



H Reflex Latency in the Healthy Elderly

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate prospectively and analyze the relationship of tibial nerve H reflex latency to age, sex, leg length, and skin temperature in a large healthy elderly population. The H reflex was recorded bilaterally in 92% of 103 carefully screened individuals aged 60-88 years. The mean H reflex latency was 30.8 (SD = 2.6) and 30.7 (SD = 2.6) ms for right and left legs, respectively. A high correlation ($r = 0.55$, $P < 0.05$) was present between H reflex latency and leg length. No significant correlation existed for H reflex latency and age. The upper normal limit for the difference between right and left H reflex latencies was 1.8 ms. This limit is greater than that reported in the literature for younger individuals due to a larger standard deviation. These findings suggest that aging increases the between-leg variability of H reflex latency in individuals. This greater difference must be taken into account when using side-to-side H reflex latency comparison to detect unilateral pathology in the elderly.