

Does the Result of the Caloric Test Change Patient Management?

Noor Yousif Abdulkarim, MD, MSc (UCL)*

Background: The caloric test has been regarded as the gold standard for vestibular function testing for over 40 years. The value of its role in the overall management of dizzy patient is variable and appears to be dependent on the clinician's expertise and training background. Many studies have reviewed this subject, but there are still no clear or consistent guidelines.

Objective: To review different professionals' experience with the caloric test and to have an insight on their opinion about its role and value in the overall management of dizzy patients.

Setting: University College of London (UCL). Ear Institute and the Royal National Throat, Nose, and Ear hospital, London - UK.

Design: Retrospective review and questionnaire.

Method: Retrospective review of the records of patients attending the neurotology clinic and questionnaire distributed to audiology professionals of different designations to review their opinion about the validity of the caloric test. The study was performed between May to October 2010.

Result: The caloric test was requested for all dizzy patients attending the neurotology clinic. There were no clear or consistent reasons for requesting the caloric test among different professionals. The management plan was often established prior to the test, and almost always remained unchanged post testing.

Conclusion: Fifty percent of the professionals enrolled in the study reported that the results of the caloric testing did not influence their line of management. Studies at wider scale would be advisable to allow a solid conclusion and to verify the real value of this gold standard tool.