

*Research Article***Toneburst Vestibular Evoked Myogenic Potential (VEMP) in Patients with Ménière's Disease****Mohamed M. Elbadry, B H Aly, H S Mahmoud, Dalia F. Mohammed**

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**Abstract**

**Objective:** In this study, we test the hypothesis that the cochlear hydrops of Meniere's syndrome leads to alteration in saccular motion that change the dynamics of the vestibular evoked myogenic potential. **Study Design:** Prospective cohort study. **Setting:** A university hospital. **Subjects:** Twenty normal adult volunteers and 20 adult patients with unilateral Meniere's disease by American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck surgery diagnostic criteria. **Intervention:** All subjects underwent vestibular evoked myogenic potential testing using ipsilateral broadband click and short tone burst stimuli at 500 and 1000 Hz. **Main Outcome Measure:** P<sub>1</sub>-N<sub>1</sub> corrected amplitude, P<sub>1</sub> and N<sub>1</sub> latency, 1000/500 FPA ratio, AR, IAL difference, **Results:** Normal subjects show a frequency dependent vestibular evoked myogenic potential with best response (frequency tuning) at 500 Hz. Compared with normal subjects and unaffected ears of Meniere's subjects. Affected Meniere's ears showed frequency shift and there was less tuning apparent at 500 Hz. Unaffected ears of Meniere's subjects also showed affected frequency tuning. Both Meniere's ear and other ear FPA ratio was larger compared to control ears while no statistically significant difference between Meniere's ear and other ears. **Conclusion:** Meniere's ears display alteration in vestibular evoked myogenic potential tuning, supporting our hypothesis of altered saccular motion mechanics arising from hydropic distention. Unaffected ears of unilateral Meniere's subjects show similar changes but to lesser degree. This finding may be because of occult saccular hydrops in the asymptomatic ear or binaural interaction in the vestibular evoked myogenic potential otolith cervical reflex arc.

**Key Words:** Toneburst, Vestibular, Evoked, Myogenic Potential**Introduction**

The Vestibular evoked myogenic potential (VEMP) is a large, short latency, myogenic potential produced by contraction of the sternocleidomastoid (SCM) muscle in response to loud acoustic stimulus<sup>[1]</sup>. Studies have shown that 90-100 dB nHL click or toneburst stimuli produce optimal VEMP recording. However, Low frequency tone burst stimuli give more pronounced results than click or other frequencies<sup>[1]</sup>. The VEMP has been applied clinically to evaluate the integrity of the sacculocollic reflex and is widely clinically applicable in many disease as Ménière's disease (MD), superior semicircular canal dehiscence, large vestibular aqueduct syndrome, acoustic neuroma, multiple sclerosis and brainstem stroke<sup>[1]</sup>.

It has been reported that VEMP may be useful in assessing MD because the saccule,

next to the cochlea is the second most frequent site of hydrops formation<sup>[1]</sup>. According to stage of MD. VEMP may take different forms either enhanced, decreased amplitude or absent. Furthermore, Rauch et al.,<sup>[2]</sup> reported the alteration of tuning characteristics of VEMP in MD patients. They reported that, in healthy subject, the largest amplitude and the lowest threshold were obtained to 500 Hz toneburst, whereas patients with MD showed less tuning at 500 Hz and shift of the best frequency to 1000 Hz. This result was based on their findings that the ratio of the amplitude of P<sub>1</sub>-N<sub>1</sub> of VEMP of 500 Hz stimulus to that of 1000 Hz was significantly less in Ménière's patients than

in normal subjects. Rauch et al attributed this shift to change of resonant frequency in the saccule and suggest that amplitude relation of VEMP at 500 Hz to 1000 Hz

may help in staging, diagnosis of early Ménière's, diagnosis in other ear and confirm diagnosis of probable Ménière's.

The current work was designed to study VEMP in patients with MD using click and tonebursts with 500 and 1000 Hz. The specific aims of the current work were:

1- To determine VEMP findings in MD patients and compare the findings with those of healthy control subjects. The specific parameter of interest is the frequency peak amplitude (FPA) ratio, which is ratio of P1-N1 VEMP amplitude at 1000 Hz toneburst to P1-N1 VEMP amplitude at 500 Hz toneburst.

2- To determine if VEMP can diagnose the involvement of the other ear in MD patients.

### **Subjects**

The current study included 2 groups. Group I was the group of Meniere's patients, which included 20 patients with definite MD. group II was the control group, which included 20 healthy volunteers.

**I- Patients with definite MD were selected according to the criteria of AAO/HNS [2] which are**

- A- Two or more definitive spontaneous episodes of vertigo 20 minutes or more.
- B- Audiometrically documented hearing loss on at least one occasion.
- C- Tinnitus or aural fullness in the treated ear.
- D- Other causes excluded.

**II- Subjects in the Control group were selected according to the following criteria**

- A- No history suggestive for vestibular disorder as vertigo, dizziness, or sense of imbalance.
- B- No history suggestive for migraine as migrainous headache, phonophobia and photophobia.
- C- Bilateral normal hearing sensitivity.
- D- Bilateral normal tympanograms with intact acoustic reflex and no current or history of middle ear disease.
- E- Normal cochlear function, as shown from normal DPOAE.
- F- No history of medical disorders known to affect hearing as diabetes, hypertension.

### **Methods**

All subjects were subjected to:

#### **I- Full history taking:**

History included description of the vertiginous attack, frequency of attack, duration of each attack, condition of the patients in between attacks, degree of disability during attack, associated hearing loss and tinnitus, sense of ear fullness, nausea and vomiting.

#### **II- Otoscope examination.**

#### **III- Audiological evaluation in the form of:**

1- **Immittancemetry** using Zodiac 401 immittancemeter (GN Otometrics A/S, Taastrup, Denmark) to measure middle ear pressure and stapedial muscle reflex threshold at frequencies of 500, 1000, 2000 and 4000 Hz and to exclude middle ear pathologies.

2- **Pure tone audiometry** using Amplaid 309 audiometer (Amplus Corp. Boulder, CO, U.S.A.) and sound treated room (amplisilence) to assess hearing sensitivity. Air conduction threshold was obtained for the frequency range 200-8000 Hz at single octave intervals using a TDH 49 ear phone (Telephonics Corporation, Farm ingdale, NY, U.S.A.), while bone conduction threshold was obtained for the frequency range 500-4000 Hz at single octave intervals using a B71 bone vibrator (Radioear, New Eagle, PA, U.S.A.). Speech reception threshold (SRT) and speech discrimination score using bisyllabic and monosyllabic phonetically balanced words respectively.

3- **DPOAE** using the Intelligent Hearing system (IHS) two channel evoked potential recording apparatus with Smart OAE 4.0 software (Intelligent Hearing Systems, Miami, FL, U.S.A.). Two tones were used: L1=70 dB SPL and L2=80 dB SPL, while f2/f1 was 1.22. Both the amplitude of response of the distortion product (DP) at f2-f1 and background noise (Ns) were obtained at nine points corresponding to f2 frequencies of 503, 783, 1105, 1561, 2211, 3125, 4416, 6250 and 8837 Hz. These measurements were used to build a DP-gram by displaying the DP against the f2 frequency. The signal to noise ratio (SNR) was measured (SNR=DP-Ns) at each of these nine points. DPOAE was considered

normal (pass), thereby reflecting normal cochlear function, if the SNR was  $> 3$  dB SPL on at least 50% of the tested frequencies<sup>[1]</sup>.

ξ- **ABR** using IHS with smart evoked potentials software version ξ.0. The stimuli were 100 μs alternating click delivered through head phone at intensity level of 80-90 dB nHL with repetition rate of the stimuli was 20 p/s and 30 p/s. Electrode montage was high forehead to ipsilateral mastoid. The common electrode was placed on the contralateral mastoid. The response was filtered between 100 and 3000 Hz, amplified 100,000 times, recorded over 10.24 ms time window and 2000 sweeps were averaged for each run. ABR was done to exclude retrocochlear pathologies when hearing sensitivity permit ABR recording. MRI petrous bone with gadolinium was done in some patients instead of ABR when hearing loss is severe enough ( $> 50$  dB HL) to preclude ABR recording.

#### **IV-Vestibular evaluation in the form of**

1- **A complete VNG test battery** using the ICS Chartr binocular four channel system. VNG examination included the search for spontaneous, gaze-evoked and post-headshake nystagmus. It also included the recording of smooth pursuit, saccadic and optokinetic eye movements. The search for positioning and positional nystagmus was also performed during the right and left Dix-Hallpike tests, and when patients were in the supine position (with head centered, head to the right and head to the left), right decubitus and left decubitus positions. Finally, a monothermal caloric test was conducted using cool water irrigation at 30°C<sup>[1]</sup>.

2- **VEMP testing** was performed using IHS with Smart EP software, version ξ.0. The patients were tested either in the sitting position or in the supine position and head rotated away from the stimulated side during recording. EMG activity was recorded ipsilaterally from the middle of the SCM using a surface (active) electrode, with a reference electrode on the ipsilateral sternoclavicular joint and a ground electrode on the forehead. Care was taken to place the bilateral electrodes symmetrically. During each recording session,

patients were instructed to rotate their heads towards the contralateral side away from the tested ear to keep the SCM under tension. The patients were instructed to tense the SCM during acoustic stimulation and relax it between recording sessions. The stimulus will be click 100 μs and STB at 200 and 1000 Hz (1 ms rise and fall time and 0 msec plateau time). The stimulus were presented ipsilaterally through Telephonics TDH-ξ9 headphone. The EMG signal was amplified (1000 times), bandpass filtered (10-1000 Hz). The repetition rate of the stimuli was 0.1 stimulus/second and an average of at least 200 sweep were taken. The intensity of each stimulus was 90 dBnHL and two waveforms were recorded for each stimulus type (click, 200 Hz TB and 1000 Hz TB) to test wave reproducibility. The analysis window started 30 ms before stimulus onset and ended 50 ms after stimulus onset (i.e. from -30 msec to 50 msec). Each ear was stimulated separately and the first ear to be tested was selected randomly.

To decrease the effect of tonic activity of the SCM on the recorded VEMP and ensure equal muscle contraction on both sides, the recording device and the Smart EP software only accepted data acquisition when the root mean square EMG activity was between 0 and 100 μV. Data acquisition was rejected when root mean square EMG activity was below 20 μV or above 100 μV. The level of root mean square EMG activity was monitored and appeared on the computer screen, allowing the examiner to give feedback responses to the patient to increase or decrease muscle contraction and maintain constant muscle tension.

Upon recording the waveforms, the first positive deflection was marked as P1 and the first negative deflection will be marked as N1. Such wave (P1-N1) was wave to be analyzed. The analyzed VEMP parameters for these stimuli (click, 200 Hz TB, 1000 Hz TB) were:

**i- P1-N1 peak to peak amplitude.**

**ii- P1-N1 corrected amplitude.**

Corrected amplitude of P1-N1 was used to control the differences in muscle activation. The CA was computed with the software by dividing the P1-N1 amplitude

by the root mean square of EMG for the first 30 ms before stimulus onset according to this formula<sup>[4]</sup>.

$$CA = \frac{\text{Raw amplitude of P1 - N1 (peak to peak amplitude)}}{\text{Mean background amplitude (-30 prestimulus rms EMG activity)}}$$

### iii-P1 and N1 latency

#### iv-1000/500 Hz frequency peak amplitude (FPA) ratio:

which is defined as P1-N1 peak to peak corrected amplitude at 1000 Hz TB divided by P1-N1 peak to peak corrected amplitude at 500 Hz.

$$FPA = \frac{\text{P1 - N1 Corrected amplitude at 1000 Hz}}{\text{P1 - N1 Corrected amplitude at 500 Hz}}$$

#### v- Asymmetric ratio (AR):

For the control subjects, AR was calculated according to such formula

$$AR = \frac{\text{Larger corrected P1 - N1 amplitude} - \text{Smaller corrected P1 - N1 amplitude}}{\text{Sum of corrected amplitude in both ears}}$$

For the Ménière's patients, AR was calculated according to such formula

$$AR = \frac{\text{corrected amplitude of other ear} - \text{corrected amplitude of Meniere's ear}}{\text{Sum of corrected amplitude in both ears}}$$

The VEMP results for the control group served as normative data. The normative limit for VEMP parameters were calculated as mean  $\pm$  2 SD of the results of control group.

## Results

### 1- Intact vs Absent

Using 500 Hz TB, VEMP results were compared between the Meniere's group and control group. While all the control ears had intact VEMP, only 10 (60%) Meniere's ears had intact VEMP and 10 ears (40%) had absent VEMP. Such results was statistically significant as shown from Binomial test ( $P=0.001$ ). On the other hand, 21 (84%) from the other ears had intact VEMP and only 4 (16%) had absent VEMP. This results was not statistically significant as shown from Binomial test ( $P=0.104$ ).

### 2- P1-N1 Corrected amplitude (CA)

Results showed that the best stimulus that produced largest amplitude was 500 Hz TB followed by 1000 Hz TB and lastly click in

control group. Clearly, the P1-N1 CA was largest for 1000 Hz TB in Meniere's patients.

ANOVA test and Post hoc test were performed to compare between the Meniere's group and control group as regard P1-N1 CA. The P1-N1 CA was statistically smaller in both Meniere's ears and other ears as compared to the control ears (p value= 0.001) while there was no statistical significant difference between Meniere's ear and other ears (p value = 0.99).

### 3- 1000/500 Hz frequency peak amplitude (FPA) ratio:

In the current study, FPR was considered abnormal if it was above the mean +2 SD value of the control subjects (i.e; above 0.90). Similar to P1-N1 CA, the FPA ratio in both the Meniere's ear and other ear was larger compared to the control ears while there was no statistical significant difference between Meniere's ears and other ears. Table 1, 2 show this results.

**Table 1:** ANOVA for comparison between Meniere's group and Control group.

	Control	Meniere's ear	Other ear	F value	P value
1000/500 Hz FPA ratio	0.71	0.96	1.27	13.780	0.000

**Table 2:** Post hoc test for comparison between Meniere's ear, other ear and control group as regard 1000/500 Hz FPA ratio.

	P value
Control vs Meniere's ear	0.047
Control vs Other ear	0.000
Meniere's ear vs Other ear	0.171

**ξ- P1 and N1 latency**

Contrally to P1-N1 CA, there was no statistical significant difference between the Meniere's group (either the Meniere ear or the other ear) and control group as regard P1 latency and N1 latency (P value by ANOVA test=0.703 and 0.046 respectively)

**ο- AR**

Similar to P1 latency and N1 latency there was no significant difference between the Meniere's group and the control group as regard the AR (P value by independent sample T test = 0.160).

**Discussion**

TB stimulation at 500 Hz tone was considered as an ideal stimulation<sup>[3,11]</sup>, with the stimulus intensity that ranged between 90-100 dB nHL or 110-130 dB SPL. Although the TB stimulation at 90 dB nHL was the most commonly used. For clinical diagnosis using VEMP, we recommend STB stimuli because latencies and amplitude of click were significantly different among several lab<sup>[11,12]</sup>.

So we use both click, 500 Hz and 1000 Hz STB for comparison between MD group and control group, MAV group and control group in our study.

Our results show that in 500 Hz TB, 10 (70%) Meniere's ear had intact VEMP and 10 (40%) absent which was statistically significant different. The other ear had 21 (84%) intact VEMP and 4 (16%) absent

which is not statistically significant different.

In affected ear, VEMP was intact in 10 ears (50%) by Ribiero<sup>[17]</sup>, 18 ears (52%) by Seo et al.,<sup>[14]</sup>, 23 ears (54%) by wael et al.,<sup>[10]</sup>, 60% by Murofushi<sup>[13]</sup>. Young et al.,<sup>[15]</sup>, de wael et al.,<sup>[12]</sup> Murofushi et al.,<sup>[13]</sup> reported that variation between in the incidence of intact VEMP can be explained by the different stages of MD.

In other ear VEMP was absent in 20% by Ribiero<sup>[17]</sup>, 7 ears (44%) by Seo et al.,<sup>[14]</sup>. It was found that VEMP could identify occult endolymphatic hydrops on ears that were apparently a symptomatic in patients with MD<sup>[17]</sup>.

Previous studies found reduced VEMP responses to clicks in Meniere subjects, with a substantial proportion of subjects showing no VEMP response<sup>[10,11]</sup> in comparison to normal subject there was reduced amplitude in both ears of unilateral Meniere's subjects with greater changes in the affected ears as the average VEMP amplitude at the affected side is significantly lower than that at the unaffected side. It was explained by reduced VEMP amplitude at the affected side points toward a permanently affected otolith system in unilateral Meniere's patients at the side of Meniere's ear. The affection of the cochlea and part of the vestibular system are related. Kingma<sup>[14]</sup>, Rauch et al.,<sup>[11]</sup> which agree with our results.

Our result shows that there was no statistically significant difference between Meniere's group and control group in P<sub>1</sub> and N<sub>1</sub> latency.

There was no statistically significant difference between absolute latencies of wave P<sub>1</sub> and N<sub>1</sub> on affected and a symptomatic ears<sup>[17]</sup>. The same was found by young et al.,<sup>[18]</sup> Waele et al.,<sup>[19]</sup> observed latency of response in subjects MD similar to that of normal subjects detecting differences only in amplitude of response. These finding are similar to our results. This can be explained by that the latency depends predominantly on central signal transmission and muscle activation, is unaffected by saccular deformation (hydrops) in Meniere's disease<sup>[1]</sup>.

Young et al.,<sup>[18]</sup> reporting 10% of cases of late endolymphatic hydrops with prolongation of absolute latency of P<sub>1</sub>, justifying these finding owing to high endolymphatic pressure that would affect the transmission of sound, provided that hearing was also affected to Murofushi et al.,<sup>[19]</sup> prolongation of latency of P<sub>1</sub> suggested retrolabyrinthine damage. These are against our results.

Because MD reduces VEMP responses, it might be thought that a symmetry of the VEMP response would provide a good clinical test of unilateral MD but unexpectedly this difference was not statistically significant this is explained by Rauch et al.,<sup>[1]</sup> that there is occult disease in the unaffected ear [occult bilateral disease in Meniere's subjects] and this is similar to our results.

Our results show in both Meniere's ear and other ear FPA ratio was larger compared to control ears while no statistically significant difference between Meniere's ear and other ears. Kim-Lee<sup>[10]</sup> show that 1000/500 Hz FA ratio is elevated in MD and this represents a useful diagnostic criteria in the diagnosis of MD. Kim-Lee<sup>[10]</sup>, Rauch et al.,<sup>[1]</sup> suggested that the elevated FPA ratio in their VEMP responses using TB stimuli of 500 and 1000 Hz. Likely due to a shift in the morphologic features of the saccule.

The change in VEMP frequency tuning produced by MD provides a clue to the origin of VEMP tuning. Welgampola and Colebatch<sup>[11]</sup> suggested that VEMP tuning originated in an electrical resonance of the hair cells, whereas Todd et al.,<sup>[12]</sup> suggested that VEMP tuning was attributed to that VEMP tuning was attributed to the mass spring damping properties of the saccule.

We found that the FPA ratio was significantly different between patients with MD and normal subjects. So we suggest that the resultant FPA cutoff value would be clinically useful in diagnosis of MD which agree with Kim lee and Rauch et al.,

### Conclusion

The altered VEMP dynamics seen in Meniere's disease offer the possibility that VEMP testing may be clinically useful in the assessment and early detector of involvement of sacculus in endolymphatic hydrops of MD, both on the affected and on the asymptomatic ear and/or monitor of evolving Meniere's disease or of the efficacy of potential Meniere's treatments.

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