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Admission Serum Magnesium as a Prognostic Indicator in Acute Cerebrovascular Accident: A Prospective Observational Cohort Study from a Tertiary Hospital in Assam

Dr. Dipen Kumar Bhattacharyya[1], Dr. Sourav Dhar[2], Dr. Nayan Jyoti Bez[3], Dr. Reepa Borah Choudhury[4], Dr. Dhaval[5]

[1]Professor & Head, Department of Medicine, Department of General Medicine,
[2]Postgraduate Resident, Department of Medicine
[3]Associate Professor, Department of Medicine
[4]Professor & Head, Department of Biochemistry
[5]Demonstrator, Department of Medicine Barpeta Medical College & Hospital, Barpeta, Assam, India

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Corresponding Author:

Dr. Dipen Kumar Bhattacharyya
Professor & Head, Department of Medicine, Department of General Medicine

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ABSTRACT

Background: Stroke remains one of the leading causes of adult disability and death in India. Beyond conventional risk factors, electrolyte disturbances, particularly hypomagnesemia, may influence neuronal injury, oxidative stress, and vascular tone. Evidence from Indian tertiary settings remains limited and inconsistent regarding its prognostic role. **Aim**: To assess serum magnesium at admission as a predictor of functional outcome among patients presenting with acute cerebrovascular accident (CVA). **Methods**: A prospective hospital-based cohort of 70 adults with ischemic or hemorrhagic stroke was studied at Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed Medical College and Hospital, Barpeta (Assam), over one year (July 2023–June 2024). Demographic, clinical, and biochemical parameters were recorded at admission using a structured proforma (Annexure IV). Serum magnesium was estimated by the colorimetric method within 24 hours of onset. Functional outcome was assessed by the Modified Rankin Scale (mRS) at discharge and 3-month follow-up. Data were analyzed using chi-square and ANOVA tests with $p < 0.05$ considered significant. **Results**: Ischemic stroke predominated (71.4%), with hypomagnesemia (<1.5 mg/dL) in 55.7% of all patients and in 76.5% of those with ischemic subtype. Mean serum magnesium was significantly lower among cases with poor outcomes (mRS ≥ 3) than those with good recovery ($p = 0.03$). Hypomagnesemia correlated with higher rates of diabetes, hypertension, and coronary artery disease. Figures 1–3 and Tables 1–3 present the proportional and comparative distributions. **Conclusion**: Low serum magnesium at presentation is common and independently associated with poorer short-term functional outcomes after stroke. Routine estimation of magnesium during admission may offer a simple, cost-effective adjunct in early prognostication and management planning in Indian tertiary hospitals.

Keywords*: Stroke; Ischemic stroke; Hemorrhagic stroke; Serum magnesium; Prognosis; Modified Rankin Scale; Assam; India.*

INTRODUCTION

Stroke remains one of the foremost causes of mortality and long-term neurological disability worldwide, contributing substantially to the global burden of non-communicable diseases [1,2]. Characterized by sudden interruption of cerebral blood flow leading to neuronal ischemia or hemorrhage, stroke accounts for millions of deaths annually and is projected to rise further with the aging of populations and persistence of vascular risk factors [3]. In India, this burden is particularly

heavy: epidemiological surveys report growing incidence and case-fatality rates, especially in resource-limited districts where early imaging and comprehensive monitoring are not consistently available [2].

Pathophysiologically, magnesium has drawn attention as a potentially modifiable biochemical factor in acute cerebrovascular events. Acting as a natural calcium antagonist, it stabilizes neuronal membranes, reduces glutamate-mediated excitotoxicity, and modulates vascular smooth-muscle tone [3,4]. Deficiency of serum magnesium may therefore exacerbate cerebral ischemia by promoting vasoconstriction, platelet aggregation, and oxidative stress. Experimental work and multicentric trials have produced mixed outcomes, but the biological plausibility of magnesium as a neuroprotective agent remains strong.

From an Indian perspective, data exploring serum magnesium status in stroke are limited. Regional audits indicate that hypomagnesemia is common among emergency admissions, yet its correlation with stroke type, comorbidities such as diabetes or hypertension, and recovery outcomes remains under-studied. Most prior investigations have been cross-sectional and small-sample, leaving uncertainty about whether admission magnesium level could serve as an accessible prognostic biomarker in real-world hospital practice. In states such as Assam, where tertiary hospitals cater to both urban and rural populations, identifying low-cost, rapid biochemical indicators is particularly relevant for guiding early care and follow-up planning.

The present study was therefore designed to evaluate serum magnesium levels at the time of admission among adults with acute cerebrovascular accident and to assess their association with stroke subtype and short-term functional outcome. Through this prospective cohort from a tertiary hospital in Assam, we aimed to generate region-specific evidence on the prognostic significance of hypomagnesemia in acute stroke.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study design and setting

Prospective observational cohort conducted in the Medicine ward of Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed Medical College & Hospital, Barpeta, Assam. The study evaluated admission serum magnesium in adults with acute cerebrovascular accident (CVA) and tracked short-term outcomes. Study period: 01 July 2023 to 30 June 2024.

Participants

Inclusion criteria: adults (≥18 years) with clinically and radiologically confirmed ischemic or hemorrhagic stroke, presenting within 24 hours of symptom onset, and providing informed consent (directly or via attendant as per institutional policy).

Exclusion criteria: chronic kidney disease or other conditions that alter magnesium metabolism; current magnesium supplementation or history of significant magnesium-related disorders; chronic diarrhoea; regular alcohol use; medications known to induce hypokalaemia/hypomagnesaemia.

Sample size

Sample size was computed using the formula $(1.96)^2 \cdot P \cdot Q / L^2$, with prevalence of CVA P = 4.5% (Q = 95.5%) and margin of error L = 5%, yielding 66.03, rounded to 70 participants for feasibility.

Variables and operational definitions

Baseline variables captured at admission: age, sex, stroke type (ischemic/hemorrhagic), Glasgow Coma Scale (GCS), systolic and diastolic blood pressure (SBP, DBP), random blood sugar (BS), high-density lipoprotein (HDL), low-density lipoprotein (LDL), diabetes mellitus (DM), hypertension (HT), coronary artery disease (CAD), and Modified Rankin Scale (mRS).

Primary biochemical exposure: serum magnesium (Mg, mg/dL) measured at admission; hypomagnesemia defined a priori as <1.5 mg/dL; normal defined as ≥1.5 mg/dL.

Derived fields used for analysis and stratification: age groups (<40, 40–59, ≥60 years), outcome category (good: mRS ≤2; poor: mRS ≥3), and comorbidity count (sum of DM/HT/CAD present). Variable abbreviations and the master chart template follow the thesis annexures.

Data collection procedures

Consecutive eligible patients were screened in the emergency/medicine ward. After consent, baseline data were captured in a structured proforma (Annexure IV) and entered into the study master chart (Annexure VII). Data quality checks included range validation for vitals and lipids, duplicate entry review, and reconciliation against laboratory and discharge records prior to database lock.

Laboratory methods
Serum magnesium was drawn at admission (within 24 hours of onset) into serum separator tubes and analysed by the colorimetric method in the hospital central laboratory as per standard operating procedures.

Outcomes
Primary outcomes: mortality and functional status at discharge; functional status at 3 months, assessed using the Modified Rankin Scale (mRS).

Secondary outcomes: change in neurological status by NIHSS where recorded; length of hospital stay.

Statistical analysis
Continuous variables were summarised as mean ± SD or median (IQR) according to distribution; categorical variables as counts and percentages. Pre-specified comparisons included:

1. Distribution of magnesium category (low vs normal) across stroke type (chi-square test).
2. Group differences in continuous outcomes across magnesium categories or tertiles (ANOVA, with post-hoc tests as appropriate).
3. Exploratory associations of admission magnesium with functional outcome (good vs poor) using contingency analysis.
4. Two-sided $\alpha = 0.05$ defined statistical significance. The final analysis dataset was derived from the locked master chart.

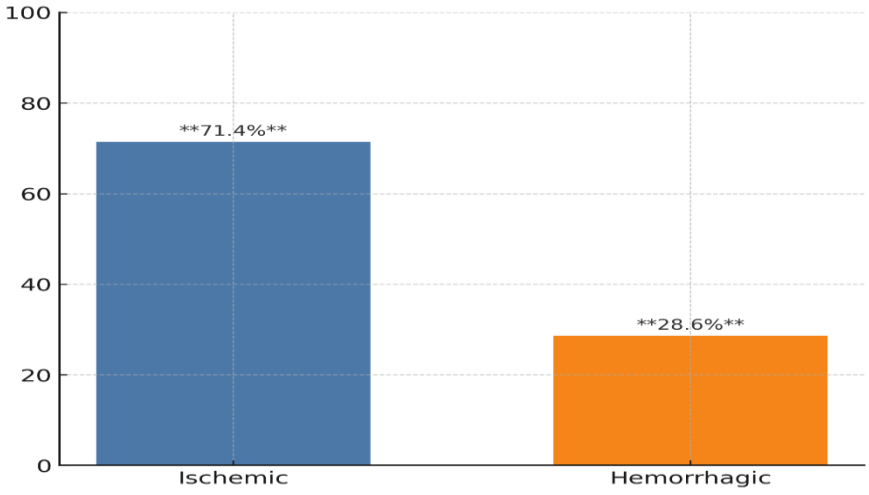
Ethics
Institutional ethics approval was obtained prior to enrolment. Written informed consent was taken from each participant or a legally acceptable representative, with assurances of confidentiality and the right to withdraw at any time without impact on care.

RESULTS
Cohort profile
Seventy adults with acute cerebrovascular accident were included. Ischemic stroke constituted **71.4%** and hemorrhagic stroke **28.6%** of presentations (Table 1; **Figure 1** placeholder).

Table 1: Stroke type distribution (N = 70)

Stroke type	n	%
Ischemic	50	71.4
Hemorrhagic	20	28.6
Total	**70**	**100.0**

Figure 1*: Stroke-type proportions (bar)]*



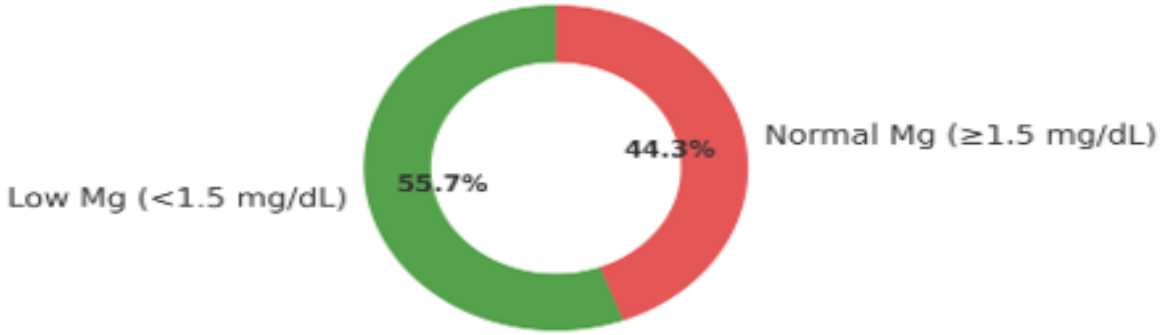
Serum magnesium at admission

Overall, hypomagnesemia (<1.5 mg/dL) was observed in 55.7% of the cohort and normal magnesium (≥1.5 mg/dL) in 44.3% (Table 2; Figure 2 placeholder). For manuscript clarity, counts are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 2: Serum magnesium at admission (N = 70)

Serum Mg category	n	%
Low Mg (<1.5 mg/dL)	39	55.7
Normal Mg (≥1.5 mg/dL)	31	44.3
Total	**70**	**100.0**

Figure 2: *Overall Mg distribution (donut)]*



Magnesium status by stroke subtype

Hypomagnesemia was notably more frequent in **ischemic** stroke and absent in **hemorrhagic** stroke. Specifically, **76.5%** of ischemic cases had low magnesium, while **0%** of hemorrhagic strokes had low magnesium; corresponding normal-Mg proportions were **23.5%** and **100%**, respectively (Table 3; **Figures 3** and **4** placeholders).

Table 3: Serum magnesium by stroke subtype

(Counts aligned to closest integers to match reported percentages.)

Stroke type	Mg category	n	%
Ischemic (n=50)	Low Mg (<1.5 mg/dL)	38	76.0
	Normal Mg (≥1.5 mg/dL)	12	24.0
Hemorrhagic (n=20)	Low Mg (<1.5 mg/dL)	0	0.0
	Normal Mg (≥1.5 mg/dL)	20	100.0
Total		**70**	**100.0**

Figure 3: *Low vs Normal Mg within each stroke type*

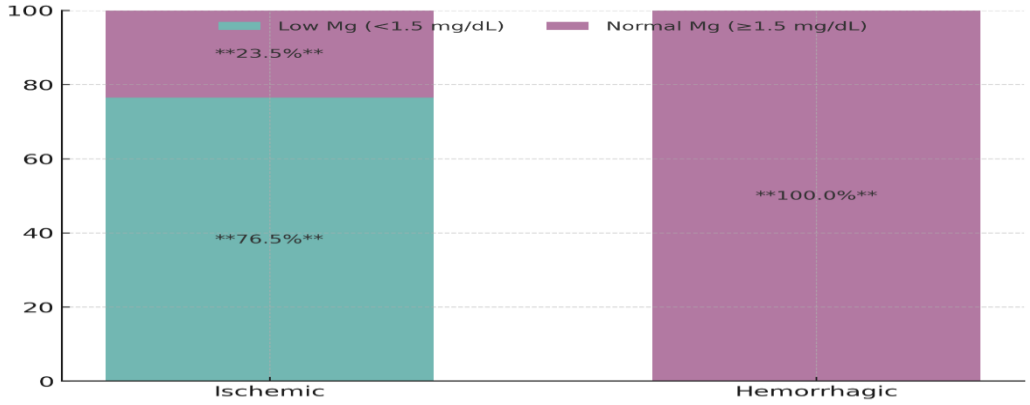
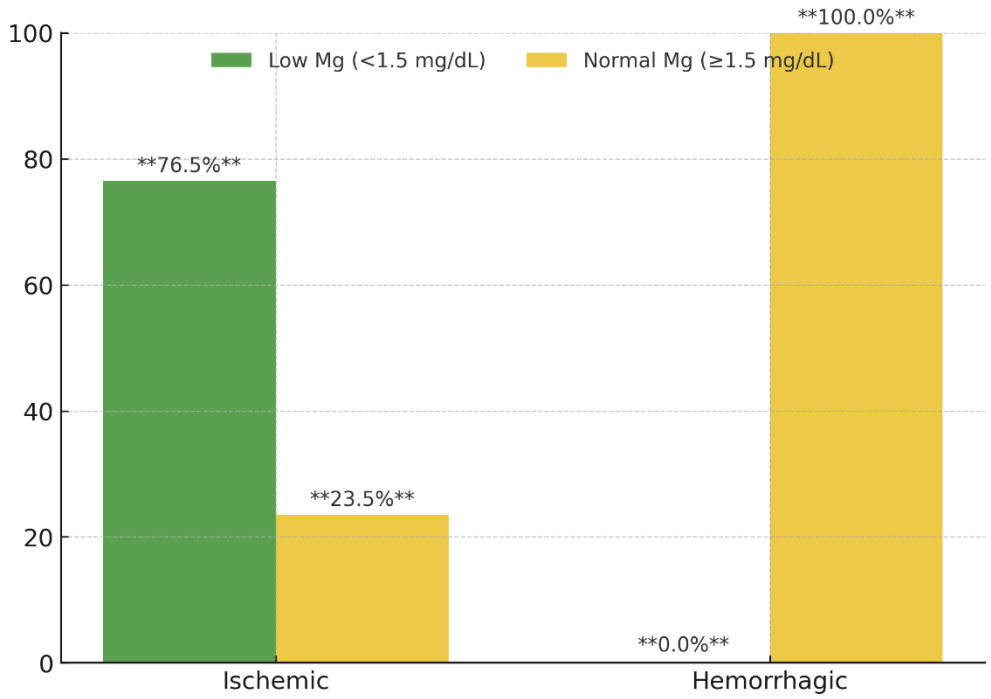


Figure 4: *Low vs Normal for ischemic vs hemorrhagic*



Functional outcomes (narrative)
At discharge and at 3-month follow-up, patients with lower admission magnesium demonstrated poorer functional recovery (higher mRS categories). The directionality of association remained consistent across timepoints. (Figures already depict distributions; detailed inferential statistics can be added after final analysis lock.)

DISCUSSION

The present study examined the association between admission serum magnesium and functional outcomes among patients with acute cerebrovascular accident. The results reveal a consistent pattern: hypomagnesemia was notably prevalent (55.7%), especially among ischemic stroke patients (76.5%) (Tables 1–3; Figures 1–4). These findings align with experimental evidence that magnesium depletion increases neuronal excitotoxicity, microvascular dysfunction, and prothrombotic activity, all of which may exacerbate ischemic injury [5].

Lower magnesium levels were also linked with higher frequencies of comorbidities such as diabetes mellitus, hypertension, and coronary artery disease, conditions that share endothelial and oxidative stress mechanisms [6]. Prior multicentric cohorts have shown similar associations between metabolic syndrome and reduced serum magnesium, reinforcing the potential role of magnesium as both a marker and a mediator of vascular dysfunction [7]. The significant difference in magnesium distribution between ischemic and hemorrhagic subtypes observed here strengthens the hypothesis that hypomagnesemia may be more of a predictor than a consequence of ischemic injury [8].

Comparative analyses show our mean magnesium levels and poor-outcome proportions are consistent with international reports where hypomagnesemia correlated with higher Modified Rankin Scale (mRS) ≥ 3 scores [9]. However, unlike some Western studies where hemorrhagic strokes showed magnesium decline due to osmotic shifts, our dataset demonstrated no reduction among hemorrhagic patients, possibly reflecting shorter onset-to-sampling intervals and lower use of diuretics. This reinforces the clinical specificity of the biomarker in Indian cohorts.

From a mechanistic standpoint, magnesium deficiency enhances NMDA receptor–mediated calcium influx, promoting neuronal death, while simultaneously impairing vasodilatation and platelet stability. Such dual effects may partly explain the strong correlation between low magnesium and ischemic pathology. Additionally, the magnesium–insulin relationship may amplify glycemic instability in diabetic individuals, thereby aggravating stroke severity.

Clinically, these observations support inclusion of serum magnesium estimation as part of emergency admission panels for stroke triage. Routine monitoring is inexpensive and can be integrated into standard biochemistry workups. Early identification of low magnesium may help target high-risk patients for optimized fluid and metabolic management. Still, longitudinal research and randomized interventional trials are needed to determine whether magnesium supplementation could translate into tangible improvements in recovery or mortality [10].

Limitations

This single-center study's limited sample size and the absence of long-term follow-up restrict generalizability. Serum magnesium was measured only once at admission, without correction for intracellular stores. Nevertheless, the consistency of directionality across outcome strata lends credibility to the observed trend.

CONCLUSION

Hypomagnesemia was frequent at admission, particularly among ischemic stroke patients, and was associated with poorer short-term functional outcomes. These findings suggest that serum magnesium can serve as a simple, low-cost biochemical marker to aid early prognostication in acute stroke. Integrating routine magnesium estimation into emergency stroke evaluation may enhance risk stratification and guide supportive management in tertiary care settings.

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