

Motor Evoked Potentials Study of the Facilitation and Reciprocal Inhibition Induced by Motor Imagination in the Thumb Muscles

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Purpose: MEPs elicited by transcranial magnetic stimulations of the motor cortex are facilitated by voluntary muscle contraction. We evaluated the effects of the imagination of the movements on latencies of MEPs and reciprocal inhibition by using transcranial magnetic stimulations.

Methods: Twenty two healthy volunteers (eight men and fourteen women) were studied. TMSs were delivered at rest and during imagining abducting or adducting right thumb. A stimulator with a round coil and a fixed intensity of 80% of maximum was used to evoke MEPs. MEPs were evoked by magnetic stimulations over the scalp and cervical spine (C7-T1), and central motor conduction times (CMCT) were calculated by subtracting the latency of compound muscle action potentials (CMAPs) obtained by stimulating over the cervical spine from that obtained by stimulating over the scalp. The motor evoked potentials were recorded from right abductor pollicis brevis muscle (APB) and adductor pollicis muscle (AP) simultaneously.

Results: Imagination of abduction resulted in a shortened latency of the CMAPs in APB, and a prolonged latency in AP. Imagination of adduction resulted in a shortened latency in AP, and a prolonged latency in APB. But the imagination caused no significant change in the latency of CMAPs elicited by stimulation over cervical spine. Therefore, the changes of the CMCTs account for these latency changes with imagination of movement. With the imagination of abduction, there are significant reduction of the CMCT's in APB (10.8%) and prolongation in AP (5.8%). On the other hand, with the imagination of adduction, prolongation of the CMCT's in APB (7.3%) and reduction in AP (5.9%) were observed.

Conclusion: These findings indicate that imagination of muscle contraction increases the excitability of the human corticospinal system. Reciprocal inhibition may be accountable for the prolonged latency in the antagonist muscle.

Key Words: Motor imagination, Reciprocal inhibition, Transcranial magnetic stimulation, Central motor conduction time

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(sweep speed) 10 msec

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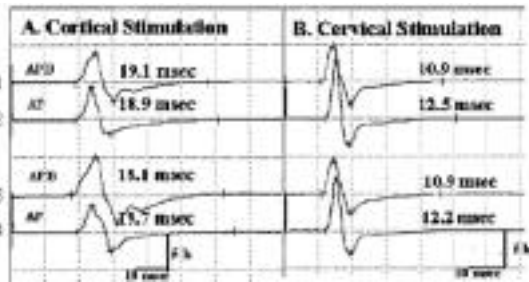


Figure 1. MEP at rest and during thinking about thumb abduction. MEP: motor evoke potentials, APB: abductor pollicis brevis muscle, AP: adductor pollicis muscle, 1 and 2: at rest, 3 and 4: thinking about thumb abduction.

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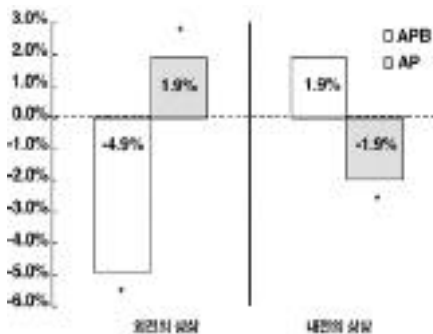


Figure 2. Latency change ratio at rest and during thinking about thumb movement. *: p<0.05 using Mann-Whitney U-test, %: (latencies during thinking-latencies at rest)/latencies at rest, APB: abductor pollicis brevis muscle, AP: adductor pollicis muscle.

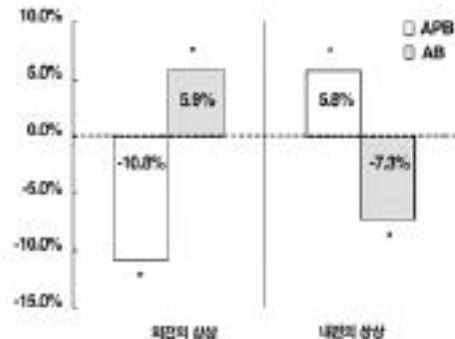


Figure 3. Central motor conduction time change ratio at rest and during thinking about thumb movement. *: p<0.05 using Mann-Whitney U-test, %: (CMCT during thinking - CMCT at rest)/CMCT at rest, APB: abductor pollicis brevis muscle, AP: adductor pollicis muscle.

20.4 msec 19.4 msec
 (p<0.05)
 20.3 msec 20.7 msec (p<0.05) (Fig. 2).

2) 19.9 msec
 7
 1 가 가 20.8msec (p<0.05) (Fig. 2).
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3) (central motor conduction time, (Table 1, 2).
 CMCT)
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 CMCT 8.8 msec 7.9 msec
 (p<0.05) CMCT 8.3
 msec 8.8 msec (p<0.05)(Fig. 3).
 가 7.7
 msec (7.3%) (p<0.05), 9.3
 msec (5.8%) (p<0.05)(Fig. 3).

3.
 ±
 SPSS 10.0 Mann -
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 CMAP , , MEP
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 (Fig. 1) MEP

Table 2. MEP latencies at rest and during thinking about thumb adduction on cervical stimulation

Recording site	MEP latency(msec)		Change ratio(%) *
	At rest	Thinking adduction	
abductor pollicis brevis muscle	11.5 ± 0.8	11.5 ± 0.7	-1.0 ± 2.7
adductor pollicis muscle	12.0 ± 1.0	12.2 ± 0.9	2.3 ± 5.8

* (latencies during thinking - latencies at rest)/latencies at rest

Table 1. MEP latencies at rest and during thinking about thumb abduction on cervical stimulation

Recording site	MEP latency(msec)		Change ratio(%) *
	At rest	Thinking abduction	
abductor pollicis brevis muscle	11.5 ± 0.8	11.5 ± 0.9	-0.5 ± 2.4
adductor pollicis muscle	12.0 ± 1.0	11.9 ± 0.9	-0.6 ± 3.1

* (latencies during thinking - latencies at rest)/latencies at rest

(central motor conduction time, CMCT)

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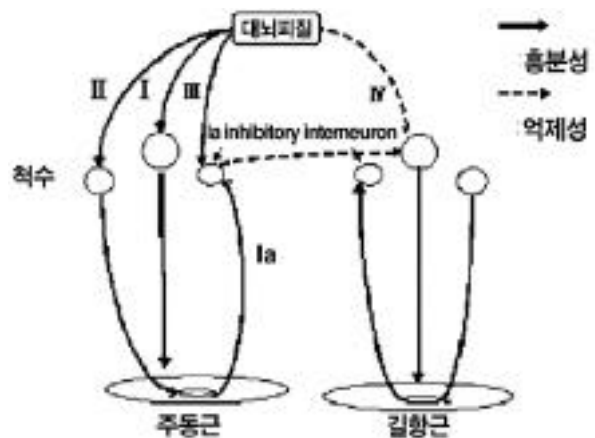


Figure 4. Schematic illustration of the proposed reciprocal inhibition pathways during voluntary contraction and thinking about movement.

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