# Electrophysiologic testing aids diagnosis and subtyping of myoclonus

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## Abstract

### Objective

To determine the contribution of electrophysiologic testing in the diagnosis and anatomical classification of myoclonus.

### Methods

Participants with a clinical diagnosis of myoclonus were prospectively recruited, each undergoing a videotaped clinical examination and battery of electrophysiologic tests. The diagnosis of myoclonus and its subtype was reviewed after 6 months in the context of the electrophysiologic findings and specialist review of the videotaped clinical examination.

### Results

Seventy-two patients with myoclonus were recruited. Initial clinical anatomical classification included 25 patients with cortical myoclonus, 7 with subcortical myoclonus, 2 with spinal myoclonus, and 15 with functional myoclonic jerks. In 23 cases, clinical anatomical classification was not possible because of the complexity of the movement disorder. Electrophysiologic testing was completed in 66, with agreement of myoclonus in 60 (91%) and its subtype in 28 (47%) cases. Subsequent clinical review by a movement disorder specialist agreed with the electrophysiologic findings in 52 of 60; in the remaining 8, electrophysiologic testing was inconclusive.

### Conclusions

Electrophysiologic testing is an important additional tool in the diagnosis and anatomical classification of myoclonus, also aiding in decision-making regarding therapeutic management. Further development of testing criteria is necessary to optimize its use in clinical practice.

Myoclonus is a frequently observed hyperkinetic movement disorder, which is often classified according to its anatomical origin: cortical myoclonus (CM), subcortical myoclonus (SCM), spinal myoclonus (SM), peripheral myoclonus (PM), or functional jerks (FJ) in case of a functional movement disorder.

Electrophysiologic testing is frequently useful in distinguishing myoclonus from other hyperkinetic movement disorders, and in identifying its anatomical origin.[1–3] The tests used in the assessment of myoclonus include polymyography, EEG-EMG back-averaging, coherence analysis, and somatosensory evoked potential (SSEP).[4–8] Table 1 summarizes the electrophysiologic criteria used in the diagnosis of myoclonus and its subtypes.

The sensitivity and specificity of electrophysiologic testing in patients with myoclonus are largely unknown, with the majority of work to date being limited by small cohorts, highly selected patient populations, or reliance on expert opinion to determine the diagnosis.[9–11]

Our recent retrospective analysis of 85 patients with myoclonus demonstrated the key clinical and electrophysiologic features in distinguishing myoclonus subtypes.[12] In 74% of cases, the clinical diagnosis of myoclonus was confirmed with electrophysiologic testing, and electrophysiologic assessment of the myoclonus subtype aided diagnosis in 73% of cases. In this study, we sought to apply these principles to a prospectively recruited cohort of patients, evaluating the contribution of electrophysiologic testing in the diagnosis and management of myoclonus.

## Methods

### Participants

Participants with a clinical diagnosis of myoclonus were identified prospectively from inpatient and outpatient settings (July 2014 to June 2016). Exclusion criteria included ongoing inpatient care on the intensive care unit, language and/or literacy barriers, and age 6 years or younger. All participants were followed up for a minimum of 6 months, after which a final diagnosis was made.

### Initial clinical classification

The initial clinical diagnosis of myoclonus and its anatomical subtype was provided by the participants' primary caring neurologist (adult or pediatric), with all participants undergoing a standardized and systematic assessment, including videotaped clinical examination.

### Electrophysiologic testing

The standardized electrophysiologic protocol included an initial polymyography, with participants excluded at this stage if the myoclonus was too subtle to adequately perform the assessment. For those meeting electrophysiologic criteria for myoclonus, further investigations included EEG-EMG back-averaging (if >25 jerks) or coherence analysis (if jerk frequency was >3 Hz). Where possible, those with CM and SCM underwent testing for SSEPs (figure e-1, http://links.lww.com/WNL/A164).

An experienced neurophysiologist (J.W.E. and J.H.v.d.H.) blinded to the original clinical diagnosis determined whether the findings were consistent with myoclonus, and the likely myoclonus subtype. Table 1 summarizes the electrophysiologic criteria used in determining diagnosis.[12]

### Diagnostic review and 6-month follow-up

A neurologist with expertise in movement disorders (M.A.J.T.), blinded to the initial diagnoses, reviewed the clinical details, videotaped clinical examination, and results of the electrophysiologic testing. Each patient was reviewed again 6 months after their initial assessment to determine any changes to the clinical findings, with the final diagnosis being confirmed by the specialist (figure 1).

### Severity of the myoclonus

The severity of the myoclonus was determined by 2 independent clinicians (R.Z. and J.C.v.Z. or J.M.G.) following review of the videotaped clinical examinations, scoring sections 2 and 4 of the Unified Myoclonus Rating Scale (UMRS), and the 7-point Global Clinical Impression–Severity (GCI-S) scale.

### Power analysis

A power calculation was performed based on our previously reported retrospective analysis.[12] It was estimated that electrophysiologic testing would support the clinical diagnosis of the myoclonus anatomical subtype in approximately 70%. A change in clinical classification of >20%, due to electrophysiologic testing, was considered clinically relevant. Using the One Proportion Confidence Interval Formula: Exact (Clopper-Pearson), a 95% confidence level, 0.7 (proportion), 0.8 (upper limit), we estimated that a minimum of 56 participants would need to be recruited.

### Statistical analysis

The clinical characteristics were analyzed using Kruskal-Wallis tests for continuous, nonnormally distributed data.

**Table 1** Electrophysiologic criteria of myoclonus and to aid diagnosis by anatomical subtype[12]

| Myoclonus/anatomical subtype | Video-polymyography | Back-averaging/coherence analysis/SSEP | Importance of criterion |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Myoclonus** | Abrupt muscle contraction or interruption of muscle activity | | Required |
| | Synchronous contraction of agonist and antagonist muscles[8,19] | | Supportive |
| **Cortical myoclonus** | Burst duration positive myoclonus <100 ms | | Required |
| | Multifocal/focal distribution | | Supportive |
| | Presence of negative myoclonus[8] | | Supportive |
| | | Positive cortical spike back-averaging: Presence of a "time locked" biphasic potential >2 SD above baseline on the contralateral motor cortex preceding the jerks seen on the EMG according to the conduction time of corticospinal pathways (arms 15–25 ms/legs ±40 ms)[8,20] | Diagnostic |
| | | Positive corticomuscular coherence: Occurrence of significant corticomuscular coherence in the alpha and beta band with a phase difference consistent with a cortical generator[6,7,21] | Diagnostic |
| | | Presence of a giant SSEP: The P27 and N35 peaks had large amplitudes >5 µV and had a suitable shape[20,22,23] | Diagnostic |
| **Subcortical myoclonus** | | | |
|   **Brainstem** | Burst duration >100 ms | | Supportive |
| | Simultaneous rostral and caudal muscle activation at brainstem level[24,25] | | Required |
|   **M-D/other** | Burst duration >100 ms | | Supportive |
| | Presence of negative myoclonus | | Supportive |
| | Do not meet criteria of other categories[26] | | Required |
| **Spinal myoclonus** | | | |
|   **Segmental** | Burst duration >100 ms | | Supportive |
| | Distribution according to 1 or 2 contiguous spinal segments | | Required |
| | Rhythmic (1–2/min to 240/min) | | Supportive |
|   **Propriospinal** | Burst duration >100 ms[20] | | |
| | Initiation in mid thoracic segments followed by rostral and caudal activation[27,28] | | Required |
| | Propagation with slow velocity (5–15 m/s) in cord[20] | | Required |
| **Peripheral myoclonus** | Burst duration <50 ms | | Required |
| | Large MUAPs | | Supportive |
| | Minipolymyoclonus or fasciculations/ myokymia | | Supportive |
| | Accompanied by weakness/atrophy[29] | | Supportive |

Continued

**Table 1** Electrophysiologic criteria of myoclonus and to aid diagnosis by anatomical subtype[12] *(continued)*

| Myoclonus/anatomical subtype | Video-polymyography | Back-averaging/coherence analysis/SSEP | Importance of criterion |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Functional jerks** | Variable muscle recruitment | | Supportive |
| | Variable burst duration (>100 ms) | | Supportive |
| | Distractibility and/or entrainment[1,30] | | Supportive |
| | | Presence of a Bereitschaftspotential: Presence of a clear slow negative electrical shift (>5 μV) over the central cortical areas that increased over time 1–2 s before movement onset[5,31] | Diagnostic |

Abbreviations: M-D = myoclonus dystonia; MUAP = motor unit action potential; SSEP = somatosensory evoked potential.

Interrater reliability was assessed using the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) (2-way mixed, consistency, average measures),[13] or Cohen κ[14] where appropriate. A Chi-squared Automatic Interaction Detection (CHAID) (SPSS, IBM, Armonk, NY; parent nodes n < 3, child nodes n > 1) analysis was undertaken to generate a decision tree in order to quantify the importance of the clinical and electrophysiologic criteria in the diagnosis of the myoclonic subtypes.

### Standard protocol approvals, registrations, and patient consents

Full written informed consent was obtained from all participants according to the Declaration of Helsinki. The study protocol was approved by the University Medical Centre Groningen ethics committee (M14.157933, approved July 2, 2014).

## Results

### Overall cohort

A total of 72 patients (32 male; 40 female) were recruited, with a median age of 29 years (range: 7–83 years), 59 from the outpatient setting and 13 from inpatient care.

The demographic details and clinical characteristics of this cohort are summarized in table 2 and table e-1 (http://links.lww.com/WNL/A165), respectively.

**Figure 1** Overview of the stages of clinical assessment and diagnosis undertaken in this study



CM = cortical myoclonus; FJ = functional jerks; MD = movement disorder; MMS = multiple myoclonus subtypes; SCM = subcortical myoclonus; SM = spinal myoclonus.

## Table 2 Demographic features of the myoclonus cohort

| Demographic features | CM (n = 33) | SCM (n = 4) | FJ (n = 20) | MMS (n = 3) | Total (n = 60) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sex, M/F** | 15/18 | 2/2 | 7/13 | 1/2 | 25/35 |
| **Age at examination, y[a]** | 21 (7–83) | 18.5 (15–48) | 31.5 (16–73) | 63 (18–73) | 22 (7–83) |
| **Age at onset of myoclonus, y[a]** | 14 (0–83) | 11 (10–14) | 25 (12–66) | 60 (4–73) | 18 (0–83) |
| **Follow-up interval, mo[b]** | 21 | 22 | 22 | 15 | 20 |
| **UMRS[a]** | | | | | |
|   **Rest** | 9 (0–38) | 14 (9–23) | 17 (2–30) | 9 (6–18) | 11 (0–38) |
|   **Action** | 19 (6–57) | 15 (7–23) | 8 (0–33) | 16 (0–31) | 15 (0–57) |
|   **Total** | 31 (7–85) | 31 (19–42) | 23 (5–62) | 28 (6–49) | 27 (5–85) |
| **GCI-S[a]** | 3 (2–7) | 4 (3–5) | 4 (2–6) | 4 (3–5) | 4 (2–7) |
| **Family history of a related disorder** | 7 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 13 |
| **Other neurologic symptoms** | | | | | |
|   **Eye movement disorder** | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
|   **Dystonia** | 9 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 14 |
|   **Chorea** | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
|   **Ataxia** | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| **Comorbidity** | | | | | |
|   **Psychiatric** | 5 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 9 |
|   **Epilepsy** | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9 |
|   **Cognitive problems** | 7 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 9 |
|   **Liver or kidney disease** | 5 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 7 |
|   **Structural damage to brain** | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| **Treatment** | | | | | |
|   **No treatment** | 14 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 23 |
|   **Clonazepam** | 9 (4) | 0 | 0 | 2 (2) | 11 (6) |
|   **Levetiracetam** | 9 (6) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9 (6) |
|   **Valproic acid** | 3 (1) | 1 (0) | 0 | 1 (0) | 5 (1) |
|   **Multiple drug therapy** | 5 (4) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 (4) |
|   **Physiotherapy** | 0 | 0 | 10 (5) | 1 (1) | 11 (6) |
|   **Explanation diagnosis** | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 5 (5) | 0 (0) | 5 (5) |
| **Side effects, yes/no** | | | | | |
|   **Clonazepam** | 5/4 | 0/0 | 0/0 | 0/2 | 5/6 |
|   **Levetiracetam** | 7/2 | 0/0 | 0/0 | 0/0 | 7/2 |
|   **Valproic acid** | 3/0 | 0/1 | 0/0 | 0/1 | 3/2 |
|   **Multiple drug therapy** | 3/2 | 0/0 | 0/0 | 0/0 | 3/2 |

Abbreviations: CM = cortical myoclonus; FJ = functional jerks; GCI-S = Global Clinical Impression–Severity; MMS = multiple myoclonus subtypes; SCM = subcortical myoclonus; UMRS = Unified Myoclonus Rating Scale.
Classification of myoclonus is given as the final diagnosis following review at 6 months post diagnosis. Treatment: the number in parentheses is the number of patients in whom the myoclonus improved with treatment.
[a] Values are displayed as median (range).
[b] Values are displayed as mean.

### Clinical diagnosis of myoclonus pre-electrophysiologic testing

Of the 72 individuals with myoclonus, these were subdivided into CM (n = 25), SCM (n = 7), SM (n = 2), and FJ (n = 15), with subtype diagnoses not possible in 23 patients (32%) because of the complexity of the movement disorder.

### Electrophysiologic diagnoses

In 6 patients (8%), clinically diagnosed with distal multifocal CM, the myoclonic jerks were of such small amplitude that the polymyographic recordings were indeterminate and unable to be interpreted. Of the remaining 66 patients, electrophysiologic testing supported a diagnosis of myoclonus in 60 (91%), with these subdivided into CM (n = 30), SCM (n = 10), multiple myoclonus subtypes (MMS) (n = 3), and FJ (n = 17). A cortical origin was detected in 5 of 9 patients (60%) with CM using back-averaging, and 16 of 20 (80%) using coherence analysis. SSEP analysis demonstrated giant potentials in 3 of 14 patients (21%) with CM, and a Bereitschaftspotential was identified in 5 of 12 patients (42%) with FJ.

A full summary of the electrophysiologic characteristics of this cohort can be seen in table 3.

### Comparison of clinical and electrophysiologic diagnoses

There was agreement between the clinical diagnosis and electrophysiologic testing in a diagnosis of myoclonus for 91% (60/66) of the study cohort. Of these 60 cases, there was agreement of its subtype in 28 cases (47%) (14 CM, 2 SCM, and 12 FJ) and disagreement in 15 cases (25%). Of the remaining 17 cases (28%) without a clinical subclassification, electrophysiologic testing proved helpful, subdividing these into 12 CM, 2 SCM, and 3 FJ (table e-2, http://links.lww.com/WNL/A165).

### Clinical opinion of the movement disorder specialist

There was agreement between the electrophysiologic testing and specialist movement disorder opinion in 66 cases, and agreement on its subtype in 52 of 60 cases (87%), considered a "substantial" agreement (κ = 0.78). A summary of the 8 cases in which there was disagreement between expert clinical diagnosis and electrophysiologic testing is provided in table 4; in each, there was a lack of conclusive electrophysiologic findings to facilitate a diagnosis of myoclonus subtype.

### Final clinical diagnoses

Follow-up review after 6 months resulted in no changes to clinical diagnosis in all 60 patients, with the final subclassification including 33 CM (55%), 4 SCM (7%), 3 MMS (5%), and 20 FJ (33%). The CHAID analysis demonstrated (1) polymyographic measurement of the myoclonic burst duration, (2) exacerbation of the myoclonus with action, and (3) facial involvement to be the most important criteria in determining myoclonic subtype (figure e-2, http://links.lww.com/WNL/A164).

### Severity of myoclonus

The median UMRS severity score was 27 (Rest 11/128, Action 15/144) and GCI-S score 4/7. No significant statistical difference was observed between the subtypes of myoclonus ($p = 0.2$). The interrater concordance was "excellent" (ICC = 0.94 [95% confidence interval: 0.9–0.96]) and "good" (ICC = 0.72 [95% confidence interval: 0.58–0.82]) for the UMRS and GCI-S, respectively.

### Underlying etiology of the myoclonus

Of the 40 patients diagnosed with an organic movement disorder, an underlying etiology was identified in 21 patients (53%). In 12 patients, a causative genetic mutation was identified, and 9 were found to have an acquired cause including metabolic disturbances (n = 3), drug-induced myoclonus (n = 1), and structural brain lesions (n = 2). Of those with an underlying genetic etiology, the highest rate was among those with CM (n = 10), with mutations in the *NKX2.1* (n = 2) and *NPC1* (n = 2) genes being most common. A single case of a contiguous gene deletion (578 kb, 16p11.2) involving the *PRRT2* gene was identified with an extended phenotype including psychomotor retardation, hemiplegic migraine, epilepsy, myoclonus, and dystonia. All patients with a myoclonic epilepsy syndrome had evidence of epileptiform discharges on EEG, with the CM in those with juvenile myoclonic epilepsy and Lafora disease demonstrating an epileptic origin. All 4 patients with SCM had a clinical diagnosis of myoclonus dystonia, with a *RELN* variant identified in one patient. Table 5 summarizes the etiologic diagnoses and additional clinical characteristics.

## Discussion

This prospective study has sought to demonstrate the benefit of electrophysiologic testing alongside clinical examination, in determining the diagnosis of myoclonus and its subtype in an unselected cohort. We have shown that this combined approach leads to changes in the initial diagnosis of myoclonus and its subtype in 53% of cases.

Overall, agreement of a diagnosis of myoclonus between the examining clinicians and the electrophysiologic findings was 91% (n = 60), decreasing to 47% (n = 28) with anatomical subtype. These findings contrast with results from similar studies in tremor cohorts (n = 210) where agreement between the 2 assessment forms was 87%, potentially reflecting greater clinical familiarity and larger patient cohorts.[15–17] We identified several clinical groups in which there was some consistency in the change in diagnosis following electrophysiologic testing. These included those with multifocal myoclonus (principally distinguishing between CM and SCM), combined movement disorders (e.g., myoclonus in the presence of dystonia), and functional jerks. The findings from this study also reflect the difficulty in determining a conclusive clinical diagnosis with myoclonus, and lend weight to the importance of electrophysiologic testing, particularly in nonspecialist centers.

**Table 3** Electrophysiologic characteristics of each subtype based on the electrophysiologic findings

| Electrophysiologic characteristics | CM | SCM | FJ | MMS | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **No.** | 30 | 10 | 17 | 3 | 60 |
| **Type** | | | | | |
| Positive | 15 | 8 | 17 | 2 | 42 |
| Negative | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Both | 15 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 17 |
| **Burst duration, ms** | | | | | |
| 30–50 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| 50–100 | 27 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 30 |
| 50–200 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 7 |
| 100–300 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 4 |
| >300 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Variable | 1 | 2 | 11 | 0 | 14 |
| **Distribution** | | | | | |
| Focal | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Multifocal | 29 | 9 | 7 | 1 | 46 |
| Segmental | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Generalized | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Variable | 0 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 10 |
| **Back-averaging** | | | | | |
| CS present | 5 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 7 |
| BP present | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 5 |
| CS absent | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| BP absent | 0 | 1 | 7 | 0 | 8 |
| Not performed | 15 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 17 |
| Not possible | 6 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 16 |
| **Positive coherence** | | | | | |
| Present (segment sec) | 16 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 16 |
| Absent (segment sec) | 4 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 9 |
| Not performed | 10 | 6 | 17 | 2 | 35 |
| **Giant SSEP** | | | | | |
| Present | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Absent | 11 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 19 |
| Not performed | 13 | 5 | 15 | 1 | 34 |
| Unable to interpret | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 |

Abbreviations: BP = Bereitschaftspotential; CM = cortical myoclonus; CS = cortical spike; FJ = functional jerks; MMS = multiple myoclonus subtype; SCM = subcortical myoclonus; SSEP = somatosensory evoked potential.

Higher-level electrophysiologic techniques were used to determine whether the myoclonus was of cortical origin or an FJ. The yield of back-averaging and coherence analysis to confirm a cortical origin was 60% and 80%, respectively. The additive value of these techniques was lower than the 100% seen in previous studies, potentially attributable to the heterogeneity

**Table 4** Details of cases in which the clinical diagnosis changed after evaluation by the movement disorders specialist

| No. | Age at onset, y[a] | Age at examination, y[a] | Clinical features | Electrophysiologic findings | Electrophysiologic diagnosis | Expert clinical diagnosis | Final clinical diagnosis | Reasons for revising the electrophysiologic diagnosis |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 10 | 20 | Distal limbs and face | 50–200 ms | SCM | CM | CM | Distal distribution |
| | | | Provocation by action | Back-averaging NP | | | | Facial involvement |
| | | | Stimulus sensitive | | | | | Stimulus sensitivity |
| | | | | | | | | No firm electrophysiologic results |
| 2 | 0 | 10 | Distal > proximal limbs | Positive and negative | SCM | CM | CM | Distal distribution |
| | | | Face | 50–100 ms | | | | Facial involvement |
| | | | Provocation by action | Back-averaging NP | | | | Stimulus sensitivity |
| | | | Stimulus sensitive | | | | | No firm electrophysiologic results |
| 3 | 69 | 69 | Negative myoclonus | Negative | SCM | CM | CM | Negative myoclonus |
| | | | Distal limbs | 50–100 ms | | | | Metabolic derangements |
| | | | Provocation by action | Back-averaging NP | | | | No firm electrophysiologic results |
| | | | Metabolic derangements | | | | | |
| 4 | 6 | 7 | Distal limbs | 50–200 ms | SCM | CM | CM | Distal distribution |
| | | | Provocation by action | Negative back-averaging | | | | Stimulus sensitivity |
| | | | Stimulus sensitive | | | | | Co-occurrence of epilepsy |
| | | | Epilepsy | | | | | No firm electrophysiologic results |
| 5 | 16 | 17 | Acute onset | 50–200 ms | SCM | FJ | FJ | Acute onset |
| | | | Distal upper limbs | Negative back-averaging | | | | Atypical sensory problems |
| | | | Entrainment | | | | | Entrainment |
| | | | Atypical sensory problems | | | | | No firm electrophysiologic results |
| 6 | 18 | 18 | Acute onset | Variable duration | SCM | FJ | FJ | Acute onset |
| | | | Distal limbs | Multifocal | | | | Stimulus sensitive |

Continued

**Table 4** Details of cases in which the clinical diagnosis changed after evaluation by the movement disorders specialist *(continued)*

| No. | Age at onset, y[a] | Age at examination, y[a] | Clinical features | Electrophysiologic findings | Electrophysiologic diagnosis | Expert clinical diagnosis | Final clinical diagnosis | Reasons for revising the electrophysiologic diagnosis |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Stimulus sensitive | Back-averaging NP | | | | Change with distraction |
| | | | Change with distraction | | | | | No firm electrophysiologic results |
| 7 | 20 | 20 | Subacute onset | 50–200 ms | SCM | FJ | FJ | Provocation by rest |
| | | | Proximal and distal | Negative back-averaging | | | | Stimulus sensitive |
| | | | Provocation by rest | | | | | Change with distraction |
| | | | Stimulus sensitive | | | | | No firm electrophysiologic results |
| | | | Change with distraction | | | | | |
| 8 | 14 | 20 | Myoclonus, dystonia, tremor | Positive and negative | CM | SCM | SCM | Combined myoclonus and dystonia |
| | | | Cognitive difficulties | 50–100 ms | | | | No firm electrophysiologic results |
| | | | Proximal and distal | Back-averaging NP | | | | |

Abbreviations: CM = cortical myoclonus; FJ = functional jerks; NP = not performed; SCM = subcortical myoclonus.
[a] Values are displayed as median.

**Table 5** Underlying etiologic diagnoses and additional clinical characteristics

| Myoclonus subtype | Etiologic diagnosis or syndrome | Additional clinical characteristics | No. |
|---|---|---|---|
| CM (n= 33) | Juvenile Huntington (CAG repeat in *HTT* gene) | Cognitive impairment, severe epilepsy, spasticity | 1 |
| | Wilson disease (mutation *ATP7B* gene) | Parkinsonism, dystonia, ataxia, cognitive impairment | 1 |
| | Niemann-Pick type C (*NPC1* mutation) | Eye movement disorder, ataxia, dystonia (n = 1) | 2 |
| | Lafora disease (mutation *NHLRC1* gene) | Severe epilepsy, mild cognitive impairment | 1 |
| | Juvenile myoclonus epilepsy (no genetic mutation identified) | Epilepsy | 1 |
| | Myoclonus epilepsy (no genetic mutation identified) | Epilepsy, mild cognitive impairment | 1 |
| | Ramsay Hunt syndrome (*GOSR* mutation) | Ataxia, areflexia, eye movement disorder | 1 |
| | Ramsay Hunt syndrome (no genetic mutation identified) | Ataxia, areflexia, eye movement disorder | 1 |
| | Benign hereditary chorea (mutation *NKX2.1* gene) | Chorea, dystonia, areflexia | 2 |
| | Paroxysmal kinesigenic dyskinesia (16p11.2 deletion [578 kb], including the *PRRT2* gene) | Severe cognitive impairment, hemiplegic migraine, epilepsy, dystonia | 1 |
| | Myoclonus dystonia (18p11.21 deletion [14.9 Mb]) | Dystonia | 1 |
| | Myoclonus dystonia (no genetic mutation identified) | Dystonia, bradykinesia (n = 1), eye movement disorder (n = 1) | 2 |
| | Medication-induced | Cognitive impairment (n = 1) | 2 |
| | Metabolic derangements due to liver or kidney disease | Cognitive impairment (n = 2), polyneuropathy (n = 1) | 3 |
| | Structural cerebral lesion | Mild cognitive impairment (n = 1), vascular parkinsonism (n = 1) | 2 |
| | Unknown | | 11 |
| SCM (n = 4) | Myoclonus dystonia (*RELN* variant) | Dystonia | 1 |
| | Myoclonus dystonia (no genetic mutation identified) | Dystonia | 3 |
| | Unknown | | 0 |
| MMS (n = 3) | Myoclonus dystonia (*RELN* variant) | Dystonia | 1 |
| | Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease | Cognitive impairment, stiffness | 1 |
| | Lumbar radiculopathy and FJ | Functional gait problem | 1 |
| | Unknown | | 0 |

Abbreviations: CM = cortical myoclonus; FJ = functional jerks; MMS = multiple myoclonus subtypes; SCM = subcortical myoclonus.

of our cohort in contrast to smaller, more selected study groups (n = 20/n = 3).[9,18] A CHAID analysis demonstrated that a combination of polymyography (burst duration) and clinical phenomenology provided the greatest accuracy (95%) in determining myoclonus subtype.

This study is limited by the lack of a definitive diagnostic test or marker. We have sought to reduce this by ensuring a minimum 6-month follow-up period to allow for any changes in clinical symptomatology. However, this lack of objective testing also serves to reinforce the potential gain of routine electrophysiologic testing to both aid, and provide additional evidence of the diagnosis of myoclonus and its subtype. Our cohort also likely reflects a more complex group of patients than might be expected in routine clinical practice, because of recruitment from a single specialist movement disorder center. We also acknowledge that while the electrophysiologic tests discussed are readily available within our center, such access varies considerably between centers and internationally.

Electrophysiologic testing is an important contributing diagnostic tool for the classification of myoclonus and its subtypes. While this clearly constitutes an important element of clinical work for neurologists with an interest in movement disorders, this algorithm of testing is also likely to be of use for those working in the fields of metabolic disorders, pediatrics, and epilepsy. Further development of the electrophysiologic criteria for myoclonus subtypes, and application of this work to larger, unselected patient cohorts is essential to improve its objectivity and diagnostic value.

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# Electrophysiologic testing aids diagnosis and subtyping of myoclonus

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## Study question
Can electrophysiologic testing contribute to the diagnosis and anatomical classification of myoclonus?

## Summary answer
Electrophysiologic testing can aid the diagnosis and anatomical classification of myoclonus.

## What is known and what this paper adds
Electrophysiologic testing is frequently used in the differential diagnosis and anatomical classification of myoclonus, but its sensitivity and specificity are poorly understood. This study evaluates the diagnostic utility of electrophysiologic testing in a large cohort of patients.

## Participants and setting
The study prospectively recruited 72 patients who were initially diagnosed with myoclonus between July 2014 and June 2016 and referred to the University Medical Center Groningen. The initial diagnosis subtypes included cortical myoclonus (25), subcortical myoclonus (7), spinal myoclonus (2), functional myoclonic jerks (15), and unclassifiable myoclonus (23). The median Unified Myoclonus Rating Scale score was 27 (range 5–85), and the median Global Clinical Impression–Severity score was 4 (range 2–7).

## Design, size, and duration
Initial clinical diagnoses were provided by the participants' primary neurologists and based on standardized, systemic evaluations that included videotaped clinical examinations. The electrophysiologic testing started with polymyography. Those meeting the electrophysiologic criteria for myoclonus underwent further testing that could include EEG-EMG or coherence analysis. An experienced neurophysiologist provided diagnoses based on the electrophysiologic test results. For a gold standard comparison, a movement disorder specialist provided diagnoses based on the clinical details, videotaped clinical examinations, and electrophysiologic test results. All reviewers were blinded to initial diagnoses.

## Main results and the role of chance
Of the 66 patients who underwent complete electrophysiologic testing, a neurophysiologist diagnosed myoclonus in 60 (91%).



Subtype agreement with the initial diagnosis was achieved for 28 (47%) cases. In distinguishing myoclonus cases from non-myoclonus cases, the movement disorder specialist concurred with the neurophysiologist for all 66 (100%) cases. For the 60 cases with a final diagnosis of myoclonus, the movement disorder specialist concurred with the neurophysiologist on myoclonus subtype in 52 (87%) patients.

## Bias, confounding, and other reasons for caution
The study lacked a definitive diagnostic test or marker.

## Generalizability to other populations
Complex cases are probably overrepresented in the study cohort, and this may limit generalizability to patients encountered in routine clinical practice.

## Study funding/potential competing interests
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