

**S E P T I C   S H O C K**

Medical Grand Rounds  
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"I suspect that the host is caught up in mistaken, inappropriate, and unquestionably self-destructive mechanisms by the very multiplicity of defenses available to him, defenses which do not seem to have been designed to operate in net coordination with each other. The end result is not defense, it is an agitated, committee-directed, harum-scarum effort to make war..."

Lewis Thomas, The Immunopathology of Inflammation, 1971

## INTRODUCTION

There are an estimated 200,000 cases/year of septic shock in the United States, and about 50% of these patients, or 100,000 people/year, die. Septic shock affects all types of medical patients and is the commonest type of shock treated by internists. Thus, it is important for internists to be knowledgeable about it's diagnosis and treatment. Additionally, the prevalence of sepsis in hospitalized patients appears to have significantly increased over the past decade. Data from the CDC's National Hospital Discharge Survey show a 139% increase in the discharge diagnosis of sepsis from 1977 to 1987 (1). The increase was especially marked (162%) for patients over 65 years of age. It is likely that the increased sepsis rate reflects an increased number of chronically ill or immunocompromised patients who are being kept alive longer by improved medical therapy and who are also put at greater risk for sepsis by invasive medical procedures and devices. Therefore septic shock is, at least in part, a disease of medical progress, and it will continue to be a major problem.

Over the past ten years important advances in elucidating the mechanisms of septic shock have occurred, and this review will focus largely on this new information. In a broad sense, septic shock represents an extreme example of the normal inflammatory response run amuck. The systemic effects of sepsis are largely caused by the host's own endogenous cytokines, which are usually beneficial when limited to discrete tissue infection sites, but are often lethal when they enter the circulation. The major targets of circulating cytokines are leukocytes, endothelial cells, and the heart. Other than initiating the production of inflammatory mediators, the infecting microbe plays a minor role. Because inflammatory cytokines are central to pathogenesis, and because future therapies will depend on interfering with the effects of these cytokines, they will be emphasized in this discussion.

## CLINICAL FEATURES OF SEPTIC SHOCK

### THE SEPSIS SYNDROME

Prior to the development of overt shock, most patients exhibit a number of signs which alert physicians to the possibility of impending shock, and such patients are frequently said to appear septic. Objective criteria for recognizing septic patients were established recently by the Methylprednisolone Study Group and are listed on Table 1 (2).

TABLE 1

SEPSIS SYNDROME CRITERIA

1. Clinical evidence of infection
2. Temperature > 101°F or < 96°F
3. Respiratory rate > 20/min.
4. Pulse > 90/min.
5. One or more manifestations of inadequate organ function:
  - Altered Mental Status
  - PaO<sub>2</sub> < 72 mm Hg
  - Elevated lactate level
  - Oliguria (less than 30 cc/hr)

These criteria were used to prospectively identify 191 patients, of whom 113, or 64%, subsequently developed shock. Positive blood or tissue cultures were not required, and only 45% of the patients had positive blood cultures. There were no differences in either the clinical characteristics or the laboratory values of blood culture negative and positive patients, and shock developed with similar frequency in both groups. Furthermore, mortality rates were similar (30 versus 36%) for the non-bacteremic and bacteremic shock patients. Thus, it is apparent that objective evidence of infection is often absent in septic patients and bacteremia is not necessary for shock. Similar findings have been noted by other investigators (3). The fact that bacteremia is frequently absent in septic shock is less surprising when one considers animal studies in which the induction of an inflammatory response by intraperitoneal injection of sterile zymosan reproduced the physiologic and pathologic changes of septic shock (4).

Other pertinent findings of the methylprednisolone study were that shock complicated gram positive bacteremia as often as gram negative bacteremia and that shock usually occurred rapidly after the onset of the sepsis syndrome; 85% of the patients developing shock did so within 24 hours. Other studies have shown that shock more often complicates aerobic gram negative bacteremia; in one study of 500 bacteremic patients, 26% of patients with aerobic gram negative bacteremias developed shock, compared to 12% of patients with gram positive bacteremias (5). Patients with sepsis usually have an acute respiratory alkalosis and, if a Swan Ganz catheter is in place, they will usually have an elevated cardiac index (CI, normal range 2.5-4.0 l/min/m<sup>2</sup>), a low or low normal systemic vascular resistance (SVR, normal range 800-1600 dynes·sec/cm<sup>5</sup>), and a slight fall or no change in blood pressure (6).

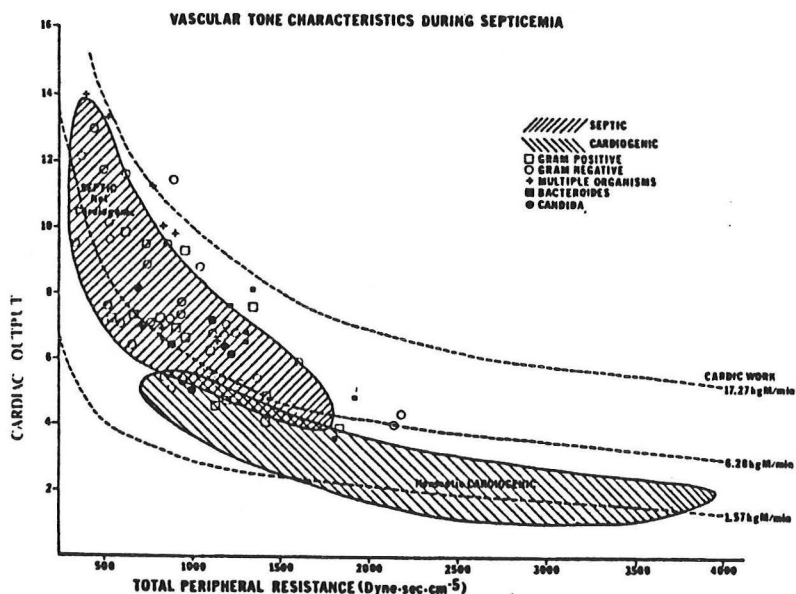
**SEPTIC SHOCK**

Septic shock is defined as a mean blood pressure of < 60 mm Hg in a patient with clinical evidence of an infection. Septic

shock is classified as a distributive type of shock, which means that total blood flow is normal but flow to metabolically active tissues is inadequate. Other types of distributive shock are neurogenic, anaphylactic, and endocrinologic (adrenal insufficiency). The diagnosis of septic shock is usually not difficult, although both cirrhosis and thiamine deficiency cause a hemodynamic pattern similar to that of sepsis.

The major hemodynamic characteristic of septic shock is a low SVR, which is diagnostically helpful because it usually overlaps minimally with SVR values of patients in hypovolemic or cardiogenic shock (Figure 1). Patients are almost always tachycardic and have a normal or high CI. Several reports of septic shock patients published in the 1960's and 1970's suggested that there were two hemodynamic types of septic shock.

FIGURE 1



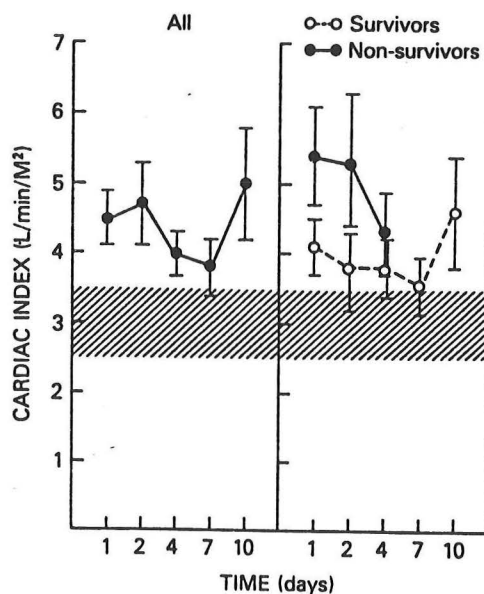
Crit. Care Med. 8:58, 1980.

Patients with warm septic shock had a high CI, while those with cold septic shock had a low CI, and it was thought that warm shock commonly evolved into cold shock and that patients with low CI had significantly higher mortality (7-9). However, fluid administration to these patients was guided by central venous pressure measurements, which correlate poorly with the pulmonary capillary wedge pressure (PCWP) of septic patients (10), and septic shock patients often require large amounts of fluid for initial resuscitation, due to their increased capillary permeability and low intravascular volume (11, 12).



In most recent series septic shock patients have been treated with vigorous volume repletion to maintain a PCWP of  $>12$  mm Hg, and several investigators have shown that in volume repleted patients the CI remains elevated, even within hours of death (12-14). Typical hemodynamic data from one recent series is shown (Figure 2). Thus, the concept of a low CI form of shock is erroneous and likely reflected intravascular volume depletion. Although most hemodynamic studies have been performed on patients with aerobic gram negative bacterial infections, identical hemodynamic alterations are present in patients infected with gram positive bacteria, anaerobes, and fungi, a finding which supports the importance of host derived cytokines, rather than microbial products, as common mediators (15).

**FIGURE 2**



Ann. Int. Med. 100:485, 1984.

Although all types of patients may develop septic shock, it occurs most commonly in elderly patients with genitourinary, abdominal, or thoracic infections. Both the frequency of shock as a complication of bacteremia, and the mortality of shock, correlate positively with increasing age (5). Many of the characteristic signs may be absent in elderly patients, in whom tachycardia and altered mental status may be the only findings (16). Review of four series of bacteremic septic shock reveals that about 60% were caused by aerobic gram negative bacteria, 20-40% by gram positive bacteria, and the remainder by anaerobes (*Bacteroides fragilis*) or fungi (*Candida albicans*) (5, 6, 15, 17). In addition to its cardiovascular effects, septic shock affects multiple other organs (Table 2).

TABLE 2

NON-CARDIOVASCULAR EFFECTS OF SEPTIC SHOCK

<u>SYSTEM</u>	<u>ABNORMALITY</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>
CNS	Encephalopathy, agitation	(18)
GI	Cholestatic jaundice	(19)
	Gastric erosions in 100% (gross bleeding rare)	(20)
BLOOD	Early neutropenia, then neutrophilia	(18)
	DIC, especially with gram negative bacteremia	(21)
	Thrombocytopenia in 50%	(22)
RENAL	Proteinuria	(18)
	Focal proliferative glomerulonephritis	(23)
	Acute tubular necrosis	(24)
METABOLIC	Hyper, hypoglycemia	(18, 25)
	Skeletal muscle proteolysis	(26)
	Hypertriglyceridemia	(27)
	Lactic acidosis	(28)
PULMONARY	Respiratory alkalosis	(29)
	↑ A-a O <sub>2</sub> gradient	(18)
	Respiratory muscle fatigue/failure (terminal)	(18)

Although most septic shock patients are febrile hypothermia may be present (especially in the very young and very old) and usually predicts a poor prognosis (2, 5). In a series of 85 patients presenting off the street with hypothermia (temperature < 35C°), the presence of a low SVR and high CI was a helpful clue to an infectious etiology; all of the bacteremic patients had SVR of < 800 dynes·sec/cm<sup>5</sup>, whereas none of the nonbacteremic patients had an SVR of < 1100 (30).

Several observations, in addition to the frequent presence of lactic acidosis, suggest that cellular oxygen utilization is impaired in septic shock. Normally, oxygen consumption ( $\dot{V}O_2$ ) is independent of oxygen delivery ( $\dot{D}O_2$ , which is the cardiac output X hemoglobin concentration X % O<sub>2</sub> saturation) until  $\dot{D}O_2$  reaches low levels (8-10 ml O<sub>2</sub>/kg/min in normal anesthetized humans) (31). In septic shock,  $\dot{D}O_2$  is normal or high and increasing  $\dot{D}O_2$  is frequently associated with an increased  $\dot{V}O_2$ , a phenomenon which has been called supply dependency of  $\dot{V}O_2$ . The phenomenon occurs most often in septic shock patients in lactic acidosis, in whom increasing  $\dot{D}O_2$  both increases  $\dot{V}O_2$  and decreases lactic acid levels (32-34). Associated findings in these patients include normal (> 35 mm Hg) mixed venous oxygen tensions (PVO<sub>2</sub>), low arterial-venous oxygen content differences, and low O<sub>2</sub> extraction ratios. Because the PVO<sub>2</sub> is often normal in septic shock, it should not be used as an index of normal tissue oxygenation.

Three possible explanations for abnormal oxygen utilization are the presence of arterial-venous shunts, diversion of blood flow to metabolically quiescent tissues, or impaired oxygen extraction. Based on experimental and clinical data, arterial-venous shunts are not present (35, 36). Measurement of regional blood flow in a dog model of bacterial lipopolysaccharide (LPS) induced shock showed that marked (50-90%) decreases in splanchnic and renal blood flow occurred while flow to resting skeletal muscle increased by 50-100% (37). Supply dependency of  $\dot{V}O_2$  can be induced in dogs by intravenous administration of 15 micron polystyrene microspheres or live bacteria (38, 39). To extrapolate these results to human septic shock, it is likely that a combination of both decreased flow to visceral organs (due to abnormal vasoregulation) and impaired oxygen extraction (due to capillary occlusion by leukoemboli and fibrin deposits) explains the frequent occurrence of lactic acidosis, normal PVO<sub>2</sub> values, and supply dependency of  $\dot{V}O_2$  in the face of a normal or elevated cardiac output.

### NATURAL HISTORY

As noted, the mortality of septic shock is high and averages 50%. About 75% of deaths occur within hours to days of shock onset and are due to persistent hypotension which is refractory to treatment. The other 25% of deaths occur days to weeks after patients have been successfully treated for hypotension and are due to the development of multiple organ failure (40). Respiratory failure, manifest as the adult respiratory distress syndrome or ARDS, usually develops first, followed by renal, hepatic, or hematologic failure. Septic shock is one of the commonest causes of ARDS (41). Survival varies inversely with the number of failed organ systems, and few patients survive after three organs fail. Multiple organ failure is a common cause of prolonged intensive care unit stays, and the average cost of caring for one such patient has been calculated at \$85,000. Multiple organ failure probably occurs due to an initial endothelial injury which occurs during shock and impairs visceral organ perfusion, leading to reduced substrate delivery and eventual organ failure. Persistent bacterial infections are commonly present in patients with multiple organ failure. The infections are often gram negative bacterial, are from ongoing sepsis or a new infection, and may be clinically occult; abdominal and thoracic infections are common in the latter group (42, 43).

### PATHOLOGY

The major findings of septic shock, which are present to some extent in most tissues, are cell necrosis, tissue hemorrhage and edema, and fibrin deposition (44). The lungs are the most heavily involved organ and typically show diffuse interstitial edema and polymorphonuclear leukocyte (PMN) accumulation.

Centrilobular necrosis involving more than 25% of liver mass is common, as are mucosal erosions of the gastrointestinal epithelium. Evidence of gross myocardial injury (i.e. infarction) is unusual. However, several investigators have reported ultrastructural changes in canine and primate hearts obtained six to 48 hours after gram negative bacteremic shock. The observed changes included interstitial edema, capillary endothelial cell swelling, PMN accumulation, and myocyte necrosis (45-47).

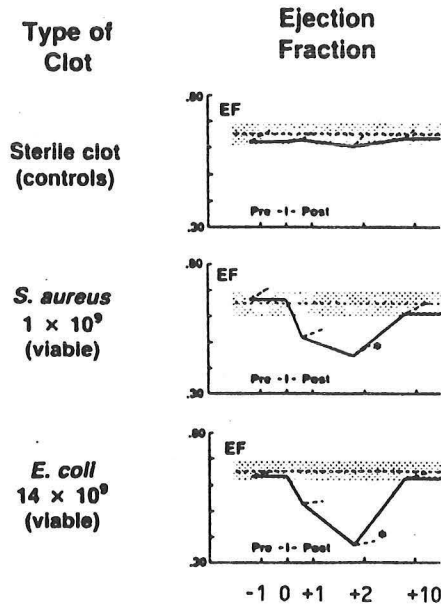
### CARDIOMYOPATHY OF SEPTIC SHOCK

Although the CI in septic shock is often above normal, it is not high enough to maintain an adequate blood pressure. Given a typical septic shock SVR of 600 dynes·sec/cm<sup>5</sup>, a CI of 4.8 L/min/m<sup>2</sup> will result in an inadequate mean blood pressure of 60 mm Hg, while a CI of 6.0 L/min/m<sup>2</sup> will result in a normal mean pressure of 80 mm Hg. Since a normal heart should be capable of a 6 liter CI, it is clear that ventricular performance is relatively impaired in septic shock. A hemodynamic study of 50 septic shock patients in 1973 found that many patients failed to increase CI after intravenous volume challenges sufficient to increase PCWP by 19%, suggesting impaired contractility (17). A similar study of fifty normotensive septic patients showed that 50% failed to augment CI after volume infusion (10).

To investigate cardiac performance in a controlled fashion, investigators at the NIH have developed a dog model of septic shock. Bacteria within fibrin clots are placed intraperitoneally, resulting in bacteremia, hypotension, and gradual recovery over seven days. The model reproduces the low SVR-high CI pattern of human septic shock and is a considerable advance over prior animal models, which used large intravenous boluses of live bacteria or LPS to induce a low CI, high SVR shock very dissimilar from septic shock (48). Using this realistic dog model, the following results have been obtained.

1. Viable *Escherichia coli*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, or formalin fixed *Escherichia coli* all produced the same hemodynamic pattern of a low SVR, high CI. LPS was not detectable in the circulation of *Staphylococcus aureus* infected dogs, thus ruling out entry of LPS into the blood from gut lesions (49). These results reinforce clinical studies showing that all types of infection, with or without bacteremia, produce identical hemodynamic changes.
2. The left ventricular ejection fraction fell within 24 hours of infection, then gradually returned to normal over ten days (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3

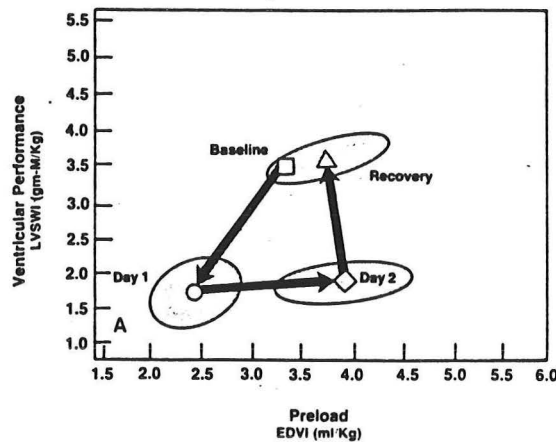


J. Clin. Invest. 83:246, 1989.

3. Ventricular performance was assessed by measuring the left ventricular stroke work index (LVSWI) versus preload (measured as the end diastolic volume index, EDVI) (Figure 4). Preload was maximized on day 2 of shock by infusion of large (80 ml/kg) volumes of saline solution. As shown on the figure, LVSWI was less than normal on day 1 and day 2, when the EDVI had been increased to normal by volume replacement. With recovery, the animals ventricular performance returned to baseline (50). These results show that maximizing preload had very little effect on cardiac output.

FIGURE 4

LEFT VENTRICULAR PERFORMANCE  
BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER SEPSIS



J. Clin. Invest. 78:265, 1986.

4. Endomyocardial biopsies, performed 48 hours after clot implantation when the ejection fraction had decreased from 71 to 42%, showed PMN accumulation, edema, and myocyte necrosis (47).

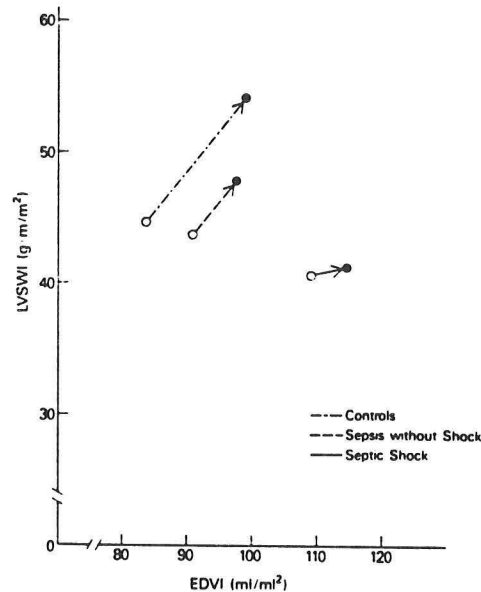
In summary, these animal experiments have shown that impaired ventricular performance, manifested by a low LVS WI and ejection fraction, occurs routinely in the course of septic shock and may be a transient phenomenon.

Similar careful hemodynamic studies have been performed on septic shock patients by the same group of NIH investigators. Patients have been treated by a standard protocol of volume infusion (to maintain a PCWP of > 12 mm Hg) and dopamine (titrated to a mean blood pressure of 60 mm Hg). Serial data on 48 patients have been collected. Impaired left ventricular performance has been noted, with septic shock patients, but not normotensive septic patients, having lower LVS WI which increase minimally after volume challenge (Figure 5) (51). Differences in afterload, vasoactive drugs, or the presence of pre-extant heart disease did not explain impaired contractility. Subnormal left and right ventricular ejection fractions were noted as well, and ejection fractions returned to normal as patients recovered (52).



FIGURE 5

## VENTRICULAR DYSFUNCTION IN SEPTIC SHOCK

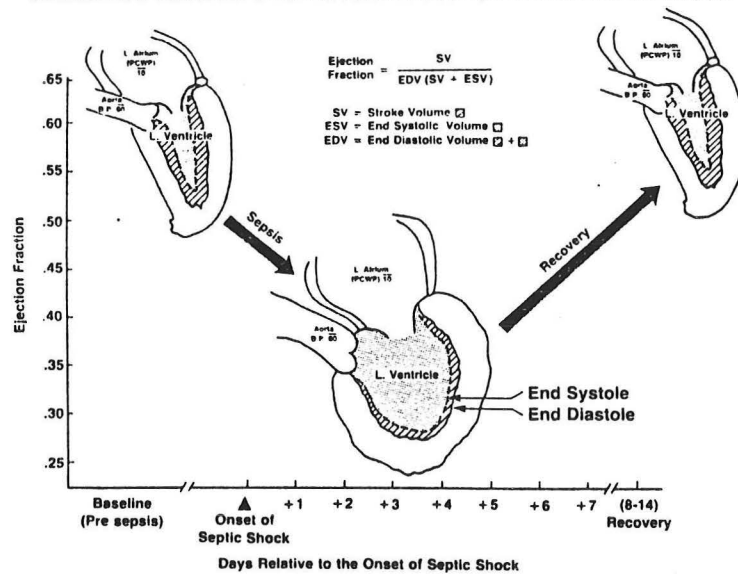


Chest 93:908, 1988.

Radionuclide scans showed that left ventricular dilatation occurred 1-2 days after shock onset, with marked increase of both end diastolic and end systolic volumes (53). The increased ventricular volumes allowed a near normal stroke volume despite the low ejection fractions, and left ventricular dilatation was noted to be transient, ventricular volume returning to normal as patients recovered (Figure 6). These results show that impaired contractility and a dilated cardiomyopathy are present in human septic shock.

FIGURE 6

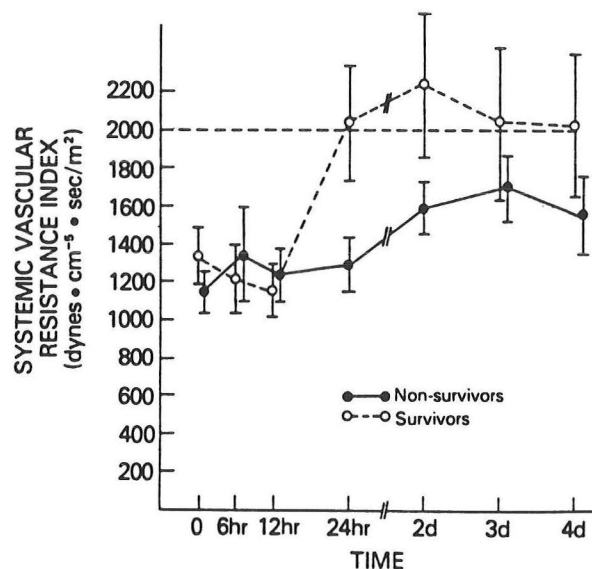
## SERIAL CHANGES IN LEFT VENTRICULAR FUNCTION DURING SEPTIC SHOCK



Clinical Research 38:208, 1990.

When hemodynamic data from survivors and nonsurvivors were compared, both groups were indistinguishable at shock onset. However, within 24 hours there were clear differences between the two groups, with survivors having higher SVR, lower heart rates, and lower CIs (Figure 7). Thus, the ability to rapidly recover vascular tone and return SVR to normal levels is apparently important for survival. Interestingly, the 1-3 day post shock ejection fractions of survivors were much lower than nonsurvivors, most of whom had normal ejection fractions; the likely explanation is that the nonsurvivors low SVR decreased left ventricular afterload enough to normalize their ejection fractions.

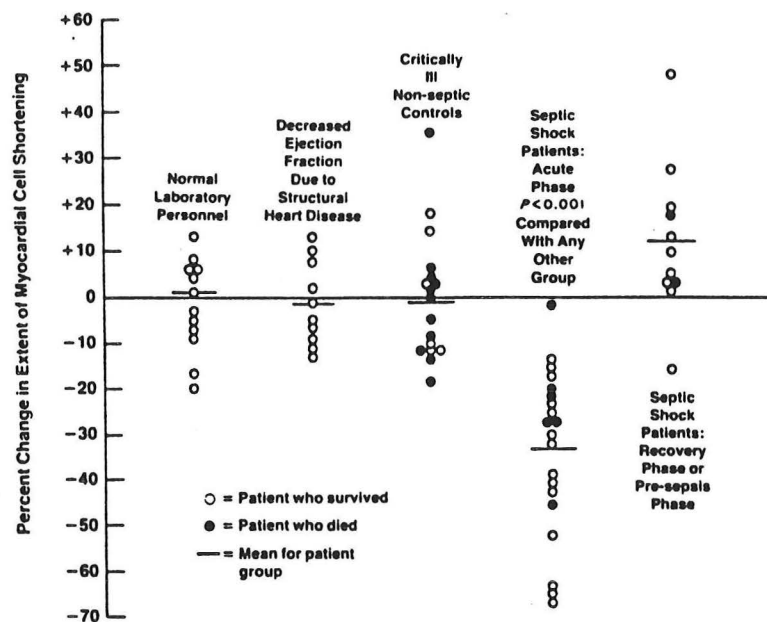
FIGURE 7



Crit. Care Med. 15:926, 1987.

What causes the cardiomyopathy of septic shock? Coronary circulation appears to be adequate, as judged by above normal coronary artery flow, normal myocardial oxygen consumption, and net myocardial lactate extraction even in patients with low ejection fractions (54). The existence of a circulating myocardial depressant factor (MDF) was first suggested by Lefer in 1967. A substance in the plasma of animals in hypovolemic shock was found to cause a marked (60%) decrease in tension development by isolated papillary muscle preparations. The MDF originated from the splanchnic circulation and was partially characterized as a < 1 kD molecular weight peptide (55, 56). A similar low molecular weight protein with MDF activity has been detected in serum of septic shock patients, using a rat myocyte bioassay. Serum from twenty septic shock patients caused a 34% mean decrease in both the extent and velocity of myocyte shortening (Figure 8), and there was an inverse correlation between individual patients MDF activity and ejection fraction (57, 58). Patients with cardiac disease, critically ill patients without sepsis, and septic patients not in shock served as controls, and MDF activity was absent in all. It is interesting to speculate that human MDF activity might originate from the gastrointestinal tract, since pancreatic and gut blood flow is decreased in animal septic shock models, in hypovolemic shock MDF originates from the pancreas, and MDF positive patients usually have lactic acidosis, suggesting that tissue ischemia is associated with MDF release. Inflammatory cytokines and LPS have also been tested for their effect on myocardial function, using

FIGURE 8



J. Clin. Invest. 76:1546, 1985.

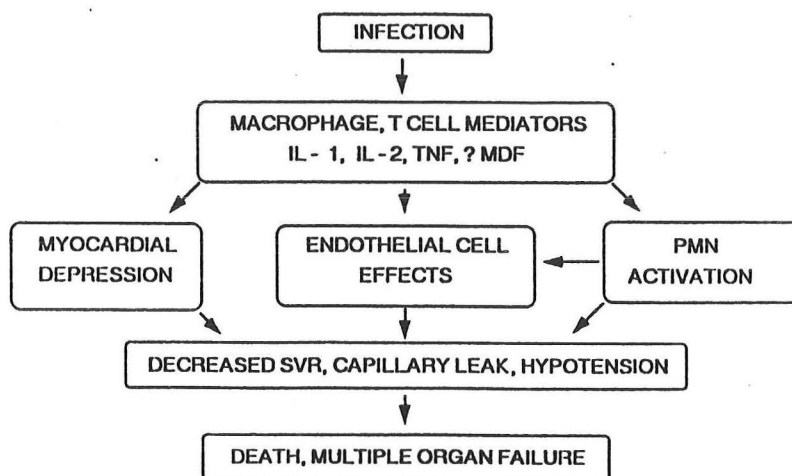
the *in vitro* rat myocyte assay. High concentrations of LPS (200  $\mu\text{g/ml}$ ), IL-1 (1,000 units/ml), and IL-2 (1,000 units/ml) had no effect, but low concentrations of tumor necrosis factor (TNF) (5 ng/ml) depressed contraction by 24% (59). However, it is unlikely that TNF accounted for much of the MDF activity measured in patients, since the molecular weight of TNF is 17 kD. Thus, at the present time the identity of MDF remains an enigma.

### PATHOGENESIS

The subsequent discussion will generally follow the outline (Figure 9) with particular emphasis on the role played by the endothelium, both as a target for cytokines and as a source of additional mediators.

FIGURE 9

## PATHOGENESIS OF SEPTIC SHOCK



## BACTERIAL PRODUCTS AND SEPTIC SHOCK

Macrophages become activated by phagocytosing opsonized bacteria via macrophage Fc and C3b receptors (60, 61). Fibronectin, a large molecular weight serum glycoprotein, is also capable of opsonizing bacteria (62). In addition to these general mechanisms of macrophage activation, bacteria also contain substances capable of specifically stimulating cytokine release from macrophages and lymphocytes.

**GRAM POSITIVE BACTERIA** - The gram positive bacterial cell wall contains peptidoglycans, including the immunostimulatory muramyl dipeptide (63). Picogram concentrations of pneumococcal cell wall elicit interleukin 1 (IL-1) production by human monocytes, and higher concentrations cause tumor necrosis factor (TNF) release as well (64). Both *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Streptococcus pyogenes* produce structurally homologous toxins (*S. aureus* enterotoxins A, B, C, D, E, toxin shock syndrome toxin 1 (TSST-1), *S. pyogenes* exotoxins A, B, C) which bind to class II MHC molecules (particularly DR) on antigen presenting cells (65, 66). T cells bind to the MHC-toxin complex and are activated, resulting in a polyclonal T cell stimulation and cytokine release. *In vitro*, picogram toxin concentrations cause prolonged (3-6 day) release of TNF and interleukin 2 (IL-2) by human blood mononuclear cells (67, 68). Rabbits receiving microgram amounts of TSST-1 rapidly (within hours) develop characteristic hemodynamic changes of septic shock and have measurable circulating TNF (69). Humans infected with toxin producing *S. aureus* and *S. pyogenes* develop typical septic shock hemodynamics (70). Thus, both exotoxins and cell wall components of gram positive bacteria can activate mononuclear phagocytes and T cells, resulting in IL-1, IL-2, and TNF release.

GRAM NEGATIVE BACTERIAL LIPOPOLYSACCHARIDE (LPS) - LPS is a major factor when gram negative bacterial infections are complicated by shock. Most of the hemodynamic effects of LPS are now considered to be secondary to LPS-induced synthesis and release of TNF from macrophages. The most convincing evidence for this comes from studies of C3H/HeJ mice, which cannot make TNF and tolerate large LPS doses without ill effects (71). Macrophages are extraordinarily sensitive to LPS, synthesizing large (1-2% of total protein synthesis) amounts of TNF when exposed to small amounts of LPS (72). In an in vivo rabbit model, 10  $\mu$ g LPS caused release of 130  $\mu$ g TNF into the circulation (73).

In addition to its role as an agonist for TNF production, LPS also has a number of direct effects which may be important. LPS activates complement via the alternate pathway (74). In vitro, endothelial cells treated with ng LPS concentrations release prostacyclin, develop increased permeability, and have decreased thrombomodulin activity in conjunction with increased tissue factor activity (75, 76). Tissue factor activates factor VII and initiates blood clotting via the extrinsic pathway. LPS also promotes coagulation by activating factor XII (77), and the procoagulant effects of LPS, in association with LPS-induced release of plasminogen activator inhibitor and decreased thrombomodulin activity, explain the association of gram negative sepsis with DIC (78). LPS has a number of direct effects on PMNs, including increased adhesiveness (via expression of CD11/CD18 on PMN membrane) and priming of PMNs for oxygen radical release (79, 80). Enhanced PMN adhesiveness may explain the neutropenia which commonly occurs during septic shock and which is not mediated by TNF (73).

A number of investigators have given bolus LPS injections (4 ng/kg) to normal human volunteers and measured subsequent hemodynamic and biochemical changes. The earliest effect was a rapid rise and fall in TNF levels, which returned to the normal undetectable level within 4 hours. Tachycardia, fever, increased CI, decreased SVR, and a 20% fall in blood pressure were present 2 hours after LPS, persisted for several hours, and were accompanied by a fall in left ventricular ejection fractions at 4 hours. Biochemical changes included an early rise in circulating plasminogen activator activity, followed by a prolonged increase in plasminogen activator inhibitor activity, epinephrine, and ACTH levels. Circulating PMN elastase- $\alpha$ 1PI complexes were present, and evidence of subclinical pulmonary impairment, manifested by an increased alveolar to arterial oxygen tension gradient and increased alveolar epithelial permeability, was present (81-84). Taken together, these results indicate that even small amounts of LPS cause TNF release and produce, in a mild form, many of the characteristic abnormalities of septic shock as well as PMN activation. It is important to realize that circulating LPS can be present without gram negative bacteremia; a recent study of LPS levels in the blood of 100 consecutive septic shock patients found 43% had detectable LPS, 46% of the



LPS positive patients had negative blood cultures, and LPS positive patients had lower SVR, ejection fractions, were more often in lactic acidosis, and developed ARDS and renal failure more frequently than LPS negative patients (85). Thus, circulating LPS indicates a poor prognosis in septic shock.

### ENDOGENOUS MEDIATORS OF SEPTIC SHOCK

Available evidence indicates that three host derived mediators - TNF, IL-1 and IL-2 - cause many of the manifestations of septic shock, either directly or by the generation of secondary mediators such as prostaglandins and platelet activating factor. Although each mediator will be reviewed separately, it is important to keep in mind that in vivo, these mediators undoubtedly interact with each other (and with bacterial products) in complex ways. Thus the clinical phenomenon of septic shock is probably due to more than the effects of individual mediators.

TUMOR NECROSIS FACTOR - Since TNFs structure was determined in 1985 there have been a plethora of investigations of its effects. As noted previously, LPS is a potent stimulus for TNF production but gram positive bacteria, viruses, and even Mycobacteria also stimulate macrophage TNF production (86, 87).

In Vitro Effects - TNF, at concentrations similar to those achievable in vivo, affects a number of cells (Table 3).

TABLE 3

#### IN VITRO EFFECTS OF TNF

<u>CELL</u>	<u>EFFECT</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>
PMN	↑ adherence to endothelial cells	(88)
	↑ oxygen radical, enzyme release	(89, 90)
skeletal muscle	↓ transmembrane potential	(91)
adipocyte	↓ lipoprotein lipase activity	(92)
macrophage	↑ IL-1, PAF, PGE <sub>2</sub> release	(93, 94)
hepatocyte	↑ acute phase protein synthesis	(95)
	↓ albumin synthesis	(85)
endothelial	↑ platelet activating factor	(96)
	↑ tissue factor, ↓ thrombomodulin	(97)
	↑ prostacyclin release	(98)
	↑ adhesion (ICAMs, ELAMs) proteins	(99)
	↑ interleukin 1 release	(100)
cardiac	↓ contractility	(59)

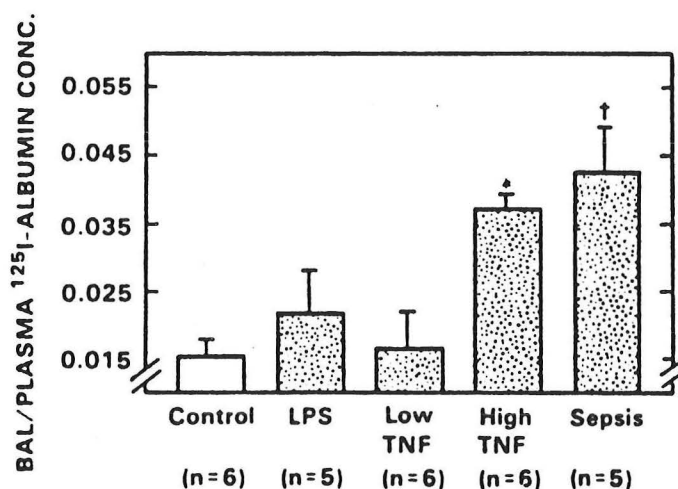
The large number of endothelial cell effects is particularly significant in light of the major role played by the endothelium in septic shock (vide infra). The time required for TNF effects is variable; PMNs and cardiac myocytes are affected within minutes, platelet activating factor and prostacyclin release

requires 1-3 hours, and interleukin 1 release, endothelial cell adhesion proteins, and the other effects require 6 hours to days to occur. TNF also damages human endothelial monolayers, causing cells to round up and develop endothelial gaps, but this effect requires 3-4 days of TNF exposure (101).

**Animal Studies** - The most convincing evidence for TNFs role in septic shock comes from animal experiments, in which similar results have been found when TNF (in ng/kg doses) was given intravenously to rats, guinea pigs, and dogs. The response to infused TNF includes hypotension, metabolic acidosis, hemoconcentration, hypoxemia, neutropenia, and frequently death. Pathologic changes are similar to those found in patients dying from sepsis and include pulmonary edema and hemorrhage, diffuse fibrin deposits, and accumulation of PMNs in multiple organs (102-104). Increased skeletal muscle lactic acid production has been noted in dogs, and increased pulmonary capillary permeability, evidenced by increased lung wet weights and increased flux of  $^{125}\text{I}$  albumin from the circulation into alveoli, has been demonstrated in guinea pigs (Figure 10). The hemodynamic pattern present in dogs following a bolus (60  $\mu\text{g/kg}$ ) TNF injection is similar to that of human septic shock, including a high CI, low SVR, and depressed ejection fraction (104). Thus, TNF reproduces the hemodynamic, biochemical, pathological, and capillary permeability changes which are typical of septic shock.

**FIGURE 10**

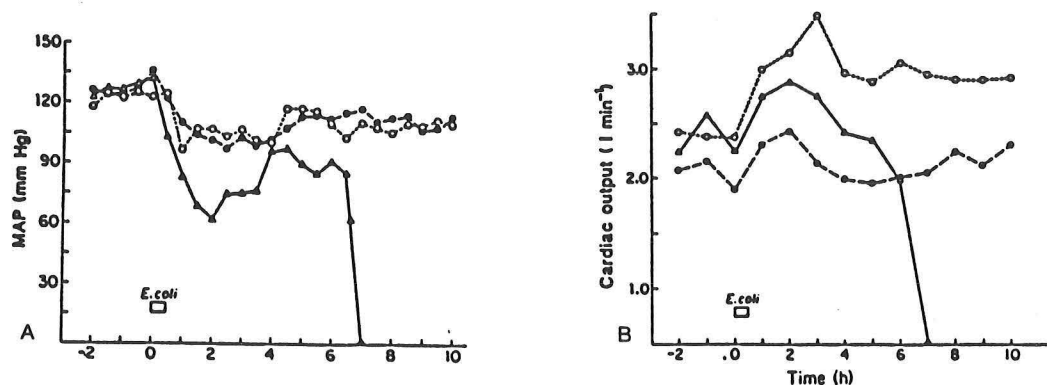
**EFFECT OF TNF ON  
PULMONARY CAPILLARY PERMEABILITY**



Additional evidence of TNFs central role in septic shock comes from experiments with rabbits and baboons in which pretreatment with anti-TNF monoclonal antibodies (mAbs), followed by intravenous challenge with either live bacteria, LPS, or TNF, completely prevented the metabolic and hemodynamic changes of septic shock (Figure 11) (73, 105).

FIGURE 11

PROTECTIVE EFFECT OF ANTI-TNF  
MABS IN BABOONS FOLLOWING E. COLI SEPSIS



Circles represent animals pretreated with anti-TNF Mab

Crit. Care Clinics 5:42, 1989.

TNF In Humans - For obvious reasons, large doses of TNF have not been administered to humans, but TNF has been given therapeutically to cancer patients. Patients receiving more than 150  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^2$  intravenous TNF frequently developed, within hours of TNF administration, fever, tachycardia, and a fall in blood pressure (92). Muscle protein catabolism and hypertriglyceridemia were noted as well. As previously discussed, small amounts of LPS result in the rapid appearance of circulating TNF (but not IL-1) (82), and TNF has been detected in the blood of patients with falciparum malaria and meningococcal infection (106, 107). In the latter study, of the 79 patients tested, 18 had TNF in their blood; 50% of hypotensive patients had detectable TNF versus only 12% of normotensive patients, there was a strong inverse correlation between the white blood cell count and the TNF level, and all patients with TNF levels > 100 picogram/ml died. Although not conclusive, the data suggests an association between TNF and shock in a naturally occurring human disease.

TNF and Secondary Mediators - Although it is certain that TNF is a very important mediator of shock, it is less certain that TNF directly causes shock. IL-1, prostaglandins, and

platelet activating factor (PAF) are formed in response to TNF and may be of pathophysiologic importance. Both TNF and IL-1 cause endothelial cell PAF release, and the effects of the two cytokines are additive (96). Minute PAF concentrations increase vascular permeability, and PAF has potent hemodynamic effects, but animal studies have shown that intravenous PAF causes hypotension, an elevated SVR, and decreased CI, which is not the pattern of septic shock (108, 109). Rats injected with TNF or LPS developed bowel necrosis (associated with significantly increased amounts of PAF in the intestines) and decreased renal blood flow, and both of these changes were absent when the animals were pretreated with specific PAF antagonists (110, 111). Thus, PAF may be an important secondary mediator of bowel and renal injury. TNF induces synthesis of vasodilatory prostaglandins of the E and I series, and indomethacin, given one hour before or one hour after a large intravenous TNF dose, completely blocked metabolic acidosis, shock, and death in rats (112). Similar results have been reported in dogs pretreated with ibuprofen and given LPS (113). The role of prostaglandins in hypotension will be subsequently discussed in more detail.

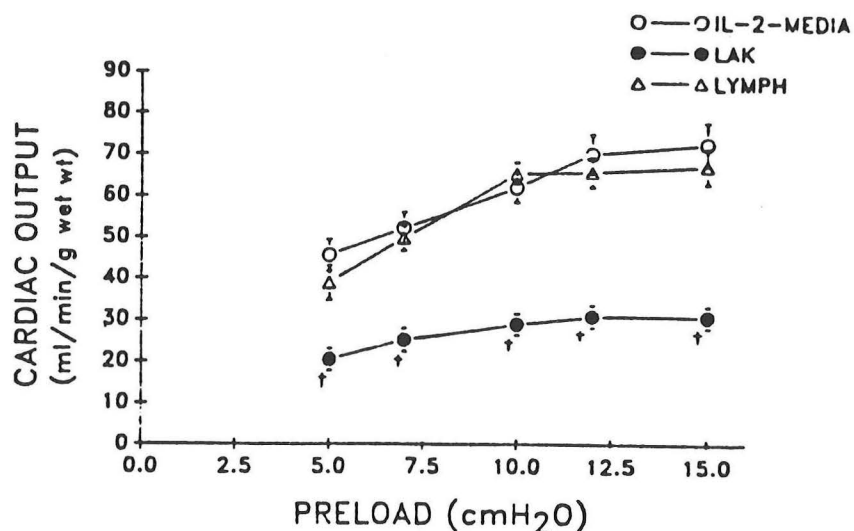
INTERLEUKIN 1 - IL-1 is released from macrophages and endothelial cells by TNF, and LPS and gram positive bacterial toxins cause macrophages to release IL-1 (114). Small amounts of IL-1 increase endothelial tissue factor and plasminogen activator inhibitor activity, and IL-1 treated rabbits have fibrin deposits on aortic endothelium (115). IL-1 stimulates endothelial prostacyclin production and induces skeletal muscle proteolysis via a PGE<sub>2</sub> regulated process (116-118). Synergy between TNF and IL-1 has been demonstrated for dermal inflammatory reactions and shock (119). Rabbits, given 5 ng/kg doses of TNF and IL-1 (doses which, when given separately, had no effect), developed a low SVR shock (120). Evidence that IL-1 and TNF are regulated in a coordinated fashion is that the MRNA for both contains a unique TTATTTAT octamer sequence in the 3' untranslated end. The sequence is also found in interferon and fibronectin message and probably regulates cytokine synthesis by affecting message stability (121). IL-1 was detectable in baboon blood after gram negative bacteremia, but IL-1 levels increased late, after hypotension occurred (122). IL-1 was not detected in humans after LPS, and large (1 mg/kg) IL-1 doses did not produce any hemodynamic changes in dogs (82, 48). The available evidence suggests that IL-1 plays an ancillary role in septic shock, IL-1 production being stimulated by TNF and IL-1 potentiating many of TNF's effects.

INTERLEUKIN 2 (IL-2) - As reviewed earlier, many gram positive bacterial toxins cause lymphocyte IL-2 release. IL-2, either alone or with the concomitant infusion of lymphokine activated killer cells, has been given as a cancer therapy, and the resultant toxicity has provided insight into septic shock. About 65% of patients treated with IL-2 have developed hypotension, which was associated with increased vascular permeability (measured by <sup>125</sup>I albumin egress from blood) and some fatalities

(123). Serial hemodynamic study of these patients revealed typical septic shock features, with low SVRs, high CIs, and low ejection fractions (124). In vitro, IL-2 causes natural killer cells (a type of circulating lymphocyte) to adhere to and damage human endothelial cells (125). Experiments with an isolated rat heart model have shown that IL-2 by itself, even at very high concentrations (10,000 units/ml), does not affect ventricular performance. However, supernatants from lymphocytes treated ex vivo with IL-2 markedly impaired cardiac function, decreasing cardiac output by more than 50% over a wide preload range (Figure 12) (126). Thus, it is probable that some factor secreted by IL-2 activated lymphocytes, and not IL-2 itself, causes toxicity;

**FIGURE 12**

**EFFECT OF SUPERNATANTS FROM IL-2 STIMULATED LYMPHOCYTES (LAK) ON CARDIAC FUNCTION**



J. Clin. Invest. 86:848, 1990.

TNF is the likely culprit since IL-2 activated cells are known to release TNF and TNF has been detected in the blood of IL-2 treated patients (127). It should be noted that all of the IL-2 effects noted in this section required IL-2 concentration of > 1,500 units/ml, and it is not known if such high concentrations occur in the course of naturally occurring infections.

**SEPTIC SHOCK AND THE ENDOTHELIUM**

Circulating cytokines affect both leukocytes and the endothelial lining of blood vessels. Recent investigations have made it clear that endothelium is a metabolically active tissue with important regulatory functions, including control of vascular tone and traffic of circulating cells into tissue (128).



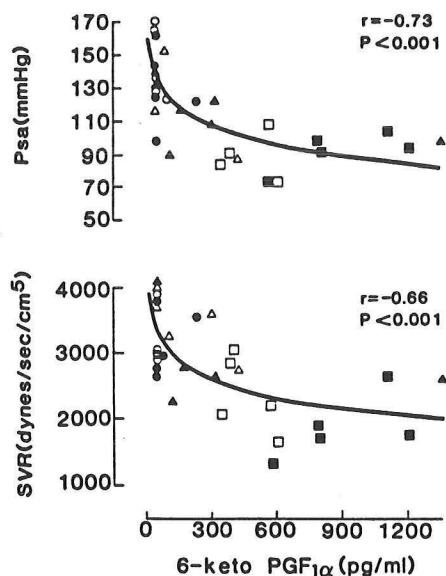
In this section the role of endothelial cells in septic shock will be reviewed.

Endothelial prostaglandin metabolism - The major prostaglandin produced by endothelial cells is prostacyclin ( $\text{PGI}_2$ ), although small amounts of  $\text{PGE}_2$  are also synthesized (129). Both substances are vasodilators and are active in the normal regulation of splanchnic and renal blood flow. Picomolar TNF or IL-1 concentrations caused cultured human umbilical vein or aortic endothelial cells to release  $\text{PGI}_2$ , and the effect was markedly potentiated (i.e. a 10 fold increase) when thrombin was present (116). The latter finding is particularly interesting because TNF and IL-1 also increase endothelial tissue factor activity and thus promote thrombin formation. Endothelial cells release  $\text{PGI}_2$  within 3 hours of TNF exposure, whereas a 24 hour IL-1 exposure is required before  $\text{PGI}_2$  release occurs (97).

Circulating  $\text{PGI}_2$  is not normally detectable, and clinical experience with  $\text{PGI}_2$  infusions has shown it to be a powerful vasodilator; doses of 10-15 ng/kg cause hypotension and a low SVR (130).  $\text{PGI}_2$  acts by increasing cAMP levels in vascular smooth muscle. Several studies have indirectly implicated prostaglandins in shock by demonstrating that pretreatment of animals with aspirin, indomethacin, or ibuprofen protected against death from subsequent challenge with intravenous LPS (112, 113, 131, 132). More direct evidence comes from animal experiments measuring  $\text{PGI}_2$  blood levels. Dogs given 150  $\mu\text{g/kg}$  LPS developed hypotension temporally associated with elevated levels of thromboxane  $\text{B}_2$  (the stable metabolite of thromboxane  $\text{A}_2$ , a vasoconstrictor prostaglandin) and 6 keto  $\text{PGF}_{1\alpha}$  (the stable metabolite of  $\text{PGI}_2$ ) (133). Loss of the normal pulmonary vasoconstrictor response to alveolar hypoxia and angiotensin II was noted. Indomethacin pretreatment prevented hypotension and maintained normal pulmonary vasoregulation, but treatment with imidazole, a specific thromboxane synthetase inhibitor, had no effect, which suggests that  $\text{PGI}_2$  was the active prostaglandin. In baboons infused with live *E. coli*,  $\text{TXB}_2$  levels rose and fell rapidly, while  $\text{PGI}_2$  levels peaked two hours after bacteremia and remained elevated for four hours (134). Hypotension, low SVR, and metabolic acidosis occurred at the time of peak  $\text{PGI}_2$ . Dogs given intratracheal *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* developed pneumonia, sepsis, hypotension, and a low SVR. Six keto  $\text{PGF}_{1\alpha}$  levels rose to high levels (900 pg/ml),  $\text{TXB}_2$  did not increase, and there was a good correlation between the 6 keto  $\text{PGF}_{1\alpha}$  level and either blood pressure or SVR (Figure 13) (135). One investigator has



FIGURE 13



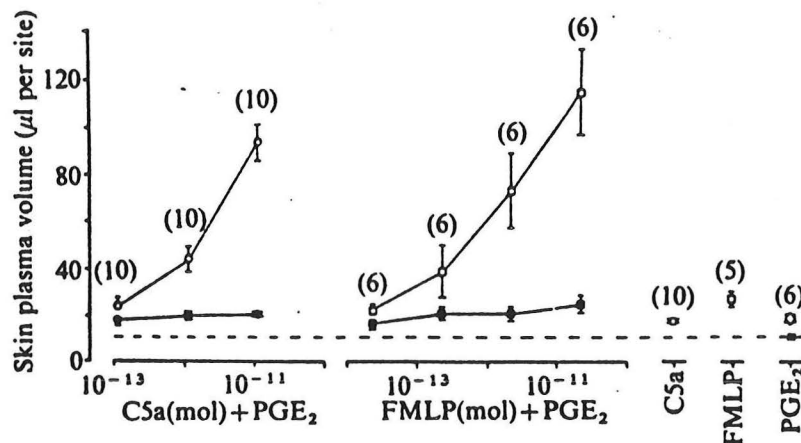
Amer. Rev. Respir. Dis. 137:703, 1988.

tested patients for PGI<sub>2</sub> (136). PGI<sub>2</sub> was undetectable in normal controls, elevated in septic shock patients who survived (median value 30 pg/ml), and markedly elevated in nonsurvivors (median 229, range 31-21,998 pg/ml). Thus, a large body of experimental and clinical evidence implicates PGI<sub>2</sub>, produced by arteriolar endothelial cells in response to TNF and thrombin, as causing vasodilatation and the low SVR of septic shock.

In addition to hemodynamic effects, vasodilator prostaglandins are important effectors of inflammatory reactions. This has been elegantly demonstrated in experiments measuring inflammation in skin after intradermal injection of PMN chemotaxins (FMLP, C5a) with or without PGE<sub>2</sub> or PGI<sub>2</sub> (137, 138). Little effect was seen when either chemotaxin or prostaglandin alone was administered, but giving both resulted in marked edema, hemorrhage, and PMN accumulation (Figure 14). Neutropenia prevented the response, and vasoconstrictor prostaglandins had no effect. The results indicate that PMNs and prostaglandins cooperate to produce inflammation; PMNs are necessary to injure vessels and increase permeability, and prostaglandins dilate arterioles and increase blood flow, thus increasing movement of cells and plasma from the vascular space into tissue.

FIGURE 14

**EFFECT OF CHEMOTAXINS AND  
PROSTAGLANDINS ON DERMAL INFLAMMATION**



Solid squares are from neutropenic rabbits.

Nature 289:647, 1981.

**Nitric Oxide** - Nitric oxide (NO) is another important regulator of vascular smooth muscle which is produced by endothelial cells. In humans, blocking NO synthesis causes a rapid increase in blood pressure, suggesting that NO plays an important role in maintaining vascular smooth muscle in a basal relaxed state (128). LPS causes cultured bovine aortic endothelial cells to rapidly (within minutes) release NO, and mice given intraperitoneal LPS have significantly increased blood and urine nitrate levels (139, 140). Since LPS administration to humans causes a decreased SVR within 1 hour and blood pressure within 2 hours, and both LPS and TNF require a minimum of 3 hours to induce PGI<sub>2</sub> release, it is possible that NO mediates vasodilatation early during septic shock. Addition of thrombin or arachidonic acid to endothelial cells causes coupled release of both NO and PGI<sub>2</sub> (141). Since NO causes vasodilatation by an entirely different mechanism than PGI<sub>2</sub> (NO increases smooth muscle cGMP), coupled release in vivo might result in marked vasodilatation and hypotension. However, there is as yet no direct evidence implicating NO in septic shock.

**Endothelial cell adhesion molecules** - In addition to their other effects, inflammatory cytokines increase expression of adhesion molecules on both endothelial cells and PMNs. Investigation into the molecular mechanisms of cell-cell adhesion is a burgeoning field, and at the present time there are four families of

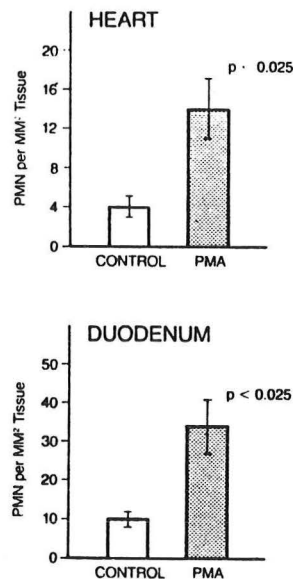
adhesion molecules - the integrins (LFA 1, CD11/CD18), the immunoglobulin superfamily (ICAM-1 and 2, NCAM, VCAM), cadherins, and the LEC-CAMs (ELAM-1, GMP 140) (142). The post-capillary venules are the site of adhesion molecule expression. A number of in vitro and in vivo experiments have determined the following:

1. ICAM 1 is expressed at low levels on normal human endothelial cells, but ELAM-1 and GMP140 are not. GMP140 is stored preformed in the Weibel-Palade bodies of endothelial cells but ELAM-1 and ICAM-1 expression requires protein synthesis (143, 144).
2. The ligand for ICAM 1 is CD11/CD18, a molecule stored preformed in the specific granules of PMNs (145). The ligand for both ELAM-1 and GMP140 is a sialylated glycoprotein which is similar to the Lewis blood group antigen and is normally present on the PMN surface (146). Thus, in the basal state one member of each pair of adhesion molecules is not present on the cell surface, and PMN-endothelial cell adhesion is weak.
3. Small amounts of LPS, TNF, and IL-1 increase surface levels of all the adhesion molecules (except for the sialylated glycoprotein PMN ligand for ELAM-1 and GMP140) (147-149). Thrombin stimulates GMP 140 expression (150). Increased expression of CD11/CD18 and GMP 140 occurs within minutes, since both are stored preformed. ICAM-1 levels rise slowly but remain elevated for days, whereas ELAM-1 levels increase within two hours but ELAM-1 is absent twenty-four hours after a stimulus.
4. In vivo, immunochemical staining of human and baboon skin biopsies after intradermal injection of TNF or substances eliciting delayed hypersensitivity reactions has confirmed that ICAM-1 and ELAM-1 are expressed; PMNs were prominently clustered along ELAM-1 positive venules (151, 152).

PMN-endothelial cell interactions - The presence of a redundant system of adhesion molecules ensures that during inflammation PMNs adhere to venular endothelium, and PMN margination explains the neutropenia of septic shock. PMNs from septic shock patients are more adherent in vitro, and adding septic shock plasma to normal PMNs causes them to become more adherent (153). In addition to increasing adhesion molecule expression, TNF, IL-1, and LPS cause human endothelial cells to synthesize and release a 1.8 Kd protein which is chemotactic for PMNs, and TNF and IL-1 have also been shown to facilitate PMN movement across endothelial monolayers by a separate (and as yet unexplained) mechanism (154, 155). The net effect is an increase in the number of PMNs adherent to endothelium and in tissue; this has been quantified in an animal model of shock and ARDS in which

large numbers of PMNs were present in heart, liver, and duodenal biopsies (Figure 15) (156). Adherent PMNs are activated and are significantly more efficient at damaging underlying cells, either by releasing granule enzymes or producing toxic oxygen radicals (157-160). Thus, the final pathway of septic shock involves leukocytes, clogging capillaries and entering tissue to inflict irreversible endothelial and visceral organ damage.

**FIGURE 15**



Amer. Rev. Respir. Dis. 139:1024, 1989.

#### OTHER MEDIATORS

Both complement and kinins have been implicated as hypotensive agents. Gram negative bacteria activate complement via the alternate pathway, and two studies have found low levels of C3, C5, C6, and C9 in gram negative bacteremic shock, as compared to normal levels in normotensive bacteremic patients (77, 161). However, animals given intravenous cobra venom factor, which activated 91% of total complement, do not develop hypotension, and prior complement depletion did not protect animals from shock after an intravenous LPS challenge (162, 163). LPS is also capable of activating Factor XII *in vitro*, which could potentially result in kallikrein formation and subsequent generation of bradykinin, a vasodilator which causes increased vascular permeability. Compared to normotensive bacteremic patients, patients with bacteremic shock have been shown to have low levels of Factor XII and pre-kallikrein, suggesting that bradykinin formation occurred (164). Small intravenous LPS doses given to normal humans resulted in five fold bradykinin elevations, but no change in blood pressure (165). Thus, a

causal role for either complement or bradykinin in septic shock is uncertain.

### THERAPY OF SEPTIC SHOCK

Patients developing septic shock should have appropriate cultures obtained and should be carefully examined for a tissue site of infection; if there is no obvious site then occult pelvic, abdominal, and thoracic abscesses should be considered. Empiric antibiotics need to be given promptly, although even with appropriate antibiotics the mortality of septic shock is discouragingly high. One review of 1,186 cases of gram negative bacteremia found that rapid (within 24 hours) administration of an antibiotic active against the blood isolate had no effect on mortality (166). One explanation for this seemingly paradoxical observation comes from an animal model of gram negative bacterial peritonitis, in which gentamicin administration resulted in large (eight fold) increases in both total and free LPS blood levels (167). Adequate volume resuscitation is important for reversing hypotension, as septic shock patients are frequently intravascular volume depleted from increased capillary permeability and may require several liters (or more) of fluid (168). Lastly, vasopressors should be given to maintain a mean blood pressure > 60 mm Hg. Dopamine should be infused and, if there is no response to maximal dopamine doses, norepinephrine added (169). If an adequate blood pressure is achieved but the patient remains in lactic acidosis, some authorities suggest adding an inotropic agent (dobutamine), as there is evidence that increasing cardiac output will reverse lactic acidosis (32, 170).

Clinical trials of three new therapies have been performed over the past ten years. In an uncontrolled series of nine patients naloxone, given in 0.4 mg increments up to a total dose of 8.0 mg, resulted in a > 20 mm Hg rise in systolic blood pressure (171). Another uncontrolled study of 12 patients found that naloxone had no effect on blood pressure and four patients developed serious side effects, including decreased blood pressure in two and a seizure in one (172). A placebo controlled study found that both saline and naloxone injections caused minor, clinically insignificant elevations of blood pressure and no difference in mortality (173). Thus, naloxone should not be used in septic shock. Because of experiments showing that corticosteroid pretreatment protected animals from septic shock, two large scale, randomized and blinded trials of corticosteroid therapy in humans have been performed. Both studies were well designed and treated patients rapidly (within two hours of sepsis onset) with large (75-120 mg/kg/24 hours) doses of methylprednisolone. There were no differences in mortality between treatment groups, and the number of patients developing shock and surviving shock were identical. A significant increase in the incidence of complicating infections in the corticosteroid group was noted (174, 175). These results indicate that even when given as early as possible corticosteroids are not helpful.



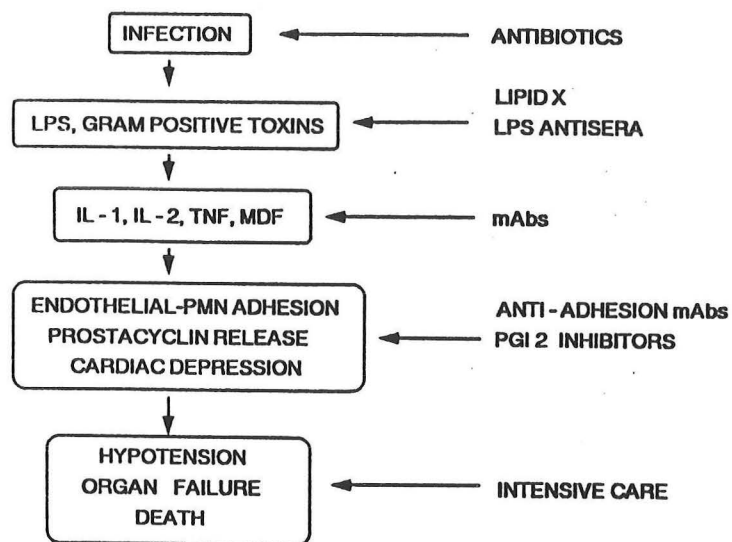
In contrast to naloxone and corticosteroids, administration of polyclonal antibodies against the Lipid A core moiety of LPS has proven efficacious, even when given after shock onset. Two hundred and twelve severely ill patients with clinical evidence of gram negative infections were randomly treated with either a lipid A antisera (prepared by immunizing normal volunteers with a mutant, Lipid A rich LPS) or nonimmune sera. Sixty-six percent of patients in both groups were hypotensive, and patients treated with lipid A antisera had significantly less mortality (22% versus 39% for the controls) (176). Patients who had been in shock > 6 hours prior to receiving sera also had lower mortality (46% versus 76%). In a subsequent study of surgical ICU patients thought to be at risk for gram negative sepsis, lipid A antisera significantly reduced both the incidence and mortality of septic shock (177). A third study found that lipid A antisera had no effect on the development of organ failure, mortality, or shock reversal in 71 patients with gram negative bacteremia and shock. However, the patients had been in shock for a mean of 12 hours prior to receiving the antisera (178). In addition to lipid A antisera, polyclonal human IgG LPS antisera significantly prevented organ failure, DIC, and death and also shortened hospital stay when given to young obstetric patients in septic shock (179).

Although the experience with lipid A antisera is encouraging, the therapy is obviously limited to gram negative infections, preparation of the antisera is tedious, and animal experiments have not shown that lipid A antisera prevents mortality or blocks TNF production (180, 181). Lipid X is a nontoxic monosaccharide lipid A precursor. Lipid X has been shown to block LPS priming of human PMNs for oxygen radical release, and administration of Lipid X either before or four hours after LPS protects animals from mortality and tissue injury (182, 183). The ability of Lipid X to protect even after a four hour interval makes it attractive for clinical use.

Based on the pathogenic schema outlined earlier, Figure 16 identifies potential future therapies for septic shock. Many of these are already under active investigation; for instance, monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) to PMN CD11/CD18 adhesion molecules prevented PMN tissue influx, CSF protein accumulation, brain edema, and death in a rabbit model of bacterial meningitis (184).



FIGURE 16



In the future, it is probable that specific treatment targeted to PMN and endothelial cell adhesion molecules, TNF, IL-1, and prostaglandins will become available. It is likely that the efficacy of any therapy will depend on early application, before serious endothelial and visceral organ injury has occurred. Thus, identification of patients of risk for the development of sepsis, and close observation of such patients for early signs of the septic syndrome and shock, will continue to be of paramount importance.

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