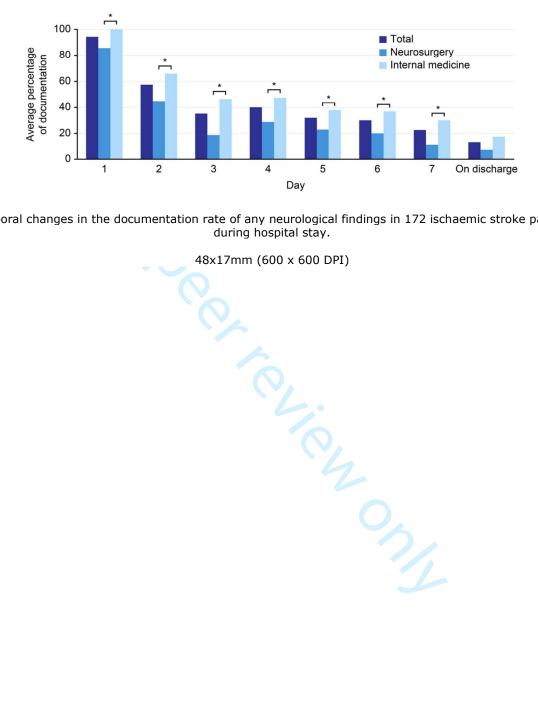
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Fig 1. Temporal changes in the documentation rate of any neurological findings in 172 ischaemic stroke patients during hospital stay.

*p-value < 0.05





Temporal changes in the documentation rate of any neurological findings in 172 ischaemic stroke patients

STROBE (Strengthening The Reporting of OBservational Studies in Epidemiology) Checklist

A checklist of items that should be included in reports of observational studies. You must report the page number in your manuscript where you consider each of the items listed in this checklist. If you have not included this information, either revise your manuscript accordingly before submitting or note N/A.

Note: An Explanation and Elaboration article discusses each checklist item and gives methodological background and published examples of transparent reporting. The STROBE checklist is best used in conjunction with this article (freely available on the Webber sites of PLoS Medicine at http://www.annals.org/, Annals of Internal Medicine at http://www.annals.org/, and Epidemiology at http://www.annals.org/, Information on the STROBE Initiative is available at www.strobe-statement.org.

Section and Item	Item No.	Recommendation	Reportedion Page Ng.
Title and Abstract	1	(a) Indicate the study's design with a commonly used term in the title or the abstract	, including for
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Methods			eur (
Study Design	4	Present key elements of study design early in the paper	(ABES
Setting	5	Describe the setting, locations, and relevant dates, including periods of recruitment, exposure, follow-up, and data collection	ing, Al tr
Participants	6	(a) Cohort study—Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of selection of participants. Describe methods of follow-up Case-control study—Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of case ascertainment and control selection. Give the rationale for the choice of cases and controls Cross-sectional study—Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of selection of participants (b) Cohort study—For matched studies, give matching criteria and number of exposed and unexposed Case-control study—For matched studies, give matching criteria and the number of controls per case	Al training, and similar technologies.
Variables	7	Clearly define all outcomes, exposures, predictors, potential confounders, and effect modifiers. Give diagnostic criteria, if applicable	

Section and Item	Item No.	Recommendation	Reported on Page No.
Data Sources/ Measurement	8*	For each variable of interest, give sources of data and details of methods of assessment (measurement). Describe comparability of assessment methods if there is more than one group	published
Bias	9	Describe any efforts to address potential sources of bias	, or
Study Size	10	Explain how the study size was arrived at	rotect
Quantitative Variables	11	Explain how quantitative variables were handled in the analyses. If applicable, describe which groupings were chosen and why	Protected by copyright, including for
Statistical Methods	12	(a) Describe all statistical methods, including those used to control for confounding	Protected by copyright, including for
		(b) Describe any methods used to examine subgroups and interactions	ncludin
		(c) Explain how missing data were addressed	g for
		(d) Cohort study—If applicable, explain how loss to follow-up was addressed	Ensuses
		Case-control study—If applicable, explain how matching of cases and controls was addressed	eignemer related to
		Cross-sectional study—If applicable, describe analytical methods taking account of sampling strategy	it Superior
		(e) Describe any sensitivity analyses	eur (A d data
Results			minin
Participants	13*	(a) Report numbers of individuals at each stage of study—eg numbers potentially eligible, examined for eligibility, confirmed eligible, included in the study, completing follow-up, and analysed	g, Al training
		(b) Give reasons for non-participation at each stage	g, and
		(c) Consider use of a flow diagram	simila
Descriptive Data	14*	(a) Give characteristics of study participants (eg demographic, clinical, social) and information on exposures and potential confounders	r technologies
		(b) Indicate number of participants with missing data for each variable of interest	logies
		(c) Cohort study—Summarise follow-up time (eg, average and total amount)	9, 6
Outcome Data	15*	Cohort study—Report numbers of outcome events or summary measures over time	
		Case-control study—Report numbers in each exposure category, or summary measures of exposure	ogies.
		Cross-sectional study—Report numbers of outcome events or summary measures	2

Section and Item	Item No.	Recommendation	Reported Page No
Main Results	16	(a) Give unadjusted estimates and, if applicable, confounder-adjusted estimates	
		and their precision (eg, 95% confidence interval). Make clear which confounders	
		were adjusted for and why they were included	
		(b) Report category boundaries when continuous variables were categorized	3
		(c) If relevant, consider translating estimates of relative risk into absolute risk for a	
		meaningful time period	Cled
Other Analyses	17	Report other analyses done—eg analyses of subgroups and interactions, and	5
		sensitivity analyses) opy
Discussion			ribiecied by copyright, including for uses related
Key Results	18	Summarise key results with reference to study objectives	
	10		
Limitations	19	Discuss limitations of the study, taking into account sources of potential bias or imprecision. Discuss both direction and magnitude of any potential bias	2
		imprecision. Discuss both direction and magnitude of any potential bias	C C C C C C C C C C C C C C C C C C C
Interpretation	20	Give a cautious overall interpretation of results considering objectives, limitations,	0 10
		multiplicity of analyses, results from similar studies, and other relevant evidence	later
Generalisability	21	Discuss the generalisability (external validity) of the study results	
Other Information			عام ک
Funding	22	Give the source of funding and the role of the funders for the present study and, if	<u> </u>
i dildilig	22	applicable, for the original study on which the present article is based	uata I
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^{*}Give information separately for cases and controls in case-control studies and, if applicable, for exposed and unexposed groups cohort and cross-sectional studies.

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