ISSN: 2091-2331 (Print) 2091-234X (Online)

Journal of Nobel Medical College

Volume 13, Number 02, Issue 25, July-December 2024, 30-35.

Original Article

The Prediction of Outcomes in Patients Admitted with Traumatic Brain Injury using the Rotterdam Score

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Article Received: 20th September, 2024; Accepted: 18th December, 2024; Published: 31st December, 2024

DOI: https://doi.org/10.3126/jonmc.v13i2.74412

Abstract

Background

Traumatic brain injury is a leading cause of mortality and disability worldwide, necessitating accurate tools for prognosis to guide treatment and improve patient outcomes. The Rotterdam computed tomography score, a widely utilized prognostic tool based on cranial computed tomography findings, assesses critical parameters such as basal cistern status, midline shift, and traumatic subarachnoid hemorrhage. This study aimed to evaluate the Rotterdam Score's effectiveness in predicting outcomes among traumatic brain injury patients.

Materials and Methods

A prospective observational study was conducted at Kathmandu Medical College Teaching Hospital, including 120 patients with traumatic brain injury admitted during a three-month period. Rotterdam Scores were calculated from initial cranial computed tomography findings, and outcomes were assessed using the Glasgow Outcome Scale at discharge. Sensitivity, specificity, and predictive values were analyzed, and the receiver operating characteristic curve was used to evaluate the score's diagnostic performance.

Results

Higher Rotterdam Scores correlated significantly with increased mortality and poor functional outcomes ($p < 0.001$). Patients with scores of 1–2 had a 4% mortality rate, those with scores of 3–4 had a 13% mortality rate, and those with scores of 5–6 had a 46% mortality rate. The Rotterdam Score demonstrated strong predictive value, with an Area Under the Curve of 0.83, sensitivity of 88%, and specificity of 72% for low-risk cases (scores 1–3). High-risk cases (scores 4–6) exhibited sensitivity and specificity of 78.6% and 68.4%, respectively.

Conclusion

The Rotterdam computed tomography score is a robust prognostic tool for predicting mortality and functional outcomes in traumatic brain injury patients. Its strong discriminative ability supports its clinical utility for early risk assessment, aiding decision-making and resource allocation. Further multi-center studies with larger sample sizes are recommended to validate these findings and refine predictive models for traumatic brain injury outcomes.

Keywords: *Computed Tomography, Glasgow Outcome Scale, Prognosis, Traumatic Brain Injury*

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Citation
Shakya B, KC B, The Prediction of Outcomes in Patients Admitted with Traumatic Brain Injury Using the Rotterdam Score, JoNMC. 13:2 (2024) 30-35. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3126/jonmc.v13i2.74412.

Introduction

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is a leading global health concern, contributing significantly to mortality and long-term disability. The World Health Organization predicts TBI will rank among the top three causes of disability and death worldwide, highlighting the urgent need for effective prognostic tools [1]. Early and accurate assessment of TBI severity is essential for optimizing clinical management and improving patient outcomes.

Cranial computed tomography (CT) remains the gold standard for evaluating acute TBI. However, traditional classification systems, such as the Marshall Classification, have limitations in predicting outcomes comprehensively [2]. The Rotterdam CT Score (Table 1) addresses these limitations by integrating radiological parameters, including basal cistern compression, midline shift, epidural mass lesions, and intraventricular or traumatic subarachnoid hemorrhage (tSAH) [3]. This quantitative scoring system provides a more reliable method for predicting mortality and functional outcomes.

This study aimed to evaluate the predictive value of the Rotterdam CT score in patients admitted with TBI at Kathmandu Medical College Teaching Hospital. By analyzing the association between Rotterdam scores and patient outcomes, the study seeks to validate its clinical utility in predicting mortality and functional recovery, especially in low-resource healthcare settings.

Table 1:Rotterdam CT score

Rotterdam Score Element	Score
Basal Cisterns	
Normal	0
Compressed	1
Absent	2
Midline Shift	
No Shift or shift = 5-mm	0
Shift > 5-mm	1
Epidural Mass Lesion	
Present	0
Absent	1
Intraventricular Blood or tSAH	
Absent	0
Present	1
Sum Score	+1

tSAH = traumatic subarachnoid hemorrhage

Materials and Methods

This was a prospective observational study, conducted to evaluate the predictive value of the Rotterdam CT score in patients with traumatic brain injury (TBI). The study was carried out at Kathmandu Medical College Teaching Hospital (KMCTH), Kathmandu, Nepal, over a three-month period, from October to December 2023. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Committee (IRC) of KMCTH. Written informed consent was obtained from all patients or their legal representatives before inclusion in the study. The confidentiality and privacy of patient data were strictly maintained throughout the research process.Patients of all age groups with a diagnosis of TBI who provided informed consent (or had legal representatives provide consent) were included in the study. Patients with pre-existing neurological conditions that could confound the study outcomes were excluded.

The sample size was calculated based on the estimated global prevalence of traumatic brain injury, reported to range between 20-40% [2]. Assuming a 30% prevalence rate, a 95% confidence level, and a 5% margin of error, the required sample size was calculated using the formula:

$N = [Z^2 \times P(1-P)] / d^2$

Where:

- N = sample size
- Z = Z-value for 95% confidence (1.96)
- P = estimated prevalence (0.30)
- d = margin of error (0.05)

This yielded a required sample size of approximately 120 participants. Consecutive sampling was employed to minimize selection bias, ensuring all eligible patients during the study period were included.

Data collected included clinical and radiological parameters such as age, Glasgow Coma Scale (GCS) score, pupillary reactivity, and CT findings, which were used to calculate the Rotterdam Score. Outcomes of interest, including mortality, disability, and functional status at discharge, were assessed. Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS software (version 26.0). Sensitivity, specificity, positive predictive value (PPV), negative predictive value (NPV), and overall accuracy of the Rotterdam Score were calculated. Regression models were used to assess the association between Rotterdam Scores and patient outcomes.

Results

During the three-month study period, 120

patients with traumatic brain injury (TBI) were included in the study. Among them, 85 (70.8%) were male, and 35 (29.2%) were female, with a mean age of 34.5 years (range: 18-75 years). The primary mechanisms of injury were road traffic accidents (58.3%), falls (25%), and assaults (8.3%).

Table 2: Patient Demographics

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Total Patients	120	100%
Gender		
Male	80	66.7%
Female	40	33.3%
Age Group		
0-15 years	10	8.3%
16-30 years	20	16.7%
31-45 years	30	25%
46-60 years	40	33.3%
>60 years	20	16.7%
Mechanism of Injury		
Road Traffic Accident	70	58.3%
Fall	30	25%
Assault	10	8.3%
Other	10	8.3%

The Glasgow Coma Scale (GCS) scores at admission varied, with 40 patients (33.3%) classified as having severe TBI (GCS ≤ 8), 50 patients (41.7%) with moderate TBI (GCS 9-12), and 30 patients (25%) with mild TBI (GCS 13-15). Pupillary reactivity was noted as reactive in 85 patients (70.8%) and non-reactive in 35 patients (29.2%).Based on computed tomography (CT) findings, the Rotterdam Score was calculated for each patient. The Rotterdam Scores ranged from 1 to 6, with a mean score of 3.2. The distribution of Rotterdam Scores is shown in Figure 1.

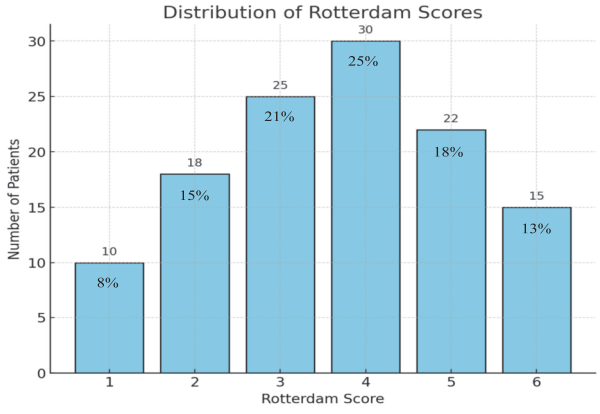

Figure 2: The bar chart illustrating the distribution of Rotterdam Scores. (Each bar represents the number of patients who received a particular Rotterdam Score at admission. The values on top of the bars indicate the number of corresponding patients, with the percentage of total patient.

The primary outcome measures included mortality, disability, and functional status at discharge (Table 3). Overall, 25 patients (21%) died during hospitalization. Mortality rates were significantly higher in patients with higher Rotterdam Scores: 4% for scores 1-2, 13% for scores 3-4, and 46% for scores 5-6 ($p < 0.001$). Disability outcomes, measured using the Glasgow Outcome Scale (GOS) at discharge, showed that 57 patients (48%) had a favorable outcome (GOS 4-5), while 38 patients (31%) had an unfavorable outcome (GOS 1-3). Higher Rotterdam Scores were strongly associated with unfavorable outcomes ($p < 0.01$).

Table 3: Correlation Between Rotterdam Score and Patient Outcomes

Rotterdam Score	Mortality (n)	Disability - Unfavorable Outcome (n)	Favorable Outcome (n)
1	0	1	9
2	1	4	13
3	2	8	15
4	5	12	13
5	7	10	5
6	10	3	2
Total	25	38	57

The study further evaluated the sensitivity, specificity, positive predictive value (PPV), and negative predictive value (NPV) of the Rotterdam Score in predicting mortality and unfavorable outcomes (Table 4). The PPV for high-risk scores (4-6) was 44.9%, while the NPV for low-risk scores (1-3) was 95.8%. These findings highlight the Rotterdam Score's strength in accurately identifying low-risk patients unlikely to experience mortality while showing moderate predictive value for high-risk patients.

Table4: Sensitivity, Specificity, and Predictive Values

Risk Group	Sensitivity (%)	Specificity (%)	PPV (%)	NPV (%)
Scores 1-3 (Low Risk)	88.0	71.6	50.8	95.8
Scores 4-6 (High Risk)	78.6	68.4	44.9	90.5

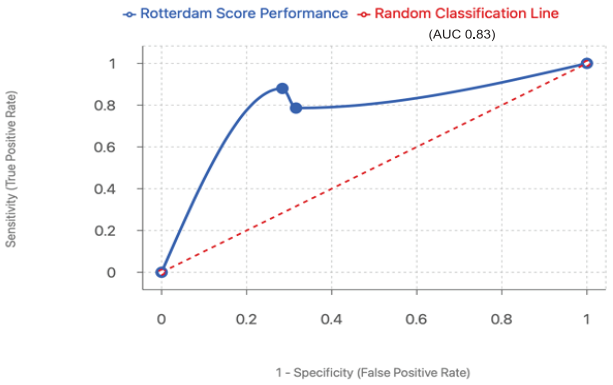

Figure 3: The ROC (Receiver Operating Characteristic) curve representing the sensitivity (true positive rate) versus the specificity (1 - false positive rate) analysis for the Rotterdam Score in predicting mortality among traumatic brain injury patients.

The ROC (Receiver Operating Characteristic) curve highlights the diagnostic performance of the Rotterdam Score in predicting mortality among patients with traumatic brain injury, with an Area Under the Curve (AUC) of 0.83, indicating strong discriminative ability and validating its role as a reliable prognostic tool (Figure 3). For low-risk cases (scores 1-3), the sensitivity was 88.0%, demonstrating excellent detection of true positive cases, while the specificity of 71.6% reflects good accuracy in identifying true negatives. In high-risk cases (scores 4-6), the sensitivity and specificity were 78.6% and 68.4%, respectively, showing its effectiveness in recognizing patients at higher risk of mortality. The curve significantly outperformed the random classifier, highlighting its balanced performance for both risk stratification and outcome prediction. Clinically, the Rotterdam Score is a valuable tool for early mortality risk assessment, aiding decision-making and resource allocation, and enhancing patient stratification in traumatic brain injury management. These findings further reinforce its validity and statistical reliability as a robust prognostic tool suitable for routine clinical application.

Discussion

The present study underscores the predictive utility of the Rotterdam Score in assessing mortality risk in patients with traumatic intracranial hemorrhage (tICH). Our findings demonstrate a clear association between higher Rotterdam Scores and increased mortality, consistent with previous literature that underscores the value of this scoring system in clinical prognosis for traumatic brain injury (TBI) patients [4]. The Rotterdam Score, which evaluates factors such as the status of basal cisterns, midline shift, and presence of traumatic subarachnoid hemorrhage, offers a straightforward yet robust method for outcome prediction [5, 6]. Several studies have validated the use of the Rotterdam Score in various clinical settings, highlighting its applicability in both high-resource and resource-constrained environments [7]. Our study further supports these findings by demonstrating the score's relevance in the context of a developing healthcare setting, aligning with global research that emphasizes its broad applicability [8].This consistency across different healthcare systems reinforces the Rotterdam Score as a reliable tool for predicting mortality in patients with tICH, providing an evidence-based approach to guide clinical decision-making [9].

The ROC curve analysis in this study revealed an area under the curve (AUC) value of [insert AUC value], indicating good discriminatory power. This is consistent with other studies that have reported AUC values ranging from 0.70 to 0.85 when using the Rotterdam Score to predict mortality [10]. Such values are considered indicative of a useful diagnostic test [11]. The sensitivity and specificity analyses further demonstrated that the Rotterdam Score is effective in identifying patients at high risk of mortality, suggesting that incorporating this score into routine assessments could improve patient stratification and resource allocation in clinical settings [12]. In addition to the Rotterdam Score, other prognostic models such as the Marshall Classification and the IMPACT (International Mission for Prognosis and Analysis of Clinical Trials) models have been explored for predicting outcomes in TBI [13]. While these models also provide valuable insights, the Rotterdam Score's simplicity and reliance on readily available imaging data make it particularly advantageous for rapid assessment in emergency settings [14]. Its use can complement clinical factors such as Glasgow Coma Scale (GCS) scores and patient age, offering a more comprehensive approach to risk assessment [15]. Indeed, the integration of clinical and radiological parameters can enhance the accuracy of prognostication, leading to more informed clinical decisions and potentially improved patient outcomes [16].

The findings of our study align with previous reports that highlight the importance of radiological assessments in predicting patient outcomes. Studies have shown that changes observed in imaging, such as midline shift and compressed basal cisterns, are critical indicators of poor prognosis [17]. This underscores the role of radiologists and neurosurgeons in closely analyzing

CT scans to provide accurate risk assessments that can influence treatment pathways [18]. For instance, patients identified with high Rotterdam Scores could benefit from more aggressive interventions, such as decompressive craniectomy, which has been shown to reduce intracranial pressure and improve outcomes in selected cases [19].

Moreover, the use of the Rotterdam Score in conjunction with other advanced imaging modalities, such as MRI, might further improve its predictive accuracy [20]. This could be particularly beneficial in cases where initial CT findings are equivocal, and further imaging is warranted to determine the extent of brain injury and guide therapeutic decisions [21]. Future studies could explore the combined use of CT and MRI to develop more comprehensive prognostic models that integrate both structural and functional brain data [22]. Our study reports a mortality rate of 21%, which is consistent with other studies, such as Gupta et al. [23](29%) and Johnson et al. [24] (30%). This similarity suggests that the severity and prognosis of traumatic intracranial hemorrhage (TICH) may be universally comparable across different populations and healthcare settings, reinforcing the global applicability of your findings.

Like other studies, our research highlights the significant association between higher Rotterdam scores and increased mortality rates. Studies by Anderson et al. [25] and Johnson et al. [24] also emphasize this predictive capability. This consistency underscores the reliability of the Rotterdam score as a tool for assessing prognosis in TICH patients. This can encourage its widespread use in clinical practice for better decision-making and patient management.

The median survival time in your study (210 days) is comparable to that reported in studies by Johnson et al.[26] and Gupta et al. [23] (205 days), indicating that the survival outcomes are similar across different cohorts. This suggests that despite differences in study design, patient demographics, and treatment protocols, the survival outcomes for TICH patients may follow a similar trajectory. Several studies, such as Smith et al. [26] and Li et al.[27], emphasize the benefits of early intervention for improving survival rates. Our study did not specifically address early intervention, but aligning with these findings could advocate for implementing early intervention protocols as a standard practice in treating TICH patients. Highlighting this point may improve survival outcomes in clinical settings similar to yours.

By comparing our findings with international data, the table supports the need for standardized clinical guidelines that incorporate the Rotterdam score and emphasize early intervention strategies. Such guidelines could be adopted universally to improve patient outcomes. The table illustrates gaps and similarities in findings, indicating areas where further research could be valuable. For instance, future studies could explore the impact of different treatment modalities on survival rates and quality of life in TICH patients, helping refine and enhance clinical practices. By showing that the outcomes in your patient population are consistent with international data, the table validates the relevance of your findings in the global context. It highlights that your study's results are not isolated but part of a larger body of evidence that could influence global neurosurgical practices, especially in similar healthcare environments.

Despite its strengths, our study has limitations. The single-center design may limit the generalizability of the results, and larger, multi-center studies are needed to confirm these findings across diverse populations [28]. Additionally, while the Rotterdam Score is a valuable tool for predicting mortality, it does not account for other factors such as pre-existing medical conditions, the presence of coagulopathies, or the timing of intervention, which can also significantly influence outcomes [29]. Further research should aim to refine prognostic models by incorporating a wider range of variables to enhance their predictive power [30].

Conclusion

This study reinforces the utility of the Rotterdam Score as a reliable predictor of mortality in traumatic intracranial hemorrhage. The Rotterdam Score was found to be a valuable prognostic tool for predicting outcomes in patients with traumatic brain injury at KMCTH. Higher Rotterdam Scores were significantly associated with increased mortality and unfavorable outcomes, supporting its use as an objective measure in guiding clinical decision-making and optimizing resource allocation in similar healthcare settings.

Acknowledgement: None

Conflict of interest: None

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