



In Vivo Molecular Profiling of Human Glioma

Cross-Sectional Observational Study Using Dynamic Susceptibility Contrast Magnetic Resonance Perfusion Imaging

Johann-Martin Hempel¹ · Jens Schittenhelm² · Uwe Klose¹ · Benjamin Bender¹ · Georg Bier¹ · Marco Skardelly³ · Ghazaleh Tabatabai⁴ · Salvador Castaneda Vega⁵ · Ulrike Ernemann¹ · Cornelia Brendle¹

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Abstract

Purpose To assess the diagnostic performance of dynamic susceptibility contrast perfusion magnetic resonance perfusion imaging (DSC-MRI) for in vivo human glioma molecular profiling.

Methods In this study 100 patients with histopathologically confirmed glioma who provided written informed consent were retrospectively assessed between January 2016 and February 2017 in two prospective trials that were approved by the local institutional review board. Cerebral blood volume (CBV) measurements from DSC-MRI were assessed, and histogram parameters of relative CBV (rCBV) results were compared among World Health Organization (WHO) 2016 based histological findings and molecular characteristics. A classification and regression tree (CART) algorithm with 10-fold cross-validation was used to calculate the diagnostic accuracy.

Results The 90th percentile (C90) of rCBV was significantly lower in patients with the isocitrate dehydrogenase 1/2 (IDH1/2) mutation (2.86 ± 1.21 ; $p < 0.001$) and loss of alpha-thalassemia mental retardation syndrome X-linked (ATRX) expression (2.23 ± 0.91 ; $p < 0.001$) than in those with the IDH1/2 wild type (4.78 ± 2.34) and maintained ATRX expression (4.30 ± 2.02). The standard deviation (SD) of rCBV was significantly higher in glioblastoma (GBM) with methylated O6-methylguanine DNA methyltransferase (MGMT; 1.99 ± 0.73 ; $p = 0.001$) than in those with unmethylated MGMT (1.20 ± 0.45). In CART analysis, rCBV predicted the molecular subgroup in 76.3% of astroglial tumors; however, the diagnostic performance was reduced to 48.1% by including oligodendrogliomas with chromosome 1p/19q co-deletion in the analysis due to substantial overlap of rCBV values between OD_{1p/19q-LOH} and IDH_{wt} GBM.

Conclusion The DSC-MRI procedure may provide insight into the IDH1/2 mutation and ATRX expression status and MGMT methylation profile of diffuse glioma; however, taking integrated oligodendroglioma into account limits the diagnostic performance of rCBV in non-invasively predicting the molecular subtype.

Keywords Glioma · Neoplasm grading · Perfusion imaging · Cerebral blood volume · Isocitrate dehydrogenase

Introduction

The recently updated World Health Organization classification (revised 4th edition) of tumors of the central nervous system (2016 CNS WHO) combines both histopathological

and molecular features into an integrated diagnosis [1]. The molecular stratification is essential for estimating the individual prognosis [2, 3]. The relevant molecular characteristics are isocitrate dehydrogenase (IDH) 1/2 mutation status and chromosome 1p/19q loss of heterozygosity (LOH). They are complemented by alpha-thalassemia/mental retardation syndrome X-linked (ATRX), which again is predictive for associated IDH or H3F3A hotspot mutations [4]. The ATRX status itself confers a prognostic potential in diffuse gliomas [5]. The loss of ATRX expression is mostly induced by truncating ATRX mutations, resulting in an alternative lengthening of telomeres (ALT) phenotype [6, 7]. Also, O6-methylguanine DNA methyltransferase (MGMT)

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✉ Johann-Martin Hempel
johann-martin.hempel@uni-tuebingen.de

Extended author information available on the last page of the article

can be regarded as an independent prognostic factor in diffuse glioma [7–9].

Dynamic susceptibility-weighted magnetic resonance perfusion imaging (DSC-MRI) is an established imaging method that allows estimation of tumor tissue perfusion based on the loss of signal in T2*-weighted images after contrast agent bolus administration [10]. Cerebral blood volume (CBV) results from DSC-MRI reflect the vascular proliferation in tumors [11, 12] and has been shown to correlate with the WHO 2007-based histology and tumor grade [11, 13, 14]; however, several studies have shown discrepant results and there is substantial overlap for CBV-based tumor grading based on previous 2007 WHO classification [15–17]. In the context of the integrated diagnostic approach of the 2016 CNS WHO [1], normalized relative CBV (rCBV) has shown potential for differentiating between IDH-mutant and IDH wild type astrocytomas [18, 19]; however, its value has not yet been sufficiently investigated in the context of molecular stratification according to the newly launched integrated approach of 2016 CNS WHO. Therefore, this study aimed to assess the diagnostic performance of DSC-MRI for stratifying glioma according to the relevant prognostic molecular characteristics including IDH1/2 mutation, ATRX expression, chromosome 1p/19q LOH, and MGMT promoter methylation.

Material and Methods

Study Design and Ethics

The study was a retrospective cross-sectional analysis of prospective data acquired in two single-center, non-randomized trials, which were approved by the local institutional review board at our university hospital. The trials were conducted based on the principles of the International Conference on Harmonization: Good Clinical Practice guidelines, and according to the 2013 revised version of the Declaration of Helsinki. All patients provided written informed consent for the imaging surveys and subsequent use of clinical data for research and scientific purposes.

Patient Selection and Stratification

The study group was selected from 145 consecutive patients comprising 76 males and 69 females with a mean age of 50.4 ± 14.7 years (range, 20–81 years). Fig. 1 demonstrates the patient selection and dichotomization in a flow diagram and includes all inclusion and exclusion criteria. All studies were completed within 2 weeks of diagnosis and before initiating treatment. None of the patients received steroid treatment at the time of imaging. The final study group included 100 patients with a mean age of 51.4 ± 15.2 years

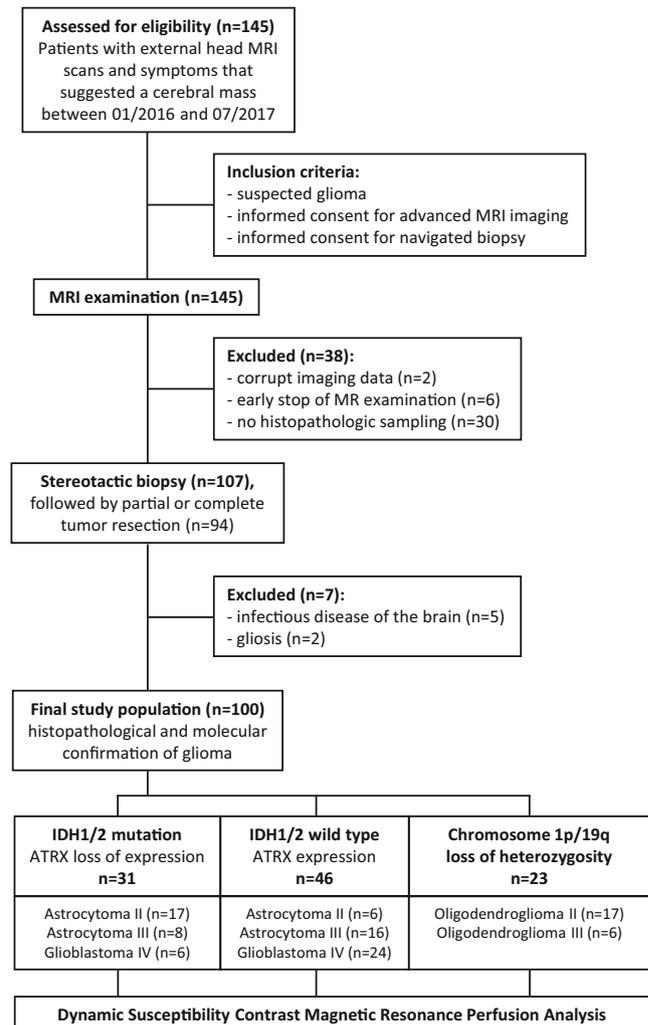


Fig. 1 Patient flow diagram

and comprised 55 men (55%) and 45 women (45%). The final diagnosis was based on histological examinations of specimens obtained by navigated biopsy in all patients followed by partial or complete tumor resection in 94 patients (94%).

The IDH mutation status was assessed by immunohistochemistry with a mutation-specific IDH1 R132H antibody [20, 21]. This was followed by Sanger sequencing of the negative samples to detect any non-canonical IDH1/2 mutations [22]. Nuclear ATRX status in tumor cells was determined by immunohistochemistry as described previously [4]. A synthetic high-resolution microsatellite PCR gel was used to study chromosome 1p/19q LOH in all tumors with an oligodendroglial component [23]. The MGMT status was assessed using methylation-specific PCR in all high-grade tumors [7, 24].

The tumors were classified according to the current 2016 CNS WHO criteria [2]. The combination of ATRX loss of expression and IDH1/2 mutation in the integrated

approach characterizes diffuse astrocytoma including its most aggressive histological subtype: secondary glioblastoma (GBM). Primary glioblastomas (GBMs) are tumors with IDH1/2 wild type and maintained ATRX expression. All gliomas with 1p/19q LOH and IDH1/2 mutation are considered to be oligodendrogliomas, and an overwhelming majority are associated with maintained ATRX expression [1, 25]. Additionally, IDH-mutant (IDH_{mut}) diffuse astrocytoma (AS2), IDH_{mut} anaplastic astrocytoma (AS3), and IDH_{mut} AS4/GBM were grouped as IDH_{mut} astrocytoma (AS); IDH wild type (IDH_{wt}) AS2, IDH_{wt} AS3, and IDH_{wt} AS4/GBM were grouped as IDH_{wt} GBM; and 1p/19q-confirmed diffuse (OD2) and anaplastic oligodendroglioma (OD3) were grouped as 1p/19q-confirmed oligodendroglioma (OD_{1p/19q-LOH}), based on their molecular profile and clinical outcome [2, 3, 5, 26].

Procedures and Techniques

Magnetic Resonance Imaging

Imaging was performed using a 3.0T MRI scanner (Biograph mMR, Siemens Healthcare, Erlangen, Germany). The conventional MRI examination protocol included a transversal 2D-encoded T2-weighted fluid attenuated inversion recovery (FLAIR) sequence (TR/TE, 9000/87 ms; inversion time (TI), 2500 ms; slice thickness, 3 mm) and a sagittal 3D-encoded magnetization prepared rapid acquisition gradient echo (MPRAGE) sequence (TR/TE, 1900/2.4 ms; TI, 900 ms) before and after contrast agent administration (0.1 ml/kg body weight gadobutrol; Gadovist®, Bayer Healthcare, Leverkusen, Germany). After preloading with 2×0.1 mmol/kg gadobutrol at an injection rate of 3 ml/s to perform dynamic contrast-enhanced MRI,

the dynamic susceptibility-weighted T2* sequence was performed during the first pass of contrast agent bolus (single-shot echo-planar imaging sequence, TR 1130 ms; TE, 31 ms; slice thickness, 4 mm; matrix size, 128×128; FoV, 230×230 mm²). Fig. 2 shows a representative slice of CBV perfusion maps and anatomic FLAIR and contrast-enhanced MPRAGE images in a 56-year-old patient with histopathologically confirmed IDH_{wt} GBM who had maintained ATRX expression and a methylated MGMT promoter in the right frontal lobe.

Observer Setting

The CBV image analyses were performed independently by two board-certified physicians who were blinded to the clinical diagnoses: reader one had 8 years of experience and reader two had 7 years of experience in neuroradiological imaging. The intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC) was calculated for testing inter-observer agreement (0.00–0.20 poor, 0.21–0.40 fair, 0.41–0.60 moderate, 0.61–0.80 good, and 0.81–1.00 excellent correlation).

Image Post-processing

The DSC-MRI-based parametric perfusion maps were calculated, and leakage correction was performed using syngo® perfusion® (Siemens Healthcare). The medial or anterior cerebral artery was identified manually for the arterial input function. Image and volume of interest (VOI) analyses were performed using MIPAV 7.4.0 (<http://mipav.cit.nih.gov/>) and in-house Matlab®-based software (Matlab 2014b, MathWorks Natick, MA, USA). The VOIs were manually drawn on the anatomic transverse FLAIR-weighted images around the most solid-appearing parts of

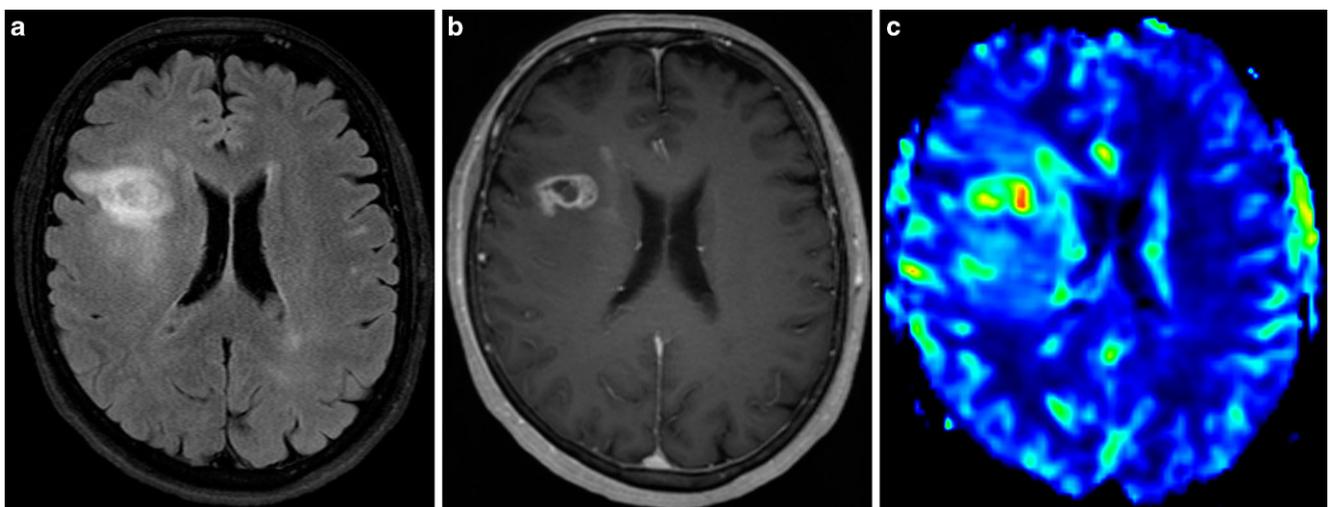


Fig. 2 FLAIR (a), contrast enhancement axial reformatted T1 MPRAGE (b), and DSC-rCBV perfusion maps (c) in a 56-year-old patient with histopathologically confirmed IDH wild type glioblastoma WHO grade IV, maintained ATRX expression, and methylated MGMT promoter

each whole tumor on multiple slices, indicated by T2 signal alterations, as well as in the contralateral frontoparietal supraventricular normal-appearing white matter (NAWM). By encompassing the whole tumor, we sought to minimize potential sampling bias [27]. The CBV parametric maps were then transformed on the matrix of the transverse FLAIR-weighted images. Subsequently, the CBV voxel intensity values were extracted voxel-wise from the overlaid VOIs and exported for statistical analysis. For histogram analysis, the following seven parameters were derived from the rCBV histograms: mean, standard deviation (SD), as well as the 10th (C10), 25th (C25), 50th (C50), 75th (C75), and 90th (C90) percentiles.

Statistical Analyses

Data analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics® Version 24 (IBM, Armonk, NY, USA). To account for potential inter-individual variations of the brain, the CBV data were normalized to the NAWM values in each patient, resulting in normalized rCBV [16].

The Shapiro-Wilk test for normal distributions was applied for all variables. The Mann-Whitney U-test was used to compare rCBV values between gliomas with the wild type and mutation of IDH1/2 and with maintained ATRX and loss of expression. Comparisons were also made between intact alleles and chromosome 1p/19 LOH as well as between the methylated and unmethylated MGMT pro-

Table 1 Histogram parameters of relative cerebral blood volume in tumor grading according to WHO 2016-based integrated tumor grades and molecular profiles

| Histopathological characteristics | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|
| Histology | Astrocytoma | | GBM | Astrocytoma | | GBM | Oligodendroglioma | |
| WHO grade | II | III | IV | II | III | IV | II | III |
| Molecular characteristics | | | | | | | | |
| IDH1/2 | Mutation | | | Wild type | | | Mutation | |
| ATRX | Loss of expression | | | Expression | | | Expression | |
| LOH 1p/19q | No | | | No | | | Yes | |
| <i>n</i> | 17 (17%) | 8 (6%) | 6 (6%) | 6 (6%) | 16 (16%) | 24 (24%) | 17 (17%) | 6 (6%) |
| Mean | 1.09±0.30 | 1.21±0.45 | 1.87±1.12 | 2.72±0.80 | 2.63±1.57 | 2.55±1.29 | 1.94±0.55 | 2.20±0.64 |
| SD | 0.90±0.29 | 0.76±0.31 | 1.07±0.32 | 1.60±0.76 | 1.44±0.61 | 1.65±0.79 | 1.31±0.47 | 1.23±0.54 |
| C10 | 0.39±0.25 | 0.55±0.24 | 0.77±1.01 | 1.30±0.34 | 1.18±0.96 | 0.90±0.53 | 0.69±0.33 | 0.95±0.29 |
| C25 | 0.56±0.26 | 0.74±0.31 | 1.15±1.10 | 1.67±0.39 | 1.61±1.08 | 1.38±0.80 | 1.08±0.37 | 1.27±0.32 |
| C50 | 0.84±0.29 | 1.04±0.40 | 1.67±1.17 | 2.37±0.73 | 2.30±1.53 | 2.20±1.25 | 1.66±0.50 | 1.93±0.51 |
| C75 | 1.25±0.36 | 1.49±0.56 | 2.40±1.34 | 3.17±0.99 | 3.23±2.00 | 3.30±1.80 | 2.41±0.73 | 2.89±0.91 |
| C90 | 2.00±0.52 | 2.12±0.78 | 3.27±1.59 | 5.07±2.23 | 4.64±2.51 | 4.80±2.36 | 3.54±1.11 | 3.75±1.30 |
| Histopathological characteristics | | | | | | | | |
| Histology | Astrocytoma and GBM | | | Astrocytoma and GBM | | | Oligodendroglioma | |
| WHO grade | All | | | All | | | All | |
| Molecular characteristics | | | | | | | | |
| IDH1/2 | Mutation | | | Wild type | | | Mutation | |
| ATRX | Loss of expression | | | Expression | | | Expression | |
| LOH 1p/19q | No | | | No | | | Yes | |
| <i>n</i> | 31 (31%) | | | 46 (46%) | | | 23 (23%) | |
| Mean | 1.25±0.49 | | | 2.60±1.33 | | | 2.00±0.57 | |
| SD | 0.89±0.31 | | | 1.56±0.71 | | | 1.29±0.47 | |
| C10 | 0.50±0.44 | | | 1.06±0.72 | | | 0.76±0.33 | |
| C25 | 0.71±0.50 | | | 1.51±0.88 | | | 1.13±0.36 | |
| C50 | 1.03±0.59 | | | 2.26±1.30 | | | 1.74±0.51 | |
| C75 | 1.50±0.74 | | | 3.26±1.77 | | | 2.54±0.79 | |
| C90 | 2.23±0.91 | | | 4.78±2.34 | | | 3.60±1.14 | |

IDH isocitrate dehydrogenase 1/2 mutation status, ATRX alpha-thalassemia/mental retardation syndrome X-linked expression status, LOH chromosome 1p/19q loss of heterozygosity, GBM glioblastoma, SD standard deviation, C_n nth percentile, rCBV relative cerebral blood volume rCBV metrics are dimensionless.

Table 2 Histogram parameters of relative cerebral blood volume in glioma stratified according to molecular characteristics

| Histopathological characteristics | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------------|--------------|------------|------------------------------|
| Histology | All | All | All | All | All | All | All | IDH _{wt} AS and GBM |
| WHO grade | All | All | All | All | All | All | All | All |
| Molecular characteristics | | | | | | | | |
| - | IDH mutation | IDH wild type | ATR _X loss | ATR _X expression | 1p/19q LOH | 1p/19qintact | MGMT meth. | MGMT unmeth. |
| <i>n</i> | 55 (55%) | 45 (45%) | 30 (30%) | 70 (70%) | 22 (22%) | 78 (78%) | 17 (37%) | 29 (63%) |
| Mean | 1.60±0.69 | 2.60±1.33 | 1.25±0.49 | 2.36±1.12 | 2.03±0.56 | 2.00±1.26 | 3.23±1.70 | 2.08±0.57 |
| SD | 1.07±0.44 | 1.56±0.71 | 0.89±0.31 | 1.45±0.63 | 1.30±0.46 | 1.26±0.66 | 1.99±0.73 | 1.20±0.45 |
| C10 | 0.62±0.41 | 1.06±0.72 | 0.50±0.44 | 0.94±0.61 | 0.77±0.33 | 0.81±0.67 | 1.25±0.93 | 0.89±0.43 |
| C25 | 0.90±0.49 | 1.51±0.88 | 0.71±0.50 | 1.36±0.73 | 1.13±0.36 | 1.16±0.83 | 1.82±1.16 | 1.25±0.44 |
| C50 | 1.35±0.65 | 2.26±1.30 | 1.03±0.59 | 2.05±1.07 | 1.74±0.50 | 1.71±1.20 | 2.81±1.68 | 1.80±0.56 |
| C75 | 1.98±0.92 | 3.26±1.77 | 1.50±0.74 | 2.97±1.49 | 2.56±0.77 | 2.47±1.66 | 4.06±2.24 | 2.57±0.83 |
| C90 | 2.86±1.21 | 4.78±2.34 | 2.23±0.91 | 4.30±2.02 | 3.64±1.11 | 3.64±2.24 | 5.99±2.80 | 3.75±1.19 |

IDH Isocitrate-dehydrogenase 1/2 mutation status, ATR_X alpha-thalassemia/mental retardation syndrome X-linked expression status, LOH chromosome 1p/19q loss of heterozygosity, MGMT O6-methylguanine DNA methyltransferase, SD standard deviation, C_nnth percentile rCBV metrics are dimensionless.

Table 3 Diagnostic performance of relative cerebral blood volume histogram parameters in grading glioma according to their 2016 CNS WHO-based molecular profile

| | Mean | SD | C10 | C25 | C50 | C75 | C90 |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <i>IDH_{mut} AS—IDH_{wt} GBM</i> | | | | | | | |
| <i>p</i> value | <0.001 |
| ROC AUC | 0.916 | 0.818 | 0.819 | 0.864 | 0.882 | 0.904 | 0.922 |
| Optimal cut-off value | 1.45 | 1.25 | 0.35 | 0.95 | 1.05 | 1.45 | 2.55 |
| Sensitivity (%) | 91 | 30 | 97 | 73 | 97 | 100 | 94 |
| Specificity (%) | 81 | 96 | 50 | 89 | 54 | 65 | 77 |
| Diagnostic accuracy (%) | 86.4 | 74.6 | 76.3 | 79.7 | 81.4 | 84.7 | 86.4 |
| <i>IDH_{mut} AS-OD1p/19q-LOH</i> | | | | | | | |
| <i>p</i> value | <0.001 | 0.014 | 0.018 | 0.001 | <0.001 | <0.001 | <0.001 |
| ROC AUC | 0.872 | 0.747 | 0.757 | 0.854 | 0.885 | 0.878 | 0.852 |
| Optimal cut-off value | 1.45 | 1.45 | 0.35 | 0.85 | 1.25 | 1.65 | 2.55 |
| Sensitivity (%) | 82 | 36 | 100 | 86 | 86 | 91 | 86 |
| Specificity (%) | 81 | 100 | 50 | 81 | 81 | 73 | 77 |
| Diagnostic accuracy | 81.3 | 70.8 | 72.9 | 81.3 | 83.3 | 81.3 | 81.3 |
| <i>IDH_{wt} GBM-OD1p/19q-LOH</i> | | | | | | | |
| <i>p</i> value | 0.699 | 0.820 | 0.532 | 0.798 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 0.401 |
| ROC AUC | 0.619 | 0.595 | 0.629 | 0.597 | 0.597 | 0.594 | 0.643 |

IDH_{mut}AS isocitrate-dehydrogenase 1/2-mutated astrocytoma, IDH_{wt} GBM isocitrate-dehydrogenase 1/2 wild type glioblastoma, OD_{1p/19q-LOH} oligodendroglioma with chromosome 1p/19q loss of heterozygosity, SD standard deviation, C_n nth percentile, ROC AUC receiver operating characteristic curves area under the curve

Significant *p* values at α=0.0083 are highlighted in bold.

The results with the highest Youden index were defined as the optimal cut-off values.

The histogram parameters with the highest discriminatory power are highlighted in italics.

The diagnostic accuracy was calculated using a CART-based decision tree algorithm with 10-fold cross-validation.

rCBV metrics are dimensionless.

moter. The Shapiro-Wilk test showed non-normal distribution in all groups and the Levené test showed that there was also no variance homogeneity in all groups. Thus, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) on ranks (Kruskal-Wallis test) with a post-hoc Dunn-Bonferroni correction was used for comparison between integrated glioma grades of 2016

CNS WHO as well as between grouped integrated diagnoses of IDH_{mut} AS, IDH_{wt} GBM, and OD_{1p/19q-LOH}. Tests of the six a priori hypotheses were conducted using Bonferroni adjusted alpha levels of 0.0083 per test (0.05/6). A classification and regression tree (CART) algorithm [28] with 10-fold cross-validation was used to determine the di-

agnostic accuracy. Receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curves were generated for all significant rCBV histogram parameters to determine the area under the curve (AUC). The results with the highest Youden index were defined as the optimal cut-off values.

Results

The inter-rater agreement was excellent (ICC, 0.893; 95% CI, 0.872–0.924) for VOI delineation.

Table 1, 2 and 3 show the integrated histopathological and molecular findings according to the 2016 CNS WHO as well as the grouped findings based on their molecular profile and clinical outcome [2, 3, 5, 26]. Additionally, Table 1 shows the histogram parameters of rCBV values with their standard deviations of the integrated diagnoses of 2016 CNS WHO as well as for grouped IDH_{mut} AS, IDH_{wt} GBM, and OD_{1p/19q-LOH}. Regarding the molecular markers separately, the findings and corresponding rCBV results for IDH1/2 mutation, ATRX expression, chromosome 1p/19q LOH, and MGMT methylation status are shown in Table 2.

Relative Cerebral Blood Volume Values Among 2016 CNS WHO Glioma Grades

For separate 2016 CNS WHO-based tumor grades, there were no statistically significant differences in the histogram parameters of rCBV values between IDH_{mut} AS2, AS3 and GBM, between IDH_{wt} AS2, AS3 and GBM and between 1p/19q-confirmed OD2 and OD3. The results are illustrated in Supplementary Fig. 1. The figure includes all *p* values.

Relative Cerebral Blood Volume Values Among Integrated Glioma Groups

For the grouped comparisons based on the molecular profile and clinical outcome [2, 3, 5, 26], all histogram parameters of rCBV were significantly lower in IDH_{mut} AS than in OD_{1p/19q-LOH} and IDH_{wt} GBM. There was no significant difference between rCBV among patients with OD_{1p/19q-LOH} and IDH_{wt} GBM. The corresponding *p* values of the histogram parameters are presented in Table 3. The table includes the ROC AUC and the optimal cut-off values as well as sensitivity, specificity, and diagnostic accuracy. Fig. 3a illustrates the C90 of rCBV in glioma grading according to their molecular profile. Supplementary Fig. 3 shows the results of multivariate and cross-validated CART analysis for non-invasive glioma classification according to their integrated molecular profile.

Relative Cerebral Blood Volume Values Among Separate Molecular Characteristics

For individual molecular characteristics, all histogram parameters of rCBV were significantly lower in tumors with the IDH1/2 mutation than in those with the wild type of IDH1/2. They were also significantly lower in patients with ATRX loss than in those with maintained ATRX expression. There was no significant difference between rCBV among patients with chromosome 1p/19q LOH and intact alleles. In patients with primary IDH_{wt} GBM the SD of rCBV was significantly higher and C90 was significantly lower in patients with an unmethylated MGMT promoter than in those with methylated MGMT promoter. All corresponding *p* values of the histogram parameters are presented in Table 4. The table includes the ROC AUC, the optimal cut-off values as well as sensitivity, specificity, and diagnostic accuracy. Fig. 3b–d illustrates significant histogram parameters of rCBV in glioma grading according to IDH1/2 mutation, ATRX expression, and MGMT methylation status. Representative ROC curves for rCBV results are displayed in Fig. 4.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to assess the diagnostic performance of DSC-MRI for in vivo molecular profiling of human glioma. According to the newly applied integrated molecular approach of the current 2016 CNS WHO, the 90th percentile of rCBV can best identify the IDH1/2 mutation and ATRX expression statuses. In the IDH_{wt} GBM group the SD and 90th percentile of rCBV may differentiate between methylated and unmethylated MGMT promoters. In CART analysis, rCBV predicted the molecular subgroup in 76.3% of astroglial tumors. The diagnostic performance was reduced to 48.1% by including OD_{1p/19q-LOH} into the analysis.

All tumors were classified according to the current 2016 CNS WHO criteria [2]; however, several recent neuropathological studies have indicated a grading problem with the 2016 CNS WHO [2, 3, 25, 26]. Reuss et al. demonstrated that the group of astrocytomas harboring an IDH mutation “can be considered to define a molecular and clinical homogenous entity” [2] with “virtually identical [...] patient age and [...] overall survival” [3] between IDH_{mut} diffuse (AS2) and anaplastic (AS3) astrocytomas. Furthermore, most IDH wild type astrocytomas (IDH_{wt} AS2 and AS3) “represent underdiagnosed GBM” [2]. Additionally, for OD_{1p/19q-LOH}, the “WHO grade does not seem to substantially affect overall survival” in the IDH_{mut} cohort [26], and recent data suggest that telomerase reverse transcriptase (TERT) mutation status in oligodendroglioma (OD) is

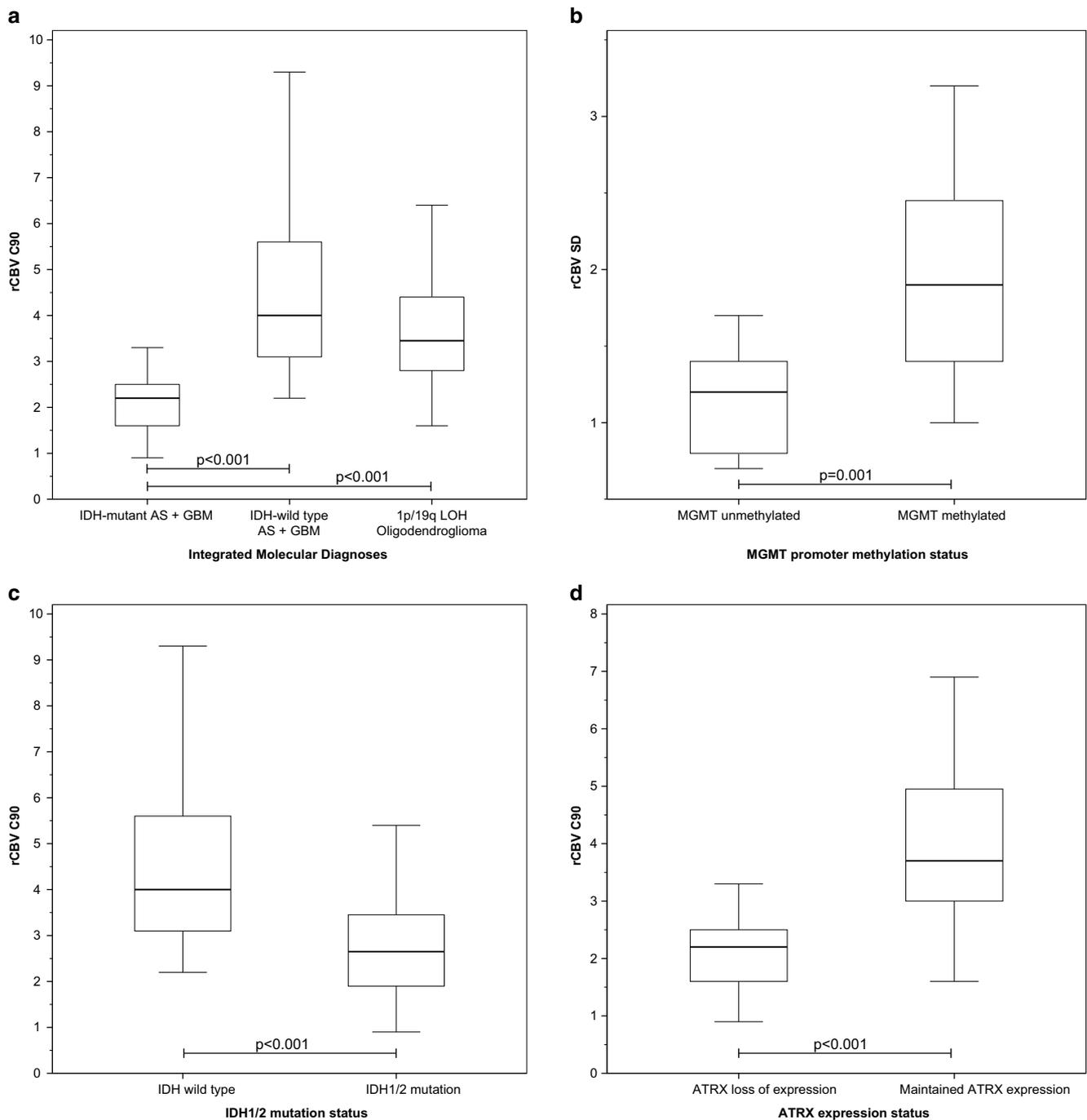


Fig. 3 Histogram parameters of normalized cerebral blood volume values in WHO 2016-based integrated tumor grading. Boxplots illustrate the 90th percentile of normalized cerebral blood volume (rCBV) values in glioma grading according to WHO-based histological findings (a), integrated molecular diagnoses of IDH mutant astrocytoma, 1p/19q-confirmed oligodendroglioma and IDH wild type glioblastoma (b), O6-methylguanine DNA methyltransferase (*MGMT*) promoter methylation status in primary IDH wild type glioblastoma, (c) isocitrate dehydrogenase (*IDH*) 1/2 mutation status, and (d) alpha-thalassemia/mental retardation syndrome X-linked (*ATRX*) expression. rCBV is dimensionless

Table 4 Diagnostic performance of relative cerebral blood volume histogram parameters in stratifying glioma according to their molecular characteristics

| | Mean | SD | C10 | C25 | C50 | C75 | C90 |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <i>IDH1/2 wild type—mutation</i> | | | | | | | |
| <i>p</i> value | <0.001 | 0.001 | <0.001 | <0.001 | <0.001 | <0.001 | <0.001 |
| ROC AUC | 0.780 | 0.716 | 0.732 | 0.755 | 0.752 | 0.762 | <i>0.795</i> |
| Optimal cut-off value | 1.45 | 1.25 | 1.05 | 0.95 | 2.30 | 3.30 | <i>4.61</i> |
| Sensitivity (%) | 52 | 77 | 90 | 67 | 87 | 85 | <i>90</i> |
| Specificity (%) | 91 | 61 | 46 | 73 | 42 | 46 | <i>53</i> |
| Diagnostic accuracy (%) | 67.9 | 70.4 | 71.6 | 70.4 | 70.4 | 70.4 | <i>70.4</i> |
| <i>ATRX maintained—loss of expression</i> | | | | | | | |
| <i>p</i> value | <0.001 |
| ROC AUC | 0.898 | 0.798 | 0.794 | 0.860 | 0.884 | 0.894 | <i>0.894</i> |
| Optimal cut-off value | 1.45 | 1.25 | 0.35 | 0.85 | 1.05 | 1.45 | <i>2.55</i> |
| Sensitivity (%) | 87 | 92 | 98 | 82 | 96 | 96 | <i>91</i> |
| Specificity (%) | 81 | 45 | 50 | 77 | 62 | 66 | <i>77</i> |
| Diagnostic accuracy (%) | 85.2 | 76.5 | 82.7 | 80.2 | 85.2 | 86.4 | <i>86.4</i> |
| <i>Chromosome 1p/19q LOH—intact alleles</i> | | | | | | | |
| <i>p</i> value | 0.126 | 0.287 | 0.509 | 0.237 | 0.087 | 0.075 | 0.202 |
| ROC AUC | 0.611 | 0.577 | 0.548 | 0.586 | 0.624 | 0.629 | 0.592 |
| <i>MGMT methylated—unmethylated in all tumors</i> | | | | | | | |
| <i>p</i> value | 0.102 | 0.037 | 0.584 | 0.276 | 0.156 | 0.079 | 0.073 |
| ROC AUC | 0.607 | 0.636 | 0.536 | 0.571 | 0.593 | 0.615 | 0.617 |
| <i>MGMT methylated—unmethylated in IDH1/2 wild type gliomas</i> | | | | | | | |
| <i>p</i> value | 0.044 | 0.001 | 0.290 | 0.190 | 0.108 | 0.044 | 0.007 |
| ROC AUC | 0.706 | <i>0.830</i> | 0.611 | 0.637 | 0.665 | 0.706 | 0.769 |
| Optimal cut-off value | 3.0 | <i>1.75</i> | 1.35 | 1.90 | 2.65 | 3.87 | 4.05 |
| Sensitivity (%) | 53 | <i>67</i> | 40 | 47 | 53 | 53 | 73 |
| Specificity (%) | 94 | <i>94</i> | 89 | 89 | 94 | 89 | 78 |
| Diagnostic accuracy (%) | 75.8 | <i>81.8</i> | 66.7 | 69.7 | 75.8 | 72.2 | 75.8 |

IDH_{mut}AS isocitrate dehydrogenase 1/2-mutated astrocytoma, *IDH_{wt}GBM* isocitrate dehydrogenase 1/2 wild type glioblastoma, *OD_{1p/19q-LOH}* oligodendroglioma with chromosome 1p/19q loss of heterozygosity, *SD* standard deviation, *C_n* nth percentile, *ROC AUC* receiver operating characteristic curves area under the curve

Significant *p* values at $\alpha=0.0083$ are highlighted in bold.

The results with the highest Youden index were defined as the optimal cut-off values.

The histogram parameters with the highest discriminatory power are highlighted in italics.

The diagnostic accuracy was calculated using a CART-based decision tree algorithm with 10-fold cross-validation. rCBV metrics are dimensionless.

more prognostic than histological grading alone [6]. Therefore, IDH_{mut} AS2, IDH_{mut} AS3, and IDH_{mut} GBM were additionally grouped as IDH_{mut} AS; IDH_{wt} AS2, IDH_{wt} AS3, and IDH_{wt} GBM were classified as IDH_{wt} GBM; and OD2 and OD3 were grouped as OD_{1p/19q-LOH} for statistical analysis based on their molecular profile and clinical outcome [2, 3, 5, 26].

The CBV reflects the vascular proliferation in central nervous system tumors [11, 12]. At the histopathological level, the increased microvascular proliferation has been shown to correlate with increased rCBV values [11, 13, 14]. The combination of ATRX loss and IDH1/2 mutations in the integrated approach characterizes diffuse astrocytoma (IDH_{mut} AS), including secondary GBM as its most aggressive histological subtype [25]. A GBM with the IDH1/2

mutation is described as a “homogeneous group” of GBM with a “lesser extent of necrosis” and “less frequent occurrence of vascular abnormalities” compared with the “heterogeneous presentation of more aggressive IDH1 wild-type” GBM, which show “more pronounced arcade-like vascular appearance” and a significantly higher contrast-enhancing component [29, 30]. Thus, lower rCBV values reflect the vascular features in IDH_{mut} AS, whereas primary IDH_{wt} GBM shows increased rCBV values because of increased microvascular proliferation [19]. Our rCBV values for IDH_{wt} GBM with maintained ATRX expression were significantly higher than for IDH_{mut} AS with ATRX loss, which corresponds to previously reported results [19]. Published values of rCBV for OD and oligoastrocytoma according to the 2007 CNS WHO were significantly higher than

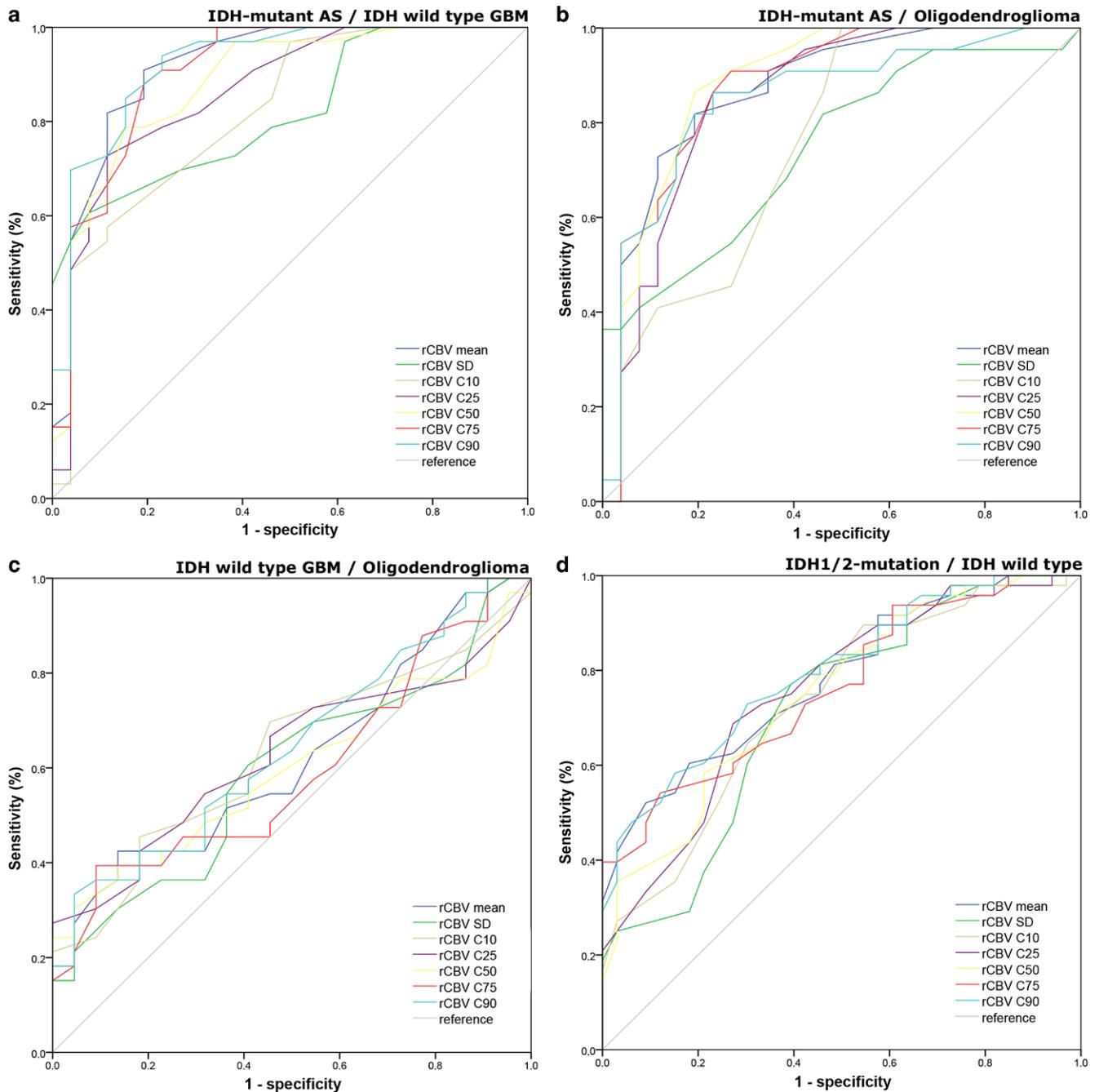


Fig. 4 Area under the receiver operating characteristics curves in WHO 2016-based tumor grading and integrated molecular approach. The AUC of ROC curves for discrimination between integrated molecular diagnoses of **a** IDH-mutant astrocytoma and IDH wild type glioblastoma, **b** IDH-mutant astrocytoma and 1p/19q-confirmed oligodendroglioma, **c** IDH-mutant astrocytoma and IDH wild type glioblastoma, as well as between molecular characteristics of **d** IDH1/2 mutation and IDH wild type, **e** maintained *ATRX* and loss of expression and **f** O6-methylguanine DNA methyltransferase (*MGMT*) promoter methylation status in primary IDH wild type glioblastoma, based on histogram parameters of *rCBV* values. *AUC* area under the curve, *ROC* receiver operating characteristics, *IDH* isocitrate-dehydrogenase, *ATRX* alpha-thalassemia/mental retardation syndrome X-linked expression, *MGMT* O6-methylguanine DNA methyltransferase, *rCBV* normalized cerebral blood volume, *GBM* glioblastoma, *SD* standard deviation

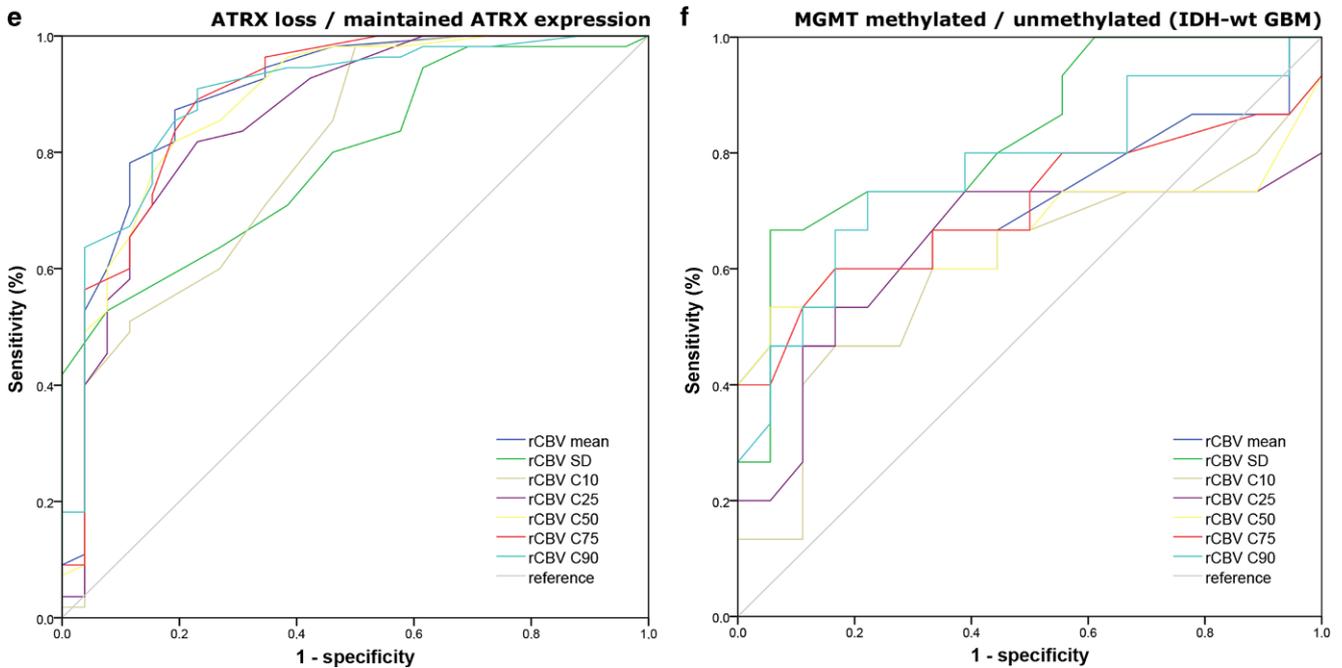


Fig. 4 (continued)

those for astrocytic tumors [16, 31]. Furthermore, oligodendroglial tumors with chromosome 1p/19q LOH were associated with significantly increased tumor perfusion, along with elevated rCBV values and epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) and vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) expression [32, 33]. The exact mechanism for elevated rCBV in oligodendroglial tumors remains unclear, but it may be associated with increased microvascular density [34], higher metabolic activity [32], distinct vascular pattern [15] or the degree and type of capillarization [16]. Our rCBV values of OD_{1p/19q-LOH} were significantly higher than those of IDH_{mut} AS; however, they could not be significantly differentiated from those of IDH_{wt} GBM because of a substantial overlap of rCBV values. Using multivariate and cross-validated CART analysis (see Supplementary Fig. 3), rCBV correctly predicted the molecular subtype in three quarters of astrocytic gliomas. By including OD_{1p/19q-LOH} into analysis, the diagnostic performance was substantially decreased to approximately 50%. Therefore, rCBV is not feasible as an independent biomarker for predicting chromosome 1p/19q LOH or for differentiating between the integrated molecular glioma subgroups of OD_{1p/19q-LOH} and IDH_{wt} GBM.

We found contradictory reports for the individual 2016 CNS WHO tumor grades. Tan et al. [18] found significant differences of rCBV values between an IDH_{mut} and an IDH_{wt} cohort of each WHO grade, whereas Hilario et al. stated that “grade II and III tumors also did not differ when astrocytomas, oligodendrogliomas, and oligoastrocytomas were considered separately” [35]. We found no significant dif-

ferences of rCBV values among AS2, AS3, and GBM both within the IDH_{mut} and the IDH_{wt} group, which supports the hypotheses of Reuss et al. [2, 3] and the findings of Hilario et al. [35]; however, we found a trend towards higher rCBV values in IDH_{mut} GBM than in IDH_{wt} AS2 and AS3 representing the degree of neovascularization. Additionally, for OD_{1p/19q-LOH}, we found similar rCBV values among OD2 and OD3, which is consistent with Suzuki et al. [26] and Hilario et al. [35].

In isolation, rCBV shows promise for predicting IDH1/2 mutation status and ATRX expression. These results are partly consistent with previously-published results by Lee et al. [36], who found significant differences in rCBV histogram parameters between patients with the wild type and IDH1/2 mutation in astrocytoma; however, that study was limited by excluding OD with synchronous IDH1/2 mutation and chromosome 1p/19q LOH, which can have significant overlap of rCBV values with GBM [15, 16]. Kickingereder et al. [19] found higher rCBV histogram parameter values in IDH_{wt} AS2, AS3, and GBM compared with IDH_{mut} AS2, AS3, and GBM or OD_{1p/19q-LOH}. They reported a diagnostic accuracy of 88% for predicting the IDH1/2 mutation. Our findings show similar accuracy when OD_{1p/19q-LOH} is not included (Supplementary Table 1, Supplementary Fig. 2); however, taking OD_{1p/19q-LOH} into account limits the role of rCBV in predicting IDH1/2 mutation status.

The ATRX has been shown to be a potential marker for prediction of IDH/H3F3A mutations and substratification of diffuse gliomas into survival relevant tumor groups [4]. Our rCBV values for gliomas with maintained ATRX expres-

sion, which is a typical feature of IDH_{wt} GBM, were significantly higher than those of gliomas with loss of ATRX expression, and the C90 of rCBV showed a diagnostic accuracy of 86.4% in predicting the ATRX expression status. We did not find any published corresponding rCBV values for individual comparison of ATRX expression status.

The MGMT can be regarded as an independent prognostic factor in patients with primary GBM [7] as MGMT promoter methylation increases responsiveness to temozolomide chemotherapy [24]. Ryoo et al. [37] found significantly higher rCBV values in GBMs with an unmethylated MGMT promoter than in those with a methylated MGMT; however, they did not take the IDH1/2 mutation status into account and analyzed only a small cohort of 25 patients. Conversely, our rCBV values were significantly higher in IDH_{wt} GBMs with a methylated MGMT than in those with an unmethylated MGMT. These findings support the hypotheses of Chahal et al. [38], who found that MGMT-positive cells displayed higher levels of vascular endothelial growth factor receptor 1 (VEGFR-1) compared with [MGMT unmethylated] U87/EV cells leading to higher vascularization of GBM. Our findings also support Kim et al. [39], who found that the “association between high CBF and a favorable 6-month outcome was more significant in the MGMT promoter methylation group” [39] in GBM but regardless of their molecular profile; however, further studies are needed to explore the role of DSC MRI in additional prognostic MGMT subgroups.

Limitations

This study is limited by potential selection bias because of the relatively small numbers of patients with IDH_{mut} GBM (secondary glioblastoma) and IDH_{wt} AS2 (early precursor lesion of IDH_{wt} GBM); however, these numbers represent their natural incidence [2, 3, 25, 26, 40]. Additionally, the process of VOI delineation may have been subject to sampling bias because glioma infiltration may extend beyond T2 signal abnormalities [41, 42]; however, studies have shown that the difference in tumor delimitation among different observers has a minor impact regarding the large number of voxels included in the histogram analysis [43, 44].

Conclusion

In the context of the revised 2016 CNS WHO, our findings support the upcoming integrated “morpho-molecular” approach towards characterization of glioma [2, 3, 26, 40]. As isolated factors, the C90 of rCBV from DSC-MRI shows the highest potential for predicting ATRX expression and IDH1/2 mutation status. Additionally, the SD and C90 of

rCBV show promise for predicting the MGMT methylation profile of IDH_{wt} GBM. Considering the diagnostic and prognostic significance of these molecular markers, rCBV appears to be a promising in vivo biomarker for glioma; however, taking OD_{1p/19q-LOH} into account limits the diagnostic potential of rCBV for non-invasively predicting the molecular glioma subtype due to substantial overlap between OD_{1p/19q-LOH} and IDH_{wt} GBM. Thus, further studies using a multiparametric approach are needed to explore the role of DSC MRI as a prognostic biomarker in molecular glioma subgroups.

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Conflict of interest J.-M. Hempel, J. Schittenhelm, U. Klose, B. Bender, G. Bier, M. Skardelly, G. Tabatabai, S. Castaneda Vega, U. Erneemann and C. Brendle declare that they have no competing interests.

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Affiliations

Johann-Martin Hempel¹  · Jens Schittenhelm² · Uwe Kloße¹ · Benjamin Bender¹ · Georg Bier¹ · Marco Skardelly³ · Ghazaleh Tabatabai⁴ · Salvador Castaneda Vega⁵ · Ulrike Ernemann¹ · Cornelia Brendle¹

¹ Department of Neuroradiology, Eberhard Karls University, Hoppe-Seyler-Str. 3, 72076 Tübingen, Germany

² Institute of Neuropathology, Eberhard Karls University, Tübingen, Germany

³ Department of Neurosurgery, Eberhard Karls University, Tübingen, Germany

⁴ Centre of Neurooncology, Comprehensive Cancer Center Tübingen-Stuttgart, Eberhard Karls University, Tübingen, Germany

⁵ Werner Siemens Imaging Center, Department of Preclinical Imaging and Radiopharmacy, Eberhard Karls University, Tübingen, Germany