

Responses of the Coronary Circulation to Physiologic Changes and Pharmacologic Agents

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AS THE GUARDIAN of the oxygen transport system through periods of almost unbelievable physiologic stress, and as medicine's most experienced practitioner of clinical pharmacology, it is imperative for the anesthesiologist to have detailed knowledge of the coronary circulation. This is so because the diseased coronary circulation system cannot manage its own affairs through the wide ranges of stress to which man is exposed. Thus, there are approximately 2,000 cardiovascular deaths per day in the United States,¹ and these deaths are not limited to the aged and infirm. Indeed, postmortem examination of Americans killed in the Korean War whose average age was 22 years revealed grossly visible coronary atherosclerosis in 77.3 per cent of hearts and 90 per cent or greater occlusion of a coronary artery in 8.3 per cent.² Hence, each adult male subject, even though without symptoms of cardiovascular disease, must be treated as though he has some coronary atherosclerosis, and those subjects with any symptoms of coronary insufficiency must be presumed to have extensive coronary disease indeed. This review attempts to cover briefly the control of the coronary circulation, its modification by physiologic stress and disease, and finally, the effects upon the coronary circulation of various therapeutic and pharmacologic interventions, especially those used during anesthesia and in patients with cardiovascular disease.

Physiologic Determinants of Coronary Flow

It is obvious that the "resting" heart is a working muscle and therefore its vascular

bed must deal with special problems which include a wide arteriovenous oxygen difference and consequently a venous oxygen content in the range of 30 per cent saturated.³ This means that any significant increase in myocardial oxygen consumption must be met by an increase in coronary blood flow. Under conditions of duress, the heart may increase its output manifold,^{3,4} and if accomplished against elevated arterial systolic pressure, as it usually is, the increase in left ventricular work and coronary blood flow is indeed impressive.⁴⁻⁸ Since increases of 500 per cent in coronary blood flow have been reported,³ obviously highly adjustable factors are involved in its control. These are reviewed below.

In its simplest terms, coronary flow is determined by the interplay of coronary vascular resistance and perfusion pressure,⁹ since changes in blood viscosity, the other factor in the equation, are generally not sufficiently variable to be very important. Clearly the prime determinants of myocardial blood flow are the cardiac rate and the arterial blood pressure, with these two variables alone accounting for most of the changes seen.¹⁰⁻¹² This is apparently because of the close direct relation between these factors and myocardial metabolism, hence demand for flow. Coronary blood flow and rate are directly related over the wide range which has been explored both in animals^{13,14} and in man.¹⁵⁻¹⁷ Although there is a minimum arterial pressure below which no coronary flow can occur, and although increasing arterial pressure in the intact animal is accompanied by increased flow, coronary flow is not linearly related to perfusion pressure because of vasomotion and autoregulation.⁹ Thus, in the perfused heart when arterial pressure is increased acutely, coronary flow increases transiently, the vascular bed then adapts itself to the increased

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pressure, and flow tends to return to the level which existed prior to the pressure change.^{9,18} Similarly, when perfusion pressure is suddenly decreased, coronary flow transiently decreases and then tends to increase again to the control level as the coronary resistance readjusts itself.^{9,18} It has been postulated that the smooth muscle in the vessel walls of the coronary arteries effects autoregulation by maintaining a constant tension, adjusted by tension sensors in the walls.⁹ Since tension in a vessel wall is related to its diameter, a smooth muscle will exert the same tension in a dilated vessel distended by a low pressure and in a constricted vessel whose intraluminal pressure is high. As with other contracting muscles,¹⁹ myocardial blood flow is sharply reduced during strong contractions.^{20,21} Thus, phasic measurements of coronary blood flow in the epicardial arteries supplying the left ventricle generally show a sharp systolic reduction and diastolic augmentation.^{20,21} The idea that this pattern is due to compression of the intramyocardial arteries is supported by the observation in the dog that flow in the right coronary artery closely follows the arterial pressure,²² presumably because it supplies chiefly the right ventricle and is not compressed so much in systole. These observations lend some credence to the idea that left ventricular intramyocardial pressure may exceed intravascular pressure and throttle systolic flow.²⁰⁻²⁴ It is known, however, that during contraction of skeletal muscle interruption of blood flow tends to occur by kinking of larger arteries where they pass through muscle layers¹⁹ and thus it is possible that a similar mechanism is more responsible for reduced myocardial systolic flow than is capillary compression. If perfusion pressure is sustained during cardiac arrest, in spite of markedly reduced myocardial metabolic demands, coronary flow increases sharply²¹ and myocardial oxygen extraction is reduced.²⁵

It is of considerable interest that the phasic pattern of coronary flow changes in passage through the myocardium, since in the epicardial vessels diastolic flow is greatest^{20,21} and in the coronary sinus systolic flow is greatest.²⁶ Although, as already indicated, it is presumed that this change in phase

is due to interruption of the arterial inflow by the intramyocardial systolic pressure, which simultaneously "wrings out" blood through compression of the cardiac venous tree, it must be conceded at the present time that no opinion concerning the timing of nutrient myocardial capillary flow is justified. It has been concluded that the systolic tissue pressure increases from the epicardium to the endocardium but does not significantly affect endocardial flow so long as normal coronary perfusion pressure and total coronary flow are maintained.^{27,28} However, it cannot be predicted in the absence of data whether the capillaries placed in the interstices around the myocardial cells are compressed or dilated during cardiac contraction, because it is not known whether the change in shape of the myocardial cells as their rigidity increases in systole would tend to reduce or to increase pressure in the specific location of the capillary. The capillaries in skeletal muscle are known to remain open during contraction.¹⁹ An analogy may be that delicate organisms live among the boulders at the bottom of a rockslide unaffected by the force distributed through the rigid structures which surround them but may be crushed quickly when a new slide occurs. Thus it would seem likely to this reviewer that at normal ventricular volumes relatively little myocardial capillary compression occurs, whereas if the end-diastolic volume were sharply reduced, considerable compression might occur. In line with this thesis, Gregg has pointed out that intravascular resistance appears to be more important than extravascular compression.²⁹

As would be expected, delivery of oxygen to the myocardium is very important in regulating coronary flow. This, in acute⁷ and chronic severe anemia, coronary flow per unit of left ventricular weight increases.^{20,21} This would appear to be related to the reduced oxygen-carrying capacity of the blood, since flow varies inversely with the hemoglobin content of a solution perfusing the myocardium.²² Furthermore, when dextran is infused, producing hemodilution, myocardial blood flow increases.²⁰ It has also been shown that when the hemoglobin content is raised by blood transfusion coronary flow in anemic

subjects falls toward the normal range.^{30,31} This observation is confirmed further by the fact that coronary flow is reduced in subjects with polycythemia.²² If the arterial blood oxygen content is reduced by administration of 10 per cent oxygen, cardiac output increases, left ventricular work increases, and coronary blood flow increases considerably.³³ Inhalation of 100 per cent oxygen or administration of hyperbaric oxygen usually causes diminution of coronary blood flow in the normal dog.^{34,35}

Hyperventilation decreases P_{CO_2} , increases pH, and reduces coronary blood flow of experimental animals³⁶ and man,³⁷ and markedly decreases coronary sinus blood P_{O_2} in both.³⁷ On the other hand, sodium bicarbonate increases blood carbon dioxide content, cardiac output, left ventricular work, myocardial oxygen consumption, and coronary blood flow.³⁸ Similar changes in blood pH produced by administration of THAM did not significantly change coronary blood flow of the intact dog,³⁹ but unbuffered THAM with a pH of 10.2 or sodium carbonate infused directly into the coronary arteries of the open-chest dog did increase coronary flow.⁴⁰

Among substances commonly administered clinically, 50 per cent glucose⁴¹ and molar sodium succinate⁴² had relatively little effect on coronary blood flow of intact animals, whereas molar sodium lactate increased body oxygen consumption, cardiac output, cardiac work, and coronary blood flow.⁴³ Administration of calcium chloride intravenously to anesthetized dogs produced a marked slowing in cardiac rate with a considerably enhanced stroke volume but no change in cardiac output, while coronary blood flow decreased and coronary vascular resistance rose.⁴⁴ In the intact unanesthetized dog, similarly administered calcium was strongly inotropic and coronary flow increased, apparently secondary to its metabolic effects.⁴⁵ Hypertonic sodium chloride caused increased cardiac output and cardiac work without increasing arterial blood pressure, with a variable but not significant increase in coronary blood flow.⁴⁶ Administration of hypertonic contrast material produced hemodilution with an apparently increased blood

volume, and elevated cardiac output, cardiac work and coronary blood flow.⁴⁷

There is no doubt that neural and neuro-humoral factors affect coronary blood flow, although relationships are complicated and the interplay of factors has been difficult to distinguish.⁹ Thus, stimulation of the sympathetics increases cardiac output, augments the vigor of cardiac contraction, increases cardiac metabolic demands, and increases coronary blood flow,^{48,49} whereas the best current evidence indicates that the direct effect of the sympathetics on the coronary vessels alone is probably that of constriction.⁵⁰⁻⁵² Contrariwise, stimulation of the vagus slows the heart, reduces the cardiac metabolic demands, and decreases coronary flow in the intact preparation. Yet it can be shown that vagal stimulation directly reduces coronary vascular resistance.⁵⁰⁻⁵³ Carotid sinus nerve stimulation decreases arterial pressure, heart rate, and work, and has been utilized to relieve anginal pain.⁵⁴

Effects of exercise on coronary flow, especially in those with cardiovascular disease, has long been of interest. It is agreed that coronary blood flow increases with exertion⁵⁻⁷ as it does during excitement and sympathetic stimulation.^{48,49} This is true in normal human subjects,⁵⁵ those with minimal heart disease,^{55,56} subjects with aortic stenosis and insufficiency,⁵⁷ and patients in congestive heart failure.⁵⁸ In subjects with coronary disease, coronary flow has been found to be normal at rest,⁵⁹⁻⁶³ with a tendency to be higher in those with more severe disease⁶³ and to increase with exercise^{59,64} or pacing.⁶⁵ Recent data indicate a limited capacity of those with coronary disease to increase their myocardial flow with pacing.⁶⁵ Isuprel,⁶⁶ and drugs which increase coronary blood flow, although coronary flow increased normally during limited exercise in anginal subjects with aortic-valve disease.⁵⁷ However, in violently exercising Alaskan sled dogs, coronary flow increases roughly five times over resting values,⁶ and in heavily exercised normal men flow is estimated to increase by at least three times.⁶ This degree of exercise has not yet been approached in studies of subjects with angina pectoris, and it would

be predicted that such increases in myocardial blood flow could not occur in the heavily diseased coronary circulation.

Myocardial Metabolism

Clearly, myocardial blood flow is regulated in some way by myocardial metabolism, increasing and decreasing to supply myocardial metabolic demands.^{7-14,18,67} It has been postulated that local release of adenosine within the heart controls coronary flow,⁶⁸ and there is much to support this hypothesis,^{69,70} since it is a very active coronary vasodilator,⁷¹⁻⁷⁴ which is locally available and is destroyed in blood and even more rapidly inactivated in the lung.⁷⁵ Thus, it could produce the evanescent type of response required for rapid, profound adjustments. Whether or not the substance eventually proves to be adenosine, some compound or compounds formed in tissue during the metabolically active state must be important in local blood flow control. As reviewed by Berne,⁹ potassium and other substances have been suggested as the controlling agent, but although they can increase coronary blood flow, the increase achieved is considerably less than that produced in response to physiologic stimuli or to the adenine nucleotides or adenosine; consequently, it seems unlikely that these agents are primary in controlling coronary flow.

Teleologically, it would be desirable for an organ so essential to life as the heart to be capable of metabolizing a wide variety of substances. It has been established that although the normal heart is predominantly aerobic, it is also capable of anaerobic metabolism, and that carbohydrates, proteins, and fats are consumed.⁶⁷ The oxygen consumption of the resting noncontracting heart is very low,^{25,76-78} presumably only that required for maintenance of cellular viability.^{76,77} If useless work such as fibrillation is permitted to occur, oxygen consumption is increased^{76,78,79} but still does not approach the high cardiac oxygen consumption per unit of weight which is the hallmark of normally working myocardium.^{25,78,79} As the amount of cardiac work increases above the resting

level, cardiac oxygen consumption increases also.^{7-11,25} However, it has been established that "pressure work" is metabolically more expensive to the heart than "volume work," with the increment added by increasing stroke volume being so small that in some situations it is scarcely measurable, whereas the increment added by increases in arterial pressure is very marked indeed.^{10,11,25} It is well established that myocardial oxygen consumption is closely and directly related to cardiac rate over the wide ranges in which this has been measured both in experimental animals and in man.¹³⁻¹⁷ The product of heart rate and systolic blood pressure, or the "time-tension index," is very closely related to myocardial oxygen consumption.^{10,11,25} An additional important factor is the velocity at which contraction occurs: the faster the myocardial fibers shorten, the more oxygen is consumed per contraction.²⁵ Electrical depolarization and repolarization of the heart is a minor energy cost.²⁵ All additional factors are small compared with the overriding determinants of cardiac rate, velocity of shortening, and tension achieved,²⁵ and in practical terms, since these are the variables over which the clinician has most control, they are of the greatest clinical importance.

Although traditionally coronary flow is regarded as subservient to metabolic demands, it is clear that overperfusion of the left ventricle increases myocardial oxygen consumption⁸⁰⁻⁸² and even contractility.^{83,84} Practical ramifications of this observation are not clear, but it should be remembered that a very considerable increase in oxygen consumption has been shown to occur with overperfusion,⁸⁰ especially in the non-working heart.⁸² These observations may well apply to the heart during cardiopulmonary bypass, when myocardial perfusion is suddenly increased during induced arrest or fibrillation. Underperfusion has even more profound effects. Thus, during myocardial hypoxia, rapid dephosphorylation of the high-energy phosphate compounds occurs and there is considerable glycogenolysis.^{87,88} The content of diphosphopyridine nucleotides in the heart diminishes with persistent hypoxia,⁸⁵ and myocardial metabolism tends to become

anaerobic, with production of lactate.^{86,91} The concept of "excess lactate"⁸⁷ as a reliable indicator of hypoxia has been both supported⁸⁷⁻⁹¹ and questioned.⁹²

Coronary Blood Flow and Disease

Great interest has centered on the determination of coronary blood flow in subjects with angina pectoris, but measurements utilizing many different methods have failed to differentiate subjects with atherosclerotic heart disease from normal individuals.^{59-63,93} Although early data indicated that such subjects could not increase their myocardial blood flow with relatively mild exercise,⁵⁹ later data did not confirm these preliminary observations.^{64,94} Recently, observations collected with new methods of measuring coronary flow and utilizing cardiac pacing or administration of Isuprel as the challenge have shown that when greater demands are made on the circulation, subjects with atherosclerotic heart disease are not capable of increasing their coronary blood flow to the same extent as normal subjects.^{65,66,95} Inequality of flow in different regions of the heart has long been suspected to occur in subjects with angina pectoris, and has been confirmed by following the rate of clearance of radioactive material after its local injection in several areas of the heart.⁹⁶ After systemic injection of radioactive material, non-uniform perfusion has also been found by using multiple counters located in a regular lattice over the cardiac shadow.⁹⁷ It is not presently known whether the areas of reduced flow measured by these methods contain normal heart muscle, but it seems very probable that if there is inadequate blood flow to maintain normal resting myocardial metabolism, localized necrosis will result, with a fibrotic scar.⁹⁸ Presently it is clear that in most subjects with significant atherosclerotic heart disease the major epicardial coronary arteries are obstructed in localized areas. Apparently, in spite of the augmented collateral circulation, blood flow remains inadequate in certain myocardial areas during increased metabolic demands and produces angina. In time these areas may undergo diffuse fibrosis if ischemia is slowly pro-

gressive, or if outright myocardial infarction occurs, a scar results. The anginal attack has also undergone considerable study and it is widely agreed, although not yet proven, to be due to a discrepancy between demand and supply of blood flow to the myocardium. The ischemic attack may be accompanied by alteration in compliance of the left ventricle, with elevated pressure in the left ventricle at end-diastole,^{90,99,100} in the systemic arteries,¹⁰¹ and in the left atrium as reflected in the pulmonary arterial wedge pressure.¹⁰² Such hemodynamic events are readily accepted as manifestations of acute left ventricular failure precipitated by ischemia. Relief of the anginal attack is frequently produced by nitrites. However, there is excellent evidence presently that this is not due to coronary vasodilatation, since administration of nitroglycerin into the coronary artery during an anginal attack does not relieve anginal pain even though an increase in coronary blood flow occurs.¹⁰³ On the other hand, systemic administration of nitrites decreases peripheral venous tone and return of blood to the heart,^{104,106} reduces cardiac size,^{105,107-109} lowers arterial blood pressure,¹¹⁰⁻¹¹³ and diminishes cardiac work,¹¹⁰⁻¹¹³ with relief of anginal pain. The hypothesis that nitrites are effective by reducing cardiac work is strengthened by the observation that angina is more easily produced after blood volume expansion with dextran,¹¹⁵ and is less easily produced after phlebotomy.¹¹⁶ Thus, our investigations would appear to have come full circle¹¹⁴ from 100 years ago, when T. Lauder Brunton¹¹⁷ introduced nitrites on the thesis that they reduced cardiac work and thereby relieved pain of cardiac ischemia. Furthermore, administration of coronary vasodilators, which increase coronary blood flow, generally does not relieve angina; indeed, it may precipitate such pain.⁹⁸ This is believed to be due to interference of vasodilators with the coronary vasoregulatory mechanisms, preventing optimal distribution of blood flow in the ischemic heart³ and perhaps precipitating "coronary steal."¹¹⁸ For the "steal syndrome" to occur, collateral vessels which supply an ischemic area must arise from an artery beyond a stenosis. In a partially obstructed artery there are two potential areas

of resistance, one at the site of the partial obstruction, the other at the normal site of most vascular resistance in the arterioles. The arterioles are so dominant in flow control that a non-critical proximal epicardial arterial stenosis usually does not interfere with their autonomy. However, if the arterioles dilate widely, the partial obstruction may become flow limiting. Then pressure will be reduced at the source of collateral vessels which arise distal to the partial occlusion and they will fail to deliver blood as they normally do. Thus, the normal arteriolar bed "steals" the blood which should have been supplied to the ischemic area.¹¹⁸ Recently, it has been recognized that during angina the hemoglobin in the coronary sinus blood has less affinity for oxygen and therefore, at any given saturation, delivers oxygen at a higher P_{50} .¹¹⁹

There have been several reviews of the metabolism of the heart during congestive heart failure.^{67,120,121} Although cardiac output is low, and coronary sinus oxygen content reduced,¹²² coronary blood flow is within the broad limits of normal.¹²³ Cardiac efficiency is reduced, however, because of the increased oxygen consumption per unit of work done.¹²³ When strophanthidin is given to human subjects with heart failure, cardiac output improves¹²⁴ but left ventricular oxygen consumption is unchanged, and therefore efficiency improves.¹²⁵ In the non-working left ventricle, strophanthidin transiently decreases and then increases coronary blood flow, whether or not there is ganglionic blockade, cardiac denervation, or adrenalectomy.¹²⁵ Subsequent to strophanthidin, potassium is lost from the myocardium of man,¹²⁴ and in the normal dog potassium is lost and sodium is taken up.¹²⁶ Lanatocid C produced little change in cardiac metabolism,¹²⁷ and it was concluded in a study of the dinitrophenol-poisoned dog heart that this glycoside restored the initial work performance of the heart without changing its oxygen consumption.¹²⁸

Coronary blood flow has been studied in several states commonly associated with hypotension. During hemorrhagic shock, coronary blood flow and cardiac output are sharply reduced.¹²⁹ It appears highly unlikely, how-

ever, that the reduction in coronary flow contributes much to the circulatory decay, except late in the course of the syndrome, when the heart, as well as many other organs, is damaged by prolonged hypoperfusion. Thus, in the terminal states of shock, when the heart dilates and left atrial pressure rises, augmenting left coronary flow, even while maintaining the same degree of hypotension, will reduce left atrial pressure to normal and improve myocardial contraction.¹³⁰ Hyperbaric oxygen administration normally decreases coronary blood flow, but in hemorrhagic hypotension it causes no change in flow, only an increase in myocardial oxygen consumption.³⁵ When hyperbaric oxygen is given to dogs in shock from myocardial infarction induced by microsphere embolization, arterial pressure rises and, in at least some animals, there is a transient increase in coronary blood flow with a marked increase in coronary sinus blood oxygen content and a significant decrease in lactate production.¹³¹ Beta-adrenergic receptor blockade ameliorates the systolic reduction in coronary flow seen in hemorrhagic hypotension,¹³² improves myocardial blood flow,¹²² and reduces the myocardial lesions which result from prolonged shock.¹³³ These results are believed to be due to relief from the intense sympathetic inotropic stimulation of the heart in hemorrhagic shock.¹³³ During cardiac tamponade coronary flow decreases, as do cardiac output and left ventricular work.¹³⁴ However, with the increase in rate produced by tamponade, left ventricular oxygen consumption remains unchanged, so cardiac efficiency is markedly reduced.¹³¹ During pulmonary embolization, in the dog, coronary flow through the left ventricle is reported to be unchanged,¹³⁵ while coronary flow to the hypertensive right ventricle increased markedly.¹³⁶ When a large arteriovenous fistula is opened, coronary flow increases in spite of the low diastolic perfusion pressure,¹³⁷ indicating marked capacity of normal vessels to adapt to this stressful situation.

When cardiac work is increased by disease, coronary flow also increases. Thus, in subjects with thyrotoxicosis, cardiac output and coronary blood flow increase, accompanied by

reduced coronary and peripheral vascular resistance.^{128,129} Treatment of such subjects with ¹²⁵I and restoration of euthyroidism also restores normal coronary blood flow.¹³⁰ Coronary blood flow per unit of left ventricular weight is normal in hypertensive subjects^{140,141}; however, allowing for the increased left ventricular mass and reduced output in Grade III and IV hypertensive subjects, total coronary flow is considerably increased and cardiac efficiency reduced.¹⁴¹

Anesthesia and Coronary Blood Flow

Extensive studies of the effects of anesthetics on coronary blood flow do not appear to have been made; most studies are done in alert human subjects or already anesthetized animals, and there is reason to doubt that the effect of an additional anesthetic in a sleeping animal is comparable to inducing anesthesia. It is well known that anesthetic doses of pentobarbital produce considerable increases in cardiac rate, cardiac output, and coronary blood flow. If the dose of barbiturates is increased progressively, cardiac depression occurs and failure is induced.^{142,143} Administration of ketamine is accompanied by increased systemic arterial pressure, cardiac output, and coronary blood flow.¹⁴⁴ When given to alert animals, some of this "ketamine effect" may be due to the excitement phase.¹⁴⁴ The systemic and coronary hemodynamic effects of many drugs, including some which may be used during anesthesia, has been summarized in tabular form for those who wish to have a ready reference to this material.¹⁴⁵ Further data on some agents of special interest are included here.

Administration of atropine is associated with a marked increase in coronary blood flow parallel to the increase in cardiac rate.¹⁵ It is reasonable to anticipate that most of the sympathomimetic agents which produce increases in cardiac rate would have a similar effect. Studies of catecholamines confirm that this is the case for isoproterenol in dogs¹⁴⁶ and in man,^{66,147,148} as well as for epinephrine and norepinephrine.^{149,150} Although the latter drugs are direct coronary vasoconstrictors, their metabolic effects quickly overcome constriction and result in overall coronary vaso-

dilatation.¹⁴⁹ If there is myocardial infarction through coronary embolization, the increased flow achieved by Isuprel is reported not to be sustained.¹⁵¹ Under circumstances of infarction with shock, norepinephrine was thought to be superior to isoproterenol.¹⁵² The increase in coronary blood flow which occurs with increases in cardiac rate is presumed to be directly related to the myocardial metabolic demand. It is known that subjects with coronary-artery disease may have ischemia induced by pacing the heart,^{65,59} so it is reasonable to expect that inducing tachycardia by other means may have a similar effect.

Vasoconstricting nerves are blocked by a wide variety of hypotensive drugs. Among these, the ganglion-blocking drugs tend to reduce cardiac output, coronary blood flow, and left ventricular oxygen consumption, as shown by studies of hexamethonium,¹⁵³ pentolinium,¹⁵⁴ mecamylamine,¹⁵⁵ trimethidinium,¹⁵⁶ and trimethaphan.¹⁵⁷ Much of this effect seems clearly related to reduced arterial blood pressure and cardiac work. There are, of course, limits to how far the blood pressure can be lowered safely with vasodepressor agents, since coronary blood flow is heavily dependent on perfusion pressure and falls off rapidly when excessively low blood pressures are reached. These limits are presumed to be even more critical in the presence of coronary arterial obstructive disease. Acute systemic and coronary vasodilatation occurs with diazoxide^{158,159} and is not blocked to any great extent by pretreatment with reserpine.¹⁵⁸ When release of catecholamines from peripheral nerves is blocked, the effects are similar to ganglionic blockade.¹⁶⁰ Pericoronary neurectomy with phenolization of the proximal coronary arteries, hence presumably localized denervation, caused an increase in coronary blood flow and a decrease in arteriovenous oxygen difference.¹⁶¹ When hypotension is induced acutely by guanethidine, cardiac output and coronary blood flow increase unless there has been prior reserpine.¹⁶² Presumably this acute effect is due to acute catecholamine release.

Administration of the beta-adrenergic receptor blocker, propranolol, produces a significant decrease in coronary blood flow and an

increase in coronary vascular resistance, accompanied by reduced cardiac output and cardiac work.¹⁶³ Cardiac contractile force is sharply reduced,¹⁶⁴ as is the cardiovascular response to exercise.¹⁶³ These actions may explain its efficacy in angina. Since propranolol increases coronary vascular resistance in reserpinized dogs which are catecholamine-depleted, at least part of the change is due primarily to propranolol itself.¹⁶⁴ Isolated helical strips of smooth muscle from small coronary arteries and isolated perfused small coronary arteries relax when exposed to small concentrations of epinephrine and norepinephrine. This response is blocked by the beta-adrenergic blocker, nethalide.¹⁶⁵ The response of similar smooth muscle preparations from large coronary arteries was variable.¹⁶⁵

Various "biological products" or closely related compounds which have important coronary hemodynamic effects may be administered or released during anesthesia. Among these, dopamine has long been known to be a very active coronary vasodilator which increases cardiac output and cardiac work.¹⁶⁶ In the closed-chest dog the coronary sinus oxygen content rises markedly, since coronary flow exceeds demand,¹⁶⁶ but in the open-chest dog coronary flow and myocardial oxygen consumption increase together.¹⁶⁷ Propranolol blocks the cardiovascular effects of dopamine.¹⁶⁷ Serotonin also causes coronary vasodilatation,¹⁶⁸ but is much less active than dopamine¹⁶⁶ or adenosine.⁷¹⁻⁷⁴ Systemically administered bradykinin is a still less potent coronary vasodilator^{169,170}; however, any of these compounds which may be synthesized in tissue could be very important in local adjustments of blood flow.

Among the so-called "coronary vasodilators" there are few which are indeed active in altering coronary blood flow. Thus, intravenous administration of papaverine decreases coronary resistance and increases coronary blood flow,¹⁷¹ but aminophylline does not.¹⁷² Administration of nitrites other than directly into the coronary circulation is now generally agreed to be associated with no significant change in coronary blood flow or to produce a slight decrease.¹¹¹⁻¹¹⁴ Nitrites are well known by coronary arteriographers to dilate the major epicardial coronary arteries

and to relieve catheter-induced large coronary-artery spasm. It is not known whether spasm occurs spontaneously in normal or diseased coronary arteries or whether it is a significant problem in producing myocardial ischemia, but many suspect that it can occur. Consequently, the use of nitrites to sustain adequate coronary blood flow during surgery on subjects with atherosclerotic coronary-artery disease is neither unreasonable nor well founded. If used, it must be recognized that nitrites usually reduce the cardiac filling pressure, and reduce the systemic arterial pressure against which the ventricle must empty, as their major effects.¹¹⁴ They may improve coronary blood flow distribution.

The effects of thermal changes have been carefully studied, and it is established that during hypothermia from total-body cooling there is a sharp initial decrease in coronary flow, while the decline in arterial pressure is small.¹⁷³ This is presumably due to the reduced metabolic demand of the body, the diminished cardiac output, and the bradycardia.¹⁷⁴ In spite of the reduced coronary resistance¹⁷⁵ and extravascular myocardial compression, during total-body hypothermia perfusion pressure tends to decrease sufficiently that actual coronary flow in ml/min is reduced.^{173,174} After cooling is achieved, even though there is prolongation of systole,¹⁷³ coronary vascular resistance remains low because elevation of the perfusion pressure results in considerable increase in flow.¹⁷³ When cardiac cooling is achieved through perfusion with cold blood, coronary vascular resistance is reduced, but when warmed blood is diverted through the coronary circuit, resistance falls acutely and then returns again toward the control level.¹⁷⁵ It is concluded that the dilatation from cold blood might result from a direct temperature effect upon the vascular smooth muscle. Part of the reduced coronary resistance may also be due to slowing of the heart rate, but in general the duration of systole per cycle is prolonged enough to increase the period of extravascular compression.¹⁷⁵ The hypothermic heart is capable of extracting oxygen very effectively,¹⁷⁶ but fibrillates readily, especially if underperfused.¹⁷⁷ When epinephrine is administered to the cold heart, heart rate, blood

pressure, and coronary blood flow increase, but ventricular fibrillation is prone to occur.¹⁷³ Although there is considerable reduction in coronary flow during hypothermia, the reduction in cardiac output is greater, so that the fraction of cardiac output perfusing the coronary arteries is increased.¹⁷⁴ The reduction in left ventricular work during hypothermia exceeds the decrease in left ventricular metabolism, suggesting a failure of cardiac efficiency during the cold state.¹⁷⁵ On the contrary, during hyperthermia induced by external warming, there are marked increases in heart rate, cardiac output, left ventricular work, coronary blood flow, and myocardial oxygen consumption.¹⁷⁶ Coronary blood flow was also increased during drug-induced hyperpyrexia.¹⁸⁰

The repeated use of cardiac arrest during heart surgery has increased the practical value of knowledge of its physiology. Studies of the arrested or non-working perfused heart indicate reduction in oxygen consumption to 20–30 per cent of that of the naturally perfused working heart *in situ*.^{76,77,79} There is only slightly less oxygen consumption in the arrested heart than in the fibrillating organ,⁷⁷ and there is little evidence of uptake of glucose, lactate, or ketones during the arrested state.⁷⁸ In cyanotic children, the myocardium tolerates longer ischemic periods with less anaerobic glycolysis and less lactate production than in the noncyanotic child.¹⁸¹ This coincides with data indicating that the heart of the altitude-acclimatized rat tolerates coronary-artery ligation better than does that of the control rat.¹⁸² During anesthesia for heart surgery on cyanotic and noncyanotic children, the coronary sinus blood oxygen content increases, as does coronary sinus blood pH, with P_{CO_2} remaining high.¹⁸³ The predominant myocardial substrate during anesthesia is nonesterified fatty acids, whereas consumption of glucose is sharply reduced.^{181,183} There is a marked fall in pH of the blood contained in the coronary circulation during cardiac arrest, but this takes place only slowly, with a minor change in the first ten minutes of acute ischemia.¹⁸⁴

Considerable reduction in left ventricular work may be produced by withdrawing blood—or volume—from the arterial system during systole and replacing it during diastole.

This may be effected by the process known as "counterpulsation."¹⁸⁵ It has been shown to decrease left ventricular oxygen consumption in normotensive dogs, but in the dog with a deteriorating heart, an increase in coronary flow occurs, accompanied by an increase in cardiac oxygen consumption.¹⁸⁵ No attempt is made here to review the extensive literature on this process or its clinical promise in supporting subjects with acute infarction and shock, in acute coronary care, or through emergency myocardial revascularization.

Summary and Conclusion

The flow of blood through the coronary circulation is heavily dependent on myocardial metabolic demands which are determined chiefly by cardiac rate, the systolic blood pressure and the velocity of contraction achieved by the ventricle. Other factors, such as the length of shortening (stroke volume), the maintenance of cellular viability, and the production of electrical activity, are relatively minor energy costs. The coronary circulation autoregulates so that changes in perfusion pressure meet a variable local vascular resistance determined chiefly by myocardial metabolic needs. Various coronary vasodilators interfere with this autoregulatory process, but there is little evidence that they improve the distribution of blood flow in the myocardium, which seems to be the fundamental problem in coronary-artery disease; indeed, they are apt to make it worse. Those agents most effective in treating ischemia secondary to coronary-artery disease probably produce their effect by reducing cardiac work. It is not established presently whether vasodilatation in the large epicardial coronary arteries insures better flow through collateral vessels or partial coronary arterial obstructions, but it seems probable that it does, and that it produces better distribution of flow. Present evidence indicates that myocardial perfusion is best insured by maintaining near-normal cardiac rate and blood pressure.

It is clear that further information concerning the effects of anesthetics on systemic and coronary hemodynamics is needed. Current techniques of chronic instrumentation in

trained animals should make it feasible to do a systematic study of the effects of premedication and anesthesia on intact animals during the crucial transition from the alert state through the successive planes of anesthesia. Although the question of "species specificity" will always be directed against such studies, past experience has shown that insofar as they are available, data concerning the coronary circulation obtained from animals and from man are essentially interchangeable. It is suspected that when such information has been obtained, it will follow a pattern which already can be predicted closely from what is known about the determinants of myocardial metabolism and coronary flow. Thus, the knowledgeable anesthesiologist, applying that information which is already available to unfamiliar situations and drugs, will probably not be seriously misled very often by assuming that the interplay of cardiac work, coronary blood flow, and cardiac metabolism will remain closely related, as they have been shown to be in a wide variety of experiments.

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