Cerebrospinal Fluid $A\beta_{42}/A\beta_{40}$ as a Means to Limiting Tube- and Storage-Dependent Pre-Analytical Variability in Clinical Setting

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CSF Aβ42/Aβ40 as means to limiting tube- and storage-dependent pre-analytical variability in clinical setting

Christelle Gervaise-Henry\textsuperscript{a}, Gasshan Watfa\textsuperscript{b}, Eliane Albuisson\textsuperscript{c}, Allan Kolodzi\textsuperscript{a}, Brigitte Dousser\textsuperscript{a}, Jean-Luc Olivier\textsuperscript{a,d}, Thérèse Rivasseau Jonveaux\textsuperscript{b}, Catherine Malaplate-Armand\textsuperscript{a,d}

\textsuperscript{a} Laboratoire de Biochimie et Biologie Moléculaire, UF Oncologie – Endocrinologie – Neurobiologie, Hôpital Central, Centre Hospitalier Universitaire, Nancy, F-54000, France.

\textsuperscript{b} CMRR de Lorraine Hôpital de Brabois CHU Nancy, Vandoeuvre lès Nancy, F-54500, France.

\textsuperscript{c} Unité ESPRI-BioBase, CHRU Nancy, Vandoeuvre lès Nancy, France.

\textsuperscript{d} UR AFPA – USC 340, Equipe BFLA, Université de Lorraine, Nancy, F-54000, France

\textbf{Running title:} Aβ\textsubscript{42}/Aβ\textsubscript{40} ratio in pre-analytical steps

\textbf{Corresponding author:} Dr Catherine Malaplate-Armand, Laboratoire de Biochimie et de Biologie Moléculaire, Hôpital Central, 29 avenue du Maréchal de Lattre de Tassigny – CO n° 34 – 54035 Nancy Cedex France. Tel: +33-(3)-83-85 27 85, Fax: +33-(3)-83-85 19 69. \textit{E-mail address: c.armand@chru-nancy.fr}
Abstract

Background. Alzheimer cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) biomarkers have recently been included in the criteria for Alzheimer’s disease (AD) diagnosis. Unfortunately, their wider use in routine and interpretation require more standardization, particularly for the pre-analytical steps. In particular, Aβ42 peptide measurement is strongly influenced by the type of collection tube and by repeated freeze/thaw cycles.

Objective. The objectives of this study were to compare, in clinical setting the impact of collection tubes and the repetition of freeze/thaw cycles on Aβ42 and Aβ40 concentrations and consequently determine if the Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio could resolve the diagnosis difficulties related to these pre-analytical parameters.

Methods. CSF from 35 patients was collected in different PP and stored at -80°C after sampling. For CSF collected in the reference tube, three successive freeze-thaw cycles were done. Aβ42 and Aβ40 concentrations were determined in each condition in order to calculate the Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio.

Results. Our results showed that CSF Aβ42 and Aβ40 values were significantly different according to the type of collection tube and the number of freeze/thaw cycles. Although the calculation of the Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio eliminated the effect of PP tube-dependent variation, this was not the case for freeze-thaw cycle-associated variation.

Conclusion. The use of Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio rather than Aβ42 alone could contribute towards pre-analytical standardization, thus allowing the general use of CSF AD biomarkers in routine practice.

Key words: Alzheimer’s disease, Aβ40 peptide, Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio, Aβ42 peptide, cerebrospinal fluid, pre-analytical standardization, tube, freeze-thaw cycles

Introduction
Alzheimer’s disease (AD) diagnosis criteria were revised in 2011 to assimilate the advances in the understanding of AD (1). Although clinical symptoms still constitute the core of the diagnosis, new criteria now include biomarkers related to the AD pathophysiological processes such as cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) and imaging biomarkers. In the CSF, AD is biologically characterized by a reduction in CSF Aβ42 peptide levels which is correlated with the density of neuritic plaques (2) and by an increase in CSF Tau and phosphorylated Tau (P-tau) levels associated with neurodegeneration and neocortical neurofibrillary pathology (3). The combination of these three parameters have shown high levels of sensitivity and specificity as well as diagnostic accuracy in discriminating AD versus controls (4).

In 2004, Lewczuk et al. (5) was the first to propose Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio rather than the absolute value of Aβ42 peptide to improve the percentage of appropriately diagnosed patients. Since this publication, several studies have largely demonstrated the interest of using Aβ42/Aβ40 ratios for better interpretative CSF analysis and increase the level of evidence of AD process (6-13). Aβ40 peptide is the most abundant Aβ peptide in the brain and its CSF level might therefore be considered to most closely reflect the total Aβ load in the brain. CSF Aβ40 was characterized by a great inter-individual variability (14) and was long considered as unchanged in AD. Today, findings are less clear-cut. Indeed, Bousiges et al. (15) confirmed that CSF Aβ40 level was not significantly different in AD than in the control group, whereas it was decreased in patients with body Lewy dementia (BLD). Thus, Aβ42/Aβ40 allowed better discrimination of AD from BLD than Aβ42 alone (15). On the contrary, others studies showed lower CSF Aβ40 levels in AD patients than in controls (13, 16). More recently, Dorey et al. demonstrated that absolute value of CSF Aβ40 levels allowed the correct classification of AD patients with non-pathological Aβ42 levels and control patients with pathological Aβ42 levels (11).
Various papers have pointed out pre-analytical and analytical variability between laboratories for Aβ42 peptide (17-21). Tubes for collection, sample handling and sample storage conditions were especially noted as critical factors (22-23). In the clinical setting, despite numerous recommendations, the use of a non-recommended tube to collect CSF and the thawing of sample are two abnormalities frequently encountered. This is particularly the case when CSF AD biomarkers are analyzed for a large geographical area and samples are aliquoted and frozen by a local lab close to the applicant hospital before being transferred to a central laboratory. Transport conditions are unfortunately not always respected, leading to premature thawing of the samples. These pre-analytical confounding factors strongly influence Aβ42 peptide analysis, potentially leading to misinterpretation of biological profiles. A clear understanding of how these factors influence Aβ levels would therefore represent a major step for a general widespread clinical application.

In this study, we sought to determine if the Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio, which might be less affected by the CSF collection tube and the repetition of freeze-thaw cycles, could be more largely used to limit variability due to these two major pre-analytical confounding parameters.

Material and methods

Patients

Thirty-five subjects needing CSF AD biomarkers (Tau, P-Tau, Aβ42 and Aβ40 peptides) were recruited in the Clinical and Research Memory Center of Nancy (France) i.e. patients with atypical clinical presentation or early-onset dementia (24).
CSF biomarkers were carried out according to European Federation of Neurological Societies guidelines (diagnosis doubt, atypical clinical presentations, or early-onset dementia) or for amnesic MCI according to research criteria for the diagnosis of AD published in 2007 (25). Each subject had signed a written informed consent for CSF assessment, analysis and storage and protocol was approved by local ethical committee.

**Samples**

CSF was collected by lumbar puncture of the L3-L4 or L4-L5 intervertebral space after local anaesthesia in non-fasting patients. Two mL CSF were collected in 3 different polypropylene (PP) tubes, always in the same order (1, R, 2). Ten mL Sarstedt PP tube (ref 62.610.201, PP + polyethylene copolymer) was chosen as the reference tube (tube R), most commonly as the standard tube in French laboratories. Five mL Gosselin PP tube (ref TP 10-03, PP), and 15 mL Biosciences Discovery Labware Falcon tube (ref 352096, PP + Polyethylene copolymer) were respectively named tube 1 and tube 2.

All CSF were transported to the Biochemistry Laboratory of the University Hospital of Nancy, at 4 °C in less than 4 hours after the lumbar puncture. There, they were centrifuged at 4,000 x g for 10 minutes at 4°C (FROILABO® centrifuge). Samples with blood contamination were excluded. CSF was sampled by 250 µL each in 500 µL PP storage tubes (ref 045513, Dutscher®) and stored at -80 °C until assay (THERMO SCIENTIFIC® freezer).

**Freeze-thaw cycles procedure**

The freeze-thaw cycles study was carried out with CSF collected in tube R but only 24 samples contained enough CSF to prepare at least 2 samples (250 µL each). Cycles 1 and 2 were done with 2 different 250 µL samples. Cycle 3 were done with the residual 120 µL CSF.
after second thawing step. Time at room temperature during a freeze-thaw cycle was 45 min. Aβ42 and Aβ40 concentrations were determined at each step in order to calculate Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio. For the freezing step, samples were stored at -80°C for at least 24h. Biochemical analyses

Aβ42 and Aβ40 concentrations were determined using commercially available sandwich ELISA procedures (INNOTEST®, Fujirebio, Ghent, Belgium) according to the manufacturer’s instructions. For each sample, Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio was calculated. A CSF pool stored at -80 °C in PP tubes was used as internal quality control for each assay. Standards, controls and samples were run in duplicate. Measures were done at 450 nm with a BIO-TEK® spectrophotometer (MWGt Lambda Scan 200, BIO-TEK®, USA). Data were analyzed with KC4 software v.3.3 (BIO-TEK®, USA). In cases of variation coefficients exceeding 10%, the sample was re-assayed.

Statistical analysis

Variables were expressed, according to their distributions, as number, percent, mean ± Standard Deviation or median with Inter Quartile Range (IQR) and minimum maximum (range). Comparisons of CSF biological parameters for the 3 tubes and for the 3 repeated freeze-thaw cycles were performed by non-parametric test (Friedman test) with 5% level of significance. When the Friedman test concluded to a significant difference, a Dunn test was performed in order to identify the differences among the tubes or among the freeze-thaw cycles. To study the stability of the ratio between different tubes, we used the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (Spearman's rho; rs) and the Bland-Altman plot to analyze correlation and agreement.
Results

Demographical characteristics

Thirty-five subjects were included in the study. Mean age was 74 ± 10 years (range: 53-89 years) and gender ratio (men/women) was 0.7.

Effect of tube type on Aβ peptide concentrations and Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio

Each comparison was done between median values because Aβ peptide concentrations and Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio were not normally distributed. Aβ42 and Aβ40 concentrations ranged from 252.5 to 1506 pg/mL and from 2379 to 18052 pg/mL, respectively. Median and extreme Aβ peptide concentration and Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio are summarized in Table 1 for each tube. Box-plots of Aβ42 and Aβ40 concentrations and Aβ42/Aβ40 ratios are presented in Figure 1.

Concentrations were quite variable and extended all over the range of measure. Detectable Aβ42 and Aβ40 concentrations of samples in different PP tubes were significantly different (p<0.001 for both peptides). Results from these data showed lower median values of Aβ42 and Aβ40 peptides in tubes 1 -6.4% (-40.2 to 10.9), p<0.01 and -12.9% (-59.5 to -6.5), p<0.01, respectively) and 2 (-26.7 (-47 to 21.7) p<0.001 and -29.9% (-62.6 to 52.2), p<0.001, respectively) compared to tube R. However, no significant difference in the median of Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio was globally observed between the 3 tubes in the whole population (Friedman test, p = 0.549) (Table 1, Figure 1).

Furthermore, individually, all the correlations between the ratios were significant for T1 vs TR, T1 vs T2 and T2 vs TR (r_s=0.957 p=0.0001; r_s=0.913 p=0.0001; r_s=0.899 p=0.0001 respectively). Bland-Altman plots showed that the number of observations located outside the corresponding interval (differences within mean ± 1.96 SD) is 2 (5.7%) for T1 vs TR; 3 (8.6%) for T1 vs T2 and 2 (5.7%) for T2 vs TR. Overall, it should be noted that 2...
observations located outside the intervals were the same for T1 vs T2 and T2 vs TR. Thus 30 observations among the 35 (85.7%) are located within the 95% limits of agreement (Figure 2). Finally, median CSF protein and glucose concentrations were 0.47 g/L (range from 0.19 to 0.81 g/L) and 3.55 mmol/L (range from 1.27 to 6.2 mmol/L), respectively. In this range of CSF protein concentrations and after one freeze/thaw cycle, variations in CSF Aβ42 or Aβ40 according to the tube were not influenced by CSF protein level (Table 2). On the contrary, Aβ42 or Aβ40 mean values were weakly correlated with variations in peptide levels according the type of tube used (Table 3).

Effect of free-thaw cycles on Aβ peptide concentrations and Aβ42/Aβ40 ratios

Twenty-four CSF were used for the freeze-thaw cycles study. Aβ peptide concentrations and Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio were not normally distributed. Median and extreme Aβ peptide concentration and Aβ42/Aβ40 ratios are summarized in Table 4. Box-plots of Aβ42 and Aβ40 concentrations and Aβ42/Aβ40 ratios are presented in Figure 2. Median values of Aβ42 and Aβ40 concentrations were observed to be significantly different with the number of freeze/thaw cycles. Results from these data showed lower Aβ42 level after 2 freeze-thaw cycles compared to one (-17.6% (-27.9 to -14), p<0.001) whereas Aβ40 level was not significantly changed -3.1% (-23.9 to 17.4), NS). Consequently, a significant difference for Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio (-15.8% (-18.2 to 1.4), p<0.001) was observed.

On the contrary, after the third freeze-thaw cycle, Aβ42 levels were similar to those measured after one cycle and were significantly increased comparatively to the levels obtained after 2 cycles (+21.6% (11.1 to 40.7), p<0.001). Similarly, Aβ40 levels were statistically higher after the third cycle than after both first and second cycles (+17.8% (6.9 to 35.5), p<0.001 and +21.6% (10.8 to 52.4), p<0.001). Consequently Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio was similar after 2 and 3 free-thaw cycles (-6.6% (-9.1 to 11.5), NS). Freeze-thaw cycles-induced variations in Aβ
peptide concentrations and Aβ42/Aβ40 ratios led to biological misinterpretations in 4 patients among 24 (15%) since A42/Aβ40 ratio was lower or higher than reference threshold (0.07) according the freeze-thaw cycle.

Discussion

In this study, we showed that the use of the CSF Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio rather than Aβ42 alone could solve some pre-analytical difficulties which currently limit the standardization process and thus wider routine use of CSF biomarkers. We demonstrated that while Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio eliminated PP tube-dependent analytical variability, it did not completely resolve freeze-thaw cycle-associated variations.

Currently, PP is clearly recommended as the best material for CSF collection tubes, due to limited variability in Aβ42 values (26). However, heterogeneous results were also obtained with PP collection tubes from different suppliers (18). Indeed, by investigating the composition of 11 different PP tubes, Perret-Liaudet et al. revealed the presence of co-polymers such as polyethylene which are reported to largely influence Aβ42 adsorption (27) and led to more than 50% disparity in Aβ42 values depending on the tube used (18). This study led to the conclusion that Aβ42 cut-off needed to be established by the laboratory using a single type of sampling tube (28). Recommendations were made for the least adsorbent tube (Tube R in our study) to be used routinely in French labs (29). This tube is composed of PP and polyethylene. Here we chose to use a commonly used tube (tube 1, PP only) and another tube containing PP and polyethylene similar to tube R. As in Perret-Liaudet study (18), we observed that tube 2 was the most adsorbent for Aβ42 but also for Aβ40 suggesting that
information about tube composition provided by the supplier was insufficient to anticipate the adsorption potential of the tube.

$\text{A}_\beta 40$ is known to be less hydrophobic than $\text{A}_\beta 2$ peptide (30) suggesting a lesser tendency to interact with sampling tubes, but no study is available in the literature. We demonstrated here that variations in $\text{A}_\beta 40$ concentrations according to the tube type were equivalent to those observed with $\text{A}_\beta 42$ concentrations leading to $\text{A}_\beta 42/\text{A}_\beta 40$ ratios that were not globally significantly different, and independent of the tube type. Individual analysis showed that variations of the ratio according to the tube type were close to the mean except for 5 patients, mostly with ratio values very high relative to the threshold of 0.07 and without influence on the biological interpretation. These results support those of Lewczuk et al. (26) and Vanderstichele et al. (31) which concluded that $\text{A}_\beta 42/\text{A}_\beta 40$ ratio was comparable between PP and polystyrene, polycarbonate tubes (26) or PP and low protein binding tubes (31). Thus the use of $\text{A}_\beta 42/\text{A}_\beta 40$ ratio rather than $\text{A}_\beta 42$ alone could also represent a solution towards minimizing pre-analytical variability related to the various collection PP tube. In daily practice, CSF collection in a non-recommended tube is a frequent mistake that leads to rejection of the sample and exposing the patient a second time to lumbar puncture-associated adverse effects and discomfort. The absence of variation in $\text{A}_\beta 42/\text{A}_\beta 40$ ratio could be used as an alternative solution, rather than carrying out another CSF sampling.

Freeze/thaw cycles before $\text{A}_\beta 42$ peptide analysis represent another critical pre-analytical step, especially for CSF transferred from others hospitals since CSF AD biomarkers are analyzed in one laboratory for a given geographic area. Unfortunately, data from published studies are extremely discordant. Several studies shown that samples could be frozen and thawed up to two times without any effect on the AD biomarkers in CSF (20, 32), whereas other demonstrated a decrease in $\text{A}_\beta 42$ values after one (33) or two freeze/thaw cycles (34).
together, these data led to imprecise recommendations suggesting the avoidance of repeated freeze/thawing of samples (28). Finally, the use of Aβ42/Aβ40 ratios rather than Aβ42 alone could also have been an interesting solution. Only one publication showed that Aβ40 level was stable for 2 freeze/thaw cycles (32). Otherwise Vanderstichele et al., recently reported that an additional freeze-thaw cycle in a PP tube reduced both CSF Aβ42 and Aβ40 levels whereas the Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio was not significantly affected (31). Here, we observed a significant decrease in Aβ42 levels between the first and the second cycle while Aβ40 levels remained stable. Interestingly, both Aβ42 and Aβ40 were significantly increased between the second and the third freeze/thaw cycles. These results led to two major conclusions. Firstly, Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio did not prevent freeze-thaw cycle-associated variability in Aβ peptide concentrations, which could lead to misdiagnosis. Indeed, 4 samples out of 24 included (15%) had ratio values above or below the pathological cut-off, depending on the considered freeze/thaw cycle. This result demonstrates the need to work with a defined number of freeze/thaw cycles and to establish a ratio cut-off according selected conditions. Secondly, the Aβ42 and Aβ40 level re-increase in CSF after 3 freeze/thaw cycles suggested that amyloid degradation was not the unique cause of variability. Aliquot volume was identified as a potential confounding factor in CSF Aβ42 peptide measurement (35-36). In our study, an extra variation factor occurred, since the total CSF volume was lower in cycle 3 than cycles 1 and 2. This could contribute to the variability between freeze/thaw cycles. However, it is known that tube Aβ42 adsorption is rapid, and is a saturable phenomenon (18). Here, the volume was effectively lower in cycle 3 than cycle 1, but CSF was left in the initial storage tube during the entire experimental period. In studies on the influence of aliquot volume such as that of Toombs et al. (35), different storage volumes (50-1500 µL) were tested in independent storage tubes. No data about the impact of the variation of volume of CSF in the initial storage tube are available in literature. However, the decrease in CSF volume in
storage tube could modify the equilibrium state between CSF and tube walls, and eventually
lead to the release of Aβ peptide from tube to CSF. Further investigation would be necessary
to clarify this issue. Other processes could be taken into account such as conformational
changes of Aβ peptides, oligomerization, protein binding or modification in adsorption of
amyloid on the tube wall which could depend on delay to freezing and changes in freezing or
thawing temperatures (37). Moreover, a protein desorption processing could occur and it
could be dependent on several parameters such as temperature, pressure (38), or eventually
CSF volume variations. Finally, the impact of repeated freeze/thaw cycles on amyloid level
variability seems to be a very complex process which requires further investigation to
determine the respective involvement of amyloid species, storage conditions and nature of the
storage tube.

The systematic use Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio could limit variability associated with some pre-
analytical aspects, but results should be confirmed by further investigations with a larger
cohort and by testing PP tubes from other suppliers. The effects of freezing seem to be
dependent on the storage tube type and a cross-study exploring the link between PP tubes and
repeated freeze/thaw cycle on amyloid pre-analytical variability could be relevant. Moreover,
few data are available about amyloid level in fresh CSF. Blennow et al. (39) showed that
Aβ42 concentrations were highly consistent between fresh and frozen CSF samples. It would
be interesting to know if similar results would be obtained with Aβ40 and Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio.

There are several limitations to note in this study. Firstly, patients were not selected according
to their diagnosis, whereas Aβ42 and Aβ40 levels seem to influence tube-associated
variations. However, this choice was deliberate because this study was voluntarily conducted
in a clinical setting before knowing final diagnosis and Aβ values. Secondly, time delay
between LP and centrifugation was very broad (< 4h) and could affect the amyloid peptide adsorption process. Again, the aim of this study was to evaluate the CSF Aβ42/Aβ40 as means to limiting variability in clinical settings. Consequently, reducing this delay to less than 4h would be very difficult. Today, AD biomarkers are not only research biomarkers, but also are largely integrated in diagnostic tools. It is thus very important to have information about pre-analytical confounding factors in daily practice. Moreover, Aβ adsorption occurred quickly, measurable within 15min of storage and did not increase with longer incubation times, suggesting that this delay should have little influence (18).

In conclusion, our study demonstrates that the use of Aβ42/Aβ40 rather than Aβ42 could contribute to pre-analytical standardization which will allow generalizing the use of CSF AD biomarkers. If this ratio seems to be interesting to solve PP tube-dependent variability, it is not relevant or even inappropriate to limit freeze/thaw cycle associated variability. Further investigation must be carried out to better understand complex interactions between these two critical pre-analytical factors.

Additional contribution

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<th>Tube</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Median (IQR)</th>
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<th>Max</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tube R</td>
<td>Aβ42</td>
<td>607.9 (270.7)</td>
<td>438.8</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aβ40</td>
<td>9983.0 (5352.2)</td>
<td>3356.2</td>
<td>18052.0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio</td>
<td>0.064 (0.059)</td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td>0.162</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tube 1</td>
<td>Aβ42</td>
<td>569.1 (282.9)</td>
<td>296.0</td>
<td>1435.0</td>
<td>0.008</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Aβ40</td>
<td>8695.0 (5664.0)</td>
<td>2910.3</td>
<td>15151.0</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio</td>
<td>0.070 (0.054)</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>0.147</td>
<td>Friedmann NS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tube 2</td>
<td>Aβ42</td>
<td>446.0 (222.4)</td>
<td>252.5</td>
<td>1407.7</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aβ40</td>
<td>6994.5 (5308.2)</td>
<td>2379.0</td>
<td>13416.0</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio</td>
<td>0.069 (0.064)</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>0.151</td>
<td>Friedmann NS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. CSF Aβ42, Aβ40 and Aβ42/Aβ40 median values according to the PP tube type.

Data are expressed as median (IQR), minimal and maximal values. All groups were compared to tube R. Median values were statistically different from tube R according to the Dunn test after a significant Friedman test if p < 0.01. NS: Not significant, n=35.
<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>Δ Tube R/tube1</th>
<th>Δ TubeT/tube 2</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aβ42</td>
<td>$r_s = -0.255$</td>
<td>$r_s = 0.042$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$p = 0.137$</td>
<td>$p = 0.801$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aβ40</td>
<td>$r_s = -0.216$</td>
<td>$r_s = -0.060$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$p = 0.201$</td>
<td>$p = 0.728$</td>
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Table 2. Influence of CSF protein concentration on tube-associated variation after one freeze/thaw cycle. Rs: Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. NS: Not significant, n=35.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aβ42</th>
<th>$r_s = 0.157$</th>
<th>$r_s = 0.393$</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$p = 0.366$</td>
<td>$p = 0.020$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\text{Aβ40}$</td>
<td>$r_s = -0.344$</td>
<td>$r_s = -0.28$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$p = 0.043$</td>
<td>$p = 0.873$</td>
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Table 3. Influence of Aβ levels on tube-associated variation after one freeze/thaw cycle.

Rs: Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. NS: Not significant, n=35.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Cycle</th>
<th>Variable</th>
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<th>Max</th>
<th>p</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cycle 1</td>
<td>Aβ42</td>
<td>631.8 (478.6)</td>
<td>438.8</td>
<td>1506.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aβ40</td>
<td>11363.0 (5666.1)</td>
<td>3356.2</td>
<td>18052.0</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio</td>
<td>0.057 (0.058)</td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td>0.155</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cycle 2</td>
<td>Aβ42</td>
<td>520.9 (324.3)</td>
<td>346.3</td>
<td>1237.3</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aβ40</td>
<td>11009.0 (5571.0)</td>
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<td>19905.0</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio</td>
<td>0.048 (0.042)</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.101</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycle 3</td>
<td>Aβ42</td>
<td>633.3 (425.4)</td>
<td>417.4</td>
<td>1404.3</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aβ40</td>
<td>13384.5 (7138.7)</td>
<td>4364.9</td>
<td>23321.0</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio</td>
<td>0.045 (0.046)</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>0.104</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. CSF Aβ42, Aβ40 and Aβ42/Aβ40 median values according to number of freeze/thaw cycles. Data are expressed as median (IQR), minimal and maximal values. All groups were compared to tube R. Median values were statistically different from tube R according to the Dunn test after a significant Friedman test if p < 0.01. NS: Not significant, n=24.
Figure legends

**Figure 1:** Variations of CSF Aβ42, Aβ40 and Aβ42/Aβ40 values according to the PP tube type. Box-plots of the dispersion of Aβ42 (A), Aβ40 (B) and Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio (C). Values were statistically different if ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001 or not significantly different (NS), n = 35.

**Figure 2:** Individual variations of CSF Aβ42, Aβ40 and Aβ42/Aβ40 values according to the PP tube type. Bland-Altman plots showing the number of observations located outside the corresponding interval (differences within mean ± 1.96 SD), n = 35.

**Figure 3:** Variations of CSF Aβ42, Aβ40 and Aβ42/Aβ40 values according the number of freeze/thaw cycles. Box-plots present the dispersion of Aβ42 (A), Aβ40 (B) and Aβ42/Aβ40 ratio (C). Values were statistically different if *** p < 0.001 or not significantly different (NS), n = 24.
Figure 1

A. Aβ42/40 ratio

B. Aβ42 (pg/mL)

C. Aβ40 (pg/mL)
Figure 2
Figure 3

(A) 

(B) 

(C) 

Figure 3