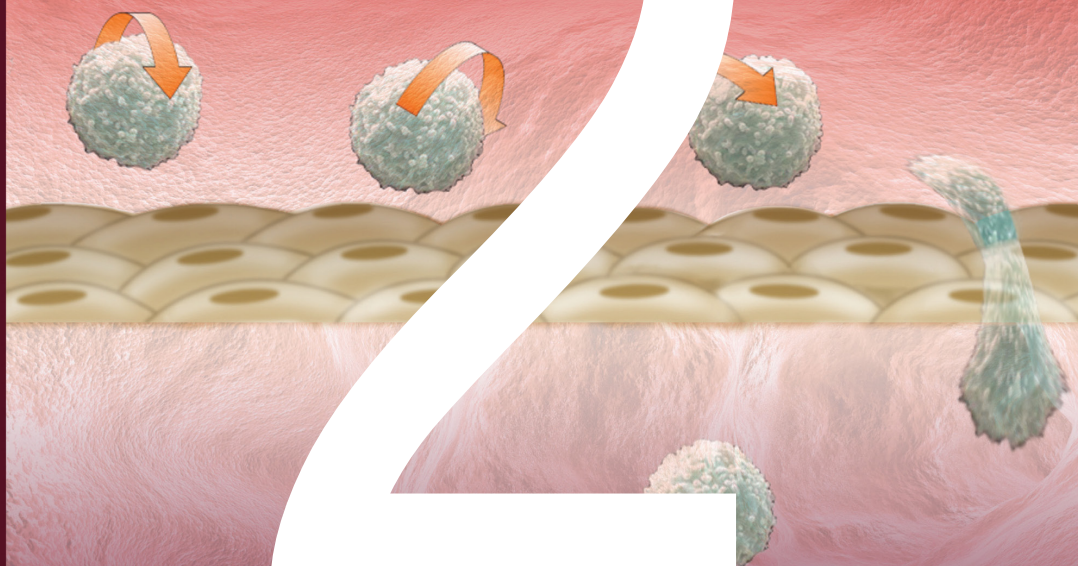


# MECHANISMS OF VASCULAR DISEASE:

A REFERENCE BOOK FOR VASCULAR SPECIALISTS

# 2



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# Mechanisms of Vascular Disease



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## 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 Hinchliffe (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 Moldawer, 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  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$
- Sources of cytosolic  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  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 A<sub>2</sub> (TXA<sub>2</sub>)

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  
308Clinical 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
<b>Comparison of acute and chronic wounds</b>	
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
<b>From bench to bedside</b>	
Role of endocrine hormones in the regulation of wound healing	
Molecular basis of chronic non-healing wounds	
Chronic venous stasis ulcers	441
Pressure ulcers	
<b>Future concepts for the treatment of chronic wounds</b>	442
Bacterial biofilms in chronic wounds	443
<b>Conclusion</b>	445
<b>References</b>	

## CHAPTER 24 – PATHOPHYSIOLOGY AND PRINCIPLES OF MANAGEMENT OF VARICOSE VEINS

*Andrew Bradbury*

<b>Introduction</b>	451
<b>Anatomy</b>	
<b>Histology</b>	452
<b>Physiology</b>	

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

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

*Michael Stacey*

<b>Definitions</b>	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
<b>Assessment of venous function</b>	467
<b>Treatment of venous ulceration</b>	
Compression therapy	
Dressings	468
Surgery	
Prevention of venous ulcer recurrence	470
Sclerotherapy and other techniques to obliterate surface and perforating veins	
Other therapies	471
<b>References</b>	

## 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
<b>Prosthetic graft modifications</b>	
Modifications to reduce graft infection	
Modifications to improve patency	521
Nanocomposite grafts	
<b>Endothelial cell seeding</b>	522
Single stage seeding	
Two stage seeding	
<b>Vascular tissue engineering</b>	
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
<b>Graft materials for aortic endografts</b>	526
<b>The future</b>	
<b>References</b>	527

## CHAPTER 29 – PATHOPHYSIOLOGY OF VASCULAR GRAFT INFECTIONS

*Mauro Vicaretti*

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

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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	$\alpha$ -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
$\beta$ 2-GPI	$\beta$ 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 $\alpha$	Interleukin-1 alpha
IL1- $\beta$	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 <sub>20</sub>	Myosin light chain <sub>20</sub>
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 <sub>2</sub>	Prostacyclin
PGG <sub>2</sub>	Prostaglandin G <sub>2</sub>
PGH <sub>2</sub>	Prostaglandin H <sub>2</sub>
PGEI <sub>2</sub> /PGI <sub>2</sub>	Prostaglandin I <sub>2</sub>
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 <sup>2+</sup> 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 $\alpha$ CE	TNF $\alpha$ 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- $\alpha$	Transforming growth factor-alpha
TGF- $\beta$	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- $\alpha$	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

## 2 • Vascular Smooth Muscle Structure and Function

DAVID P WILSON

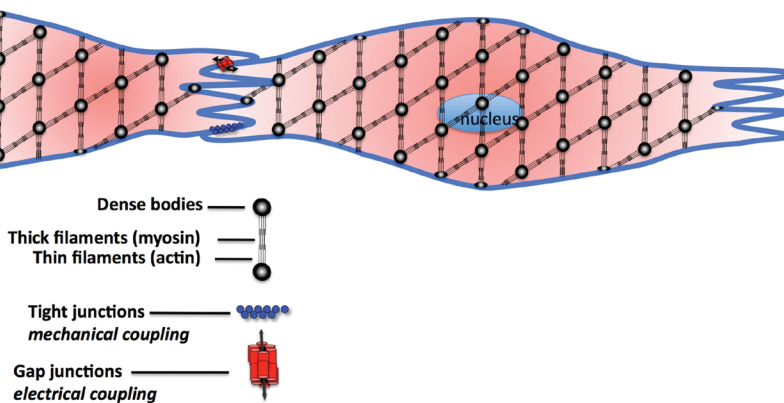
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### INTRODUCTION

Smooth muscle has an important role in regulating the function of a variety of hollow organ systems including the: vasculature, airways, gastrointestinal tract, uterus and reproductive tract, bladder and urethra and several other systems. Smooth muscle has two fundamental roles: 1) to alter the shape of an organ and 2) to withstand the force of an internal load presented to that organ. In order to achieve these fundamental objectives smooth muscles have developed mechanisms of mechanical coupling, which enable the development of powerful and coordinated contractions at a relatively low energy cost. For example, smooth muscle in the gastrointestinal tract must undergo intermittent but coordinated phasic contractions to propel the bolus of food through the alimentary canal. Whereas in the airways and vasculature the smooth muscle is more often in various states of tonic contraction, but can be dynamically regulated to relax or contract in response to specific neuro-hormonal and haemodynamic signals. In keeping with the aims of this text, this chapter will focus on the principle mechanisms through which vascular smooth muscle functions.

### SMOOTH MUSCLE (VASCULAR) STRUCTURE

Vascular smooth muscle cells have classically been envisaged as fusiform cells, on average 200 microns long  $\times$  5 microns in diameter, with a large central nucleus surrounded by an abundant array of endoplasmic reticulum and golgi apparatus, with the cytosol and plasma membrane tapering toward the poles. Although the dimensions of the vascular smooth muscle cell narrow toward their ends there is clear evidence that the end-to-end junctions coupling smooth muscle cells are complex and contain a significant number of membrane invaginations to provide increased surface area for both mechanical tight junctions and electrical coupling via gap junctions (Figure 2.1). Vascular smooth muscle cells do not contain the complex t-tubule/sarcoplasmic reticulum system common to striated muscles, but rather they contain a significant number of invaginations along the plasma membrane called caveolae, which serve a similar, albeit less developed role to increase the cellular surface: volume ratio. These specialized caveolae further provide a unique plasma membrane environment, which enables clustering of specific groups



**FIGURE 2.1:** Highlights the fusiform shape of typical smooth muscle cells and the patterned array of actin myosin myofilaments across the cell. Smooth muscle cells have invaginations along their length to provide increased surface area for mechanical coupling via tight junctions and electrical coupling through Gap junctions. Dense bodies are thought to be similar to Z-disks found in striated muscle.

of ion channels and receptors important in cellular signal transduction.

In contractile vascular smooth muscle the endoplasmic reticulum has been modified to enable  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  release and reuptake and has therefore been termed sarcoplasmic reticulum. In smooth muscle cells the sarcoplasmic reticulum/endoplasmic reticulum (SR/ER) complex comprises about 5% of the total cell volume, with a considerable amount of rough endoplasmic reticulum and golgi apparatus adjacent to the nucleus, which reflects the significant capacity that smooth muscle has for protein synthesis and secretion. The fact that vascular smooth muscle has a fundamental role in mediating pressure and flow in the vasculature is reflected in the abundance of cytoskeletal and contractile proteins expressed.

## CYTOSKELETON

As with all eukaryotic cells the cytoskeleton is comprised of a network of many and various filamentous proteins, often formed by the polymerization of monomeric subunits. For example, monomers of alpha and beta tubulin self assemble into microtubules

that function to provide static support to the cell and to enable motor protein mediated transport of cytosolic cargo and for chromosomal segregation during mitosis. The actin cytoskeleton and elements of the actin contractile myofilament are also generated from the polymerization of globular monomeric actin to form polymeric actin filaments. This process is dynamically regulated even within the time scale of contractile processes, i.e., as the smooth muscle slowly shortens it can actually synthesise and extend the length of the actin filaments.

## CONTRACTILE MYOFILAMENT

The structure of the smooth muscle actomyosin array is similar to striated muscle with several important differences:

1. there is no troponin complex in smooth muscle
2. contraction is regulated by  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  calmodulin-dependent myosin light chain kinase (MLCK) mediated phosphorylation of the regulatory light chains of myosin, which enables actin

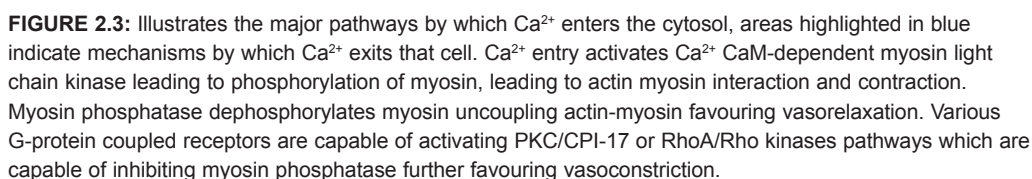
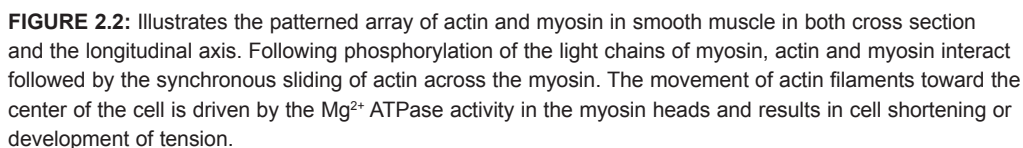
- myosin interaction and cross bridge cycling
3. in the absence of  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  and calmodulin (CaM), caldesmon interacts with actomyosin inhibiting the activity of myosin ATPase
  4. the activity of myosin light chain phosphatase (MLCP) directly causes the dephosphorylation of myosin  $\text{LC}_{20}$  leading to relaxation
  5. the actin: myosin ratio is higher in smooth muscle averaging 15:1 in vascular smooth muscle in comparison to 6:1 in skeletal or cardiac muscle. There are no intercalated disks or z-disks, however, dense bodies in smooth muscle are thought to be analogous to z-disks (Figure 2.2).

There are a variety of intermediate filament proteins but desmin and vimentin are particularly abundant in smooth muscle. In fact, desmin has been shown to be upregulated in several myopathies and during smooth muscle hypertrophy. As indicated once globular actin polymerizes into filaments they coil to form mature filamentous actin that then combines with tropomyosin to form a large actin-tropomyosin filament which together is arranged in side polar arrays with myosin II filaments (Figure 2.1). The myosin II thick filaments are composed of two 200kDa heavy chains, two 17kDa light chains and two phosphorylatable regulatory myosin light chains ( $\text{LC}_{20}$ ). The two heavy chains coil together forming a 155nm rod, while the globular head contains the motor domain consisting of light chains and  $\text{Mg}^{2+}$  ATPase activity and the actin binding domain. The myosin is arranged in an anti parallel array that enables the myosin motors, on the heads of myosin molecules, to draw actin polymers along its length and effect shortening of the cell, so-called cross bridge cycling (Figure 2.2). MLCK, which is

responsible for the  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  calmodulin mediated phosphorylation of  $\text{LC}_{20}$  is actin associated while MLCP which removes the phosphoryl groups from  $\text{LC}_{20}$  is associated with myosin. (Figure 2.3)

## FUNCTIONAL REGULATION OF VASCULAR SMOOTH MUSCLE: NEURONAL, HORMONAL, RECEPTOR MEDIATED

Smooth muscle from all hollow organs including blood vessels have been somewhat artificially categorized into either single unit smooth muscle or multiunit smooth muscle, when in reality they should likely be considered as a combination of both types. Nevertheless, historically, multiunit smooth muscle has been considered to be regulated primarily through autonomic sympathetic innervations, which release neurotransmitters from varicosities along the axon, rather than specifically coupling to individual cells. Consequently, neurotransmitters are required to diffuse anywhere from 5-100 nm to the adjacent smooth muscle membrane in order to activate their receptors. The activation of sympathetic nerves therefore causes membrane depolarization and activation of voltage dependent ion channels, the most prominent of which are the clinically relevant voltage operated  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  channels (VOCC) of the  $\text{Cav}_{1.2}$  family, also known as the long acting L-type  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  channels. Due to the mechanism of membrane depolarization, this form of cellular activation has been termed electromechanical coupling. In contrast, single unit smooth muscles have very little innervation and are primarily activated by autocrine and paracrine hormones, including noradrenalin, adrenalin, and angiotensin II, all of which function through G-protein coupled membrane receptors. Receptor activation either triggers sarcoplasmic reticulum-mediated  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  release or membrane



depolarization through the activation of ion channels which may include VOCC. Consequently this form of activation has been termed pharmacomechanical coupling. Experimental evidence also exists to suggest that like striated muscle, extracellular  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  entry in smooth muscle can also activate SR  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  release into the cytosol, so called  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  induced  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  release, although this appears to be a less common mechanism of  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  entry. Once activated, single unit smooth muscle cells tends to contract in synchrony with neighbouring smooth cells, which are coupled through gap junctions. Gap junctions are composed of 6 connexin proteins, which are transmembrane spanning proteins which assemble to form a barrel-shaped connexon or hemichannel in the plasma membrane. When two hemichannels from adjacent cells assemble they form a functional gap junction that enables the movement of ions (electrical coupling) and small molecules between adjacent cells (Figure 2.1). Evidence indicates that at least some of the vascular smooth muscle cells in most vascular beds are electrically coupled via gap junctions and may even be coupled to the endothelium in a similar manner.

## SMOOTH MUSCLE FUNCTION

As with other muscle types smooth muscle functions best when at its optimal resting length  $L_0$ , which provides the ideal balance of actin-myosin interaction and muscle shortening. Vascular smooth muscle cells that are stretched beyond  $L_0$  have less than optimal overlap of actomyosin crossbridges and thus are unable to maintain or generate maximum force. In contrast, smooth muscle that is over shortened experiences increased internal resistance due to internal friction generated from having too many slowly cycling cross bridges. However, in smooth muscle the optimal length tension

relationship is considerably more variable than that for skeletal or cardiac muscle, but appears to be directly related to the degree of phosphorylation of the regulatory light chains of myosin. The broader range of optimal resting length amongst smooth muscle may reflect the dynamic changes in load that exist within the vasculature and of the high actin:myosin ratio in smooth muscle relative to striated muscle. Interestingly, at the onset of stretch or pressurization smooth muscle responds via activation of stretch receptors (TREK and TRAK) that induce  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  entry and consequent smooth muscle shortening, which directly offsets increased vascular wall stress. This is the important mechanism governing the phenomenon of autoregulation. It is important to note that although gastrointestinal smooth muscle appears relatively unaffected by significant stretch, more than 25% stretch often destroys the contractile properties of vascular smooth muscle.

## MYOFILAMENT BASIS OF SMOOTH MUSCLE CONTRACTION AND RELAXATION

Motility studies using isolated actin and myosin proteins have identified that the duty cycle of the myosin head power stroke is 7-11 nm. Perhaps more important than the stroke length of the myosin is the activity of the myosin ATPase, which along with  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ /CaM and the activation state of myosin light chain kinase and myosin light chain phosphatase, determines the extent and the rate of contraction of the vascular smooth muscle (Figure 2.3). Smooth muscle myosin ATPase hydrolyses ATP at a rate of  $\sim 0.16$  moles ATP/mol myosin/second, which is several orders of magnitude slower than the skeletal muscle myosin ATPase which hydrolyses  $\sim 10-20$  moles ATP/mol myosin/



second. In part the slower ATPase rate of the myosin head accounts for the vastly slower contraction rates of vascular smooth muscle compared with striated muscles. In addition, there are a variety of different isoforms of smooth muscle myosin II which when differentially expressed will increase or decrease the maximum rate of smooth muscle contraction. For example, so called foetal isoforms of smooth muscle myosin II have a slower rate of contraction. In addition, these “foetal” isoforms have been shown to be upregulated during extended hypoxia, and during phenotypic remodelling of smooth muscle from a contractile to synthetic or proliferative phenotype.

### **Smooth muscle contraction and relaxation**

As mentioned, unlike cardiac and skeletal muscle, smooth muscle does not contain troponin and therefore is not subject to troponin mediated regulation of contraction. Smooth muscle contraction makes use of another  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  binding protein called calmodulin (CaM), which when bound with  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  mediates the activation of the actin bound myofilament enzyme, myosin light chain kinase (MLCK), which in turn phosphorylates the regulatory light chains of myosin ( $\text{LC}_{20}$ ). Phosphorylation of the myosin  $\text{LC}_{20}$  is a critical step in smooth muscle contraction which causes a conformational change in the myosin head enabling the interaction of myosin with actin, cross bridge cycling, and contraction. Removal of cytosolic  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  occurs through the activation of energy dependent plasma membrane  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  ATPases (PMCA),  $\text{Na}^+/\text{Ca}^{2+}$  exchangers and sarco/endoplasmic reticulum CaATPases (SERCA) (Figure 2.3). However, since MLCK-mediated phosphorylation of the serine 19 of myosin  $\text{LC}_{20}$  generates a covalent bond, simply removing  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  does not directly cause

vasodilatation. However, myosin associated, myosin light chain phosphatase (MLCP), is responsible for the dephosphorylation of myosin  $\text{LC}_{20}$  and the consequent loss of smooth muscle acto-myosin interaction and the attenuation of cross bridge cycling (Figure 2.3). It is important to recognize that, simple removal of extracellular  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  only stops the phosphorylation of  $\text{LC}_{20}$  and does not provide an explanation for subsequent smooth muscle relaxation since the  $\text{LC}_{20}$  remains phosphorylated. This also partially explains why  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  channel blockers are less effective in attenuating pre-existing vascular spasm as opposed to preventing spasm.

### **ION CHANNELS IMPORTANT IN THE REGULATION OF SMOOTH MUSCLE FUNCTION**

#### **Regulation of cellular $\text{Ca}^{2+}$**

There are vast arrays of ion channels, pumps, transporters and exchangers that are important in regulating ionic balance and smooth muscle membrane potential. Perhaps the best known are the electrogenic  $3\text{Na}^+/\text{2K}^+$  ATPase and the voltage gated L-type  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  channels but includes:  $\text{Na}^+/\text{Ca}^{2+}$  exchangers, plasma membrane  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  ATPases (PMCA), which provide routes to extrude  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  from the cytosol into the extracellular space, whereas the sarcoplasmic reticulum  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  ATPases (SERCA) are important in removing  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  from the cytosol back into the SR. In contrast, when the SR becomes depleted of  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  sensor proteins in the SR termed stromal interacting molecule 1 (STIM1) translocate to the plasma membrane and activate an ion channel called Orail which enables refilling of SR  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  stores. In addition, a great deal of recent research has focused on the non-selective cation channels of the transmembrane receptor potential canonical (TRPC) family that are thought to be involved

in regulating  $\text{Na}^+$  and  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  entry. Finally a series of potassium channels are involved in either re or hyperpolarisation of the plasma membrane and thereby have therapeutic potential in limiting extracellular  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  entry through voltage operated  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  channels and thereby limiting vasoconstriction.

### Sources of cytosolic $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ entry

Within the smooth muscle cell,  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  enters the cytosol from the extracellular space or from the intracellular endoplasmic reticulum, which in muscle cells is termed the sarcoplasmic reticulum (SR). Within muscle the sarcoplasmic reticulum has become variously modified to affect  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  release into the cytoplasm. Typically agents that activate the ryanodine receptor such as caffeine or phospholipase C (PLC) derived inositol 1, 4, 5 tris phosphate ( $\text{IP}_3$ ) which activates the  $\text{IP}_3$  receptors (which are ion channels) in the SR cause  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  to be released into the cytosol.  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  entering the smooth muscle cell from the extracellular space does so through non-selective cation channels or selective  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  channels, which may or may not be gated by voltage. To date the most important source of extracellular  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  entry in vascular smooth muscle is mediated by the voltage dependent  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  channels (VDCC). The primary VDCC are the long lasting  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  channel, so called L-type or  $\text{Ca}_v1.2$  channels, which are the clinical targets of the L-type channel blockers the dihydropyridines, phenylalkamines, benzothiazapenes. More recent evidence indicates that a second class of VDCC, the transient or T-type  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  channels also known as the  $\text{Ca}_v3.X$  family may be important in mediating  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  entry in the microvasculature. As the name suggests VDCC are activated by a depolarization of the plasma membrane, which increases the open probability and overall  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  conductance into the cell. In addition, a

variety of non-selective cation channels have the capacity to conduct a variety of ions including  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  and  $\text{Na}^+$  into the smooth muscle cell but due to their low conductance are currently thought to be more important in regulating membrane potential and subsequent activation of plasma membrane VDCC (Figure 2.3).

### Potassium channels

The insulin-dependent electrogenic  $3\text{Na}^+/2\text{K}^+$  ATPase is important in establishing the resting membrane potential ( $E_M$ ) of the vascular smooth muscle cell. However, the activation states of several types of  $\text{K}^+$  channels in smooth muscle are also important in effecting membrane depolarization and hyperpolarisation and consequent smooth muscle contraction and relaxation, respectively. The inward rectifier  $\text{K}_{\text{IR}}$  channels become activated when the membrane becomes hyperpolarized and beyond the equilibrium potential for potassium ( $E_K$ ) they transport more  $\text{K}^+$  ions from the extracellular space into the cell thereby offsetting or rectifying the hyperpolarizing stimulus. However, there are few if any physiological conditions in which  $E_M$  is more negative than  $E_K$ , consequently, even the  $\text{K}_{\text{IR}}$  channels conduct a small outward hyperpolarizing  $\text{K}^+$  current, and therefore along with the  $3\text{Na}^+/2\text{K}^+$  ATPase may be important in mediating smooth muscle tone.

The  $\text{K}_v$  family of potassium channels as the name suggests are activated by depolarization and thus are thought to be an important control mechanism to hyperpolarize the smooth muscle cell following neural or hormonal-mediated depolarization. Agonists including histamine acting through the  $\text{H}_1$  receptor have been shown to block the 4-aminopyridine sensitive  $\text{K}_v$  channels in coronary arteries.

Physiologically  $\text{K}_{\text{ATP}}$  channels are activated by agents including adenosine, calcitonin gene

regulated peptide (CGRP) and vasoactive intestinal peptide (VIP). The activation of  $K_{ATP}$  channels and hyperpolarization mediated vasodilatation is thought to be due in part to activation of adenylyl cyclase and subsequent cAMP dependent activation of protein kinase A. More recent evidence has also indicated that  $K_{ATP}$  channels become activated in a protein kinase C-dependent manner. However, perhaps more important is the fact that cytosolic ATP and ADP function to close and open  $K_{ATP}$  channels, respectively. This explains part of the mechanism underlying the finding that vasculature in ischemic tissue, containing high ADP: ATP levels extrude  $K^+$  in an effort to hyperpolarize the membrane and effect vasodilatation. Both experimentally and clinically the so-called vasodilatory  $K^+$  channel openers including pinacidil, cromakalim, diazoxide, and minoxidil activate  $K_{ATP}$  channels. Interestingly the antidiabetic sulfonylurea drugs, including glibenclamide actually inhibit  $K_{ATP}$  channels, enabling membrane depolarization and activation of VOCC in pancreatic beta cells enabling insulin release. Consequently overuse of sulfonourea drugs may therefore interfere with the efficacy of vascular  $K^+$  channel openers or directly contribute to vasoconstriction.

The large conductance  $Ca^{2+}$  activated potassium channels ( $BK_{Ca}$ ) channels are also voltage sensitive but the smaller conductance  $smK_{Ca}$  channels are less sensitive to voltage. This family of  $K^+$  channels are activated by increases in cytosolic  $Ca^{2+}$  which occurs after agonist stimulation, membrane depolarization or stretch/pressure-dependent activation of  $Ca^{2+}$  entry and therefore is involved in that arm of the myogenic mechanism involved in hyperpolarization.

G protein coupled receptors (GPCRs) transduce signals from the autonomic nervous system and hormonal stimuli including bradykinin, noradrenalin, adrenaline, angiotensin II,

endothelin-1, serotonin and thromboxane  $A_2$ . Many GPCRs exhibit divergent subcellular signalling mechanisms and there is increasing evidence for diversity of subcellular signalling amongst vascular beds (Figure 2.3). For example, angiotensin II can be generated both locally within smooth muscle cells and systemically through the renin angiotensin system (RAS). In smooth muscle the type I AngII receptors are prototypical G-protein coupled receptors which couple through  $G_{q11}$ . Similarly endothelin-1 can be generated locally via endothelial cells, inflammatory cells or renal sources. Like Ang II, endothelin-1 makes use of  $G_{q11}$  in smooth muscle to activate PLC, releasing diacylglycerol (DAG) activating non selective cation channels which facilitates membrane depolarization and subsequent extracellular  $Ca^{2+}$  entry through VGCC. In addition, the activation of PLC generates IP3 causing SR-mediated  $Ca^{2+}$  release. DAG can also activate PKC leading to the phosphorylation of CPI-17 which specifically inhibits myosin phosphatase, favouring phosphorylation of the  $LC_{20}$  of myosin and vasoconstriction (Figure 2.3). However, in contrast to AngII, endothelin-1 also activates  $G_{13}$  coupled receptors activating the RhoA/ Rho associated kinase which leads to a direct inhibitory phosphorylation of myosin phosphatase, again favouring contraction (Figure 2.3).

## ENDOTHELIAL REGULATION OF SMOOTH MUSCLE VASODILATATION

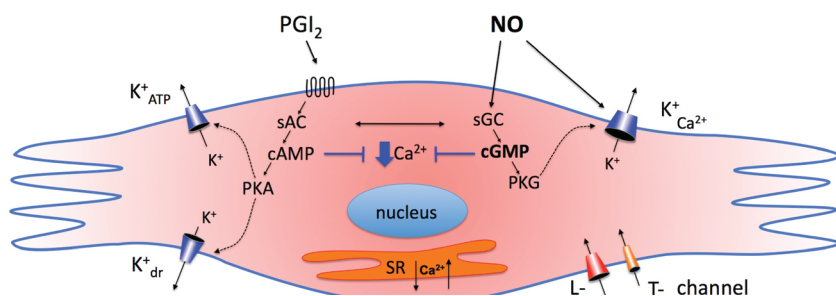
Nitric oxide is a potent vasodilator generated in the endothelium which has many and varied effects in the vasculature including attenuating: platelet adhesion and aggregation, cellular proliferation, and vasoconstriction. A common theme underlying the influence of nitric oxide is activation of guanylyl cyclase, formation of cGMP,

activation of protein kinase G and consequent activation of  $K^+$  channels effecting  $K^+$  removal from the cell leading to membrane hyperpolarization and consequent inactivation of VDCC favoring low intracellular  $Ca^{2+}$  and vasorelaxation. Cyclooxygenase activation in endothelial cells also leads to generation of prostaglandin  $PGI_2$  which leads to receptor mediated activation of adenylyl cyclase, generation of cAMP, subsequent activation of PKA and inhibition of  $K^+$  channels (Figure 2.4).

## SMOOTH MUSCLE PROLIFERATION AND VASCULAR REMODELLING

In the normal adult vascular wall most vascular smooth muscle cells subserve a contractile function to directly modulate vasoconstriction and vasodilatation. However, during development, following injury or in the presence of growth factors and mitogens, including inflammatory cytokines and oxidized lipids, vascular smooth muscle can undergo phenotypic modulation. Vascular smooth muscle phenotypic modulation involves a partial down regulation of the proteins that activate the contractile apparatus in favour of the synthetic and proliferative cellular machinery i.e., the cell increases the abundance of; endoplasmic reticulum, ribosomes for protein synthesis and the

density of the Golgi apparatus. So called synthetic vascular smooth muscle cells are therefore able to undergo very active protein and DNA synthesis, cell division, and in pathological settings are capable of taking up large amounts of oxidized and nonoxidized lipids which can contribute to lipid loading of vascular smooth muscle cells and the formation of so-called foam cells in the vascular wall. As the name foam cell suggests, under microscopic examination lipid laden smooth muscle cells appear much like foam. Synthetic vascular smooth muscle cells also secrete, external to the cell, a great deal of extracellular matrix including the proteins; collagen I, III, IV, and the proteoglycans, perican, hyaluronan, laminin. Proliferative smooth muscle cells also secrete or associate with the membrane surface several, matrix metalloproteinases (MMPs) and their corresponding tissue inhibitors of matrix metalloproteases (TIMPs) to enable correct repair and remodelling of growing or damaged vessels. Evidence exists that a chronic excess of inflammatory cytokines and growth factors can cause dysregulation of both MMPs and TIMPs which can contribute to inappropriate vascular remodelling. This remodelling plays a significant role in the progression of vascular stenosis, restenosis following mechanical interventions, the progression of unstable atheroma, and aneurysmal dissection and rupture.



**FIGURE 2.4:** outlines the major influences of prostaglandin  $I_2$  and nitric oxide (NO) in regulating the activation state of various  $K^+$  channels leading to hyperpolarization of smooth muscle cells and vasodilatation.

At this point it is worth noting that proliferative smooth muscle cells have an attenuated response to vasoconstrictors and vasodilators, probably due to the down regulation of the contractile apparatus and certain elements of the subcellular signalling machinery that is involved in vasoconstriction. However, many of the ligands that normally lead to vasoconstriction, for example, noradrenalin, angiotensin II and endothelin also function to promote smooth muscle proliferation both in the context of cellular hypertrophy and hyperplasia. Platelet derived growth factor (PDGF), is a potent smooth muscle cell mitogen and growth stimulant and contributes to normal vessel repair while chronically elevated levels, for example, generated from unstable thrombus, can contribute to proliferative vascular disorders. Interestingly nitric oxide, in addition to functioning as a potent vasodilator also limits smooth muscle hyperplasia and hypertrophy, probably by limiting intracellular  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  and associated  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ -dependent vascular proliferation.

## SUMMARY

It is clear from the preceding that there is a dynamic interplay between cellular  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  entry from the extracellular space mediated by membrane depolarization and the activation of voltage dependent  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  channels. Extracellular  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  entry can be offset by the activation of  $\text{K}^+$  channels through either endothelial nitric oxide-cGMP/PKG- or PGI<sub>2</sub>-cAMP/PKA-dependent mechanisms, both of which function to limit smooth muscle contraction and proliferation. However, the simple fact that L-type  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  channel blockers and nitric oxide treatment are limited in their ability to effectively manage several disorders of hypercontractility suggests that the additional mechanisms including; SR  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  release and regulation

of myosin phosphatase are also important targets for future therapeutic development.

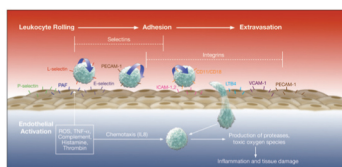
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*Biochem J* **389**, 763–774.





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