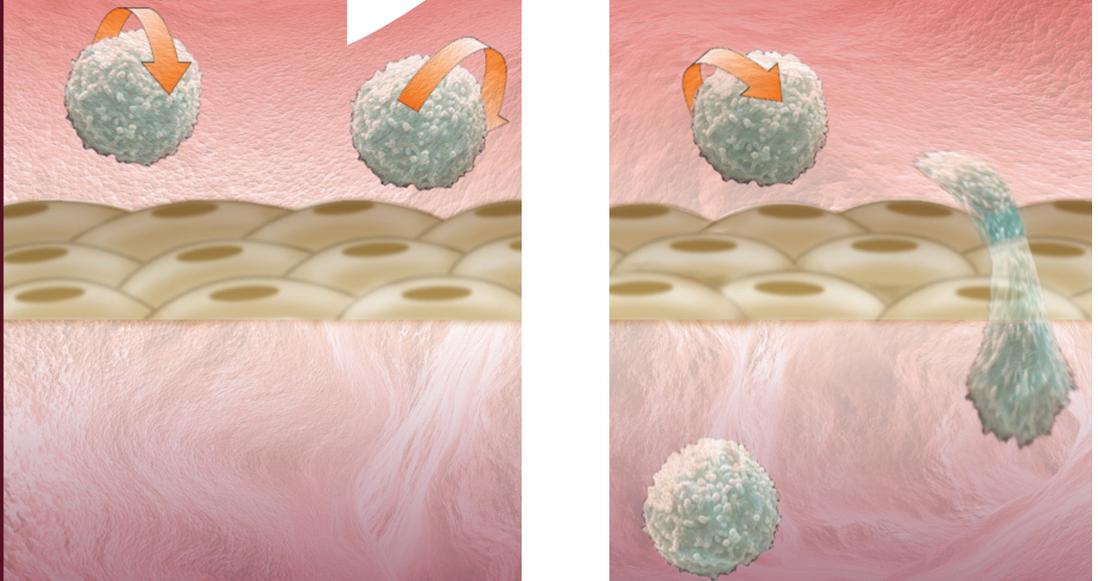


MECHANISMS OF VASCULAR DISEASE:

A REFERENCE BOOK FOR VASCULAR SPECIALISTS

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Mechanisms of Vascular Disease

Mechanisms of Vascular Disease:

A Reference Book for Vascular Specialists

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Table of Contents

Contributors vii

Detailed Contents xi

1. Endothelium 1
Paul Kerr, Raymond Tam, Frances Plane (Calgary, Canada)
2. Vascular smooth muscle structure and function 13
David Wilson (Adelaide, Australia)
3. Atherosclerosis 25
Gillian Cockerill, Qingbo Xu (London, UK)
4. Mechanisms of plaque rupture 43
Ian Loftus (London, UK)
5. Current and emerging therapies in atheroprotection 79
Stephen Nicholls, Rishi Puri (Cleveland, USA)
6. Molecular approaches to revascularisation in peripheral vascular disease 103
Greg McMahon, Mark McCarthy (Leicester, UK)
7. Biology of restenosis and targets for intervention 115
Richard Kenagy (Seattle, USA)
8. Vascular arterial haemodynamics 153
Michael Lawrence-Brown, Kurt Liffman, James Semmens, Ilija Sutalo (Melbourne & Perth, Australia)
9. Physiological haemostasis 177
Simon McRae (Adelaide, Australia)
10. Hypercoagulable states 189
Simon McRae (Adelaide, Australia)
11. Platelets in the pathogenesis of vascular disease and their role as a therapeutic target 201
Sandeep Prabhu, Rahul Sharma, Karlheinz Peter (Melbourne, Australia)
12. Pathogenesis of aortic aneurysms 227
Jonathan Golledge, Guo-Ping Shi, Paul Norman (Townsville & Perth, Australia; Boston, USA)
13. Pharmacological treatment of aneurysms 247
Matthew Thompson, Janet Powell (London, UK)
14. Aortic dissection and connective tissue disorders 255
Mark Hamilton (Adelaide, Australia)
15. Biomarkers in vascular disease 277
Ian Nordon, Robert Hincliffe (London, UK)
16. Pathophysiology and principles of management of vasculitis and Raynaud's phenomenon 295
Martin Veller (Johannesburg, South Africa)
17. SIRS, sepsis and multiorgan failure 315
Vishwanath Biradar, John Moran (Adelaide, Australia)
18. Pathophysiology of reperfusion injury 331
Prue Cowled, Robert Fitridge (Adelaide, Australia)
19. Compartment syndrome 351
Edward Choke, Robert Sayers, Matthew Bown (Leicester, UK)
20. Pathophysiology of pain 375
Stephan Schug, Helen Daly, Kathryn Stannard (Perth, Australia)

21. Postamputation pain 389
Stephan Schug, Gail Gillespie
(Perth, Australia)
 22. Treatment of neuropathic pain 401
Stephan Schug, Kathryn Stannard
(Perth, Australia)
 23. Principles of wound healing 423
Gregory Schultz, Gloria Chin,
Lyle Moldauer, Robert Diegelmann
(Florida, USA)
 24. Pathophysiology and principles of
varicose veins 451
Andrew Bradbury (Birmingham, UK)
 25. Chronic venous insufficiency and leg
ulceration: Principles and vascular
biology 459
Michael Stacey (Perth, Australia)
 26. Pathophysiology and principles of
management of the diabetic foot 475
David Armstrong, Timothy Fisher,
Brian Lepow, Matthew White,
Joseph Mills (Tucson, USA)
 27. Lymphoedema – Principles, genetics
and pathophysiology 497
Matt Waltham (London, UK)
 28. Graft materials past and future 511
Mital Desai, George Hamilton
(London, UK)
 29. Pathophysiology of vascular graft
infections 537
Mauro Vicaretti (Sydney, Australia)
- Index 549

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Detailed Contents

CHAPTER 1 – ENDOTHELIUM

Paul Kerr, Raymond Tam, Frances Plane

- Introduction 1
- Endothelium-dependent regulation of vascular tone 2
- Angiogenesis 7
- Haemostasis 8
- Inflammation 9
- Conclusions 10
- References

CHAPTER 2 – VASCULAR SMOOTH MUSCLE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION

David Wilson

- Introduction 13
- Smooth muscle (vascular) structure
- Cytoskeleton 14
- Contractile myofilament
- Functional regulation of vascular smooth muscle: Neuronal, hormonal, receptor mediated 15
- Smooth muscle function 17
- Myofilament basis of smooth muscle contraction and relaxation
- Smooth muscle contraction and relaxation 18
- Ion channels important in the regulation of smooth muscle function
- Regulation of cellular Ca^{2+}
- Sources of cytosolic Ca^{2+} entry 19
- Potassium channels
- Endothelial regulation of smooth muscle vasodilatation 20

Smooth muscle proliferation and vascular remodeling 20

Summary 22

References

CHAPTER 3 – ATHEROSCLEROSIS

Gillian Cockerill, Qingbo Xu

Introduction 25

Atherosclerotic lesions 26

Fatty streaks

Plaque or atheroma

Hypercholesterolemia and oxidised-LDL 27

High-density lipoproteins role in atheroprotection 28

Hypertension and biomechanical stress 29

Biomechanical stress-induced cell death 30

Biomechanical stress and inflammation 31

Biomechanical stress-induced smooth muscle cell proliferation 32

Infections and heat shock proteins

Infections

Heat shock proteins 33

Infections and HSP expression

Infections, sHSP and innate immunity 34

Immune responses 36

MHC class II antigens and T cells

Oxidised LDL as a candidate antigen

HSP60 as a candidate antigen 37

B2-glycoprotein Ib as a candidate antigen

Inflammation

C-reactive protein	38
CD40/CD40L	
Summary and perspectives	39
References	

CHAPTER 4 – MECHANISMS OF PLAQUE RUPTURE

Ian Loftus

Introduction	43
Evidence for the ‘plaque rupture theory’	44
Coronary circulation	
Cerebral circulation	
The role of individual components of the arterial wall	
The endothelium	45
The lipid core	47
The cap of the plaque	49
Smooth muscle cells and collagen production	50
Macrophages and collagen degradation	51
The vessel lumen	56
The role of angiogenesis in plaque rupture	
The role of infectious agents in plaque rupture	57
Risk prediction of plaque instability	58
Imaging	
Blood markers	59
Therapy aimed at plaque stabilisation	
HMG Co-A reductase inhibitors	60
MMP inhibition	
Tissue inhibitors of metalloproteinases (TIMPs)	61
Synthetic MMP inhibitors	
Doxycycline	
ACE inhibitors	
Summary	62
References	63

CHAPTER 5 – CURRENT AND EMERGING THERAPIES IN ATHEROPROTECTION

Stephen Nicholls, Rishi Puri

Background	79
Pathology	
Risk factor modification	80
Statins, LDL lowering and C-reactive protein	
The complexity of HDL	84
The controversy of triglycerides	87
Hypertension	
Risk factor modification in the diabetic patient	89
Glycaemic control	
Global risk factor reduction in diabetics	91
The metabolic syndrome	92
Future targets	93
Conclusion	
References	94

CHAPTER 6 – MOLECULAR APPROACHES TO REVASCULARISATION IN PERIPHERAL VASCULAR DISEASE

Greg S McMahon, Mark J McCarthy

Introduction	103
Mechanisms of vascular growth	
Vasculogenesis	
Angiogenesis	104
Neovessel maturation	105
Microvascular network maturation	106
Arteriogenesis	
Therapeutic induction of vascular growth	107
Delivery of molecular activators of vascular growth	
Angiogenic activators	108
Arteriogenic activators	109
Clinical trials for angiogenic therapy of peripheral vascular disease	
Conclusions	110
References	

CHAPTER 7 – BIOLOGY OF RESTENOSIS AND TARGETS FOR INTERVENTION

Richard Kenagy

Introduction 115

Mechanisms of restenosis

Thrombosis 116

Remodelling

Intimal hyperplasia 123

Sequence of events after injury

Origin of intimal cells 125

Inflammation 126

Role of ECM production 127

The contribution of specific factors to restenosis

Growth factors/cytokines

Inhibitors 128

Coagulation and fibrinolytic factors 129

Matrix metalloproteinases

Extracellular matrix/receptors

Targets for intervention 130

Intracellular signalling molecules

mTOR and microtubules

Transcription factors

miRNA 131

Inflammation targets

Brachytherapy

Extracellular targets and cell-based therapies

Angiotensin pathway

Cell-based therapies 132

Differential effects on endothelium and SMCs

Delivery devices

Prevention versus reversal of restenosis

Conclusions 133

References 134

CHAPTER 8 – VASCULAR ARTERIAL HAEMODYNAMICS

Michael Lawrence Brown, Kurt Liffman, James Semmens, Ilija Sutalo

Introduction 153

Laplace's law of wall of tension 154

Newtonian fluid 155

Non-Newtonian fluid

Poiseuille flow 158

Bernoulli's equation

Young's modulus and pulsatile flow 159

Mass conversion 161

Reynold's number

Arterial dissection, collateral circulation and competing flows 163

Shear stress and pressure 164

Forces on graft systems 165

Case 1 – The cylindrical graft 168

Case 2 – The windsock graft

Case 3 – The curved graft 169

Case 4 – The symmetric bifurcated graft

Computational modelling 170

Recent development and future directions 171

Conclusions 172

References 173

CHAPTER 9 – PHYSIOLOGICAL HAEMOSTASIS

Simon McRae

Introduction 177

Primary haemostasis

Platelets

Platelet adhesion

Platelet activation and shape change 179

Platelet aggregation 180

Interactions between primary and secondary haemostasis 181

Secondary haemostasis

The coagulation cascade 182

Initiation 183

Amplification

Propagation 184

Normal inhibitors of coagulation

Fibrinolysis 185

Conclusions 186

References

CHAPTER 10 – HYPERCOAGULABLE STATES

Simon McRae

Introduction 189

Classification of thrombophilia

Inherited thrombophilia 190

Type 1 conditions

Antithrombin deficiency

Protein C and Protein S deficiency

Type 2 conditions 191

Factor V Leiden

The prothrombin (G20210A) gene mutation

FVL/PGM compound heterozygotes

Other inherited conditions

Acquired thrombophilia 192

Antiphospholipid antibodies

Heparin induced thrombocytopenia

Myeloproliferative disorders 193

Potential reasons for performing thrombophilia testing

Patients with venous thrombosis and their relatives

Providing an understanding of the aetiology of a thrombotic event

Determining risk of recurrence and therefore optimal duration of anticoagulation 194

Determining the need for primary prophylaxis in asymptomatic family members 195

Making decisions regarding the use of the oral contraceptive pill 196

Determining the need for thromboprophylaxis during pregnancy

Patients with arterial thrombosis

Potential detrimental effects of thrombophilia testing 197

Conclusion

References

CHAPTER 11 – PLATELETS IN THE PATHOGENESIS OF

VASCULAR DISEASE AND THEIR ROLE AS A THERAPEUTIC TARGET

*Sandeep Prabhu, Rahul Sharma,
Karlheinz Peter*

Introduction 201

Platelet function – Adhesion and activation

Platelet adhesion 202

Platelet activation 203

Mediators of platelet activation and ‘outside in’ signalling

Thrombin and collagen 204

Adenosine diphosphate (ADP)

Thromboxane A2 (TXA2)

Adrenaline 206

Second messenger systems 207

Physiological consequences of platelet activation

The GP IIb/IIIa receptor and ‘inside-out’ signalling

Granule exocytosis 208

Activation-induced conformational change of platelets

Platelets and atherosclerosis 209

Role of platelets in the initiation of the atherosclerosis

Role of the platelets in the progression of the atherosclerosis

Role of platelets in vulnerable plaques and plaque rupture

Current and future anti-platelet agents 210

Aspirin (salicylic acid)

Thienopyridines 211

Clopidogrel

Prasugrel 213

Ticlopidine

Ticagrelor

GPIIb/IIIa Antagonists

Other anti-platelet agents and promising new developments 214

Platelet function testing 215

Light-transmission aggregometry

Whole blood aggregometry 217
 VerifyNow® Assay
 Flow cytometry 218

References

CHAPTER 12 – PATHOGENESIS OF AORTIC ANEURYSMS

*Jonathan Golledge, Guo-Ping Shi,
 Paul E Norman*

Introduction 227

Differences between thoracic and abdominal aortic aneurysms 228

Summary of current theories and stages of AAA evolution

Atherosclerosis and AAA

Immune mechanisms in AAA 229

Extracellular matrix dysfunction 232

Infection 233

Biomechanical forces

Angiogenesis

Intra-luminal thrombus

Extracellular matrix proteolysis 234

Genetics 236

AAA rupture 237

Biomechanical factors in aneurysms rupture

The role of enzymes in AAA rupture

Role of intraluminal thrombus in aneurysm rupture 238

Future research

References

CHAPTER 13 – PHARMACOLOGICAL TREATMENT OF ANEURYSMS

Matthew Thompson, Janet T Powell

Background 247

Screening programmes

Pathophysiology 248

Therapeutic strategies

Beta blockade

Modification of the inflammatory

response 249

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatories

Matrix metalloproteinase (MMP)

inhibition

Anti-chlamydial therapy 250

Drugs acting on the renin/angiotensin axis

HMG Co-A reductase inhibitors 251

The future – Data from recent

experimental studies

References

CHAPTER 14 – PATHOPHYSIOLOGY OF AORTIC DISSECTION AND CONNECTIVE TISSUE DISORDERS

Mark Hamilton

Introduction 255

Embryology of thoracic aorta and arch vessels

Haemodynamics of thoracic compared to abdominal aorta 257

Sizes of normal aorta

Classification of aortic syndromes

Acute/Chronic

DeBakey classification of class 1 dissection – Type 1, 2, and 3

Stanford classification 258

European task force

Pathogenesis of thoracic aortic dissection

Classical thoracic aortic dissection (class 1 dissection) 260

Intramural haematoma (class 2 aortic dissection) 261

Penetrating aortic ulcer (class 4 aortic dissection) 262

Complications of acute aortic syndromes 263

Visceral ischaemia /malperfusion syndromes

Fate of the false lumen

Aneurysmal degeneration and rupture 264

Connective tissue disorders and acute aortic syndromes

Marfan syndrome
 Fibrillin and Marfan syndrome 265
 The role of transforming growth factor
 beta in development of the vascular
 system in health and disease 266
 Ehlers-Danlos syndrome 267
 Diagnosis of Ehlers-Danlos syndrome
 268
 Loeys-Deitz syndrome 270
 Familial thoracic aortic aneurysm disease
 271
 Bicuspid aortic valve 273
 Turners Syndrome
Summary 274
Reference list

CHAPTER 15 – BIOMARKERS IN VASCULAR DISEASE

Ian M Nordon, Robert J Hinchliffe

Introduction 277
What is a biomarker?
Types of biomarkers
 A classical clinical example 278
**Potential value of biomarkers in vascular
 disease 279**
Biomarker discovery steps 280
AAA biomarkers
 Circulating extracellular matrix markers
 281
 Matrix-degrading enzymes 283
 Proteins associated with thrombosis
 Markers of inflammation 284
Biomarkers of AAA rupture 285
Biomarkers following endovascular repair
 Inflammation 287
 Lipid accumulation
 Apoptosis
 Thrombosis
 Proteolysis 288
Challenges in biomarkers discovery
Future work
Conclusion 289
References

CHAPTER 16 – PATHOPHYSIOLOGY AND PRINCIPLES OF MANAGEMENT OF VASCULITIS AND RAYNAUD'S PHENOMENON

Martin Veller

Vasculitides 295
Introduction
Classification of vasculitides 296
Clinical presentation of vasculitides
Investigations of vasculitides
**Principles of treatment of vasculitides
 297**
**The vasculitides of specific interest to
 vascular surgeons 298**
 Giant cell arteritis
 Takayasu's arteritis 299
 Thromboangitis obliterans (Buerger's
 disease) 300
 Behcet's disease 301
 Polyarteritis nodosa 302
 Vasculitides secondary to connective
 tissue diseases 303
 Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE)
 Antiphospholipid antibody syndrome
 (APS) 304
 Rheumatoid arthritis 305
 Scleroderma
 Infective vasculitides 306
 Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)
**Pathophysiology and principles of
 Raynaud's phenomenon 307**
 Prevalence of Raynaud's phenomenon
 308
 Clinical findings in Raynaud's
 phenomenon 309
 Diagnosis of Raynaud's phenomenon
Prognosis 310
Treatment
Recommendations 311
References 312

CHAPTER 17 – SIRS, SEPSIS AND

MULTIORGAN FAILURE*Vishwanath Biradar, John Moran***Epidemiology 315****Historical perspectives and definition 316****Risk factors for sepsis 317**

Causative agents

Pathophysiology of sepsis

innate immunity and toll-like receptors (TLRs) 319

Proinflammatory response

Coagulation cascade

Multorgan dysfunction syndrome (MODS) 320

Epithelial and endothelial dysfunction

Immune suppression and apoptosis

Sepsis, circulatory failure and organ dysfunction

Management 322

Steroids 323

Recombinant human activated protein C (rhAPC) 324

Glucose control 325

Renal replacement therapy

3-hydroxy-3-methylglutaryl-coenzyme reductase inhibitors (HMG-CoA) 326

Other adjuvant therapies in sepsis

Cytokines and anticytokine therapies

Pooled immunoglobulin (IVIG)

Acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) 327

References**CHAPTER 18 –
PATHOPHYSIOLOGY OF
REPERFUSION INJURY***Prue Cowled, Rob Fitridge***Introduction 331****Ischaemia**

ATP and mitochondrial function

Gene expression during ischaemia 332

Reperfusion 333

Reactive oxygen species

Eicosanoids 334

Nitric Oxide 335

Endothelin 336

Cytokines

Neutrophil and endothelial interactions 338

Complement activation 340

Tissue destruction 341

Proteases and metalloproteinases

Apoptotic cell death during ischaemia-reperfusion injury

No-reflow phenomenon 342

Therapeutic approaches to IRI

Ischaemic preconditioning

Ischaemic post-conditioning 343

Conditioning effects of volatile anaesthetics

Pharmacological treatments 344

Summary 345**References****CHAPTER 19 – COMPARTMENT
SYNDROME***Edward Choke, Robert Sayers, Matthew Bown***Definition 351****Acute limb compartment syndrome**

Incidence

Anatomy/physiology 352

Aetiology/pathophysiology

Clinical presentation 354

Investigation 355

Treatment 357

Complication of LCS 359

Outcome 360

Acute abdominal compartment syndrome

Incidence 361

Aetiology

Pathological effects of raised intra-abdominal pressure 362

Clinical presentation 363

Investigation

Treatment 364

Complications of surgical decompression

Outcome 367

References 368

CHAPTER 20 – PATHOPHYSIOLOGY OF PAIN

Stephan Schug, Helen Daly, Kathryn Stannard

Introduction 375

Peripheral mechanisms

Nociception/transduction

Conduction 376

Spinal cord mechanisms

Ascending systems 377

Descending control

Pain modulation 378

Peripheral sensation

Central sensitisation in the dorsal horn

Neuropathic pain 379

Mechanisms of neuropathic pain

Peripheral mechanisms

Spontaneous ectopic discharge

Altered gene expression

Spared sensory neurons

Involvement of the sympathetic nervous system 380

Collateral sprouting

Effects of bradykinin

Central mechanisms

Wind up

Central sensitization 381

Central disinhibition

Expansion in receptive field size (recruitment)

Immediate early gene expression

Anatomical re-organisation of the spinal cord

Contribution of glial cells to pain conditions 382

Symptoms of neuropathic pain

Stimulus-dependent pain

Stimulus-independent pain 383

Sympathetically maintained pain (SMP)

Neuropathic pain syndromes

Peripheral neuropathies

Central neuropathies 385

References

CHAPTER 21 – POST-AMPUTATION PAIN

Stephan Schug, Gail Gillespie

Introduction 389

Classification and incidence of post-amputation pain syndromes

Stump pain

Phantom sensation 390

Phantom limb pain

Pathophysiology of post-amputation pain syndromes

Peripheral factors

Spinal factors 391

Supraspinal factors

Current pathophysiological model of post-amputation pain syndromes 392

Prevention of post-amputation pain

Perioperative lumbar epidural blockade

Peripheral nerve blockade 393

NMDA antagonists

Evaluation of the patient with post-amputation pain syndromes

Examination

Therapy of post-amputation pain syndromes 394

Calcitonin

Ketamine

Analgesic and Co-analgesic compounds

Opioids 395

Gabapentin

Clonazepam

Lidocaine

Carbamazepine

Tricyclic antidepressants (TCA)

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors

Baclofen

Capsaicin

Symptomatic treatment of pain components 396

Neuropharmacological therapies

Invasive therapies
 Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT)
 Nerve blockade
 Spinal cord stimulation
 Implantable intrathecal delivery systems
 Dorsal root entry zone (DREZ) lesions
 Psychological therapy 397

Future aims

References

CHAPTER 22 – TREATMENT OF NEUROPATHIC PAIN

Stephan Schug, Kathryn Stannard

Introduction 401

Principles of treatment

Pharmacological treatment 402

Opioids

Recommendations for clinical use of opioids

Tramadol

Mechanism of action

Efficacy 403

Adverse effects

Recommendations for clinical use of tramadol in neuropathic pain

Antidepressants

Tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs)

Mechanism of action 404

Adverse effects

Selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors (SSRIs)

Serotonin/Noradrenaline reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs) 405

Recommendations for clinical use of antidepressants as analgesics

Anticonvulsants

Mechanism of action 406

Individual medications

Clonazepam

Gabapentin

Pregabalin 407

Carbamazepine

Sodium valproate 408

Phenytoin

Lamotrigene

Recommendations for clinical use of anticonvulsants as analgesics

Local anaesthetics and antiarrhythmics 409

Mechanism of action

Lignocaine

Mexiletine

Recommendations for clinical use of lignocaine and mexiletine in neuropathic pain

N-methyl-D-aspartate-receptor antagonists (NMDA)

Ketamine 410

Other NMDA antagonists

Miscellaneous compounds for systemic use

Clonidine

Efficacy

Baclofen

Levodopa 411

Cannabinoids

Topical treatments

Lignocaine 5% medicated plaster

Capsaicin 412

Mechanism of action

Efficacy

Non-pharmacological therapy

Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS)

Spinal cord stimulation (SCS) 413

Sympathetic nerve blocks

Neurosurgical destructive techniques

Cognitive behaviour therapy

References 414

CHAPTER 23 – PRINCIPLES OF WOUND HEALING

Gregory Schultz, Gloria Chin, Lyle Moldawer, Robert Diegelmann

Introduction 423

Phases of acute wound healing

Haemostasis

- Inflammation 426
 - Neutrophils 427
 - Macrophages 428
- Proliferative phase 429
 - Fibroblast migration 430
 - Collagen and extracellular matrix production
 - Angiogenesis 431
 - Granulation 432
 - Epithelialization
 - Remodelling 433
- Summary of acute wound healing 435
- Comparison of acute and chronic wounds**
 - Normal and pathological responses to injury
 - Biochemical differences in the molecular environments of healing and chronic wounds 436
 - Biological differences in the response of chronic wound cells to growth factors 439
- From bench to bedside**
 - Role of endocrine hormones in the regulation of wound healing
 - Molecular basis of chronic non-healing wounds
 - Chronic venous stasis ulcers 441
 - Pressure ulcers
- Future concepts for the treatment of chronic wounds 442**
 - Bacterial biofilms in chronic wounds 443
- Conclusion 445**
- References**

CHAPTER 24 – PATHOPHYSIOLOGY AND PRINCIPLES OF MANAGEMENT OF VARICOSE VEINS

Andrew Bradbury

- Introduction 451**
- Anatomy**
- Histology 452**
- Physiology**

- Varicose veins 453**
- Valvular abnormalities**
- Muscle pump failure 455**
- Venous recirculation**
- Recurrent varicose veins**
 - New varicose veins
 - Persistent varicose veins
 - True recurrent varicose veins 456
- Cellular and molecular biology of varicose veins**
- Conclusion 457**
- References**

CHAPTER 25 – CHRONIC VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY AND LEG ULCERATION: PRINCIPLES AND VASCULAR BIOLOGY

Michael Stacey

- Definitions 459**
 - Chronic venous insufficiency
 - Leg ulceration
 - Assessment of cause of leg ulceration 460
- Epidemiology 461
- Pathophysiology
 - Venous abnormality
 - Effect of ambulatory venous hypertension on the tissues in the leg 463
 - Influence of venous disease on the wound healing process 465
 - Genetic associations with venous ulceration 466
- Assessment of venous function 467**
- Treatment of venous ulceration**
 - Compression therapy
 - Dressings 468
 - Surgery
 - Prevention of venous ulcer recurrence 470
 - Sclerotherapy and other techniques to obliterate surface and perforating veins
 - Other therapies 471
- References**

CHAPTER 26 –
PATHOPHYSIOLOGY AND
PRINCIPLES OF MANAGEMENT
OF THE DIABETIC FOOT

*David Armstrong, Timothy Fisher, Brian
Lepow, Matthew White, Joseph Mills*

- Introduction** 475
- Pathophysiology of the diabetic foot** 476
- Neuropathy
 - Structural abnormalities/gait abnormalities
 - Angiopathy 478
- Diagnosis**
- History and rapid visual screening
 - Neurological examination 479
 - Monofilament testing
 - Vibration testing
 - Dermatologic examination 480
 - Anatomy of occlusive disease – vascular examination
 - Prediction of wound healing: assessment of perfusion 481
 - Arterial imaging
 - Soft tissue imaging 482
- Classification systems** 483
- Diabetes mellitus foot risk classification
 - University of Texas wound classification system
- Clinical problems and principles of management** 484
- Ulceration
 - Epidemiology and risk factors
 - Offloading
 - Non-vascular surgical treatment 485
 - Class I – Elective 486
 - Class II – Prophylactic
 - Class III – Curative
 - Class IV – Emergency (urgent)
 - Post-operative management
 - Infections 487
 - Charcot arthropathy
- Prevention** 490
- Conclusion** 492
- References**

CHAPTER 27 – LYMPHOEDEMA
– PRINCIPLES, GENETICS AND
PATHOPHYSIOLOGY

Matt Waltham

- Introduction** 497
- Classification of lymphoedema**
- Classification of primary lymphoedema 498
- The genetics of lymphangiogenesis in primary lymphoedema** 500
- Milroy's disease
 - Lymphoedema – distichiasis syndrome 501
 - Hypotrichosis – lymphoedema – telangiectasia syndrome 502
 - Meige disease (primary non-syndromic lymphoedema)
 - Other primary lymphoedema disorders 503
- Structure and development of the lymphatic circulation**
- Clinical aspects of lymphoedema** 505
- Summary**
- References**

CHAPTER 28 – GRAFT
MATERIALS PAST AND FUTURE

Mital Desai, George Hamilton

- The pathophysiology of graft healing** 511
- The peri-anastomotic area
 - Healing of prosthetic grafts 512
 - The healing process of the anastomosis
 - Graft porosity and permeability
- Physical properties of prosthetic materials** 514
- Tubular compliance
 - Anastomotic compliance mismatch
 - The compliance hypothesis of graft failure
- Synthetic grafts** 515
- Newer developments of Dacron grafts
 - Modifications and newer developments of PTFE grafts 517
 - Polyurethane grafts

Newer developments of polyurethane vascular grafts	518
Biological vascular grafts	519
Newer developments of biological vascular grafts	520
Prosthetic graft modifications	
Modifications to reduce graft infection	
Modifications to improve patency	521
Nanocomposite grafts	
Endothelial cell seeding	522
Single stage seeding	
Two stage seeding	
Vascular tissue engineering	
Non-degradable polymer and cell seeding	523
Bioresorbable and biodegradable polymers	
Combined bioresorbable and tissue engineered grafts	524
Mechanical conditioning of seeded vascular cells	
Alternative scaffolds	
Tissue-engineered grafts	525
Graft materials for aortic endografts	526
The future	
References	527

CHAPTER 29 – PATHOPHYSIOLOGY OF VASCULAR GRAFT INFECTIONS

Mauro Vicaretti

Introduction	537
Natural history of prosthetic vascular graft infections	
Mechanism of graft contamination at operation	538
Pathogenesis of graft infections	
Bacteriology of vascular graft infections	
Investigations for detection of prosthetic graft infections	539
History and physical examination	
Laboratory investigations	
Diagnostic imaging	540
Management of prosthetic graft infections	
Prevention	
Reduction of prosthetic vascular graft infection with rifampicin bonded gelatin sealed Dacron	541
Established infection	
Antibiotic therapy	
Operative management	
Conclusion	542
References	

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Abbreviation List

a1-PI	a1-protease inhibitor
5-HT	5-Hydroxytryptamine/Serotonin
AAA	Abdominal aortic aneurysm
AAS	Acute aortic syndrome
AAV	Adeno-associated viruses
ACE	Angiotensin converting enzyme
ACS	Acute coronary syndrome
ACS	Abdominal compartment syndrome
ACTH	Adrenocorticotrophic hormone
ADAMTS	A disintegrin and metalloproteinase with thrombospondin motifs
ADP	Adenosine diphosphate
AIDS	Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
ALI	Acute lung injury
AMP	Adenosine monophosphate
AMPA	α -amino-3 hydroxy-5-methylisoxazole
ANA	Anti-nuclear antibody
ANCA	Anti-neutrophil cytoplasmic antibody
AOD	Aortic occlusive disease
AP1	Activated protein 1
APC	Activated protein C
APC	Antigen presenting cell
APLAS	Antiphospholipid antibody syndrome
ApoAI	Apolipoprotein AI
ApoE	Apolipoprotein E
APS	Antiphospholipid antibody syndrome
APTT	Activated partial thromboplastin time

ARDS	Acute respiratory distress syndrome
AT	Antithrombin
ATP	Adenosine triphosphate
AVP	Ambulatory venous thrombosis
β 2-GPI	β 2-glycoprotein Ib
bFGF	Basic fibroblast growth factor
BKCa	Large conductance calcium activated potassium channel
BMPs	Bone morphogenetic proteins
BMS	Bare metal stent
CAD	Coronary artery disease
CaM	Calmodulin
CAM	Cell adhesion molecule
cAMP	Cyclic adenosine monophosphate
CCK	Cholecystokinin
cGMP	Cyclic guanine monophosphate
CD	Cluster of differentiation
CD40L	Cluster of differentiation 40 ligand
CEA	Carotid endarterectomy
CETP	Cholesteryl ester transfer protein
CFD	Computational fluid dynamics
CG	Cationized gelatin
CGRP	Calcitonin gene regulated peptide
CHD	Coronary heart disease
CI	Confidence interval
CIMT	Carotid intimal-media thickness
c-JNK	c-Jun N-terminal kinase
CK-MB	Creatinine kinase (Myocardial specific)
CNCP	Chronic noncancer pain
cNOS	Constitutive nitric oxygen synthase enzyme
COX-1	Cyclooxygenase-1
COX-2	Cyclooxygenase-2
CROW	Charcot restraint orthotic walker
CRRT	Continuous renal replacement therapy

CRP	C-reactive protein
CRPS	Complex regional pain syndromes
CT	Computational tomography
CTA	Computed tomographic angiography
CTD	Connective tissue disorders
CTGF	Connective tissue growth factor
CYP	Cytochrome P450
CVD	Cardiovascular disease
CVI	Chronic venous insufficiency
DAG	Diacylglycerol
DES	Drug-eluting stent
DRG	Dorsal root ganglion
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
DSA	Digital subtraction arteriography
DTS	Dense tubular system
DVT	Deep vein thrombosis
EC	Endothelial cell
ECM	Extracellular matrix
EDCF	Endothelium-derived contracting factor
EDH	Endothelium-dependent hyperpolarisation
EDS	Ehlers-Danlos syndrome
EET	Epoxyeicosatrienoic acids
ELAM-1	Endothelial-leukocyte adhesion molecule-1
ELG	Endoluminal grafts
ELISA	Enzyme linked immunosorbent assay
E_K	Equilibrium potential
E_M	Membrane potential
eNOS	Endothelial nitric oxide synthase enzyme
EPC	Endothelial progenitor cells
EPCR	Endothelial protein C receptor
ePTFE	Expanded polytetrafluoroethylene
ERK	Extracellular signal-regulated kinase
ESR	Erythrocyte sedimentation rate

ET	Essential thrombocytosis
ET-1	Endothelin 1
EVAR	Endovascular aortic aneurysm repair
EVLA	Endovenous LASER ablation
FDA	Food and drug administration
FDPs	Fibrin degradation products (soluble)
FGF	Fibroblast growth factor
FGF-2	Fibroblast growth factor 2
FMN	Flavin mononucleotide
FVL	Factor V Leiden
GABA	Gamma-aminobutyric acid
GABA B	Gamma-aminobutyric acid subtype B
G-CSF	Granulocyte colony stimulating factor
GMCSF	Granulocyte-macrophage colony stimulating factor
GP	Glycoprotein
GPCR	G-protein coupled receptor
GSV	Great saphenous vein
HDL	High density lipoprotein
HDL-C	High density lipoprotein cholesterol
HIF	Hypoxia inducible factor
HIT	Heparin induced thrombocytopenia
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
HLA	Human leukocyte antigen
HMG Co-A	Hydroxymethylglutaryl coenzyme-A
HMW	High molecular weight
HPETE	Hydroperoxyeicosatetraenoic acid
HETE	Hydroxyeicosatetraenoic acids
HR	Hazard ratio
hsCRP	High-sensitive C-reactive protein
HSP	Heat shock protein
HUV	Human umbilical vein
IAH	Intra-abdominal hypertension

IAP	Intra-abdominal pressure
IAPP	Intra-abdominal perfusion pressure
ICAM-1	Inter-cellular adhesion molecule-1
ICAM-2	Inter-cellular adhesion molecule-2
ICP	Intra-compartmental pressure
ICU	Intensive care unit
IFN	Interferon
IGF-1	Insulin-like growth factor-1
IHD	Ischemic heart disease
IL	Interleukin
IL-1	Interleukin-1
IL-1 α	Interleukin-1 alpha
IL-1 β	Interleukin-1 beta
IL-6	Interleukin-6
IL-8	Interleukin-8
ILT	Intraluminal thrombus
IKCa	Intermediate conductance calcium-activated potassium channels
IMH	Intramural haematoma
IMP	Inosine monophosphate
iNOS	Inducible nitric oxide synthase enzyme
IP(3)	1,4,5-inositol triphosphate
IRI	Ischemia reperfusion injury
IVIG	Intravenous pooled immunoglobulin
IVUS	Intravascular ultrasound
KGF	Keratinocyte growth factor
KGF-2	Keratinocyte growth factor-2
LAP	Latency associated peptide
LCS	Limb compartment syndrome
LDL	Low density lipoprotein
LDS	Loeys-Dietz syndrome
LLC	Large latent complex
LEC	Lymphatic endothelial cells

LFA-1	Lymphocyte function-associated antigen-1
LO	Lipoxygenase
LOX	Lysyl oxidase
LOPS	Loss of protective sensation
LPA	Lysophosphatidic acid
LPS	Lipopolysaccharide
LTA	Lipoteichoic acid
LTGFBP	Latent TGF binding protein
MAC-1	Macrophage-1 antigen
MAPK	Mitogen activated protein kinase
MCP-1	Monocyte chemoattractant protein-1
M-CSF	Macrophage-colony stimulating factor
MFS	Marfan syndrome
MHC	Major histocompatibility
MI	Myocardial infarction
MIP-1	Macrophage inflammatory protein-1
MLC ₂₀	Myosin light chain ₂₀
MLCK	Myosin light chain kinase
MLCP	Myosin light chain phosphatase
MMP	Matrix metalloproteinase
MODS	Multiple organ dysfunction syndrome
MRA	Magnetic resonance angiography
MRI	Magnetic resonance imaging
mRNA	Messenger RNA
MRSA	Methicillin resistant <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>
MRSE	Methicillin resistant <i>Staphylococcus epidermidis</i>
MRTA	Magnetic resonance tomographic angiography
MTHFR	Methylenetetrahydrofolate reductase
MT-MMP	Membrane-type MMP
MVPS	Mitral valve prolapse syndrome
NADPH	Nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate
NGF	Nerve growth factor

NFκB	Nuclear factor kappa B
NiTi	Nitinol
NJP	Non-junctional perforators
NMDA	N-methyl-D-aspartate
NNH	Number needed to harm
NNT	Number needed to treat
NO	Nitric oxide
NOS	Nitric oxide synthase enzyme
NSAID	Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug
NV	Neovascularisation
OCP	Oestrogen/progesterone contraceptive pill
OPN	Osteopontin
OPG	Osteoprotegerin
OR	Odds ratio
OxLDL	Oxidised low density lipoprotein
PAD	Peripheral arterial disease
PAF	Platelet activating factor
PAI	Plasminogen activator inhibitor
PAI-1	Plasminogen activator inhibitor-1
PAR	Protease activated receptor
PAR-1	Protease activated receptor-1
PAR-4	Protease activated receptor-4
PAU	Penetrating aortic ulcer
PC	Protein C
PCA	Poly (carbonate-urea) urethane
PCI	Percutaneous coronary intervention (angioplasty)
PCWP	Pulmonary capillary wedge pressure
PDGF	Platelet-derived growth factor
PDGFβ	Platelet-derived growth factor-β
PDS	Polydioxanone
PECAM-1	Platelet-endothelial cell adhesion molecule-1
PEDF	Pigment epithelium-derived factor
PES	Paclitaxel-eluting stent

PET	Positron emission tomography
PF4	Platelet factor 4
PGI ₂	Prostacyclin
PGG ₂	Prostaglandin G ₂
PGH ₂	Prostaglandin H ₂
PGEI ₂ /PGI ₂	Prostaglandin I ₂
PGN	Peptidoglycan
PHN	Postherpetic neuropathy
PHZ	Para-anastomotic hyper-compliant zone
PI3K	Phosphatidylinositol 3-kinase
PIP2	Phosphatidylinositol 4,5-bisphosphate
PLC	Phospholipase C
PLOD	Procollagen lysyl hydroxylase
PMCA	Plasma membrane Ca ²⁺ APTases
PMN	Polymorphonuclear leukocyte
POSS	Polyhedral oligomeric silsesquioxanes
PPAR	Peroxisomal proliferation activating receptor
PPI	Proton pump inhibitor
PRV	Polycythaemia rubra vera
PS	Protein S
PSGL-1	P-selectin glycoprotein ligand-1
PT	Prothombin time
PTCA	Percutaneous coronary angioplasty
PTFE	Polytetrafluoroethylene
PTS	Post-thrombotic syndrome
PUFA	Polyunsaturated fatty acid
PVI	Primary valvular incompetence
rAAA	Ruptured AAA
Rac	Ras activated cell adhesion molecule
RANTES	Regulated upon activation, normal T cell expressed and secreted
RAS	Renin angiotensin system
RCT	Randomised controlled trial

RF	Rheumatoid factor
RFA	Radiofrequency ablation
rhAPC	Recombinant human activated protein C
RNA	Ribonucleic acid
ROS	Reactive oxygen species
RR	Relative risk
RSD	Reflex sympathetic dystrophy
S1P	Sphingosine-1-phosphate
SAPK	Stress-activated protein kinase
SCF	Stem cell factor
SCS	Spinal cord stimulation
ScvO2	Superior vena cava venous oxygen saturation
SDF-1	Stromal-cell-derived factor-1
SERCA	Sarco/endoplasmic reticulum CaATPases
SEP	Serum elastin peptides
SES	Sirolimus-eluting stent
SEPS	Subfascial endoscopic perforator surgery
SFA	Superficial femoral artery
SFJ	Sapheno-femoral junction
SIRS	Systemic inflammatory response syndrome
SKCa	Small conductance calcium-activated potassium channels
SLE	Systemic lupus erythematosus
SMA	Smooth muscle alpha actin
SMC	Smooth muscle cell
SMP	Sympathetically maintained pain
SNARE	Soluble N-ethylmaleimide-sensitive factor activating protein receptors
SNP	Single nucleotide polymorphisms
SNRI	Serotonin/Noradrenaline reuptake inhibitors
SPJ	Sapheno-popliteal junction
SPP	Skin perfusion pressure
SR	Sarcoplasmic reticulum
SSRIs	Selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors
SSV	Small saphenous vein

SVT	Superficial thrombophlebitis
STIM1	Stromal interacting molecule 1
T α CE	TNF α converting enzyme
TAAD	Thoracic aortic aneurysm disease
TAD	Thoracic aortic dissection
TAFI	Thrombin-activatable fibrinolysis inhibitor
Tc-99 MDP	Technetium-99 methylene diphosphonate
TCA	Tricyclic antidepressant
TCC	Total contact cast
TCR	T-cell receptor
TENS	Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation
TF	Tissue factor
TFPI	Tissue factor pathway inhibitor
TGF	Transforming growth factor
TGF- α	Transforming growth factor-alpha
TGF- β	Transforming growth factor-beta
TGL	Triglycerides
Th	T helper
TIA	Transient ischemic attack
TIMP	Tissue inhibitors of metalloproteinase
TLR	Toll-like receptors
TNF	Tumour necrosis factor
TNF- α	Tumour necrosis factor-alpha
tPA	Tissue-type plasminogen activator
TRP	Transient receptor potential
TRPC	Transmembrane receptor potential canonical
TRPV1	Transmembrane receptor potential Vanilloid-type
TXA2	Thromboxane A2
uPA	Urokinase
UT	University of Texas
VCAM	Vascular cell adhesion molecule
VCAM-1	Vascular cell adhesion molecule-1
VEGF	Vascular endothelial growth factor

VEGF-R	Vascular endothelial growth factor receptor
VIP	Vasoactive intestinal peptide
VLA-1	Very late activating antigen-1
VOCC	Voltage operated calcium channels
VPT	Vibratory perception threshold
VSMC	Vascular smooth muscle cells
VTE	Venous thromboembolism
VV	Varicose veins
vWF	von Willebrand factor
XO	Xanthine oxidase

1 • Endothelium

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INTRODUCTION

The endothelium, first described over 100 years ago as an inert anatomical barrier between blood and the vessel wall, is now recognized as a dynamic organ with secretory, synthetic, metabolic, and immunologic functions. Forming a continuous lining to every blood vessel in the body, endothelial cells play an obligatory role in modulating vascular tone and permeability, angiogenesis, and in mediating haemostatic, inflammatory and reparative responses to local injury. To fulfil these roles the endothelium is highly dynamic, continuously responding to spatial and temporal changes in mechanical and biochemical stimuli. Such responsiveness is affected through receptors for growth factors, lipoproteins, platelet products and circulating hormones, which regulate changes in protein and mRNA expression, cell proliferation and migration or the release of vasoactive and inflammatory mediators.

All vascular endothelial cells have a common embryonic origin but show clear bed-specific heterogeneity in morphology, function, gene and protein expression, determined by both environmental stimuli and epigenetic features acquired during development. Thus, the endothelium should not be regarded as a homogenous tissue

but rather a conglomerate of distinct populations of cells sharing many common functions but also adapted to meet regional demands.¹

The continuous endothelial cell layer provides an uninterrupted barrier between the blood and tissues in the majority of blood vessels and ensures tight control of permeability of the blood-brain barrier. In regions of increased trans-endothelial transport such as capillaries of endocrine glands and the kidney, the presence of fenestrae, transcellular pores approximately 70 nm in diameter with a thin fenestral diaphragm across their opening, facilitate the selective permeability required for efficient absorption, secretion, and filtering. In hepatic sinuses, the presence of a discontinuous endothelium with large fenestrations (0.1–1 μm in diameter) lacking a fenestral diaphragm, provides a highly permeable and poorly selective sieve essential for transfer of lipoproteins from blood to hepatocytes.

Beyond these structural variations, endothelial heterogeneity is also manifest in regional differences in the release of vasoactive and inflammatory mediators, in response to changes in shear stress and hypoxia, and in expression of pro- and anti-coagulant molecules. For example, endothelial expression of the pro-thrombotic mediator von

Willebrand factor (vWF) is a function of endothelial cells found in vessels of discrete size and/or anatomic location. Similarly, the contribution of nitric oxide (NO) to endothelium-dependent vasodilation is far greater in large conduit arteries compared to small resistance vessels. These regional biochemical and phenotypic differences between endothelial cells extend to their susceptibility to injury in the face of cardiovascular risk factors such as hypercholesterolemia, diabetes and smoking and thus impact the function of the vasculature both in health and disease.

This chapter provides an overview of how the endothelium regulates four key aspects of cardiovascular homeostasis—vascular tone, angiogenesis, haemostasis and inflammation.

ENDOTHELIUM-DEPENDENT REGULATION OF VASCULAR TONE

Since the first report by Furchgott and Zawadzki² of endothelium-dependent modulation of the contractile state of smooth muscle cells in the artery wall, it has become apparent that endothelial cells release a plethora of vasoactive factors in response to a wide range of mechanical and chemical stimuli. That many of these factors also modulate processes such as inflammation, cell adhesion and coagulation, highlights the crucial physiological role of the endothelium and why endothelial dysfunction is pivotal in the development of cardiovascular diseases such as atherosclerosis and hypertension. This section will focus on the four major pathways underlying endothelium-dependent modulation of vascular tone; NO, arachidonic acid metabolites, endothelium-dependent hyperpolarisation (EDH) and endothelin.

Nitric oxide

The first endothelium-derived relaxing factor described by Furchgott and Zawadzki was subsequently identified as NO, a short-lived free radical synthesized from L-arginine by endothelial NO synthase (eNOS) and destroyed by reactive oxygen species (ROS). NO activates the haem-dependent enzyme, soluble guanylyl cyclase in surrounding smooth muscle cells, leading to formation of cyclic guanosine monophosphate (cGMP). Subsequent protein kinase G-mediated phosphorylation of a diverse range of target proteins such as large conductance calcium-activated potassium (BK_{Ca}) channels, RhoA, Rho kinase, transient receptor potential (TRP) channels, myosin light chain phosphatase and phospholamban, leads to smooth muscle cell relaxation and hence vasodilation.³

eNOS is a bidomain enzyme; an N-terminal oxygenase domain with binding sites for haem, tetrahydrobiopterin, oxygen and the substrate L-arginine supports the catalytic activity, and a C-terminal reductase domain binds nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate (NADPH), flavin mononucleotide (FMN) and flavin adenine dinucleotide co-factors. Transfer of electrons from NADPH to flavins in the reductase domain and then to the haem in the oxygenase domain is required so that the haem iron can bind oxygen and catalyze the synthesis of NO from L-arginine. Binding of the ubiquitous calcium regulatory protein calmodulin (CAM) facilitates transfer of electrons from the reductase to the oxygenase domain and is critical for activation of the enzyme.

eNOS is constitutively expressed in all endothelial cells but regulation of the enzyme by physiological and pathophysiological stimuli occurs via a complex pattern of transcriptional and post-translational modifications. For example, both eNOS

mRNA and protein levels are increased by fluid shear stress via activation of a pathway involving both c-Src-tyrosine kinase and transcription factor NF κ B. At the post-translational level, eNOS activity is highly regulated by substrate and cofactor availability as well as by endogenous inhibitors, lipid modification, direct protein-protein interactions, phosphorylation, O-linked glycosylation, and S-nitrosylation. Agonists at endothelial G-protein coupled receptors (GPCRs) such as bradykinin, and acetylcholine, elicit calcium-CAM-dependent NO production by via phospholipase C-mediated generation of inositol 1,4,5-trisphosphate (IP₃) and subsequent release of calcium from intracellular stores. However, activation of tyrosine kinase linked receptors such as the vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) receptor, and mechanical stimulation of the endothelium by shear stress, lead to phosphorylation of eNOS at Ser¹¹⁷⁷ to increase the calcium sensitivity of the enzyme so that it can be activated at resting calcium levels. Distinct kinase pathways can mediate eNOS phosphorylation; shear stress elicits phosphorylation of Ser¹¹⁷⁷ via protein kinase A whereas insulin and VEGF cause phosphorylation of the same residue via the serine/threonine protein kinase Akt. Conversely, phosphorylation of the enzyme at Tyr⁶⁵⁷ within the FMN domain or Thr⁴⁹⁵ within the CaM-binding domain, inhibit enzyme activity.⁴

Within endothelial cells, eNOS is targeted to invaginations of the cell membrane called caveolae, membrane microdomains enriched in cholesterol and sphingolipids, and defined by the presence of the scaffolding protein caveolin. Caveolae sequester diverse receptors and signaling proteins including GPCRs, growth factor receptors and calcium regulatory proteins such as CAM. Thus, targeting of eNOS to this region facilitates communication with upstream and downstream pathways. Within caveolae, caveolin-1 toni-

cally inhibits eNOS activity, thereby limiting the production of NO; binding of calcium-CAM leads to disruption of the caveolin-1/eNOS interaction and increases eNOS activity. Other associated proteins such as platelet endothelial cell adhesion molecule-1 (PECAM-1), modulate eNOS activity by virtue of their function as scaffolds for the binding of signaling molecules such as tyrosine kinases and phosphatases.

A vast range of stimuli such as shear stress generated by the viscous drag of blood flowing over the endothelial cell surface, circulating hormones (e.g. catecholamines, vasopressin), plasma constituents (e.g. thrombin), platelet products (e.g. 5-HT) and locally-produced chemical mediators (e.g. bradykinin) each evoke NO-mediated vasodilation. Release of endothelium-derived NO by such stimuli plays a critical role in mediating acute changes in local blood flow and tissue perfusion. Shear stress-stimulated NO production is central to exercise-induced increases in blood flow in skeletal muscle. Production of NO in response to 5-HT released from aggregating platelets, dilates coronary arteries thus preventing the clot from occluding the vessel. Mice lacking eNOS are hypertensive and infusion of L-arginine analogues, competitive inhibitors of eNOS, cause alterations in local blood flow and in systemic blood pressure, demonstrating the importance of endothelium-derived NO in long-term control of blood pressure and blood flow in vivo. In humans, elevated levels of an endogenous inhibitor of eNOS, asymmetric dimethyl-arginine, are associated with hypertension and increased cardiovascular risk.

In addition to its vasodilator actions, NO is now recognized as playing myriad other protective roles in the vasculature as a regulator of clot formation, inflammation and vessel repair. Loss of NO-mediated vasodilation, due to reduced expression or activity of eNOS and/or oxidative stress-mediated

reductions in NO bioavailability, is a hallmark of endothelial dysfunction associated with cardiovascular risk factors such as hypercholesterolemia, smoking, diabetes and obesity. Loss of NO tip the homeostatic balance in favour of vasoconstriction, proliferation, activation of platelets and blood clot formation, and inflammation. These pathological processes contribute to clinical manifestations such as hypertension, atherosclerosis and arterial thrombosis, which are associated with significant morbidity and mortality.

Metabolites of arachidonic acid: Arachidonic acid, released from cell membrane phospholipids by phospholipases, is metabolized by cyclooxygenase (COX), lipoxygenase (LO), and cytochrome P450 monooxygenase (CYP) enzymes to yield an array of endothelium-derived vasoactive factors.

Cyclooxygenases: COX enzymes metabolize arachidonic acid to endoperoxide intermediates which are then converted to a range of eicosanoids (e.g. prostacyclin; PGI₂, thromboxane A₂) through the actions of various synthases. Two isoforms of cyclooxygenase are found in the endothelium. The constitutively expressed COX-1 has long been regarded as vasculoprotective, the predominant product being PGI₂ which acts on prostanoid (IP) receptors to cause vasodilation and inhibition of platelet aggregation via activation of adenylyl cyclase and subsequent elevation of intracellular cyclic-adenosine monophosphate (cAMP). PGI₂ also inhibits platelet and lymphocyte adhesion to endothelium, limits vascular smooth muscle cell proliferation and migration, and counteracts the production of growth factors.

However, evidence is now emerging that GPCR-mediated activation of endothelial COX-1 can generate other products such as TXA₂ and PGH₂ which activate thromboxane (TP) receptors on smooth muscle cells and so function as endothelium-derived contracting factors (EDCFs). Stimulation of TP

receptors elicit not only vasoconstriction but also proliferation of vascular smooth muscle cells, platelet adhesion and aggregation and expression of adhesion molecules on endothelial cells. COX-1 shows basal activity and is activated by endothelial GPCRs. A shift from production of endothelium-derived relaxing factors to COX-dependent EDCFs is implicated in endothelial dysfunction associated with ageing, diabetes and hypertension.⁶

COX-2 was first identified as an inducible form of the enzyme, regulated at the level of gene expression and associated with inflammation. However, it is expressed in some blood vessels in the absence of overt signs of inflammation and may be a major source of vasculoprotective PGI₂; hence the deleterious cardiovascular consequences seen in some patients treated with selective COX-2 inhibitors.⁷

Lipoxygenases: LO enzymes deoxygenate polyunsaturated fatty acids to hydroperoxyl metabolites. The three LO isoforms expressed in endothelial cells are 5-LO, 12-LO, and 15-LO, which correspond to the carbon position of arachidonic acid oxygenation. Each LO oxygenates arachidonic acid to form a stereospecific hydroperoxyeicosatetraenoic acid (HPETE). HPETEs are unstable and are reduced to the corresponding hydroxyeicosatetraenoic acids (HETEs). 5-LO is the initial enzyme in the synthesis of leukotrienes but 5-LO products do not seem to be involved in regulation of vascular tone. In contrast, products from the 12-LO and 15-LO pathways are vasoactive but show species and vessel variation in the responses they elicit. 12-HETE elicits relaxation of a number of peripheral arteries including human coronary vessels, but causes vasoconstriction in dog renal arteries. 15-HPETE and 15-HETE cause slight vasorelaxation at lower concentrations but contractions at higher concentrations mediated by activation

of TP receptors. Although vasoactive LO metabolites are produced by endothelial cells, elucidation of their physiological role has been hindered by the lack of selectivity of pharmacological inhibitors.

Cytochrome P450 monoxygenases: CYP enzymes add oxygen across the double bonds of arachidonic acid to produce four cisepoxides, 14,15-, 11,12-, 8,9-, and 5,6-epoxyeicosatrienoic acids (EETs). Two CYP enzymes have been cloned from human endothelium CYP2C8/9 and CYP2J2 both of which produce mainly 14,15-EET with lesser amounts of 11,12-EET. The latter are also the major EETs released from endothelial cells stimulated by GPCR agonists (e.g. acetylcholine, bradykinin) and physical stimuli such as cyclic stretch and shear stress. EETs are rapidly metabolized by esterification into phospholipids or hydration to dihydroxyeicosatrienoic acids by soluble epoxide hydrolase.

EETs are vasoactive causing vasoconstrictions in the lung but eliciting vasodilatation of systemic arteries via activation of iberiotoxin-sensitive, BK_{Ca} channels on the vascular smooth muscle cells. EETs are proposed mediators of EDH in systemic arteries, acting either as transferable factors that hyperpolarize and relax smooth muscle cells, or acting in an autocrine manner to cause hyperpolarisation of the endothelial cell membrane potential which is then spread to the underlying smooth muscle through gap junctions (see below).

An EET receptor on smooth muscle cells has not been identified but development of 14,15-EET analogues such as 14,15-epoxyeicosa-5Z-enoic acid has revealed strict structural and stereoisomeric requirements for relaxations suggesting a specific binding site or receptor and BK_{Ca} channel activation by EETs requires a G protein indicating that a GPCR for EETs exists.

Some EETs activate vascular TRP channels,

non-selective cation channels that can mediate calcium influx. Endothelium-dependent flow-induced dilation is linked to 5,6-EET-mediated activation of vanilloid type 4, TRPV4, channels. Formation of a complex of TRPV4 with BK_{Ca} channels in smooth muscle cells may couple local increases in calcium due to activation of TRPV4 by EETs to membrane hyperpolarisation and vasorelaxation.⁸ In contrast, endothelial stimulation by bradykinin or hypoxia is associated with activation of TRPC3 and TRPC6 channels. In addition to stimulating channel activity, EETs elicit the rapid intracellular translocation of TRP channels into caveolae, a process dependent on activation of protein kinase A by cAMP, and consistent with the activation of a GPCR.

In some models of endothelial dysfunction, reduced bioavailability of NO is counteracted by increased production of EETs which can maintain endothelium-dependent vasodilator responses. Thus, strategies aimed at enhancing production of endothelium-derived EETs or inhibiting their degradation, may represent a new therapeutic approach to endothelial dysfunction.

Endothelium-dependent hyperpolarisation (EDH): Observations of agonist-induced endothelium-dependent vasorelaxation which persisted in the presence of inhibitors of prostaglandin and NO synthesis and was accompanied by hyperpolarisation of the vascular smooth muscle cell membrane potential, led to identification of a third endothelium-derived relaxing factor, EDHF. Hyperpolarisation of the smooth muscle cells reduces the open probability of voltage-dependent calcium channels thus reducing calcium influx to cause relaxation. A range of agents have been proposed to account for the actions of EDHF including K⁺ ions, EETs and C-type natriuretic peptide. However, in many arteries, endothelium-dependent hyperpolarisation of vascular smooth muscle (EDH)

actually reflects direct electrical coupling between endothelial and smooth muscle cells via myoendothelial gap junctions rather than the actions of a diffusible factor.⁹

Irrespective of the mediator, the initiating step in EDH-mediated vasorelaxation is activation of small- (SK_{Ca}) and intermediate-conductance (IK_{Ca}) calcium-activated potassium channels on endothelial cells. Inhibition of endothelium-dependent relaxation by a combination of SK_{Ca} and IK_{Ca} channel blockers is now regarded as the hallmark of EDH and has been documented in response to many agonists, in a wide range of blood vessels from a number of species.¹⁰ SK_{Ca} and IK_{Ca} channels, activated by increases in intracellular calcium via CAM which is constitutively associated with the channels, are voltage-independent and thus can operate at negative membrane potentials close to the K^+ equilibrium potential.

The lack of selective inhibitors of EDH, aside from the SK_{Ca} and IK_{Ca} channel blockers, has hampered investigations of the physiological role of this pathway but it is now clear that EDH becomes progressively more important as a mediator of endothelium-dependent vasodilation with decreased vessel size. The importance of EDH as a regulator of blood flow and blood pressure in vivo is demonstrated by enhanced resistance artery tone and elevated systemic blood pressure seen in mice lacking endothelial SK_{Ca} or IK_{Ca} channels. Loss of EDH, due to changes in expression or activity of SK_{Ca} and/or IK_{Ca} channels, contributes to experimental hypertension and diabetes-related erectile dysfunction. In contrast, resistance of the EDH pathway to the deleterious actions of ROS may allow EDH-mediated vasodilation to be maintained in the face of reduced bioavailability of NO in atherosclerosis and heart failure. Thus, selective activation of endothelial SK_{Ca} and IK_{Ca} channels is a potential therapeutic avenue for the future.

Endothelin: Endothelins are a family of 21 amino acid peptides, of which there are three members (ET-1, ET-2, ET-3). Endothelial cells produce only ET-1; endothelin ET-2 is produced in the kidney and intestine, while ET-3 has been detected in the brain, gastrointestinal tract, lung and kidney. ET-1 is a potent vasoconstrictor inducing long-lasting vasoconstriction at a half maximum effective concentration in the nano molar range, at least one order of magnitude lower than values reported for other vasoconstrictor peptides such as angiotensin II.

ET-1 is produced constitutively by the endothelium but production is regulated at the level of gene expression; inflammatory factors such as transforming growth factor- β (TGF β) and tumour necrosis factor- α (TNF α , insulin, and angiotensin II up-regulate ET-1 mRNA whereas NO, PGI₂ and shear stress cause down-regulation.) ET-1 is synthesized as a large protein, the pre-proET-1 (203 amino acids) that is cleaved to pro-ET-1 (39 amino acids) and then to ET-1 by ET-converting enzymes. The half life of ET-1 protein and mRNA is 4–7 minutes and 15–20 minutes, respectively, and the majority of plasma ET-1 (90%) is cleared by the lung during first passage.

The biological effects of ET-1 are mediated by two GPCR subtypes, ET_A and ET_B which have opposing effects on vascular tone. ET_A receptors present on vascular smooth muscle are responsible for the majority of ET-1 induced vasoconstriction; activation of phospholipase C increases formation of IP₃ and diacylglycerol, and the resultant increase in intracellular calcium and activation of protein kinase C cause vasoconstriction. ET_B receptors are mainly present on endothelial cells and play an important role in clearing ET-1 from the plasma in the lung. Activation of endothelial ET_B receptors induces vasodilatation by stimulating the release of

PGI₂ and NO. Inhibition of ET_B increases circulating ET-1 levels and blood pressure in healthy subjects demonstrating that although ET-1 is regarded as primarily a vasoconstrictor, ET_B-mediated vasodilation is physiologically important.¹¹

ET-1 is not only a vasoactive factor. Acting via ET_B receptors, ET-1 modulates the expression and degradation of extracellular matrix (ECM) and thus plays a role in vascular remodelling. Acting via ET_A, ET-1 promotes smooth muscle proliferation contributing to neointima formation following vascular injury and to thickening of the arterial wall in pathological conditions such as pulmonary arterial hypertension, atherosclerosis and vein graft occlusion. As NO strongly inhibits the release of ET-1 from the endothelium and ET-1 attenuates NO-mediated dilation, ET-1 and NO are functionally closely interdependent and many of the cardiovascular complications associated with endothelial dysfunction are due to an imbalance in this relationship.

ANGIOGENESIS

Angiogenesis is the growth of new blood vessels as a result of endothelial cells sprouting from existing vessels. In adults, it is a protective mechanism initiated in response to tissue hypoxia and ischemia or injury. It is also a key process in pathological conditions such as the proliferative diabetic retinopathy and neovascularization of tumours and as such, inhibitors of angiogenesis have received considerable interest as potential therapeutic strategy. The angiogenic process depends on a complex transcriptional network coordinating production and release of numerous cytokines and growth factors. Recruitment and proliferation of bone marrow-derived endothelial progenitor cells to form new vessels (vasculogenesis) is a distinct but complimentary process which

occurs simultaneously in ischemic and wounded tissue to augment perfusion.¹²

Angiogenesis requires a sequence of individual processes: degradation of ECM by metalloproteinase enzymes, proliferation and directional migration of endothelial cells to form endothelial tubes, maturation of new vessels by recruitment of pericytes (connective tissue cells) to stabilize endothelial sprouts and secrete ECM molecules to form the vascular basement membrane and apoptosis to prune back immature vessels into a vascular network.¹³ The endothelial cells that sprout from the parent vessel, tip cells, possess long and motile filopodia that extend towards the source of pro-angiogenic growth factors and respond to other guidance cues to enable directional vessel growth. Endothelial cell migration requires the dynamic regulation of interactions between integrins and the surrounding ECM. Integrins are cell surface receptors which provide adhesive and signaling functions and link the actin cytoskeleton of the cell to the ECM at areas called focal adhesions. Phosphorylation of focal adhesion kinase, a cytoplasmic non-receptor tyrosine kinase, in response to pro-angiogenic signal molecules stimulates cell contraction, thus allowing cell movement on adhesive contacts. Subsequent integrin inactivation destroys the adhesive complex and allows detachment of the cell in its new location.

Cell-cell contacts between endothelial cells, essential for development of patent vessels, are mediated by cell surface receptors such as PECAM-1, a 130 kDa member of the immunoglobulin superfamily, which acts like a docking molecule to allow other proteins to provide further strength to vascular structures. Cadherins such as vascular endothelial cadherin are transmembrane proteins which provide weak adhesive cell-cell forces, further stabilized by catenins, intracellular proteins linking the cadherin cell surface molecule to the actin cytoskeleton.

Angiogenesis in response to hypoxia and ischemia is largely controlled by the transcription factor hypoxia-inducible factor-1 (HIF-1).¹⁴ HIF-1 has multiple subunits; HIF-1 α which is produced continuously but is rapidly degraded in the presence of oxygen and HIF-1 β which is constitutively expressed. Under hypoxic conditions, HIF-1 α degradation is inhibited and the stabilized protein translocates to the nucleus, where it dimerizes with HIF-1 β and binds to hypoxia response elements on more than 60 HIF-responsive genes that function to enhance oxygen delivery and increase metabolism. Central angiogenic signals driven by increased HIF-1 activity include VEGF, fibroblast growth factor (FGF), platelet-derived growth factor (PDGF) and angiopoietin. After injury, local platelets release TGF β and PDGF, which stimulate vessel growth.

FGF and VEGF stimulate endothelial cell proliferation and migration. Their high affinity for heparan sulfate glycosaminoglycans on the endothelial cell surface facilitates binding to receptors and provides a reservoir of both factors in the ECM, which can be released during wounding or inflammation. VEGF stimulates endothelial replication and migration and increases vessel permeability facilitating extravasation of plasma proteins to form a provisional matrix for cell migration. PDGF is required for the recruitment and survival of pericytes for vessel stabilization and maturation. Angiopoietins have multiple effects the angiogenic process, particularly the interactions between endothelial cells, pericytes and the basement membrane. For example, angiopoietin-1 stimulates secretion of growth factors from endothelial cells, which in turn stimulate differentiation of surrounding pericytes into smooth muscle cells. Conversely, angiopoietin-2 is an antagonist of the actions of angiopoietin-1 and so acts as a naturally occurring inhibitor of angiogenesis. Overall regulation of angiogenesis is a bal-

ance between angiogenic versus angiostatic factors.

There is a fuller description of the angiogenic process in Chapter 6, which also deals with therapeutic angiogenesis.

HAEMOSTASIS

The endothelium plays a pivotal role in regulating blood flow by exerting effects on the coagulation system, platelets and fibrinolysis.¹⁵ Under normal physiological conditions, the endothelium provides one of the few surfaces which can maintain blood in a liquid state during prolonged contact.

A key factor in blood clot formation is activation of the serine protease thrombin which cleaves fibrinogen, producing fragments that polymerise to form strands of fibrin. It also activates factor XIII, a fibrinoligase, which strengthens fibrin-to-fibrin links, thereby stabilising the clot and stimulates platelet aggregation. Heparan sulfate proteoglycan molecules provide an anti-thrombotic endothelial cell surface by serving as co-factors for antithrombin III, causing a conformational change that allows this inhibitor to bind to and inactivate thrombin and other serine proteases involved in the clotting cascade. The endothelium also prevents thrombin formation by expressing tissue factor pathway inhibitor which binds to clotting factor Xa. Tissue factor pathway inhibitor and antithrombin III both contribute to physiological haemostasis, and both show impairment in acquired thrombotic states. A third endothelial anti-coagulation mechanism is expression of thrombomodulin; binding of thrombin to cell surface thrombomodulin removes its pro-coagulant activity, and the thrombin-thrombomodulin complex activates protein C a vitamin K-dependent anticoagulant. Activated protein C, helped by its cofactor protein S, inactivates clotting factors Va and VIIa.

The anti-platelet properties of the endothelium are largely mediated by release of PGI₂ and NO. As in smooth muscle, PGI₂ inhibits platelet aggregation through the activation of IP receptors and activation of adenylyl cyclase whereas NO inhibits platelet adhesion, activation, secretion, and aggregation through a cGMP-dependent mechanism. NO inhibits agonist-dependent increases in intra-platelet calcium to suppress the calcium-sensitive conformational change in the heterodimeric integrin glycoprotein IIb–IIIa required for fibrinogen binding. NO also promotes platelet disaggregation by impairing the activity of phosphoinositide 3-kinase, which normally supports conformational changes in glycoprotein IIb–IIIa, rendering its association with fibrinogen irreversible. Should a blood clot form, fibrinolysis depends primarily on the action of plasmin, an active protease formed from its precursor, plasminogen, upon stimulation by tissue-type plasminogen activator.

Under physiological conditions, there is a haemostatic balance and in addition to these anti-thrombotic mechanisms, the endothelium also synthesises several key haemostatic components; vWF and plasminogen activator inhibitor-1 (PAI-1) being particularly important. PAI-1 is secreted in response to angiotensin IV, providing a link between the renin-angiotensin system and thrombosis. In addition to anti-coagulant activity, binding of thrombin to thrombomodulin accelerates its capacity to activate thrombin-activatable fibrinolysis inhibitor (TAFI) which cleaves fibrin and other proteins, resulting in the loss of plasminogen/plasmin and tPA binding sites and thus retarding fibrinolysis. Perturbations, such as those that may occur at sites of injury, inflammation or high hydrodynamic shear stress, tip this haemostatic balance in favour of a pro-thrombotic and anti-fibrinolytic microenvironment. Critical steps include loss of cell surface heparin

proteoglycan molecules and increased expression of the transmembrane glycoprotein tissue factor (TF) which initiates coagulation by stimulating the activation of clotting factors IX and X, and pro-thrombinase, with subsequent fibrin formation. TF accumulates in experimentally injured vessels and accumulation in some atherosclerotic plaques likely accounts for their high thrombogenicity.

INFLAMMATION

Development of inflammatory reactions by the endothelium in response to injury or infection is critical for the maintenance and/or repair of normal structure and function of the vessel wall. However, excessive inflammatory reactions can lead to severe tissue damage and contribute to the development of atherosclerosis.

The interaction between endothelial cells and inflammatory cells such as leukocytes depends on the production of inflammatory cytokines (e.g. interleukin 8; IL-8) to attract leukocytes and expression of adhesion molecules (e.g. selectins) to facilitate their migration towards the site of infection. Loosely tethered leukocytes first roll over the endothelial surface, then arrest, spread, and finally migrate between endothelial cells to attach on to underlying ECM components.¹⁶

Leukocyte rolling involves endothelial adhesion molecules of the selectin family which transiently bind to carbohydrate ligands on leukocytes to slow passage through the blood vessel. E- and P-selectin are expressed only on the surface of activated endothelial cells whereas L-selectin is constitutively expressed on leukocytes and binds to ligands induced on the endothelium at sites of inflammation or on other leukocytes. The role of individual types of selectins in leukocyte rolling shows stimulus- and time-dependent variation. Immediate stimulation

of leukocyte rolling induced by histamine or thrombin depends on rapid expression of P-selectin, surface levels of this adhesion molecule declining after only 30 minutes. In contrast, TNF α stimulates delayed leukocyte rolling and adhesion to endothelial cells through the induction of E-selectin, surface levels of which peak after 12 hours and decline after 24 hours. Both E- and P-selectin are expressed on the surface of endothelial cells overlying atherosclerotic plaques, affirming the importance of these molecules in the development of atherosclerosis.

Firm adhesion of leukocytes is promoted by binding of chemokines such as IL-8 to leukocyte GPCRs resulting in rapid activation of β 1 and β 2 integrins to increase their affinity for adhesion molecules of the immunoglobulin superfamily, intercellular adhesion molecule (ICAM-1) and vascular cell adhesion molecule (VCAM-1). ICAM-1 is constitutively expressed on endothelial cells but levels are increased by stimuli such as TNF α peaking at 6 hours and remaining elevated for 72 hours. ICAM-1 mediates firm adhesion of blood cells by acting as a ligand for leukocyte beta2 integrins. VCAM, a ligand for integrins α 4 β 1 and α 4 β 7, principally mediates the adhesion of monocytes, lymphocyte, eosinophils, and basophils to the endothelial surface. Expression of VCAM-1 is induced by cytokines, oxidized low-density lipoproteins and ROS acting, as with induction of ICAM-1, primarily via NF- κ B.

Migration of leukocytes through the endothelium requires the transient disassembly of endothelial cell junctions. Firm adhesion of leukocytes to the endothelium induces clustering of adhesion molecules like ICAM-1 and VCAM-1 triggering activation of intracellular signaling pathways which induce endothelial cell actin cytoskeleton and cell junction remodelling. The remodelling process involves numerous pathways including Rho GTPase signaling, protein

phosphorylation and ROS generation but a key event is alteration of the dimerization of PECAM-1. PECAM-1 localizes to intercellular junctions of endothelial cells, forming homodimers linking two cells. Leukocytes also express PECAM-1 and the dissociation of PECAM-1 dimers between endothelial cells to form dimers between emigrating leukocytes and endothelial cells is critical for leukocyte migration.

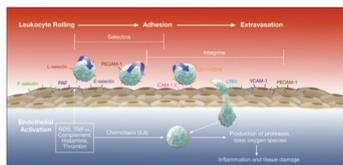
CONCLUSIONS

The endothelium, once viewed as an inert physical barrier, is a dynamic secretory organ fulfilling numerous roles in the maintenance of cardiovascular homeostasis. Endothelial cells from different parts of the vasculature show highly differentiated functions as a consequence of both environmental stimuli and epigenetic modifications. Advances in defining many endothelial functions at the molecular level may lead to targeted therapies to alleviate chronic endothelial dysfunction associated with the progression of cardiovascular disease.

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MECHANISMS OF VASCULAR DISEASE

Edited by Robert Fitridge and Matthew Thompson

Chapter 1: Endothelium **Chapter 2:** Vascular smooth muscle structure and function **Chapter 3:** Atherosclerosis **Chapter 4:** Mechanisms of plaque rupture **Chapter 5:** Current and emerging therapies in atheroprotection **Chapter 6:** Molecular approaches to revascularisation in peripheral vascular disease **Chapter 7:** Biology of restenosis and targets for intervention **Chapter 8:** Vascular arterial haemodynamics **Chapter 9:** Physiological haemostasis **Chapter 10:** Hypercoagulable states **Chapter 11:** Platelets in the pathogenesis of vascular disease and their role as a therapeutic target **Chapter 12:** Pathogenesis of aortic aneurysms **Chapter 13:** Pharmacological treatment of aneurysms **Chapter 14:** Aortic dissection and connective tissue disorders **Chapter 15:** Biomarkers in vascular disease **Chapter 16:** Pathophysiology and principles of management of vasculitis and Raynaud's phenomenon **Chapter 17:** SIRS, sepsis and multiorgan failure **Chapter 18:** Pathophysiology of reperfusion injury **Chapter 19:** Compartment syndrome **Chapter 20:** Pathophysiology of pain **Chapter 21:** Postamputation pain **Chapter 22:** Treatment of neuropathic pain **Chapter 23:** Principles of wound healing **Chapter 24:** Pathophysiology and principles of varicose veins **Chapter 25:** Chronic venous insufficiency and leg ulceration: Principles and vascular biology **Chapter 26:** Pathophysiology and principles of management of the diabetic foot **Chapter 27:** Lymphoedema – Principles, genetics and pathophysiology **Chapter 28:** Graft materials past and future **Chapter 29:** Pathophysiology of vascular graft infections



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