Clinical Characteristics, Radiological Features, And Disease Severity Of Bronchiectasis According To The Spirometric Pattern

Sun-Hyung Kim

Chungbuk National University Hospital

Bumhee Yang

Chungbuk National University Hospital

Jin Young Yoo

Chungbuk National University Hospital

Jun Yeun Cho

Chungbuk National University Hospital

Hyeran Kang

Chungbuk National University Hospital

Yoon Mi Shin

Chungbuk National University Hospital

Eung-Gook Kim

Chungbuk National University College of Medicine

Ki Man Lee

Chungbuk National University Hospital

Kang Hyeon Choe (✉ choekh@chungbuk.ac.kr)

Chungbuk National University Hospital

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Abstract

Bronchiectasis show various ventilatory disorders in pulmonary function. The characteristics and severity of patients with bronchiectasis according to these pulmonary dysfunctions are still very limited. This study aimed to evaluate the clinical, radiologic feature and the disease severity of patients with bronchiectasis according to spirometric patterns. We retrospectively evaluated 506 patients with bronchiectasis who underwent pulmonary lung function test (PFT) at a referral hospital between 2014 to 2021. Cylindrical type was the most common (70.8%) type of bronchiectasis on chest CT, and 70% of patients had bilateral lung involvement. Of the 506 patients, Obstructive ventilatory disorder was the most common (51.6%), followed by normal ventilation (30%) and restrictive ventilatory disorder (18.4%). mMRC was highest in patients with obstructive ventilatory disorders, Modified Reiff score (6 (3-10), $P < 0.001$), FAGED score (3 (1-4), $P < 0.001$), and BSI score (8 (5-11), $P < 0.001$) also showed significantly highest values of obstructive ventilatory disorder rather than restrictive ventilatory disorder and normal ventilation. More than half of patients with bronchiectasis had obstructive ventilatory disorder. Bronchiectasis with obstructive ventilatory disorders has more dyspnea symptom, more disease severity and more radiologic severity. There was no significant association between spirometric pattern and radiologic type, but the more severe the radiologic severity, the more severe the lung function impairment.

Introduction

Non-cystic fibrosis bronchiectasis (hereafter referred to as bronchiectasis) is a chronic respiratory disease characterized by permanent dilatation of the bronchi and chronic respiratory symptoms, such as cough, expectoration of sputum, and dyspnea. The inherent dysfunction in mucociliary clearance leads to persistent bacterial infection, chronic inflammation of the bronchial tree, and progressive tissue destruction. Thus, persistent airway destruction leads to decreased lung function and respiratory failure^{1, 2}.

Previous studies have reported that the morphological changes in bronchiectasis are associated with pulmonary dysfunction³⁻⁵. Research suggests that the development of bronchiectasis is promoted by the early involvement of the lymphoid follicles in the small airways, which gradually leads to the obstruction of the more distal airways⁶. Accordingly, it has been known that bronchiectasis is accompanied by airflow limitation⁷. As a result, forced expiratory volume in 1 second (FEV₁) was used to evaluate pulmonary dysfunction in patients with bronchiectasis, as a same line, FEV₁ was included in Bronchiectasis Severity Index (BSI) score and FAGED (FEV₁, Age, Chronic colonization, Extension, and Dyspnea) score to evaluate the severity and prognosis of patient with bronchiectasis^{8, 9}. Moreover, recent studies have reported that patients with bronchiectasis exhibit various ventilatory disorders on pulmonary function tests, such as obstructive, restrictive, and mixed ventilatory disorder^{4, 10-12}. Although various ventilatory disorders of bronchiectasis have been reported as described above, studies on the characteristics and severity of patients with bronchiectasis according to these pulmonary dysfunctions are still very limited.

Hence, we investigated the clinical and radiological features of patients with bronchiectasis according to the spirometric pattern. Moreover, we further evaluated the disease severity in patients with bronchiectasis according to spirometric patterns.

Results

Baseline characteristics

The baseline characteristics of 506 patients with bronchiectasis are presented in Table 1. The median age was 66 years (IQR, 53-79 years), and 254 (50.2%) patients were male. The median body mass index (BMI) was 23.0 (IQR, 19.3-26.7). Current and ex-smokers accounted for 34.8% of the study population, and 23.7% of patients had a history of tuberculosis. The distribution of comorbidities in patients with bronchiectasis was as follows: chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) (51.6%), followed by cardiovascular disease (37.7%), asthma (16.2%), diabetes mellitus (12.6%), and malignancy (12.6%). Cylindrical bronchiectasis was the most common (70.8%) morphology on chest CT, and 70% of patients exhibited bilateral lung involvement. The pulmonary function parameters were as follows: FVC % predicted, 84% (70-95); FEV₁/FVC, 73% (56-90); and FEV1% predicted, 69% (55-78). Microorganisms were identified in 32.4% of patients: *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (18.0%) was the most frequently identified species, followed by *Klebsiella pneumoniae* (8.5%), and *Staphylococcus aureus* (4.9%). NTM were identified in 10.1% of patients, of which *Mycobacterium avium* complex (MAC) was the most common type (8.3%).

Table 1
Baseline characteristics of patients with bronchiectasis

Variables	Total
	N=506
Age, years	66 (53-79)
Sex, male	254 (50.2)
BMI (kg/m ²)	23.0 (19.3-26.7)
Smoking history	
Current or ex-smoker	176 (34.8)
Previous history of TB	120 (23.7)
Previous history of pertussis	15 (3.0)
Comorbidities	
COPD	261 (51.6)
Asthma	82 (16.2)
Cardiovascular disease	191 (37.7)
Diabetes mellitus	64 (12.6)
Chronic liver disease	16 (3.2)
Chronic kidney disease	15 (3.0)
Bronchiectasis type	
Cylindrical	358 (70.8)
Varicose	12 (2.4)
Cystic	315 (62.3)
Lung involvement	
One lung	152 (30.0)
Both lungs	354 (70.0)
Spirometry patterns	
FVC, L	2.6 (2.0-3.3)

Data are presented as the median (interquartile range) or numbers (%).

Abbreviations: BMI, body mass index; COPD, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; TB, tuberculosis; FVC, forced vital capacity; FEV₁, forced expiratory volume in 1 second

Variables	Total
FVC, % predicted	84 (70-95)
FEV ₁ , L	69 (55-78)
FEV ₁ , % predicted	1.7 (1.2-2.2)
FEV ₁ /FVC, %	73 (56-90)
Microbiology	164 (32.4)
Pseudomonas aeruginosa	91 (18.0)
Haemophilus influenzae	12 (2.4)
Staphylococcus aureus	25 (4.9)
Klebsiella pneumoniae	43 (8.5)
Streptococcus pneumoniae	12 (2.4)
Others*	52 (10.3)
Non-tuberculous mycobacteria	50 (10.1)
MAC	42 (8.3)
MABC	8 (1.6)
Data are presented as the median (interquartile range) or numbers (%).	
Abbreviations: BMI, body mass index; COPD, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; TB, tuberculosis; FVC, forced vital capacity; FEV ₁ , forced expiratory volume in 1 second	

Clinical characteristics according to the spirometric pattern

As shown in Table 2, 152 patients (30.0%) with bronchiectasis had normal ventilation, 261 patients (51.6%) had obstructive ventilatory disorder, and 93 patients (18.4%) had restrictive ventilatory disorder. The median ages of patients with normal ventilation, obstructive ventilatory disorder, and restrictive ventilatory disorder were 66 (58-72), 68 (62-75), and 64 (56-71) years, respectively ($P < 0.001$). The proportion of males was highest in patients with obstructive ventilatory disorder, followed by those with normal ventilation and those with restrictive ventilatory disorder (62.1%, 41.4%, and 31.2%, respectively, $P < 0.001$). The proportion of current- or ex-smokers was higher among patients with obstructive ventilatory disorders compared to that in patients with normal ventilation or restrictive ventilatory disorders (43.7%, 28.3%, and 20.4%, respectively, $P < 0.001$). The prevalence of COPD (100%), asthma (21.8%), diabetes mellitus (16.9%), and malignancy (16.1%) was the highest in patients with obstructive ventilatory disorder from amongst the entire study population. Most of the microorganisms were cultured in the obstructive ventilatory disorder, followed by restrictive ventilatory disorder and normal ventilation. (41.4%, 32.3% and 15.8%, respectively, $P < 0.001$). The frequency of culturing for *P. aeruginosa* (23.8%, 17.2% and 8.6%,

respectively, $P<0.001$), *E. coli* (5.4%, 3.2%, and 0%, respectively, $P<0.001$), and others (10.3%, 6.5% and 1.3%, respectively, $P<0.001$) was significantly higher in the obstructive ventilatory disorder and restrictive ventilatory disorder than that in the normal ventilation. The prevalence of NTM (20.4%) was the highest in patients with restrictive ventilatory disorder from amongst the entire study population.

Table 2
Baseline characteristics of patients with bronchiectasis according to spirometric pattern.

Variables	Normal	Obstructive	Restrictive	P-value
	N=152	N=261	N=93	
Age, years	66 (58-72)	68 (62-75) ^a	64 (56-71) ^c	<0.001
Sex, male	63 (41.4)	162 (62.1) ^a	29 (31.2) ^c	<0.001
BMI (kg/m ²)	23.4 (21.1-25.5)	22.9 (20.4-25.2)	22.5 (19.9-25.6)	0.275
Smoking history				
Current or ex-smoker	43 (28.3)	114 (43.7) ^a	19 (20.4) ^c	<0.001
Previous history of TB	29 (19.1)	68 (26.1)	23 (24.7)	0.266
Previous history of pertussis	4 (2.6)	5 (1.9)	6 (6.5)	0.083
Comorbidities				
COPD	0	261 (100) ^a	0 ^c	<0.001
Asthma	20 (13.2)	57 (21.8) ^a	5 (5.4) ^c	0.001
Cardiovascular disease	46 (30.3)	114 (43.7)	31 (33.3)	0.016
Diabetes mellitus	13 (8.6)	44 (16.9) ^a	7 (7.5) ^c	0.013
Chronic liver disease	4 (2.6)	8 (3.1)	4 (4.3)	0.763
Chronic kidney disease	1 (0.7)	10 (3.8)	4 (4.3)	0.131
Spirometry				
FVC, L	2.9 (2.4-3.5)	2.5 (1.9-3.4) ^a	2.0 (1.6-2.5) ^{b,c}	<0.001
FVC, % predicted	94 (87-102)	82 (68-94) ^a	68 (59-74) ^{b,c}	<0.001
FEV ₁ , L	78 (74-81)	56 (48-64) ^a	79 (74-86) ^c	<0.001
FEV ₁ , % predicted	2.22 (1.9-2.7)	1.30 (1.0-1.8) ^a	1.6 (1.23-2.1) ^{b,c}	<0.001
FEV ₁ /FVC, %	98 (88-108)	61 (45-74) ^a	69 (61-79) ^{b,c}	<0.001
NTM	15 (9.9)	17 (6.5)	19 (20.4) ^{b,c}	0.001
MAC	13/15 (86.7)	15/17 (88.2)	14/19 (73.7)	0.454
MABC	2/15 (13.3)	2/17 (11.8)	4/19 (21.1)	0.167
Microbiology	24 (15.8)	108 (41.4) ^a	30 (32.3) ^b	<0.001

Variables	Normal	Obstructive	Restrictive	P-value
<i>P. aeruginosa</i>	13 (8.6)	62 (23.8) ^a	16 (17.2) ^b	0.001
<i>H. influenzae</i>	1 (0.7)	9 (3.4)	2 (2.2)	0.196
<i>S. aureus</i>	3 (2.0)	18 (6.9) ^a	4 (4.3)	0.080
<i>K. pneumoniae</i>	9 (5.9)	26 (10.0)	8 (8.6)	0.364
<i>S. pneumoniae</i>	1 (0.7)	9 (3.4)	2(2.2)	0.196
Others	2 (1.3)	27 (10.3) ^a	6 (6.5) ^b	0.002
Data are presented as the median (interquartile range) or numbers (%).				
One patient had co-infection with MAC and <i>M. abscessus</i> .				
Others had multidrug-resistant bacteria identified in hospital-acquired pneumonia (e.g., <i>Acinetobacter baumannii</i> , <i>Stenotrophomonas maltophilia</i>).				
Due to Bonferroni correction with three comparisons, the p-value of 0.05 corresponds to 0.17 (0.05/3).				
^a There was a significant difference between normal lung function and the obstructive pattern.				
^b There was a significant difference between normal lung function and the restrictive pattern.				
^c There was a significant difference between the obstructive and restrictive patterns.				
Abbreviations: BMI, body mass index; COPD, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; TB, tuberculosis; FVC, forced vital capacity; FEV ₁ , forced expiratory volume in 1 second; NTM, nontuberculous mycobacteria; MAC, <i>Mycobacterium avium-intracellulare</i> complex				

Respiratory symptoms, radiological features, and disease severity scales in patients with bronchiectasis according to the spirometric pattern

As shown in Table 3, the modified Medical Research Council (mMRC) was the highest in patients with obstructive ventilatory disorder, followed by those with restrictive ventilatory disorder and normal ventilation [1 (1-2), 1 (0-2), and 0 (0-1), respectively; $P<0.001$]. The modified Reiff score [6 (3-10), $P<0.001$]; FACED score [3 (1-4), $P<0.001$], and BSI score [8 (5-11), $P<0.001$] were significantly higher in the obstructive ventilatory disorder group than those in the restrictive ventilatory disorder and normal ventilation groups. There was no significant correlation between the lung function pattern and bronchiectasis type. The proportion of bilateral lung involvement was the highest in patients with obstructive ventilatory disorder, followed by those with restrictive ventilatory disorder and normal ventilation (79.7%, 72.0%, and 52.0%, respectively, $P<0.001$). The disease severity indices, i.e., the BSI and FACED scores, were the highest in patients with obstructive ventilatory disorder, followed by those with restrictive ventilatory disorder and normal ventilation [8 (5-11), 6 (4-9) and 4 (2-7), respectively, $P<0.001$ for the BSI score; 3 (1-4), 1 (1-3) and 1 (0-2), respectively, $P<0.001$ for the FACED score].

Table 3

Respiratory symptoms, radiological features and disease severity scales of patients with bronchiectasis according to spirometric patterns.

Variables	Total N=506	Normal N=152	Obstructive N=261	Restrictive N=93	P-value
mMRC	0 (1-2)	0 (0-1)	1 (1-2) ^{a,c}	1 (0-2) ^{b,c}	<0.001
Hemoptysis	150 (29.6)	45 (29.6)	79 (30.3)	26 (28.0)	0.916
BAE	36/150 (24.0)	8/45 (17.8)	20/79 (25.3)	8/26 (30.8)	0.431
Modified Reiff score	5 (3-8)	3 (2-6)	6 (3-10) ^a	5 (3-8) ^b	<0.001
Bronchiectasis type					
Cylindrical	358 (70.8)	106 (69.7)	185 (70.9)	67 (72.0)	0.926
Varicose	12 (2.4)	3 (2.0)	7 (2.7)	2 (2.2)	0.890
Cystic	315 (62.3)	87 (57.2)	167 (64.0)	61 (65.6)	0.301
Lung involvement					
One lung	152 (30.0)	73 (48.0)	53 (20.3) ^a	26 (28.0) ^b	<0.001
Both lungs	354 (70.0)	79 (52.0)	208 (79.7) ^a	67 (72.0) ^b	<0.001
FACED score	2 (1-3)	1 (0-2)	3 (1-4) ^{a,c}	1 (1-3) ^{b,c}	<0.001
FACED score risk class					<0.001
Mild (0-2)	303 (59.9)	122 (80.3)	114 (43.7) ^{a,c}	67 (72.0) ^{b,c}	
Moderate (3-4)	158 (31.2)	30 (19.7)	106 (40.6) ^{a,c}	22 (23.7) ^{b,c}	
Severe (5-7)	45 (8.9)	0	41 (15.7) ^{a,c}	4 (4.3) ^{b,c}	
BSI score	6 (4-10)	4 (2-7)	8 (5-11) ^{a,c}	6 (4-9) ^{b,c}	<0.001
BSI score risk class					<0.001
Mild (0-4)	179 (35.4)	80 (52.6)	63 (24.1) ^{a,c}	36 (38.7) ^{b,c}	
Moderate (5-8)	211 (41.7)	62 (40.8)	109 (41.8) ^{a,c}	40 (43.0) ^{b,c}	
Severe (9+)	116 (22.9)	10 (6.6)	89 (34.1) ^{a,c}	17 (18.3) ^{b,c}	
Follow-up duration, months	28 (6-55)	17 (2-42)	36 (12-69) ^{a,c}	17 (4-43) ^c	<0.001
Data are presented as the median (interquartile range) or numbers (%).					

Variables	Total N=506	Normal N=152	Obstructive N=261	Restrictive N=93	P-value
One person had a co-infection of MAC and M. abscessus.					
Others were multidrug-resistant bacteria identified in Hospital-acquired pneumonia (e.g., <i>Acinetobacter baumannii</i> , <i>Stenotrophomonas maltophilia</i>).					
Due to Bonferroni correction with three comparisons, the p-value of 0.05 corresponds to 0.17 (0.05/3).					
^a There was a significant difference between normal lung function and the obstructive pattern.					
^b There was a significant difference between normal lung function and the restrictive pattern.					
^c There was a significant difference between the obstructive and restrictive patterns.					
Abbreviations: mMRC, Modified Medical Research Council; BAE, bronchial artery embolization; BSI, Bronchiectasis Severity Index; NTM, nontuberculous mycobacteria; MAC, <i>Mycobacterium avium</i> -intracellulare complex					

Correlation between the modified Reiff score and lung function

As shown in Figure 2, the FVC %, FEV₁/FVC %, and FEV₁ % declined significantly with the elevation in the modified Reiff score ($P<0.001$ for all). The FEV₁ declined significantly with the increase in the BSI score ($r=-0.442$, respectively; $P<0.001$) in the obstructive pulmonary disorder group. The FVC decreased significantly with the increase in the BSI score ($r=-0.363$, $P<0.001$) in the restrictive pulmonary disorder group (Supplemental figure 1).

Discussion

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to evaluate the clinical characteristics, radiological features, and disease severity according to the spirometric pattern in patients with bronchiectasis. Approximately 52% and 18% patients with bronchiectasis had obstructive and restrictive ventilatory disorders, respectively. The frequency of dyspnea, higher disease severity (including high BSI and FACED scores), higher sputum culture positivity for *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, and greater radiological severity (i.e., high modified Reiff scores) were predominant in bronchiectasis accompanied by obstructive ventilatory disorder. On the other hand, bronchiectasis with restrictive ventilatory disorder was associated with a high prevalence of NTM disease. There was no significant correlation between the spirometric patterns and the type of bronchiectasis; however, lung function decreased with the increase in the modified Reiff score.

Patients with bronchiectasis frequently experience structural and functional lung damage that vary in severity^{2, 8, 9}. Our notable finding was that more than half of patients (52%) with bronchiectasis showed obstructive ventilatory disorder. In previous studies, approximately up to 35% of bronchiectasis were

known to experience obstructive ventilatory disorders^{5, 12, 20–22}. Bronchiectasis is known to manifest as an obstructive ventilatory disorder due to continuous airway destruction and distortion caused by chronic inflammation and abnormal mucociliary clearance². In our study, the bilateral lung involvement was high at 70% in patients with bronchiectasis. Bilateral lung involvement resulted in widespread inflammation of the bronchial tree and damage to the lung parenchyma, which is believed to have resulted in pulmonary impairment of obstructive ventilatory disorder. Additionally, patients with bronchiectasis may also experience restrictive ventilatory disorder. Bronchiectasis accompanied by atelectasis and pleural disease, parenchymal scarring, and peribronchial fibrosis is thought to be associated with restrictive ventilatory disorder¹¹. In contrast with obstructive ventilatory disorder, only a few studies have described restrictive ventilatory disorder and the presumable prevalence was reported to be 8–15% among patients with bronchiectasis^{12, 20, 22}. Our study also reported a similar result, i.e., 18% of patients with bronchiectasis had restrictive ventilatory disorder; however, verification through a large-scale study is necessary since it accounted for a small proportion of the study population.

Our notable finding was that bronchiectasis with obstructive ventilatory disorder was characterized by greater symptoms of dyspnea, disease severity and radiological severity. We measured the degree of dyspnea using the mMRC score, which was significantly higher in bronchiectasis with obstructive ventilatory disorder. mMRC is a subjective measure of dyspnea in COPD, which is known to be associated with the decrease in FEV₁²³. Similarly, in our study, the degree of dyspnea as measured by the mMRC score was higher in the obstructive ventilatory disorder group with low FEV₁. Moreover, we evaluated disease severity using the BSI and FACED scores. The FACED score [FEV₁% predicted (F), age (A), chronic colonization by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (C), extension of the disease by radiological assessment (E) and dyspnea (D)]⁹ is a five-point instrument that predicts the probability of all-cause mortality after 5 years of follow-up, whereas the BSI⁸ is a seven-point scale that identifies patients with bronchiectasis at risk for future mortality, hospitalization, exacerbations, and deterioration in the quality of life. Our study revealed high disease severity and poor prognosis, as measured using the BSI and FACED, in bronchiectasis with obstructive ventilatory disorder. These results may be related to low BMI, low FEV₁, high mMRC score, and high *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* infection, which are the clinical features of bronchiectasis with obstructive ventilatory disorder ascertained by our study. Although most studies have reported that the FEV₁ decreases with the increase in CT severity^{11, 24, 25}, no study has analyzed the relationship between CT severity and lung function in bronchiectasis with obstructive ventilatory disorder. Our study is the first to demonstrate the impairment in lung function, including FVC and FEV₁, and CT severity using the modified Reiff score in bronchiectasis with obstructive ventilatory disorder. Therefore, these findings emphasize the importance of the management of lung function in bronchiectasis with obstructive ventilatory disorder.

Another interesting finding of our study was that there was no significant correlation between the spirometric pattern and radiological type of bronchiectasis. However, the increase in the radiological severity, which was measured by the modified Reiff score, was accompanied by the increase in the

severity of impairment of lung function. Bronchiectasis is known to manifest as a combination of three morphologies, viz., cylindrical, varicose, and cystic²⁶. Few studies have investigated the relationship between the type of bronchiectasis and the spirometric pattern. In contrast with our study, other studies have suggested that cylindrical bronchiectasis is associated with obstructive ventilatory disorder^{22, 27}. However, it is difficult to generalize the results of studies that incorporated a small patient population. Thus, large-scale research on the association between the radiological features of bronchiectasis and lung function is warranted. Our study also showed that the severity of lung function impairment increased with the radiological extent of bronchiectasis. Inflammation and destruction of the lung parenchyma and airways become more severe with the expansion in the extent of bronchiectasis, which may lead to a decrease in lung function. Other studies have also reported similar results^{11, 24}. Thus, we can infer that the extent of bronchiectasis, rather than the type of bronchiectasis, affects lung function.

This study had several limitations. First, it was conducted at a single center in South Korea. Second, its retrospective and observational design could have introduced potential biases. For example, the proportion of patients with obstructive ventilatory disorder was high in this bronchiectasis population, possibly because this study was conducted in patients with bronchiectasis who underwent pulmonary function testing. Third, the BSI and FACED scores were high in the bronchiectasis with obstructive ventilatory disorder group. FEV₁ is included in the BSI and FACED evaluation criteria, which may be a confounding factor. However, our study showed that low BMI, high mMRC score, and high prevalence of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* infection were clinical features associated with the severity of bronchiectasis with obstructive ventilatory disorder, even after excluding these confounding factors.

In conclusion, among patients with bronchiectasis, 52% had obstructive ventilatory disorder and 18% had restrictive ventilatory disorder. Bronchiectasis with obstructive ventilatory disorder had more dyspnea, and greater disease and radiological severity. The extent of bronchiectasis rather than radiologic type of bronchiectasis affects lung function impairment, however more research is needed.

Methods

Study setting and patients population

We retrospectively reviewed the medical records of 1369 patients at Chungbuk National University Hospital (a 793-bed referral hospital) in Cheongju, Republic of Korea, in whom bronchiectasis was diagnosed between January 2014 to August 2021. Of those patients, those not undergoing pulmonary function test (n= 863) were excluded, a total of 506 patients were included in the study. We classified patients with bronchiectasis into three groups according to spirometric patterns (Figure 1).

Ethics approval and consent to participate

The study was approved by the Ethical Committee of the “Chungbuk National University Hospital” in compliance with the ethical principles (IRB No. CBNUH 2021-09-023). This study was conducted in accordance with the amended Declaration of Helsinki (as revised in 2013). Patient information was

anonymized and de-identified prior to analysis. Therefore, the need for informed consent was waived owing to the retrospective nature of the study.

Pulmonary function tests

Pre-bronchodilator and post-bronchodilator spirometry was performed according to American Thoracic Society/European criteria¹³. The absolute values of FEV₁ and forced vital capacity (FVC) were recorded, and the percentage of predicted values for FEV₁ and FVC were calculated using an automatic calculator with a reference equation obtained from a representative Korean sample¹⁴. Normal ventilation was defined as pre-bronchodilator FEV₁/FVC $\geq$ 0.70 and FVC $\geq$ 80% predicted. Obstructive ventilatory disorder was defined as pre-bronchodilator FEV₁/FVC < 0.70. Restrictive ventilatory disorder was defined as FEV₁/FVC $\geq$ 0.7 and FVC < 80% predicted¹⁵.

Bronchiectasis severity: Radiological and disease severity

The radiological severity of bronchiectasis was measured using the modified Reiff score¹⁶. Chest computed tomography (CT) was used to evaluate the radiological extent of bronchiectasis in all participants. The number of lobes involved (the lingula was considered to be a separate lobe) and degree of dilatation (tubular: 1, varicose: 2, and cystic: 3) were determined by three researchers, including two pulmonologists (SHK and BY) and one radiologist (JYY), based on the consensual interpretation of the chest CT image. The FACED and BSI scores were calculated to assess the clinical status and severity of the bronchiectasis, based on previous studies^{8,9}.

Microbiology

Spontaneous sputum or lower tract specimens (bronchoalveolar lavage) were obtained from all patients. The specimens were subjected to microbiological analyses according to standard methods¹⁷. Conventional semi-qualitative bacterial and fungal cultures were performed. All samples underwent initial Gram staining prior to sputum culture, if the Murray and Washington criteria were met¹⁸. Nontuberculous mycobacteria (NTM) lung disease was diagnosed using the microbiological criteria provided by the American Thoracic Society and Infectious Disease Society of America; (1) two positive sputum cultures, (2) one positive bronchial wash or lavage, (3) compatible mycobacterial histological features such as granulomatous inflammation, and positive results on acid-fast bacilli lung biopsy and/or lung biopsy culture, and (4) more than one positive sputum culture or bronchial wash¹⁹.

Statistical analysis

Data were presented as the median and interquartile range (IQR) for continuous variables and frequency (percentage) for categorical variables. Continuous variables were compared using the Kruskal-Wallis test and the Pearson chi-squared test or Fisher exact test was used for categorical variables. Moreover, p-values for comparing the three ventilatory disorder groups were adjusted using Bonferroni correction.

Spearman's rho correlation method was used to confirm the existence of a correlation between the BSI score and lung function tests. All tests were two-sided, and p-values <0.05 were considered statistically significant. All statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows (version 21.0; IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA) and STATA (version 15; Stata Corp., College Station, TX, USA).

Declarations

Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Author Contributions

Conceptualization: Choe K.H., Kim E.G., Yang B. Investigation: Kim S.H., Yang B. Formal analysis: Kim S.H., Yang B., Yoo J.Y. Methodology: Choe K.H., Kim S.H., Yang B. Supervision: Kim E.G., Yoo J.Y. Writing-original draft: Choe K.H., Kim S.H., Yang B. Writing-review & editing: Choe K.H., Kim S.H., Yang B.H., Yoo J.Y., Cho J.Y., Kang H., Shin Y.M., Lee K.M.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

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Figures

Figure 1

Flow chart of study population

Figure 2

Correlation between the modified Reiff score and lung function

(a) Obstructive pattern

(b) Restrictive pattern

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