Myosin Activator Omecamtiv Mecarbil Increases Myocardial Oxygen Consumption and Impairs Cardiac Efficiency Mediated by Resting Myosin ATPase Activity

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Background—Omecamtiv mecarbil (OM) is a novel inotropic agent that prolongs systolic ejection time and increases ejection fraction through myosin ATPase activation. We hypothesized that a potentially favorable energetic effect of unloading the left ventricle, and thus reduction of wall stress, could be counteracted by the prolonged contraction time and ATP-consumption.

Methods and Results—Postischemic left ventricular dysfunction was created by repetitive left coronary occlusions in 7 pigs (7 healthy pigs also included). In both groups, systolic ejection time and ejection fraction increased after OM (0.75 mg/kg loading for 10 minutes, followed by 0.5 mg/kg/min continuous infusion). Cardiac efficiency was assessed by relating myocardial oxygen consumption to the cardiac work indices, stroke work, and pressure–volume area. To circumvent potential neurohumoral reflexes, cardiac efficiency was additionally assessed in ex vivo mouse hearts and isolated myocardial mitochondria. OM impaired cardiac efficiency; there was a 31% and 23% increase in unloaded myocardial oxygen consumption in healthy and postischemic pigs, respectively. Also, the oxygen cost of the contractile function was increased by 63% and 46% in healthy and postischemic pigs, respectively. The increased unloaded myocardial oxygen consumption was confirmed in OM-treated mouse hearts and explained by an increased basal metabolic rate. Adding the myosin ATPase inhibitor, 2,3-butanedione monoxide abolished all surplus myocardial oxygen consumption in the OM-treated hearts.

Conclusions—Omecamtiv mecarbil, in a clinically relevant model, led to a significant myocardial oxygen wastage related to both the contractile and noncontractile function. This was mediated by that OM induces a continuous activation in resting myosin ATPase.

Key Words: contractility ■ heart failure ■ inotropic agent ■ myocardial metabolism ■ omecamtiv mecarbil ■ oxygen consumption
LV dysfunction, an ex vivo working mouse heart model without neurohumoral influence, and isolated mitochondria from the mouse myocardium. Our hypothesis has been that OM has a neutral effect on myocardial energy consumption because the favorable effects of reduced wall stress potentially can be counteracted by the prolongation of systole through the myosin ATPase activity.

Methods

Experimental Animals

The experimental protocols were approved by the local steering committee of the National Animal Research Authority at the Faculty of Health, UIT, The Arctic University of Norway. Twenty-two castrated male domestic pigs weighing 28±6 kg were adapted to the animal department for 5 to 7 days and fasted overnight before experiments, with free access to water. Additionally, 49 female NMRI mice from Charles Rivers Laboratories (Wilmington, MA) were used in this study. All mice received chow and drinking water ad lib and were housed at 23°C.

Anesthesia and Surgical Preparation

In Vivo Pig

The pigs were premedicated with intramuscular injections of 20 mg/kg Ketamine (Pfizer AS, Norway) and 1 mg of atropine (Nycomed Pharma, Norway). Anesthesia was induced by inhalation of isoflurane (Abbott, Norway). After endotracheal intubation, an intravenous injection of 10 mg/kg pentobarbital sodium (Abbott, Sweden) and 0.01 mg/kg fentanyl (Humedin Pharmaceuticals, Germany) were given, and the animals were nor-moventilated. An introducer sheath catheter was placed in the left internal jugular vein, and anesthesia was maintained throughout the experiment by a continuous infusion of 0.9% NaCl supplemented with 1.25 g/L glucose, 0.02 mg/kg/h fentanyl, and 0.3 mg/kg/h midazolam (B. Braun, Germany). The circulating volume was maintained by a 20 mL/kg/h continuous infusion of 0.9% NaCl supplemented with 1.25 g/L glucose. The animals received 2500 IU heparin and 5 mg/kg amiodarone (Sanofi-Synthelabo, Sweden) to avoid blood clotting of catheters and cardiac arrhythmias.

The surgical preparation of the open chest pig model has been described in detail previously. In brief, a 7.5 Fr Swan-Ganz catheter was placed in the pulmonary artery via the jugular vein. A 7 Fr manometer-pressure catheter (Millar MPVS Ultra, Houston,TX) was placed in the left ventricle. Arterial pressure was measured via a vascular catheter in the abdominal aorta. A 7 Fr balloon catheter was introduced to the inferior vena cava for preload reduction. After medial sternotomy, the pericardium was removed, and the coronary arteries and pulmonary trunk were dissected free to place trans-time flow probes (Medi-stim, Norway) for measurements of coronary blood flow and cardiac output. Three sonomicrometry crystals (Sonometrics corporation, trx 4, Canada) were placed in the myocardium to measure long axis and short axis myocardial shortening.

In Vivo Mouse

Isolated perfused mouse hearts were used for assessment of unloaded MVO₂ and myocardial substrate oxidation as described previously. In brief, the mice were anesthetized with 10 mg sodium pentobarbital IP. The hearts were quickly excised, and the aorta was cannulated and initially perfused retrogradely (Langendorff) with Krebs-Henseleit bicarbonate buffer containing 5 mmol/L glucose and 0.4 mmol/L palmitate bound to 3% bovine serum albumin. Subsequently, hearts were perfused either in unloaded retrograde mode using for assessment of unloaded MVO₂ or in the working heart mode for assessment of myocardial glucose and fatty acid oxidation rates by the use of radiolabeled isotopes.

In the retrograde perfused unloaded hearts, the ventricular cavity was vented by inserting a 25 G steel cannula through the apex of the heart, allowing drainage of any perfusate trapped in the LV lumen. In the working heart perfusions, the left atrium was cannulated with a 16 G steel cannula connected to a preload reservoir ensuring forward perfusion through the aortic valve. Aortic and filling pressures were set to column heights of 55 and 8 mm Hg, respectively. Electrodes were placed on the right atrium for electric pacing at 7 Hz, and cardiac temperature was maintained at 37°C throughout in both perfusion modes.

Experimental Protocols

In Vivo Pig

In a dose-response protocol (n=3), intravenous infusion of OM showed a linear increase in SET, cardiac output, and EF until maximum dose of 1 mg/kg (Figure 2). Based on this data, the following dose was selected for the main protocol; a bolus dose of 0.75 mg/kg over 10 minutes followed by a continuous infusion of 0.5 mg/kg/h. This corresponds to a plasma concentration of 500 to 1000 ng/mL.5,6

![Figure 1. Outline of experimental protocols. BDM indicates 2,3-butanedione monoxide; BMR, basal metabolic rate; Gluc/FFAOx, glucose/free fatty acids oxidation; MVO₂, myocardial oxygen consumption; and OM, omecamtiv mecarbil.](http://circheartfailure.ahajournals.org/doi/fig/10.1161/01.CIR.101.20.767)
were performed. Then extracellular K+ concentration was raised to 1200 ng/mL. An increased SET of 15% to 20% was obtained at 400 ng/mL of OM, which was selected for the subsequent protocols. Ex Vivo Mouse

The dose–response relationship of OM was studied in ex vivo work–volume relations, as obtained by a transient vena cava occlusion. The Y-intercept in the PVA–MVO2 relationship indicates the myocardial oxygen cost not related to pump function (unloaded MVO2). l/slope indicates the energy cost for contractile work (contractile efficiency). LVCFB was calculated from the formula LVCFB=CBFxLVW, where LVCFB and CBF are LV and total CBF, respectively. W and LVW are total myocardial and LV myocardial weight, respectively. LV MVO2 was calculated from the formula MVO2=(LVCFB×avdO2×HR×1.39)/HR×20.2, where MVO2 is LV MVO2, avdO2 is the difference between aortic and myocardial venous oxygen saturations, Hb is hemoglobin in grams per liter, 1.39 is a constant (mL O2/g Hb), and HR is heart rate. To convert MVO2 to mechanical energy equivalents, the factor 20.2 l/mL O2 was used.

Ex Vivo Pig

Coronary flow was derived from timed measurements of coronary effluent. Filtr-optic probes (FOXY-AL 300; Ocean Optics, Dunedin, Netherlands) were used to measure partial oxygen pressure (PO2) in the arterial and venous coronary buffer. These were placed proximally in the aortic line and in the pulmonary trunk, respectively. MVO2 was then calculated by the following equation: MVO2=|PO2 (coronary inflow)−PO2 (coronary effluent)|×Bunsen solubility coefficient of O2×coronary flow.

Metabolism

In Vivo Pig

Methods for assessing myocardial glucose and FFA oxidation by isotopic tracers are described in details previously.11 In brief, isotope-labeled oleic acid and glucose was dissolved in 50 mL of tissue and stored on ice for 1 to 3 hours. Mitochondrial respiration was measured using a Clark-type electrode (Oxygraph-2k Oroboros Instruments) in both the absence and presence of 200 mM OM. Malate (2 mM) and pyruvate (5 mM) were used as substrates. adenosine diphosphate (ADP; 200 μM) was added to achieve maximal mitochondrial oxidation phosphorylation (OXPHOS) capacity. Measurement was performed at 37°C in 2 mL. Mitochondria were suspended in isolation buffer, adjusted to pH 7.1. Mitochondrial LEAK respiration was measured in presence of substrates, but absence of ADP. State 3 respiration was defined at maximal OXPHOS after adding ADP. State 4 respiration was recorded when all added ADP was converted to ATP and state oligo after adding the ATPase blocker oligomycin (4 μg/mL). P/O ratio was calculated by measuring the mitochondrial oxygen consumption used to deplete 200 mM ADP (ATP produced per oxygen atom reduced by the respiratory chain).
plasma obtained from the pig to give a final radioactivity of 0.126 and 1.014 MBq/mL of [U-14C] glucose and [9,10-3H] oleic acid, respectively. Infusion of isotopes was started 30 minutes before administration of OM with a bolus of 30 mL/h for 15 minutes, continued by steady-state infusion at 8 mL/h throughout the experiment. Arterial and coronary sinus blood samples were drawn simultaneously before and 20 minutes after OM administration. Five 1-mL samples for 14CO2 determination were transferred to airtight 14CO2 trapping vials. Four 1.25-mL aliquots were cold-centrifuged, and the plasma was immediately frozen. Plasma was stored at −70°C and analysed later for determination of 3H2O and substrate levels. The content of 3H2O in plasma was determined by Folch extraction.15 The 14CO2 content of the blood was assessed by a diffusion method, as described by Wisneski and associates.16 Aliquots of blood (with trapped 14CO2) or plasma water (with 3H2O) were then mixed with scintillation fluid, and the radioactivity was determined on a β-scintillation counter (Packard 1900 TR Liquid Scintillation Analyzer; Packard Instruments BV-Chemical Operations, Groningen, the Netherlands).

**Ex Vivo Mouse**

Glucose and FFA oxidation in the ex vivo working hearts were measured simultaneously as described previously.17 Glucose oxidation was determined by measuring 14CO2 released by the metabolism of [U-14C] glucose and FFA oxidation by measuring 3H2O released from [9,10-3H] palmitate. Cardiac output was obtained as the sum of aortic perfusate flow and coronary flow. At the end of the perfusion, hearts were frozen and total dry mass was determined.

**Statistical Analysis**

All data are presented as means±standard deviation (SD), unless stated otherwise. Within-group effects of energetic data and on a β-scintillation counter (Packard 1900 TR Liquid Scintillation Analyzer; Packard Instruments BV-Chemical Operations, Groningen, the Netherlands).

**Figure 3.** Illustration of typical pressure–volume loops showing the effect of omecamtiv on left ventricular (LV) function. The loops are based on mean volumes and pressure given in Table 1. **Left panel** shows loop from healthy animals and **right panel** from animals with postischemic LV dysfunction.

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**Table 1. Hemodynamics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Healthy Hearts Group</th>
<th>Postischemic LV Dysfunction Group</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baseline Healthy OM</td>
<td>Baseline Postischemia OM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean arterial pressure, mmHg</td>
<td>86±7</td>
<td>84±6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean pulmonary arterial pressure, mmHg</td>
<td>21±2</td>
<td>20±1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart rate, beats/min</td>
<td>81±14</td>
<td>82±13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiac output, L/min</td>
<td>2.56±0.29</td>
<td>2.72±0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemic vascular resistance, dyn s/cm5</td>
<td>2509±309</td>
<td>2321±423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stroke work, mmHg mL</td>
<td>2770±531</td>
<td>2828±465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stroke volume, mL</td>
<td>32±5</td>
<td>34±6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coronary blood flow, mL/beat</td>
<td>1.25±0.29</td>
<td>1.30±0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tau, ms</td>
<td>31±2</td>
<td>32±1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diastolic filling time, ms</td>
<td>512±110</td>
<td>494±112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systolic ejection time, ms</td>
<td>242±8</td>
<td>255±15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dP/dtmax, mmHg/s</td>
<td>1523±344</td>
<td>1500±249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dP/dtmin, mmHg/s</td>
<td>2656±510</td>
<td>2743±416</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hemodynamic data were assessed in both the healthy and the postischemic LV dysfunction group (n=7 in both groups, except dP/dtmax/min, and tau (both n=6)). There were 3 hemodynamic measurements in each group. Baseline, with or without postischemia and subsequently after administration of omecamtiv mearbil (OM). dP/dtmax/min denotes peak positive and negative derivative of left ventricular pressure. Systolic ejection time denotes time between dP/dt max and min. Diastolic filling time refer to cardiac cycle time minus systolic ejection time.

*P<0.05 vs baseline, analysed by 1-way repeated measures ANOVA.
†P<0.05 between healthy and postischemic LV dysfunction group measurements, analysed by linear mixed model analysis.
‡P<0.05 vs before drug, analysed by 1-way repeated measures ANOVA.
between-group effects of hemodynamic data were analyzed using a linear mixed-models approach with a restricted maximum likelihood method and the subject identifier as the random effect. Within-group effects of hemodynamic data were assessed by 1-way repeated measures analysis of variance. We performed Wilcoxon signed-rank test to compare means of metabolic data from pigs and substrate metabolism in working mouse hearts. Measurements of MVO2 in unloaded retrograde perfused hearts and measurements of mitochondrial respiratory data were assessed using the Mann–Whitney Wilcoxon test. Multiple comparisons were adjusted for by Bonferroni correction. P values <0.05 were regarded as statistically significant, and all analyses were conducted in SPSS 22.0 (Chicago).

Results

A total of 19 pigs were used in the in vivo study. Fourteen pigs were included for analysis of energetics and hemodynamics in the healthy (n=7) and the postischemic LV dysfunction (n=7) group. Three pigs were excluded because of hemodynamic collapse after induction of myocardial ischemia with sustainable need of vasopressor and 2 pigs were excluded because of surgical complications. Forty-nine mice were used in the ex vivo study. A calibration error led to exclusion of 1 heart. Thirty mice were included in the retrograde perfusion (Langendorff) protocol for assessment of unloaded MVO2. In the

Figure 4. Example of 2 experiments showing the relation between left ventricular (LV) mechanical work and myocardial oxygen consumption. LV mechanical work is presented in the upper panel as pressure–volume area (PVA) and in the lower panel as stroke work (SW). Left panels are data from 1 healthy pig and right panels are data from 1 pig with postischemic LV dysfunction. Data are obtained at various workloads before (○) and after (●) infusion of omecamtiv mecarbil (OM). Y-intercept represents unloaded myocardial oxygen consumption (MVO2), that is, energy used for excitation–contraction coupling and basal metabolism. 1/slope of the regression line represents the contractile efficiency of the heart.

Figure 5. Pooled scatters of left ventricular (LV) mechanical work–myocardial oxygen consumption (MVO2) relationship from all experiments. Left panels are from the healthy pigs (n=7) and right panels are from pigs with postischemic LV dysfunction (n=7). Omecamtiv mecarbil (OM) impairs cardiac efficiency as displayed by a significant increase in Y-intercept and slope in all panels, except for only increased Y-intercept in the lower right panel. *P<0.05 vs no drug for Y-intercept, and †P<0.05 vs no drug for slope (linear mixed model analysis). See Figure 4 for an extended legend. SW indicates stroke work.
working heart perfusion protocol for assessment of substrate oxidation, 14 mice were included, whereas in the mitochondrial respiratory assessment, 4 mice were included.

**LV Function**

**In Vivo Pig Hearts**

Cardiac effects of the ischemia-reperfusion protocol are shown in Table 1. The effects of the accumulated 17±5 minutes of ischemia are compatible with postischemic LV stunning5,18 with reduced SV, stroke work, and EF and a concomitant increase in HR and mean pulmonary arterial pressure. The pigs received reduced SV, stroke work, and EF and a concomitant increase in diastolic filling time with OM dose targeting a clinically relevant increase in SET of 20%. This dose resulted in a 16%±4% and 20%±6% increase in SET in healthy and postischemic pig hearts, respectively. Simultaneously, OM induced a substantial increase in diastolic filling time before and after OM, resulting in a 31% and 35% increase in the healthy and the postischemic group, respectively. However, the enhanced LV emptying was accompanied by an impaired ventricular filling as seen by a reduced EDV and an increased tau. Thus, the net result of these alterations was an unchanged SV after OM treatment in both healthy and postischemic hearts. Also, perfusion pressure in the systemic and pulmonary circulation was unchanged by OM.

**Ex Vivo Mouse Hearts**

In ex vivo working mouse hearts, SET increased 16%±4% after OM administration. Cardiac output was unchanged in these hearts.

**Cardiac Efficiency and Metabolism**

**In Vivo Pig Hearts**

Figure 4 shows the effect of OM on the relation between mechanical work and MVO2 in typical experiments with healthy and postischemic hearts. Figure 5 presents all data points used in the statistical analysis of the OM effect on the work–MVO2 relationship. In therapeutically relevant doses, OM had a negative effect on cardiac efficiency as measured by increased MVO2 relative to cardiac work (Table 2). The impaired energetic state by OM was observed in both healthy and postischemic hearts over a large range of workloads (Figure 5). unloaded oxygen cost (y-intercept of the PVA–MVO2 relation) increased by 31% and 23% in healthy and postischemic pig hearts, respectively. OM also impaired contractile efficiency as seen by a 47% (healthy) and 46% (postischemic) increase in the slope of the PVA–MVO2 regression (Figure 5; Table 2).

OM only marginally affected the relative substrate consumption with a trend toward more glucose utilization at the expense of FFA (Figure 6A). The uptake of lactate, glucose, and FFA were not affected by OM (Figure 6B).

**Ex Vivo Mouse Hearts**

OM increased unloaded MVO2 in ex vivo mouse hearts similar to the extrapolated Y-intercept in the PVA–MVO2 relation in pig protocols. This was attributed to a 63%±31% increase in basal metabolic rate, whereas oxygen cost of excitation–contraction coupling was unaffected. Adding the myosin ATPase inhibitor, BDM, abolished all surplus basal MVO2 in the OM-treated hearts (Figure 7). There was a small increase in the rate of glucose oxidation with OM in the ex vivo working hearts (Figure 6C), whereas the mitochondrial respiration in isolated mitochondria from mouse hearts was unaffected by OM (Figure 6D). There was no difference in any of the respiratory states or mitochondrial efficiency shown by unchanged P/O ratio.

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**Table 2. Left Ventricular Energetics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Healthy</th>
<th>Healthy+OM</th>
<th>Postischemia</th>
<th>Postischemia+OM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pressure–volume area, J/beat/100 g</td>
<td>0.78±0.15</td>
<td>0.53±0.15</td>
<td>0.49±0.11</td>
<td>0.46±0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MVO2, J/beat/100 g</td>
<td>1.25±0.29</td>
<td>1.38±0.39</td>
<td>1.07±0.29</td>
<td>1.33±0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y-Intercept</td>
<td>0.22±0.12</td>
<td>0.29±0.14*</td>
<td>0.31±0.09</td>
<td>0.38±0.12*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slope</td>
<td>1.58±0.38</td>
<td>2.58±0.60*</td>
<td>1.57±0.36</td>
<td>2.30±0.78*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2</td>
<td>0.97±0.02</td>
<td>0.95±0.02</td>
<td>0.95±0.01</td>
<td>0.96±0.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data show the relationship between myocardial oxygen consumption (MVO2) and left ventricular (LV) mechanical work over a large range of workloads for both the healthy (n=7 pigs) and the postischemic LV dysfunction (n=7) group. LV mechanical work is presented in A as pressure–volume area and in B as stroke work. Y-intercept indicates MVO2 for myocardial processes not related to pump function (unloaded MVO2), whereas the 1/slope indicates the energy cost for contractile work (contractile efficiency). R2 is the coefficient of determination. OM indicates omecamtiv mecarbil

*P<0.05 vs before drug, analysed by linear mixed model analysis.
The main finding of this study is that OM contributes to a significantly increased myocardial oxygen cost in both healthy and postischemic stunned hearts. OM increases oxygen consumption because of energetically inefficient LV function and increased oxygen consumption by noncontractile processes. The increase in MVO₂ was mediated by hyperactivity in myosin ATPase.

**Discussion**

The main finding of this study is that OM contributes to a significantly increased myocardial oxygen cost in both healthy and postischemic stunned hearts. OM increases oxygen consumption because of energetically inefficient LV function and increased oxygen consumption by noncontractile processes. The increase in MVO₂ was mediated by hyperactivity in myosin ATPase.
Effect on Cardiac Function

OM's mechanism of action on the contractile apparatus is difficult to classify. An important characteristic of inotropy is accelerating the contraction and relaxation (measured as an increase in dP/dt max and min), indices that are only marginally affected by OM because it extends the systolic contraction rather than reinforcing it. On the other hand, OM increases EF similarly to classic inotropes by improved emptying in systole. Such reduction of wall stress is considered energetically favorable as systolic wall stress is a main determinant of MVO₂. However, the oxygen cost of a prolonged systolic phase may outweigh the beneficial effect of a reduced wall stress. We found no significant changes in SV and cardiac output. This can potentially be explained by a reduced LV diastolic filling and increased Tau. Shen et al. found a small increase in SV in dogs given OM, and this could be caused by a reduced afterload as seen by a concomitant reduction in vascular resistance in these dogs.

The reduced contractile efficiency observed may be caused by an unfeasible increase of SET at the expense of diastolic filling time. The fact that EDV becomes smaller, despite unchanged preload and HR, suggest that OM induces myocardial constrain in late diastole. However, our stunning model of acute heart failure does not have the characteristics of diastolic dysfunction. Thus, the interpretation that OM impairs diastolic performance demands caution. Studies that address potential effects of OM in tachycardia and reduced coronary reserve should be performed. It is unclear how the LV filling and coronary perfusion are affected in the heart when there is a shortened diastole and concomitantly elevated HR. Thus, a thorough assessment of the impact of OM in a relevant model of diastolic dysfunction seems warranted.

Effect on Cardiac Energetics

Our findings are in contrast with a previous study on dogs by Shen et al. These authors found that OM significantly improved cardiac efficiency by enhancing LV function without a corresponding change in MVO₂. They reported a nonsignificant increase in MVO₂ after 24 hours of OM infusion (MVO₂ from 3 to 4 mL/min). However, a formal evaluation of cardiac efficiency require measurements of MVO₂ and total cardiac work (ie, PVA) over a wide range of workloads. Such an analysis can separate the energy consumption (MVO₂) in unloaded MVO₂ (the y-intercept of the regression line), reflecting the oxygen cost of excitation–contraction coupling and basal metabolism and contractile efficiency (increased slope of the regression line). In both the healthy and the postischemic pig hearts, we observed a pronounced impairment in cardiac efficiency after OM infusion. This was evident by increase of both the y-intercept and the slope of the PVA-MVO₂ regression.

To further elucidate the energetics, we measured unloaded MVO₂ in ex vivo mouse hearts. Here we confirmed that the elevated y-intercept as seen in the pigs also was evident by direct measurements of unloaded MVO₂ in mice. When the hearts were arrested by cardioplegia (ie, blocking the cyclic depolarization of the myocyte membrane), we observed that the surplus unloaded oxygen could be attributed to an increased basal metabolic rate and not because of the calcium handling in excitation–contraction coupling. This observation is compatible with the proposed action of OM: activation of myosin ATPase used in the sliding contraction of the myofilaments and not the traditional increased inotropy-controlled intracellular calcium transients. Changes in substrate metabolism do not seem to be the explanation for the increased oxygen consumption in hearts perfused with OM. Only a marginal switch toward glucose oxidation after administration of OM was seen in both the pig and mouse heart, reaching significance only in the mouse protocol. However, glucose is in fact a more oxygen sparing substrate compared with fatty acids because of an increased Pi/O ratio. Such a switch should therefore potentially counteract the observed inefficient energetic state in OM-perfused hearts. An increased basal metabolic rate could also be caused by an altered mitochondrial respiration, that is, mitochondrial uncoupling in the oxidation phosphorylation. However, we did not observe any effect on the efficiency in isolated myocardial mitochondria that was incubated with OM. Combined with the missing alteration in substrate metabolism on both the organ and subcellular levels, this warrants
another explanation for the increased oxygen cost in noncontracting hearts. As OM is a nonbiological compound without integrated receptor, signal molecule, and ionic effectors, a distinct possibility is that the myosin ATPase is activated with no relation to the electrophysiological cycling of the myocardium and therefore is still active in noncontracting and arrested hearts.

The oxygen waste caused by the drug is likely to be a by-product of its interaction with myosin. A chemical precursor of OM was discovered through a high-throughput screening aimed at compounds increasing cardiac sarcomere ATPase activity. This compound was refined to reduce its toxicity, and the fully developed OM showed a 40% increased activity of the myosin ATPase at only 0.58 μM, demonstrating that OM is a potent activator of myosin ATPase. The contribution of the resting rate of myosin ATPase to basal metabolism is generally regarded as small or nonexistent in normal myocardium. Most of these studies were done with the cross-bridge inhibitor BDM. They were able to show that 40% of the resting rate of myosin ATPase to basal metabolism is of major interest given the ongoing collapse of the resting MVO2 in humans. This study shows that OM leads to a significant oxygen waste for excitation–contraction coupling suggests that OM induces myocardial oxygen waste mediated by hyperactivity in resting myosin ATPase.

Conclusions

This study shows that OM leads to a significant oxygen waste in the myocardium independent of neurohumoral factors. The oxygen waste can be explained by a combination of a reduced contractile efficiency and increased energy consumption in the noncontracting muscle, as mediated by hyperactivity in resting myosin ATPase. An assessment of OM’s effect on cardiac energetics in humans is of major interest given the ongoing clinical trials of the drug in heart failure patients. A clinical trial (www.clinicaltrials.gov NLM identifier: NCT00748579) addressing this issue was terminated with only 2 patients included.

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Disclosures

None.

References


CLINICAL PERSPECTIVE

Despite their potential negative side effects, that is, arrhythmias and increased cardiac metabolic activity, inotropic drugs have an important role in everyday clinical medicine. Most guideline recommendations find an indication for these drugs in patients with severely compromised circulation, for instance, patients in cardiogenic shock. Also, they are in routine application in intensive care units for patients with circulatory critical states of noncardiac etiology. Their recognized potentially life-threatening side effects and negative large clinical trials have set off an active search for alternative drugs to increase cardiac contractile function. Through a large-scale screening using a myosin-ATPase assay measuring the consumption of ATP, the drug omecamtiv mecarbil has been brought to clinical trials through a series of systematic preclinical and clinical model-testing. Of interest, this compound has an alternative contractile effect by prolonging systolic ejection time and, contrary to traditional inotropes, does not increase intracellular calcium levels and fluxes. Of particular interest, preclinical testing has found no increase in myocardial oxygen consumption based on this drug application, and this observation supports a particular interest for its use in patients with myocardial dysfunction or ongoing ischemia. In the present study, however, we found a relatively increased oxygen consumption in various experimental myocardial models, including posts ischemic in vivo pig hearts. This is compatible with the theoretical increase in oxygen consumption that should be initiated by the ATPase-stimulatory effect of the drug, and such an effect is of concern if omecamtiv mecarbil should find an indication in acute cardiac dysfunction.
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