Subarachnoid contrast extravasation after intravenous and intra-arterial reperfusion therapy

A 63-year-old woman presented with acute hemiparesis from right middle cerebral artery occlusion. After IV tissue plasminogen activator and intra-arterial treatment with Merci retriever, balloon angioplasty, and urokinase, CT demonstrated diffuse subarachnoid hyperdensity (figure, A). Because the patient appeared clinically improved, subarachnoid contrast extravasation rather than hemorrhage was suspected. Hounsfield units may not reliably distinguish between diluted contrast and blood, but absence of susceptibility on gradient echo MRI (figure, B) and rapid contrast clearance on serial CT (figure, C) support the correct diagnosis.1 Potential etiologies include blood–brain barrier breakdown2 and microvascular injury due to device manipulation.

Wolfgang Leesch, MD, New York, NY; Brian L. Edlow, MD, Albert J. Yoo, MD, David M. Greer, MD, MA, Boston, MA

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Address correspondence and reprint requests to Dr. Wolfgang Leesch, Institute for Neurology and Neurosurgery, Center for Endovascular Surgery, Roosevelt Hospital, 1000 Tenth Avenue, Suite 10G, New York, NY 10019; wleesch@chpnet.org

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