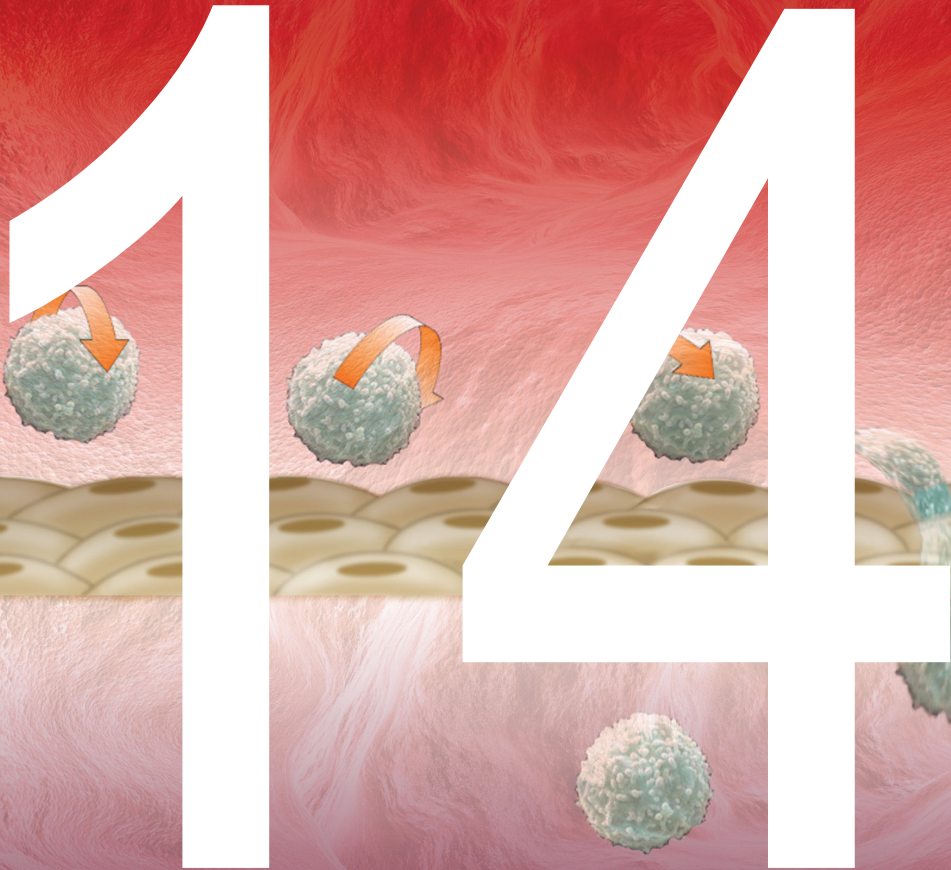


MECHANISMS OF VASCULAR DISEASE:

A REFERENCE BOOK FOR VASCULAR SPECIALISTS



EDITED BY ROBERT FITRIDGE AND MATTHEW THOMPSON
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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

14 • Pathophysiology of Aortic Dissection and Connective Tissue Disorders

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INTRODUCTION

Thoracic aortic dissection (TAD) is the most common aortic catastrophe, occurring in approximately 5 to 30 cases per 1 million persons per year.¹ It carries a significant morbidity and mortality risk, with 21% of patients dying prior to hospital admission.² Recent improvements in the understanding of both the molecular biology and genetics of vascular disease has led to greater clarity of the pathogenesis of acute TAD and a number of associated diseases of the thoracic aorta. Since the initiation of the International Registry of Aortic Dissection (IRAD)³ in 1996 there has been an evolution of terminology in relation to TAD, and the more encompassing term acute aortic syndrome (AAS) is now utilised to include TAD and a number of other pathologies including intramural haematoma (IMH) and penetrating aortic ulcer (PAU).

In broad terms this classification reflects recent advances in understanding in relation to the pathology and natural history of TAD, and the recognition that TAD is part of a spectrum of thoracic aortic pathology. These individual processes will be discussed separately along with some of the underlying

pathologic phenomena that lead to AAS/TAD.

Embryology of thoracic aorta and arch vessels

The formation of blood vessels occurs between the third and eighth week of embryological development. The ventral aortas fuse into the endocardial tube and circulate blood by the end of the third week. During this process a series of mesenchymal clefts lined by what will become endothelium fuse and form two pairs of longitudinal channels – one medial and one lateral. The medial channels form the primitive aortas which with elongation and folding of the embryo become paired into ventral and dorsal arrangements, joining the cephalad end of the primitive heart tubes (formed by the ventral components). Five further pairs of arterial arches pass around the developing pharynx connecting the cephalad end of the heart to the remaining unfused dorsal aortas. These branchial arch arteries in pairs form a number of components of the definitive circulation as outlined below. The paired aortas fuse over much of their length around the end of the fourth week and give a number

of intersegmental branches in dorsal, lateral and ventral patterns. During weeks 5–7 there is a significant evolution in pattern or, in particular the cephalad arches regressing and new caudad arches forming.

The aortic arches are part of this cephalad to caudal progression, with six initial sets of arches regressing in a step-wise fashion starting around weeks four to five. The first, second, and fifth arches regress and are largely gone by the start of week five having contributed to the formation of parts of the maxillary and external carotid circulation (1st), the stapedia arteries (2nd) and a pair of early regressing rudimentary vessels from the 5th. Above the level of the 3rd arch the dorsal aortas remain fused and communicate with the 3rd arch to form the definitive internal carotid artery. The common carotid artery is formed by the proximal parts of the 3rd arch (hence it is also referred to as the carotid arch). The remaining proximal external carotid artery arises as new growths of artery from the aortic sac and are not part of the arches per se, but migrate up the third arch to their final position.

Of particular relevance to the thoracic aorta, the 4th arches both persist, the left as the aortic arch and the right as the root of the right subclavian artery. The subclavian arteries initially arise as outgrowths of the terminal paired aortas just proximal to their union and subsequently the resorption of the right aorta between the origin of the subclavian and the fused trunk causes the right subclavian to be isolated.

The sixth arches fuse with the developing pulmonary arteries, the right partly regressing and partly forming the pulmonary artery with the left becoming the ductus arteriosus.

There is also a concurrent change in cardiac anatomy at this time with the heart separating into its left and right sides (aortic and pulmonary).

There is an excellent demonstration of these embryological changes in Valentine and Wind⁴ and a discussion of the most prevalent anomalies in a paper by Kau *et al.*⁵ Conceptually this may give some understanding of why different segments of the aorta behave in different ways, and what the influences of the embryological derivation may be on the likelihood of differing pathologies in each segment. The embryonic origin of the vascular smooth muscle cells (VSMC) at differing levels of the aorta varies, with the predominant origin being neurectoderm in the thoracic aorta, versus mesoderm in the abdominal aorta.⁶

This difference in origin influences the response of VSMC's to a number of mediators such as Transforming Growth Factor Beta 1 (TGF β 1), an important modulator of the extracellular matrix (ECM) in the thoracic aorta. Neurectodermal VSMC growth is potentiated by TGF β 1, as is Collagen I production. This is in comparison to mesodermal VSMC's where TGF β 1 inhibits growth and has no influence on collagen deposition. Given that VSMC's are influential in aortic strength, it would be expected that varying concentration of VSMC's and differential response to TGF β 1 and haemodynamic strain in the aorta would influence the sites of ECM degradation and hence likelihood of aortic pathology such as dissection and/or aneurysm.⁷ There is some evidence that VSMC's in the abdominal aorta under cyclical haemodynamic stress secrete TGF β 1, leading to an increase in aortic wall mass (however not in the thoracic aorta).⁶

There is also a differential pattern of elastic lamellar units (the functional elastic unit in the aorta – combining elastin lamellae and VSMC's) through the aorta, with higher levels of elastic lamella and VSMC's in the thoracic aorta than in the abdominal. Similarly there is a decrease in the elastin to

collagen ratio in the abdominal aorta compared to the thoracic aorta.⁶ It is interesting to note that acardiac foetus do not develop differential structure throughout the length of the aorta, suggesting that there is a significant influence of haemodynamic cyclical strain on the secretion of mediators such as TGF β 1 and hence architecture.

Haemodynamics of Thoracic Compared to Abdominal Aorta

There is convincing evidence to suggest that dissection flaps occur at the points in the aorta subject to the greatest fluctuations in pressure over time. Due to the torsional manner in which the heart contracts, and the physical effects of cardiac motion on the arch of the aorta, the areas subject to the greatest changes in pressure are the ascending aorta and the proximal descending aorta. This was demonstrated elegantly in a model created by Qiao et al based on a thoracic aortic aneurysm.⁸ This model demonstrated differential shear and flow at varying points in the thoracic aorta, particularly the outer curves of the ascending and proximal descending aorta. There were also areas of increased transit/contact time on the concavity of the arch and proximal descending aorta (along with branch vessel origins in the arch) which as an aside may be the reason for the preponderance of atherosclerotic change at these points.

The alterations in elastic recoil ability and collagen concentrations and function in the aorta that are present in a number of aortic pathologies, combined with the magnitude of the force involved in blood flow (related to absolute blood pressure, pulse pressure and dP/dT) results in the most likely sites of dissection being where the physical forces on the aorta are greatest and the diminution in aortic strength is maximal. There is reasonable evidence that suggests that VSMC

apoptosis (which is influenced by TGF β 1) is greatest at the convexities of the ascending and descending aorta – particularly in patients with bicuspid aortic valves, and that this may alter aortic strength at these sites,⁷ predisposing to dissection or aneurysm at these sites.

Sizes of Normal Aorta

There is an excellent outline of both the normal sizes of the thoracic aorta at differing ages, allowing a basis for sizing in different pathologies, in the European Society of Cardiology Task Force document.⁹

CLASSIFICATION OF AORTIC SYNDROMES

The acute aortic syndromes can be classified in a number of ways, included chronicity, and anatomy and on the basis of the underlying pathology and complications.

Acute/Chronic

Acute dissections are those present for less than 14 days and chronic are those present for longer.¹⁰

DeBakey Classification of Class 1 Dissection – Type 1, 2 and 3

The DeBakey classification system separates TAD into three types, with subtypes of Type 3. Initially described by De Bakey and colleagues in 1965,¹¹ this classification is based on both the anatomy of the entry tear and the extent of the dissection. It is an anatomical classification and has been simplified on the basis of outcome measures and prognosis into the Stanford Classification.

TABLE 14.1: DeBakey Classification of Class I Dissection

Type	Tear	Extent
I	Ascending Aorta	Propagating up ascending aorta, across arch and through descending aorta
II	Ascending Aorta	Confined to ascending aorta/intrapericardial aorta
III	Distal to the Left Subclavian Artery	Descending aorta +/- retrograde across arch
Subtype IIIa		Confined to descending aorta above diaphragm
Subtype IIIb		Extends through diaphragm into visceral or abdominal aorta

TABLE 14.2: Relationship between Stanford and DeBakey classification of class I dissection

Stanford Type	De Bakey Equivalent	Site of Involvement
A	Type I and II	Ascending aorta +/- Arch
B	Type III	Descending thoracic aorta distal to left subclavian artery
Subtype a and b		Above or below diaphragm, similar to DeBakey

Stanford Classification

The Stanford classification arose from the recognition that prognosis was largely dependant on the involvement or not of the ascending aorta in the dissection process and was published by Dailey and colleagues in 1970.¹² The De Bakey Classification was thus simplified into two subclasses, Type A and B depending on involvement of the ascending aorta. Although the Stanford classification has allowed stratification into surgical treatment or conservative management groups, it fails to take into account the variations of thoracic aortic pathology that are now recognised to make up what is referred to as the Acute Aortic Syndrome. A review of recent literature proposed a more complex but inclusive classification which has been adopted by the European Task Force on Aortic Dissection.⁹

European Task Force

In 1999 Svensson et al¹³ published a classification of thoracic aortic pathology that included not only classical TAD but also a number of newly recognised subtype pathologies that were felt to make up part of the continuum of aortic dissection. This system should be considered a subclassification to the Stanford and/or DeBakey classifications. This classification is outlined in Figure 14.2.

PATHOGENESIS OF THORACIC AORTIC DISSECTION

Hypertension is recognised as one of the most significant risk factors for thoracic aortic dissection, and the treatment regimes for acute dissection syndromes utilise anti-hypertensive therapy as their mainstay.

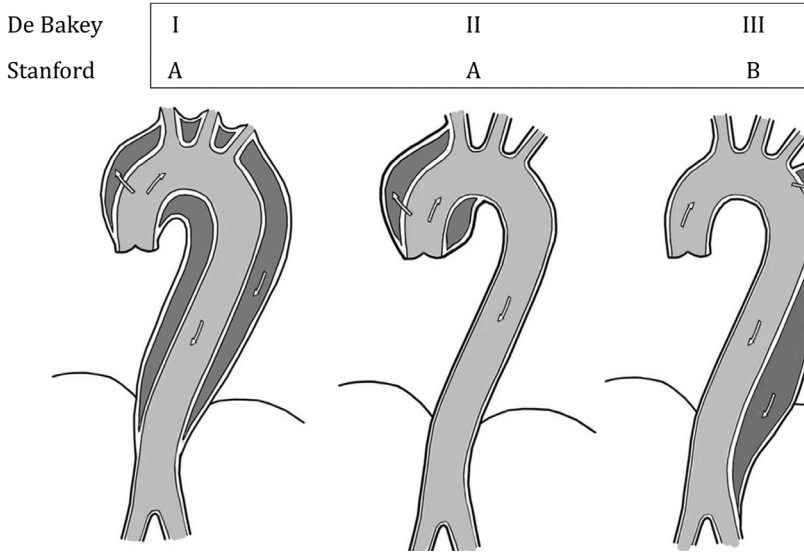


FIGURE 14.1: Diagrammatic representation of aortic dissection class 1 divided into De Bakey and Stanford Classifications. Based on figure 4 from Erbel *et al.* 2001.

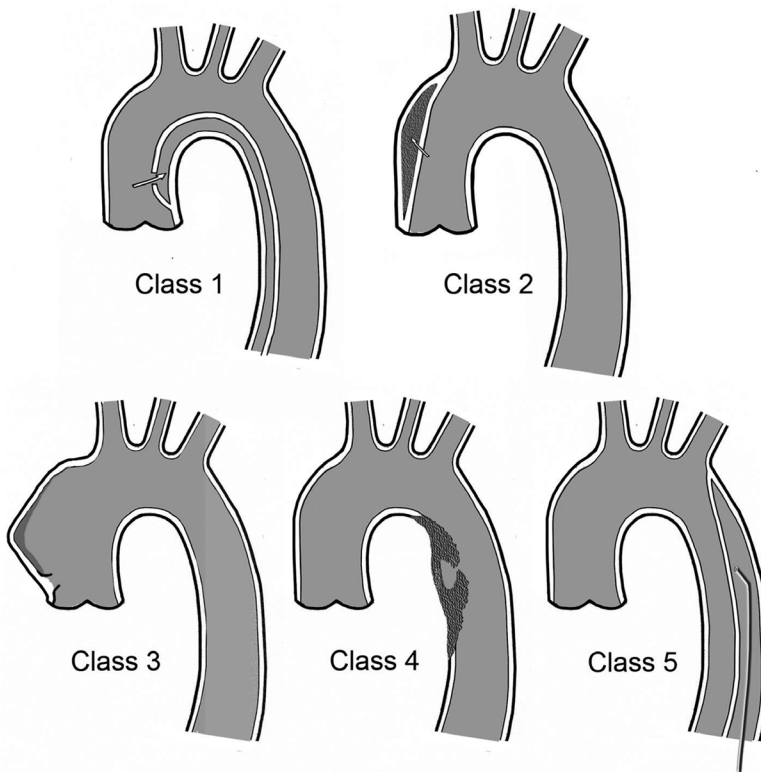


FIGURE 14.2: Classes of aortic dissection. Class 1- Classical Aortic Dissection (Intimal flap between true and false lumen); Class 2 – Intramural haematoma (Medial disruption with formation of IMH); Class 3 – Discrete/ Subtle dissection without haematoma. Eccentric bulge at tear site; Class 4 – Penetrating Aortic Ulcer (Plaque rupture leading to aortic ulceration, or a classical penetrating aortic ulcer with surrounding haematoma. Usually sub-adventitial); Class 5 – Iatrogenic and Traumatic Dissection. Based on figure 5 from Erbel *et al.* 2001⁹ and Svensson *et al.* 1999.¹³

TABLE 14.3: Summary of aortic dissection classification systems

Stanford Classification	
Type A	Dissection of the ascending and descending aorta
Type B	Dissection of the descending aorta
De Bakey Classification	
Type 1	Dissection of the entire aorta
Type 2	Dissection of the ascending aorta
Type 3	Dissection of the descending aorta
New Classification	
Class 1	Classical aortic dissection with an intimal flap between true and false lumen
Class 2	Medial disruption with formation of intramural haematoma/haemorrhage
Class 3	Discrete/subtle dissection without haematoma, eccentric bulge at tear site
Class 4	Plaque rupture leading to aortic ulceration, penetrating aortic atherosclerotic ulcer with surrounding haematoma, usually subadventitial
Class 5	Iatrogenic and traumatic dissection
Class 1–5 Represent a subdivision to the Stanford or De Bakey classification	

There is good evidence that suggests that aggressive blood pressure management reduces mortality, particularly the use of beta blockers. There is also evolving evidence that a number of the newer antihypertensives such as losartan, which exerts some effect on mediators such as TGF β 1, may have extra effects on the turnover of thoracic aortic ECM, and may reduce the risk of both dissection and aneurysmal degeneration in some of the connective tissue disorders.

Smoking and hypercholesterolaemia have deleterious effects on the thoracic aorta and the catecholamine drive that is present in chronic tobacco use may exacerbate dissections and increase the risk of aneurysm disease.

Cocaine use is recognised as a risk factor for the development of the AAS, in particular in young african american males. Amphetamines similarly have a linkage with development of TAD, presumably for similar reasons to cocaine, with surges in catecholamines and concomitant acute rises in dP/dT and blood pressure in the aorta.^{15,16}

Classical Thoracic Aortic Dissection (Class 1 Dissection)

The pathognomonic lesion in aortic dissection is a tear in the intima which allows pulsatile surging of blood into the intimo-medial plane of the aorta. Typically the entry site is transverse but not involving the whole

circumference of the aorta. It usually extends down the left posterolateral plane of the aorta, in a spiral fashion.¹⁰ These dissections may have communication between the false and true lumen, with intimal flap tears being present in >70% of cases at autopsy.⁹ In a series of sudden deaths however, fenestrations were absent in 67% of cases.

Flow in the false lumen is usually antegrade but occurs retrograde in a small number of cases. Differences in the elasticity of the dissection flap and the aortic adventitia, and the increase in pressure in the false lumen predispose to collapse of the true lumen, with higher frequency of true lumen compression in non-fenestrated aortic dissection.

In 65% of cases of dissection, intimal tears occur in the ascending aorta, 20% in the descending and 10% in the arch, with 5% in the abdominal aorta.¹⁰ There is a male:female ratio of 5:1 with a peak incidence of 50–60 years for proximal dissections, and 60–70yrs for distal dissection.¹⁰

There has been no particular success in defining the anatomical features of particular aortas that make them prone to dissection and long-term sequelae, despite analysis of multiple factors including tear depth and angle, local wall stress and the status of the vasa vasorum.¹⁷

Intramural Haematoma (Class 2 Aortic Dissection)

Intramural haematoma (IMH) otherwise known as Class 2 aortic dissection is a less common precursor or variant form of TAD. It comprises approximately 6–10% of all acute aortic syndromes. Approximately 10–30% of patients presenting with symptoms consistent with TAD may have IMH on imaging.⁹ Occurring in greater prevalence in Asian populations, it makes up 30–40% of AAS in Asian series. Defined as a bleed into the outer layers of aortic media

that lacks a discrete or detectable entry tear, it is usually seen on CT as a crescent shaped or concentric thickening of aortic wall. It may involve a longer segment of aorta than classical dissection. It appears as a ‘dissection without intimal tear’, and was previously described as such – however it is now recognised that there may be small atherosclerotic plaque ruptures in the wall of the vessel that are related to the proximal extent of the IMH.¹⁸ There has been some suggestion that there may be focal rupture of vasa vasorum in the aortic wall which causes IMH, however with the advent of newer multidetector CT arrays, previously invisible intimal defects are now being recognised. This has led to the proposition that a ruptured vasa vasorum leads to increased focal transmural pressure and consequent ‘retrograde’ rupture of a pre-existing aortic plaque and intimal disruption.¹⁹

Two subtypes of IMH/Class 2 dissection are recognized.⁹ The features of the two subtypes of IMH are summarized in Table 14.4.

IMH seems to be associated with a lower risk of malperfusion syndromes than classical TAD, although complications are common. Between 28–47% of cases of IMH progress to overt false luminal dissection. Early aneurysm formation or contained rupture develops in 20–45% of patients.¹⁴ There is considerable crossover between these groups. Spontaneous regression is seen in approximately 10% of patients.⁹

Predictors of progression to TAD include recurrent/persisting pain, and presence of PAU. Some IMH may improve spontaneously with medical management only (particularly in Asian series). Younger ages, smaller aortic diameter (<4–4.5cm) and thinner haematoma (<1cm) confer better prognosis^{9,20} and may allow conservative/non operative treatment with close observation. In one series, a 30-fold increase in

TABLE 14.4: Subtypes of IMH

	IMH Type 1	IMH Type II
Wall thickness	≤0.5cm	0.6 – 4.0cm (median >1.3cm)
Vessel diameter	<3.5cm	>3.5cm
Mean length in IMH	<11cm	>11cm
Presence of flow in IMH on echocardiography	Less common	Common
Association with calcified plaque	Not usually associated	Commonly associated
Intimal appearance	Smooth	Rough / Atherosclerotic
Echocardiographic appearances	Echo free zones present <30%	Echo free zones present >70%

progression to rupture was demonstrated if the aortic diameter was greater than 40mm. Wall thickness >1cm was associated with a nine-fold risk of progression.²¹

Location of IMH is also prognostic – ascending aorta has a high risk of progression to frank dissection and usually mandates repair. Exceptions to this seem to be Japanese and Korean series where there is a more benign course with Type A IMH treated with BP control, bed rest and serial imaging.¹⁸

Given recent advances in understanding of the contribution of genetic influences to MMP concentrations, elastin and collagen turnover and risk of syndromal AAS, it may be that the genotypic differences between Asian and European groups explains the differences in prognosis, progression and prevalence in IMH.

Penetrating Aortic Ulcer (Class 4 Aortic Dissection)

Penetrating aortic ulcer (PAU) was first described in 1934 by Shennan and then subsequently further characterized by Stanson et al in 1986. This condition can be defined as ulceration of an aortic atherosclerotic

plaque penetrating through the internal elastic lamina into the aortic media. It is also classified as Class 4 Aortic Dissection.⁹

PAU comprises around 2.3–7.6% of acute aortic syndromes but in a series of 15 patients, 40% (n = 6) suffered aortic rupture, compared to a rate of 7.3% for Type A dissection and <4% for Type B, hence it is a morbid pathology when present.²² It also appears that for a given aortic diameter the presence of PAU confers a worse prognosis than for classical or Class 1 TAD.²²

PAU tends to occur in patients with extensive aortic atherosclerotic disease and in an older population than those affected by Class 1 dissection (a mean age of 77 years versus 54 for Type A dissection and 67 for Type B).²² It appears that the pathological lesion (haemorrhage into/through an atherosclerotic plaque) is limited in its extent around the aorta by the transmural inflammation of extensive surrounding atherosclerosis. Penetration through, and dissection towards the adventitia can occur in the setting of medial penetration of the localised plaque haemorrhage.

Both IMH and PAU are recognised to be endpoints of a degenerative aortic pathology,

and largely occur in the descending thoracic aorta. In one series,²³ 90% of IMH and PAU were confined to the descending aorta.

Although such focal pathology as IMH and PAU seems ideally suited to treatment by endovascular means, it is probable that most patients in these groups with pathology in the descending aorta do not require intervention, unless they fulfil criteria that would categorise them in a treatment group for classical TAD (rupture/aneurysm etc). The presence of aneurysmal dilatation is a strong predictor of the requirement for intervention in the future.

COMPLICATIONS OF ACUTE AORTIC SYNDROME

Visceral ischaemia/malperfusion syndromes

Visceral ischaemia is one of the most significant and catastrophic consequences of TAD. In broad terms two main pathophysiological mechanisms of ischaemia have been described.

The first is a classical proximal entry tear in the absence of a distal fenestration. This leads to rapid and significant increases in mean false luminal pressure, leading to compression of the true lumen leading to distal ischaemia. In the context of considering treatment options, this pressure differential explains why the use of a bare stent alone in treating the entry tear is unlikely to succeed. It is unlikely that a bare stent would be able to compress the highly pressurised false lumen enough to divert flow without surpassing aortic rupture pressure.

A second pattern is where there is a distal fenestration present with relatively equivalent luminal pressures. This situation has a reduced risk of distal ischaemia as flow is not compromised, however an extension into a visceral vessel can cause branch ischaemia

in one of two ways. These are described as either fixed or dynamic branch ischaemia. Fixed occlusion is caused by false luminal thrombus or pressurisation leading to a fixed impingement of the ostia. Dynamic occlusion occurs in the presence of a flap which acts as a floating valve across the ostia, particularly where there is differential pressurisation.

It is worthwhile remembering that aortic branch occlusion and malperfusion syndrome are not totally synonymous, given that partial or dynamic branch occlusion may not lead to significant end-organ ischaemia. There is some evidence that in recent times survival outcomes of branch occlusion and malperfusion syndromes have significantly improved in comparison to previous data from 1965–1985.¹⁰ There is also good evidence to support mesenteric revascularisation prior to ascending aortic repair in particular, with improvements in mortality from 87% to 37% over time.

Ischaemic complications are present in up to 30% of cases of Type B dissection.¹⁰ Rupture is less common but occurs in >20% of cases over the patient's lifespan. Recent literature still suggests 16–25% mortality in the patient group suffering ischaemic complications.¹⁷ IRAD has demonstrated an overall mortality of 27.4% for all types of dissection, with mortality in distal dissections in the uncomplicated medical therapy cohort being 10.7%, rising to 31% in the complicated cohort. Malperfusion syndromes occur in 30–42% of dissection patients.¹⁰ Spinal cord ischaemia is relatively rare as a complication of TAD but is still present in 2–3% of Type B dissections at presentation.¹⁰

Fate of the False Lumen

False lumen thrombosis occurs in 2–3% of medically managed patients, however even with surgical treatment distal false

lumen thrombosis only occurs in 15–30% of treated patients. This has implications for recurrent dissection and aneurysmal degeneration, with progression to aneurysm formation occurring in 30–50% of patients within 4 years of diagnosis of the initial dissection.¹⁰ Long-term data show that aortic death is the ultimate outcome in 30–40% of patients with medically treated dissection, despite reasonable rates of early mortality with aggressive medical therapy.¹⁷

Aneurysmal Degeneration and Rupture

As outlined above, aneurysmal degeneration and rupture is one of the potential consequences of AAS. In medically managed patients who survive their initial dissection event, 25–40% will continue onwards to develop aneurysmal dilatation. Out of this group 10–20% will rupture.¹⁰ Degenerative disease rates in IMH are as high as 45%, with either contained rupture or aneurysm formation.¹⁸ Similarly PAU rupture or aneurysm rates are in the region of 40% – with variable reports of severity/mortality risk. As discussed earlier, predictors of worse outcomes in IMH patients are initial aortic diameter above 4cm, and aortic wall thickness >1cm. These features conferred a 30-fold and 9-fold increase in progression to aneurysm and rupture respectively.¹⁰ The prognostic features for development of aneurysmal degeneration include aortic size >4cm, persistent hypertension despite medical therapy, and persistent patency of the false lumen. Interestingly the recent data from IRAD also suggests a significant increase in 3 year mortality in the group with partial thrombosis of the false lumen – a relative risk of 2.69, with a 3 year mortality rate of 31.6%.¹⁴

CONNECTIVE TISSUE DISORDERS AND ACUTE AORTIC SYNDROMES

Heritable disorders such as Marfan's Syndrome (MFS), Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (EDS) and Loeys-Dietz Syndrome (LDS) are well-recognised predisposing causes for TAD, however in large series only contribute 14–22% of dissections.¹ Their presence predisposes patients to early dissection and aneurysm formation compared to the atherosclerotic cohort, and identification of these patients early in life allows targeted medical therapy, surveillance and early intervention as appropriate to prevent rupture and its associated mortality.

Marfan Syndrome

Initially described by Antoine-Bernard Marfan in 1896 as a constellation of skeletal manifestations, Marfan Syndrome (MFS) has subsequently been more clearly codified into a recognised set of cardiovascular, skeletal and ocular findings. Marfan syndrome is responsible for approximately 5% of all aortic dissections and is the most common cause of dissection in patients under 40 years of age.

The classification of the syndrome was initially described in the Berlin Nosology (1986) but due to advances in molecular biology and further understanding of the disease and its sub-types, there was a new nosology developed in 1996 – the Ghent Nosology. This has recently been revised and was published in 2010.²⁴ This allows some differentiation from previously overlapping syndromes such as the Mitral Valve Prolapse Syndrome (MVPS) and the MASS (Myopia, Mitral Valve Prolapse, Non-progressive Aortic Root Dilatation, skeletal findings and striae), and also further differentiation from some of the more recently described overlap

syndromes such as Loeys-Deitz Syndrome. These other syndromes do not all carry the same vascular implications as MFS. Unfortunately in the past the laxity of diagnostic criteria meant that many people had the diagnosis of MFS applied, when in actuality their vascular mortality was lower than that of MFS.

The previously identified genetic basis of MFS is a mutation in the gene coding for fibrillin 1 – a cysteine-rich glycoprotein important in the manufacture of connective tissues. In the aorta, fibrillin 1 is prevalent in the aortic adventitia, and to a lesser degree in the media where fibrillin 2, a similar but functionally different protein, is more prevalent.²⁵ The anatomic abnormalities in the MFS aorta are those of ‘cystic medial degeneration’ – loss of VSMC numbers, increased collagen content and elastic fiber disarray.⁷

The current diagnostic criteria include a series of major and minor criteria. Major criteria include aortic root dilatation/dissection, Ectopia Lentis, ≥ 4 particular skeletal manifestations and dural ectasia as defining characteristics, and the presence of the fibrillin 1 mutation as a component of diagnosis when these are not clear. In index patients the diagnosis must involve major involvement in at least two organ systems and minor involvement in one more. In the presence of a fibrillin 1 mutation that is known to cause the MFS, or when there has previously been a first degree relative with MFS based on the Ghent Nosology – there need be only one major and one minor manifestation in different organ systems. The presence of the fibrillin1 mutation is now given more weight in light of the increased ease of detection.

The 2010 Ghent nosology has been developed based on a more evidence-based approach, and in a more patient centric fashion with an alteration in the weighting of different criteria and development of more meaningful diagnostic thresholds.

Cardinal features such as aortic root dilatation and ectopia lentis are now given more weight, and in combination can be diagnostic. Other systemic manifestations (in other organ systems) contribute to an overall systemic risk score that assists in diagnosis.

MFS has variable time of onset, tissue distribution and severity of clinical manifestation, even in patients with identical fibrillin gene mutation.

Of interest in MFS, levels of proteases such as MMP-9 are actually quite low, particularly in comparison to AAA phenotypes, and there is some suggestion that MFS-related dissection and aneurysm are not as strongly influenced by proteases as had previously been thought.⁶

Fibrillin and Marfan Syndrome

Fibrillin1 is a fundamental component of the vascular ECM. Fibrillin-rich microfibrils play a significant role in linking vascular SMC to adjacent elastin fibrils. They are thought to regulate tissue development and turnover of elastin, and are a template for the construction of elastin microfibrils.⁶

The FBN-1 gene is a large gene on the q arm of Chromosome 15 at position 21.1. The description of this location is 15q21.1. It is closely associated with the gene for TGF β 1. There are more than 600 described mutations in the FBN-1 gene that can cause MFS with varying degrees of penetrance. The majority (around 2/3) of fibrillin 1 mutations are missense mutations that alter one amino acid out of the 2871 that make up the protein. Approximately 20% are frameshift mutations, and 12% are side splice mutations. Around 25% of the presentations of MFS have a new and previously unidentified mutation in the fibrillin 1 gene.²⁵

It was previously felt that the abnormality of the fibrillin1 gene led to structural abnormalities in ECM and elastin through fibrillin 1 weakness which were the cause of the

aneurysmal degeneration seen in MFS. This rather simplistic concept has been partly refuted, particularly in light of syndromes such as Williams-Beuren syndrome where a microdeletion of the elastin gene is actually characterised by aortic stenosis rather than aneurysm and dissection.⁶ It is now postulated that there is both a structural and a signalling component to the pathophysiology. This has led to a change in the definition of Marfan's from a purely connective tissue disorder to a developmental abnormality with effects on the development and morphogenesis of multiple organ systems.

There is some evidence from mouse knockout models that underexpression of the fibrillin 1 gene results in increased MMP expression and elastin fragmentation, leading to reduced structural integrity of the aorta.²⁶ There is also upregulation of MMPs when mutated fibrillin 1 (which is more prone to proteolysis) undergoes degradation. There is similarly an increase in macrophage numbers in the setting of elevated concentrations of fibrillin 1 fragments.⁶ There is some evidence of a degree of a threshold phenomenon for the deterioration in vessel structure in relation to proportional amounts of normal and abnormal fibrillin 1 microfibrils.

One of the proposed mechanisms by which fibrillin 1 mutation causes loss of tissue integrity is the documented impact of abnormal fibrillin 1 on the action of normal fibrillin-1 in the formation of microfibrils. This is a case of a heterozygote disorder where there is a dominant-negative pattern of activity caused by the mutated gene product.^{6,27}

Fibrillin 1 gene mutations on their own (ie in absence of Marfan's) that result in decreased fibrillin1 gene expression have also been linked to thoracic aortic aneurysm (TAA) and TAD. A reduction in fibrillin 1 abundance, but with normal protein structure may lead to similar but less severe

phenotype to Marfan's that is restricted to the vascular system.²⁶ Similarly there appears to be a relationship between fibrillin 1 mutation and upregulation of TGF β 1 signalling pathways. This may be because of structural and functional similarities between latent TGF β 1 binding protein (LTBP) and fibrillin 1 and the possibility that abnormalities in the fibrillin 1 gene cause decreased affinity for TGF β 1 in LTBP – hence releasing greater amounts of TGF β 1 to increase signalling of TGF β 1 and therefore increase VSMC apoptosis.⁶

Given the large number of unique mutations, genotypic/phenotypic correlations are difficult. There are also additions to the fibrillin 1 gene which can cause the related phenotypic abnormality that is MASS. The recently described interplay between fibrillin 1 and TGF β has similarly provided new insight into potential mechanisms for and explanations of the variable penetrance and phenotypic appearance of MFS and related disorders.

SMADs are intracellular proteins that transduce extracellular signals from TGF β ligands to the nucleus where they activate TGF β gene transcription. Some recent evidence suggests that the majority of the vascular end points in MFS are related to the influence of fibrillin 1 mutation on TGF β 1 levels and the subsequent TGF β 1/SMAD2 signalling interaction. The downstream effect of this on elastin manufacture and disorganisation via upregulation of TGF β responsive gene expression leads to elastolysis and ECM degradation.

The Role of Transforming Growth Factor Beta (TGF β) in the Development of Vascular System in Health and Disease

The TGF β signalling pathway is important in both embryologic development – particularly in relation to body morphology and patterning, tissue differentiation and body

axis; as well as having a potent role in the differentiation and proliferation of a number of cell lines, and the stimulation of apoptosis – particularly in VSMCs. TGF β mutations therefore have the potential to cause a number of congenitally acquired disorders of development and function of the skeletal, muscular and cardiovascular systems. This applies to both TGF β and TGF β receptors (TGF β R) or components of the signaling pathway. This includes a number of ligands that are currently of particular interest to researchers in TAA/AAA/TAD.

The TGF β superfamily is large, and signals via two main pathways – TGF β /activin/nodal receptor to downstream intracellular transduction proteins SMAD2 and 3, or alternatively bone morphogenetic proteins (BMPs) to SMAD1 and 5.^{7,28}

TGF β has three ligand subtypes -1, -2 and -3. These are secreted as what is termed a large latent complex (LLC) comprising 3 polypeptide chains. These chains are the small dimeric TGF β ligand, a latency associated peptide (LAP) to which TGF β is non-covalently bonded and a latent TGF β binding protein (LTGF β BP) of which there are three subtypes which are covalently bound to the LAP.²⁸

After secretion, the LLC is sequestered in the ECM in association with fibrillin 1. This provides a pool of stable, largely inactive TGF β which can be released under stimulus from a reservoir. The TGF β receptors and ECM with a reservoir are widespread and the effects of TGF β occur both locally and systemically. This explains why the regulation of TGF β secretion at local level by variation in levels of ECM components such as fibrillin 1 can have significant effects.

The mechanism of TGF β ligand signaling is reasonably well understood and appears to occur via two families of TGF β receptor, type 1 and type 2 (of which there are further subtypes within each family). TGF β binding

to the type 2 receptor causes recruitment and subsequent phosphorylation of the type 1 receptor, leading to the formation of an activated receptor complex. TGF β affinity for the receptor is variable, and there are a number of transmembrane co-receptors such as betaglycan (TGFBR3), which is high affinity but non-signalling, that enhance TGF β binding to the type 2 receptor complex.²⁸

The formation of the activated receptor complex leads to further cascading phosphorylation of receptor-associated SMADs (r-smads or smad 2/3). The type of SMAD activated depends on which TGF β 1 receptor subtype is activated. Once the r-smad is activated it binds with a co-smad (SMAD4) to shuttle it to the nucleus to allow transcription of the target TGF β gene.

Clearly this is a complex pathway, and furthermore there are a number of other intracellular kinases which can influence the phosphorylation and hence activity of the SMAD family, all of which can have outside influences.^{7,28,29}

Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome

Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (EDS) is a hereditary disorder of connective tissue related to abnormalities in the gene for collagen, with six different types described.^{30,31} It has an overall prevalence of approximately 1 in 25,000 live births.³¹ Original descriptions were by Edward Ehlers in 1899 and Henri Alexandre Danlos in 1908. The most important subtype from the vascular perspective, and the most catastrophic in terms of presentation remains Type IV or what is now known as the vascular type, described by Andras Barbaras in 1967, in which he noted increased vascular fragility. The prevalence of the vascular type is <4% of all EDS cases. Presentations are heterogenous, and are not always entirely clear, and the distribution of clinical presentation reflects that of Type III collagen.

Children with EDS are often misdiagnosed as having coagulation disorders due to easy bruising.³⁰ Skeletal manifestations are consistent with abnormality in manufacture of Type III collagen with a defect in the pro- α -1 Type III collagen chain, coded for by the COL3A1 gene. Abnormalities in these collagens lead to ligamentous laxity.

The biochemical basis for EDS was described by Pope in 1975. It is a heterozygous mutation of the gene for Type III collagen, which is located on the long arm of chromosome 2, and is inherited in an autosomal dominant fashion.³¹ Vascular EDS is best described as a monogenic orphan disease transmitted as an autosomal dominant trait. There is therefore a 50% chance of affected individuals passing on EDS to each child. Sporadic cases do however, account for up to half of all reported cases.

Diagnosis of Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome

Clinical diagnostic features of vascular EDS include typical facial features (although these may be absent in some cases), skin abnormalities with a thin translucent appearance and more visible veins, rupture of hollow viscera and vessels and easy bruising or ecchymoses. The classical facies of EDS are described as acrogeria, an appearance of slim face, thin long nose, sunken cheeks and often bulging or protruberant eyes. There may be periorbital pigmentation and/or telangiectasis. The upper lip is often fine and lacks puckering.³⁰ This is present in around 30% of patients.³¹

Skin manifestations vary from the other types of EDS, in particular the hypermobility and classical types, in that skin hyperextensibility is a less prominent feature. The skin does feel softer and is more translucent, and the subcutaneous vessels are often very prominent and visible – particularly on the trunk. Skin on the hands and feet is often more aged appearing than expected. With

previous scarring, the appearance is quite stretched and there may be deposits of haemosiderin and enlargement of scars over mobile areas.

Easy bruising is a common finding, particularly in the younger group – in fact it is the most consistent clinical feature, being present in 66% of reported cases in one series.³² These bruises and subcutaneous haematomas are often huge – much larger than the inciting injury would account for. The presence of these bruises often prompts investigation of platelet function and coagulation, however the underlying pathology is vascular fragility rather than any haematological abnormality.

Vascular complications in EDS are relatively rare in infancy but prevalent in teens and in the third and fourth decades of life. More than 80% of people have had a vascular complication by the age of 40.³¹ Median survival of vascular type EDS patients is only 48 years. Vessel complications are the leading cause of mortality in patients with vascular EDS; with aortic tears, dissection, and arteriovenous fistulas being seen along with classical arterial rupture. These events are often spontaneous with no apparent cause and can occur in otherwise normal appearing blood vessels. The thoracic aorta and abdominal aorta are the main sites of involvement with more than 50% of these events occurring in the distal thoracic aorta.³¹ Middle-sized arteries appear to be the main vessels in which these events otherwise occur. Extremity vessel events contribute approximately 25% of the complications that are seen in vascular EDS.³¹ Spontaneous arterial rupture into closed spaces can lead to compartment syndrome and limb loss. Sudden onset of flank or abdominal pain should mandate non-invasive imaging as it is a common presentation of intestinal, uterine or arterial rupture.

The most commonly seen intra-cerebral

catastrophe related to vascular Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome is carotid-cavernous fistula.^{30,32} This is an exceedingly uncommon presentation in the normal population, and is seen almost exclusively in patients with traumatic injury. The occurrence of this in an atraumatic setting should lead to a high clinical suspicion of the presence of a collagen-vascular disorder. The mean age of occurrence of carotid-cavernous fistula in this population is 31 years compared with 58 years in the general population. Less common presentations include intracranial haemorrhage in approximately 4% of cases.⁷ Most of these cases have a previously identified intracranial aneurysm. Extracranial dissection of both the vertebral and carotid arteries is also seen. As with carotid-cavernous fistula the presence of this pathology in the absence of trauma should suggest the presence of a collagen vascular disorder. Other vascular anomalies include prominent varicose veins and these are widely seen in EDS patients. Surgical treatment of varicose veins is contraindicated.

Gastrointestinal and obstetric complications are also common—both of these tissue types being rich in type III collagen. From the gastrointestinal point of view, the sigmoid colon is the most regularly involved site of perforation. In contrast to the hypermobility of classical types of EDS, joint hypermobility is not a prominent feature in vascular EDS. In some studies there is an increased risk of congenital hip dysplasia and congenital clubfoot in comparison to the general population.³⁰ Differential diagnosis of EDS includes a number of paediatric coagulation disturbances and Silverman Syndrome, which can also have easy bruising and haematoma. In adults, Marfan's disease should also be considered.^{30,33}

The diagnostic criteria for EDS were outlined most recently in the Villefranche nosology³⁴ that breaks the more classical

description of EDS into six main types based on clinical presentation and the pathognomonic manifestations of each type. The presence of two or more major criteria is highly indicative of the disease and laboratory testing is recommended.³⁴

Laboratory diagnosis involves the demonstration of structurally abnormal type III collagen produced by fibroblasts, and demonstration of an abnormal COL3A1 gene. The most reliable study is assessment of procollagen III deficiency using gel electrophoresis. This requires skin biopsy and has a risk of wound complications, thus site selection should be careful. Qualitative abnormalities in type III collagen can be seen by measuring secretion of type III collagen in cultured skin fibroblasts.³⁰

Unfortunately although COL3A1 gene analysis is intuitively more accurate and would seem easier, it suffers the problem of lack of concordance between the mutation type and severity. There are numerous mutations possible in the gene given its large size, and there may be a greater prevalence of mutations than is currently recognised. Some mutations may have a degree of phenotypic correlation. Unfortunately the site of the mutation within the collagen gene has not been useful in predicting tissue integrity—one series of 135 EDS vascular type patients had no correlation between location of mutation and degree or presence of tissue fragility.³⁵

From a biochemical perspective the most common point mutation that has been demonstrated is the replacement of a glycine in the collagen triple helix chain with another amino acid. Unfortunately the amino acid substitution does not correlate with phenotypic expression or clinical outcome. A proposed hypothesis in the aetiology of the clinical syndrome is that the abnormal procollagen components are either degraded in a form of 'protein suicide'³⁵ or are retained but their presence causes disruption of the

TABLE 14.5: The diagnostic criteria for the vascular subtype of EDS.

Inheritance Pattern	Autosomal dominant
Major Diagnostic Criteria	Thin, translucent skin
	Arterial/Intestinal/uterine fragility or rupture
	Extensive bruising
	Characteristic facial appearance
Minor Diagnostic Criteria	Acrogeria
	Hypermobility of small joints
	Tendon and muscle rupture
	Talipes equinovarus
	Early onset varicose veins
	Arteriovenous / carotid-cavernous sinus fistula
	Pneumothorax/haemopneumothorax
	Gingival recession
	Positive family history, sudden death in (a) close relative(s)

normal organisation and deposition of other types of collagens. This may explain the spectrum of differences in tissue fragility that are present with the same mutation. This is an evolving area of knowledge.³¹

Although controversial, some experts recommend ongoing surveillance to determine whether there is an incidental vascular lesion.³¹ The controversy in this area arises from the fact that the majority of lesions will be treated conservatively and diagnosing them may increase patient anxiety unnecessarily. Arteriography is relatively contraindicated as an investigative modality in these patients as it is associated with a 67% complication rate and mortality rate of 17%,³² however there is evolving discussion about its use as a treatment modality with the utilisation of endovascular coils or stents to minimise the use of arterial sutures. Similarly much of the previous evidence in relation to intervention in these patients was with larger sheaths

and the advent of lower profile devices may minimise these risks.

The prognosis of Vascular EDS is dismal, with 92% of late deaths in a cohort of 220 index patients being due to vascular catastrophes, with median survival being 48–54 years, and patient survival to 60 years being as low as 55–68%.³¹ The average age of first vascular or visceral complication is 24yrs with a 12% mortality. Pregnancy has a 25% risk of death with each pregnancy and an associated 50% chance of passing on the mutated COL3A1 gene.³²

Loeys-Deitz Syndrome

Although MFS and EDS are by far the most commonly recognised connective tissue disorders (CTD) associated with AAS/TAD, recent understanding in the molecular biology of dissection has allowed recognition of a new disorder described by Bart Loeys and

Harry Deitz in 2005. This autosomal dominant CTD is recognised to be caused by mutation in the transforming growth factor beta (TGF β) receptor 1 or 2 gene. LDS prevalence is currently not well-described. LDS does appear to be intimately related to MFS, and this becomes clear when it is understood that the genetic anomaly in LDS is a loss-of-function mutation in the TGF β R2 receptor – hence this mimics some of the effects of alteration in the levels of available TGF β seen in fibrillin 1 deficiency syndromes such as MFS.

Phenotypic features of LDS include hypertelorism (90%), bifid uvula, cleft palate, generalised arterial tortuosity, craniosynostosis (50%), PDA and ASD. Mental retardation is often present. These features contrast with some of the features of MFS such as narrow high arched palate in MFS versus cleft, but there are a significant number of shared features such as ascending aortic aneurysm and dissection.

LDS falls into two types, LDS type 1 and LDS type 2. LDS1 has a number of similarities and overlap with MFS, including aortic root dilation, arachnodactyly (long thin fingers), dolichostenomelia (thin body and long extremities), pectus deformity and joint laxity. These patients are now discriminated from MFS patients in the new revised Ghent nosology by the absence of ectopia lentis (present in 40–56% of MFS patients) and other more stringent diagnostic criteria. LDS type 2 shares a number of similar features to vascular EDS, including soft, velvety skin and the presence of aortic aneurysm or dissection, however EDS lacks a significant number of features present in LDS including excessive vascular tortuosity, and bifid uvula. The table below outlines the major differences between the syndromes.

The vascular degenerative changes associated with LDS are significantly more malignant than those in MFS and occur

at a younger age, hence early recognition is vital. Aortic root aneurysm is reported in patients as young as 6 years of age. The underlying genetic abnormality of LDS leads to altered signaling in the TGF- β cytokine family. TGF- β plays an important role in ECM formation and turnover, as well as cell proliferation and differentiation, along with apoptosis. This influence on proliferation and differentiation is particularly apparent in cardiovascular embryogenesis, including ventricular myocardial genesis.

TGF- β signal alterations lead to disarrayed elastin fibres, with loss of elastin content, and dilation and dissection as a consequence. In comparison to MFS, aortic and vascular aneurysms and dissections happen throughout the vascular tree, not just in the aortic root. Rupture has also been demonstrated in vessels <4.5 cm in diameter, in comparison to MFS where this would usually be considered a 'safe' size to manage conservatively.

Histological evaluation of vessels in LDS has shown excessive aortic wall collagen, along with increased levels of phosphorylated nuclear smad2. This indicates increased TGF β signalling despite some degree of deficiency in the receptor.²⁹ In contrast to other CTD's, in particular EDS Vascular type, the surgical prognosis for LDS is quite good with reasonable surgical outcomes achievable as these patients lack the inherent tissue fragility of vascular EDS patients.³⁵

Familial Thoracic Aortic Aneurysm Disease

Recent research shows that there are a significant number of patients who do not have typical named syndromes such as MFS but who have familial clustering of thoracic aortic aneurysm disease (TAAD). These patients display features of aortic pathology including ascending aortic or root dilation

TABLE 14.6: Major clinical features of Loeys-Dietz Syndrome (LDS) type 1 and 2, Marfan syndrome and the vascular type of Ehlers Danlos Syndrome (EDS type IV). Modified from Aalberts et al., 2008.

	Marfan	LDS 1	LDS 2	EDS 4
Vascular				
Aortic aneurysm/dissection	++	+++	+++	+++
<i>Aortic Tortuosity</i>	-	+++	+++	-
ASD	-	+	+	-
Skeletal				
Arachnodactyly ^a	+++	++	++	-
Dolichostenomelia ^b	++	+		-
Pectus abnormalities	++	++	++	-
Joint laxity	++	++	+++	+ (small joints)
<i>Pes equinovarus</i> ^c	-	+		+
Facial				
Craniosynostosis ^d	-	+ /+++	-	-
Hypertelorism ^e	-	+++	-	-
<i>Cleft palate/bifid uvula</i>	-	+++	+	-
Skin				
Excessive striae	+	-	-	-
<i>Easy bruising</i>	-		+++	++
<i>Soft, velvety, translucent</i>	-	+	+/+++	+++
Eyes				
<i>Ectopia lentis</i> ^f	++	-	-	-
Other				
<i>Rupture large organs</i>	-	-	+/+++	++
The presence or absence of the features in italics might help to differentiate from Marfan syndrome, - infrequently, + around 25–50%, ++ around 50–75%, +++ >75%, ^a long slender fingers, ^b thin body habitus and long extremities, ^c clubfeet, ^d premature closure of cranial sutures, ^e increased distance between pupils, ^f lens subluxation				

and aneurysms or dissection of the ascending or descending aorta. They appear to have an autosomal dominant pattern of inheritance but with variable penetrance and expression. That is, some carriers do not demonstrate the pathology, and those that develop the

pathology within a family do so at different severities. There is no gender bias. This is largely a diagnosis of exclusion, with a focus being on ruling out other named congenital or genetic anomalies that predispose to AAS/TAAD. The age of presentation provides some

hint as to the likely underlying pathology, with familial thoracic aortic aneurysm disease (FTAAD) patients presenting on average at older age than MFS patients, but younger age than sporadic TAAD patients.

Familial TAAD has been linked to a number of chromosomal abnormalities, some of which appear to be allelic with the mutations seen in well-characterised diseases such as MFS.

FTAAD type 1 is related to a gene defect on chromosome 11q23.3-4. This is an autosomal dominant inheritance pattern gene, but in comparison to a number of other syndromes, is a vascular-only syndrome with multiple segmental involvement of the thoracic and abdominal aorta commonly seen. This disease is highly penetrant in comparison to such diseases as MFS.

FTAAD type 2 has been linked to a 5q13-q14 mutation which is inherited in autosomal dominant fashion. In comparison to type 1 FTAAD, there is variable penetrance of this disorder, particularly in women. In comparison to type 1 FTAAD this process also carries with it a number of cardiovascular abnormalities which are similar to those seen in MFS. The postulation is that the 5q locus codes for a connective tissue protein of some kind.

FTAAD type 3 has a locus of mutation that maps to the 3p25-p24 site. This seems to be the site of the TGFBR2 gene, and the mutations that cause vascular anomalies appear to occur in the functionally important kinase domain leading to loss of function. This also overlaps a locus for a Marfan-like syndrome (the MFS2 locus). This mutation is found in approximately 5% of TAD patients. The phenotype is predominantly ascending aortic disease, however other site disease is also seen. Rupture and dissection at smaller sizes than usual is also recognised in the FTAAD type 3 patients.

Bicuspid Aortic Valve

Bicuspid aortic valve (BAV) is the most common congenital cardiac anomaly (1–2% of the population) and predisposes patients to increased risk of dissection, dilatation and aneurysm, independent of valvular function.²⁶ It displays an autosomal dominant inheritance pattern and has been shown to have a strong link with TAA in a cohort of 13 families.²⁵

Similar medial degeneration is seen in BAV as that seen in fibrillin1 knockout mice. There is a measurable deficiency of fibrillin 1 and elevated levels of MMP-2 in bicuspid aortic valves compared to the control population.²⁶ There is similarly evidence of decreased amounts of fibrillin 1 in aortic media in BAV patients, but normal elastin and collagen levels. This is in comparison to atherosclerotic dilation where fibrillin 1 levels are increased. This suggests that the underlying pathology in BAV is similar to that in fibrillin 1 knockout mice – increases in TGFβ1 concentration and activity.

Turners Syndrome

Monosomy X, or Turners syndrome (TS) is a moderately common chromosomal disorder, (1 in 2500 live births), that carries with it an increased risk of aortic coarctation and dissection. The most commonly seen cardiovascular anomaly in TS is bicuspid aortic valve, and as discussed earlier, this independently increases the risk of TAD. BAV is seen in 13–34% of TS patients compared with 1–2% of the general population. The risk of aortic dissection in young Turners patients is significantly higher than the general population and dissection occurs at sizes below that at which dissection would normally be considered a risk (<5cm). Dissection is usually Type A, although there is a correlation between aortic coarctation

(present in 4–14% of TS patients) and Type B dissection. Given the short stature of TS patients, the aortic size index rather than the raw aortic size is preferred for calculating aortic dissection risk in these patients.

SUMMARY

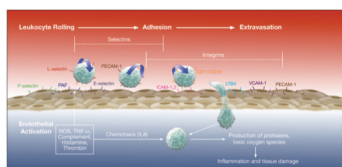
Although previously considered a simple haemodynamic consequence of chronic hypertension, thoracic aortic dissection in the classical sense is now recognised as being part of a continuum of aortic pathologies that include intramural haematoma, penetrating aortic ulcer and a number of congenital connective tissue disorders. The recent advances in the molecular understanding of aspects of ECM turnover – particularly relating to fibrillin 1 and transforming growth factor – beta have allowed us to expand our diagnostic and treatment options into new areas.

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MECHANISMS OF VASCULAR DISEASE

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