

Cardiac Oxidative Stress and Inflammatory Cytokines Response after Myocardial Infarction

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Abstract: Oxidative stress in heart failure or during ischemia/reperfusion occurs as a result of the excessive generation or accumulation of free radicals or their oxidation products. Free radicals formed during oxidative stress can initiate lipid peroxidation, oxidize proteins to inactive states and cause DNA strand breaks. Oxidative stress is a condition in which oxidant metabolites exert toxic effects because of their increased production or an altered cellular mechanism of protection. In the early phase of acute heart ischemia cytokines have the feature to be functional pleiotropy and redundancy, moreover, several cytokines exert similar and overlapping actions on the same cell type and one cytokine shows a wide range of biological effects on various cell types. Activation of cytokine cascades in the infarcted myocardium was established in numerous studies. In experimental models of myocardial infarction, induction and release of the pro-inflammatory cytokines like TNF- α (Tumor Necrosis Factor α), IL-1 β (Interleukin-1 β) and IL-6 (Interleukin-6) and chemokines are steadily described. The current review examines the role of oxidative stress and pro-inflammatory cytokines response following acute myocardial infarction and explores the inflammatory mechanisms of cardiac injury.

Keywords: Cardiac oxidative stress, Chemokine, IL-1 β , IL-6, MCP-1, Myocardial infarction, TNF- α .

INTRODUCTION

Myocardial infarction remains the greatest killer in the Western world, and is the leading cause of chronic heart failure [1]. Although early reperfusion is the only way to salvage an ischemic organ, during the crucial early moments of reperfusion, significant reversible and irreversible organ damage is initiated, and is referred to as reperfusion injury. Reperfusion injury includes arrhythmias, transient mechanical dysfunction of the heart or “myocardial stunning”, microvascular injury and “no-reflow”, as well as inflammatory responses. In reperfusion, cell death can occur due to apoptosis, necrosis, and autophagy [2-8]. Reperfusion therapy must be performed as soon as possible after myocardial infarction in order to attenuate the ischemic injury. However, reperfusion is responsible for additional myocardial damage. One hypothesis is that antioxidants are extensively consumed during infarction and O₂ abruptly increases metabolism after reperfusion in the absence of normal defenses [9]. This hypothesis has led to the proposal of myocardial anti-oxidative conditioning. However, although several studies have reported on the beneficial effect of certain antioxidants, this has been refuted by others [10-14], but supported by studies involving cardiac surgery [12, 15]. Furthermore, several researches demonstrated that inflammatory processes are

involved in cardiovascular injury resulting from ischemia and/or reperfusion, thrombosis, and infection [16, 17]. For example, myocardial inflammation has been implicated as a secondary injury mechanism after ischemia and reperfusion [18].

Activation of cytokine cascades in the infarcted myocardium was established in numerous studies [19-21]. In experimental models of myocardial infarction, induction and release of the pro-inflammatory cytokines like TNF- α (Tumor Necrosis Factor α), IL-1 β (Interleukin-1 β) and IL-6 (Interleukin-6) are steadily described [21-23]. The inflammatory response is a multifaceted system made by many components and their interactions, the inflammatory molecules and pathways are closely related and change cellular physiology, leading to various pathologies in the cardiovascular system [16, 17]. Inflammation is also a major component of the damage caused by infectious diseases such as myocarditis and rheumatic heart disease and is also a fundamental contributor to atherosclerosis, ischemic heart disease, and heart failure, as well as transplant vasculopathy and stroke [16].

Cytokines have the feature to be functional pleiotropy and redundancy, moreover, several cytokines exert similar and overlapping actions on the same cell type and one cytokine shows a wide range of biological effects on various cell types [24]. The multifunctional, overlapping and often contradictory effects of the cytokines have hindered understanding of their functional role in cardiac injury and repair. In the infarcted area is present a marked cytokine upregulation due to various mechanisms like Reactive Oxygen Species (ROS)

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generation, complement activation, and NF- κ B (nuclear factor kappa-light-chain-enhancer of activated B cells) activation potentially stimulate cytokine mRNA (Messenger Ribonucleic acid) synthesis in both resident and blood-derived cells [25].

The current review examines the role of oxidative stress and pro-inflammatory cytokines response following acute myocardial infarction and explores the inflammatory mechanisms of cardiac injury.

1. OXIDATIVE STRESS

1.1. Free Radicals and Oxidative Stress

Oxidative stress in heart failure or during ischemia/reperfusion occurs as a result of the excessive generation or accumulation of free radicals or their oxidation products. Free radicals formed during oxidative stress can initiate lipid peroxidation, oxidize proteins to inactive states and cause DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid) strand breaks [26]. Free radicals are molecules and atoms with unpaired electrons in their outer shell. They are highly reactive and are formed in processes that involve oxygen. Free radicals that originate from oxygen are called Reactive Oxygen Species (ROS), whereas free radicals that originate from the reaction of oxygen with nitrogen are considered a subclass of free radicals and are called reactive nitrogen species (RNS).

In the case of oxygen, its univalent reduction leads to the formation of superoxide (O_2^-) anion, which serves a key role in the generation of other more reactive species such as hydroxyl (OH) radical. The OH radical can be formed by two pathways: 1) the hydrogen peroxide (H_2O_2) spontaneously combined to form molecular oxygen, OH^- and OH radicals; 2) the Fenton reaction where H_2O_2 accepts an electron from a reduced metal ion such as Fe^{2+} . Superoxide serves a critical role here as well since it is the primary reducing agent to replenish the reduced metal ion. The high reactivity of the OH radical causes it to react at diffusion-limited rates, and it reacts with the first molecule it comes into contact such as unsaturated fatty acid side chains resulting in lipid peroxidation and disruption of cell membranes [27, 28]. Singlet oxygen (1O_2), the electronically excited state of molecular oxygen is one of its more reactive and toxic forms. The activation of molecular oxygen to that energetic state with anti-parallel spin (singlet state) requires overcoming of spin restriction. Singlet oxygen has a non-radical and electrophilic character. Thus, 1O_2 can induce oxidative reactions with organic compounds in its electron-rich moieties without the participation of free radicals. The high reactivity of 1O_2 with biological macromolecules makes it a potential aggressor when produced within the cell. This has been observed specially by its ability to damage guanine components and nucleic acids, with toxic and mutagenic effects [29]. Mechanisms for the enzymatic formation of 1O_2 have been proposed to occur in several cases, including as part of the host immune defenses in inflammatory processes. It is believed that different cellular types, such as eosinophils, macrophages and neutrophils can generate this oxidant in response to inflammation [30, 31]. RNS are another group of free radicals generated during ischemia-reperfusion from an iron-independent reaction involving the interaction of O_2^- and the nitric oxide (NO). RNS include nitric oxide (NO), nitrogen

dioxide (NO_2) and peroxynitrite ($ONOO^-$), the latter being originated by a reaction of O_2^- with NO [32]. Such RNS may have biologic activities distinct from those of the parent molecules [33-41]. In particular, in a biological system where O_2 or superoxide are present, NO may be considered a reactive radical, when involved in the so-called "indirect effects" while NO "direct effects" are defined as those reactions occurring between NO and specific biological molecules [40]. During reperfusion a large burst of NO is produced primarily from nitric oxide synthase (NOS). In the same time frame large amounts of O_2^- are also generated. The overwhelming affinity of NO and O_2^- ensures their rapid reactivity during the initial moment of reperfusion to form $ONOO^-$ [42]. One of proposed mechanisms of cardiac dysfunction in heart failure is the excessive production of NO in the heart, especially in myocytes [43]. Circulatory proinflammatory cytokines found in high concentrations in plasma of patients with heart failure [44] stimulate the expression of inducible NOS, with consequent over-production of NO. NO has negative inotropic effects and induces apoptosis at high concentrations *in vitro* [45].

Hydrogen peroxide (H_2O_2), which is not a free radical, is considered with ROS because it is very reactive. It can be formed from superoxide anion and can generate hydroxyl radicals. In fact, strong oxidants are produced through Fenton-type reactions of H_2O_2 with transition metal complexes [2, 33-41].

Oxidative stress occur when there is "an increased generation of superoxide anion and hydrogen peroxide which overwhelms the normal cellular defence mechanisms" [46] and this results in oxidative damage. By their nature ROS can attack all cellular targets nonspecifically causing alteration of membrane integrity and permeability. ROS also denature proteins determining a loss in enzyme activity. As well as this they interfere with the sarcoplasmic reticulum calcium transport and potentiate inflammatory responses by acting as chemotactic agents. Unbalanced cellular redox status can impair signal transduction protein synthesis, enzyme activation and even regulation of the cell cycle [28, 47, 48]. Alteration in membrane proteins by free radicals is among the important factors in the evolution of myocardial ischemia/reperfusion damage; oxygen free radicals can attack subcellular structures resulting in metabolic and structural changes leading ultimately to apoptosis and necrosis [26].

1.2. Sources of Free Radicals, Myocardial Oxidative Damage, and Antioxidant Defence Systems

Oxidative stress is a condition in which oxidant metabolites exert toxic effects because of their increased production or an altered cellular mechanism of protection. The heart needs oxygen but it is also susceptible to oxidative stress, which occurs during post-ischaemic reperfusion, for example. Ischaemia causes alterations in the defence mechanisms against oxygen free radicals; at the same time, production of oxygen free radicals increases. Several possible sources of free radicals in the myocardium are described [3] and the mitochondria, myocardial cell membranes and endothelial cells are all potential sites of free radical production [42, 49, 50]. These sources included: the enzymes xanthine ox-

doreductase, the major source of superoxide in postischemic tissue [11]; NADPH oxidase (multisubunit membrane complexes), NO synthases and mitochondrial cytochromes [33-41, 51, 52]. The mitochondria are considered the main source of ROS in myocardium [3] and they can produce ROS from respiratory complex, Monoamine oxidase and p66Shc [52]. Their role during ischemia/reperfusion is particularly critical because of the conditions that promote both apoptosis by the mitochondrial pathway and necrosis by irreversible damage to mitochondria in association with mitochondrial permeability transition (MPT). MPT is caused by the opening of permeability transition pores in the inner mitochondrial membrane, leading to matrix swelling, outer membrane rupture, release of apoptotic signaling molecules such as cytochrome c from the intermembrane space, and irreversible injury to the mitochondria. During ischemia, factors such as intracellular Ca^{2+} accumulation, long-chain fatty acid accumulation, and ROS progressively increase mitochondrial susceptibility to MPT, increasing the likelihood that MPT will occur on reperfusion [53]. Other potential source of oxygen radicals include superoxide anion production from autoxidation of catecholamines *via* adrenochrome formation and from activated neutrophils. ROS, which are known to generate oxidative stress and produce cardiotoxic effects, including arrhythmias, are formed during the oxidation of catecholamines; the levels of catecholamines which are abundantly released from the ischemic myocardium are increased in plasma during ischemia and subsequently their autoxidation could provide ROS through the formation of adrenochromes and potentially induces myocardial damage [54-58]. The oxidation products of catecholamines have been demonstrated to produce subcellular alterations, intracellular Ca^{2+} -overload, coronary spasm, myocardial cell damage, depletion of high energy stores, and ventricular arrhythmias [59]. Because intracellular Ca^{2+} -overload is known to activate different proteases and phospholipases, it is likely that the cardiotoxic effects of high concentrations of catecholamines may be occurring upon the disruption of some proteins, which control subcellular functions, and/or accumulation of some phospholipids intermediates, which affect cardiac rhythms adversely [60, 61].

The superoxide anion can also be produced from the cyclooxygenase pathway of arachidonic acid metabolism during ischemia [49, 50, 54, 62]. In fact, calcium activation of phospholipases degrades cell membrane phospholipids that releases arachidonic acid. This is metabolized via cyclooxygenase and lipoxygenase to prostaglandins and leukotrienes. These metabolic pathways involve electron transfer that can initiate the formation of free radicals [28, 49, 50, 63, 64]. Activated neutrophils during reperfusion represent a potential source of ROS. The inflammatory response to ischemia-reperfusion cause the release of substances with chemotactic activity that induces neutrophils infiltration and activation. They then adhere to injured endothelium where they initiate the production of ROS via NADPH oxidase on their cell membrane, which reduces molecular oxygen to superoxide anion and oxidize NADPH to NADP⁺ [28, 62, 65]. ROS generated during the early stages of post ischemic reperfusion can induce lipid peroxidation and oxidative injury that result in alteration of membrane permeability and membrane lipid bilayer disruption. ROS also denature proteins causing

a loss of normal enzyme activity [28, 47, 48, 66]. In addition, alterations in myocyte function due to oxidative stress are associated with the effects of free radicals on subcellular organelles. ROS have been involved in contractile dysfunction and hypercontracture. They have been shown to disrupt sarcolemma and ATPase Ca^{2+} transport activity and subsequently to induce Ca^{2+} overload and impair sarcoplasmic reticulum function [63, 67]. The critical role of intracellular Ca^{2+} overload in the genesis of myocyte dysfunction has been well established [68]. In general, Ca^{2+} -overload can be induced by direct effect of ROS on Ca^{2+} -handling proteins or indirectly, by inducing membrane lipid peroxidation. In addition, other mechanisms involving an increase in the concentration of Na^+ and accumulation of long chain fatty acids in cardiac membranes should be considered. Deficiency in ATP in the ischemic heart may also impair Ca^{2+} -handling mechanisms in the sarcolemmal and sarcoplasmic reticular membranes and thus induce Ca^{2+} -overload. Reperfusion of the ischemic heart may also increase the uptake of extracellular Ca^{2+} into the myocardium and thus be another factor for Ca^{2+} -overload. Intracellular Ca^{2+} -overload seems to be a common denominator for vasoconstriction for the development of hypertension, myocardial cell damage observed in ischemia-reperfusion, and cardiac hypertrophy in heart failure [69].

Exposure to free radicals from a variety of sources has led organisms to develop a series of defence mechanisms. Defence mechanisms against free radical-induced oxidative stress in the heart involve enzymatic and non-enzymatic antioxidant defences. Enzymatic antioxidant defences include superoxide dismutase (SOD), glutathione peroxidase (GPx), catalase (CAT). Non-enzymatic antioxidants are represented by ascorbic acid (Vitamin C), α -tocopherol (Vitamin E), glutathione (GSH), carotenoids, coenzyme Q, thioredoxins. Under normal conditions, there is a balance between both the activities and the intracellular levels of these antioxidants. The major thiol antioxidant and redox buffer of the cell is the tripeptide, GSH [70]. The oxidised form of glutathione is GSSG, glutathione disulphide. Oxidised glutathione is accumulated inside the cells and the ratio of GSH/GSSG is a good measure of oxidative stress of an organism. Too high a concentration of GSSG may damage many enzymes oxidatively. The main protective roles of glutathione against oxidative stress are [70] to take part as a cofactor of several detoxifying enzymes against oxidative stress; to scavenge hydroxyl radical and singlet oxygen directly, detoxifying hydrogen peroxide and lipid peroxides by the catalytic action of glutathione peroxidase; to regenerate the most important antioxidants, Vitamins C and E, back to their active forms. The capacity of glutathione to regenerate the most important antioxidants is linked with the redox state of the glutathione disulphide-glutathione couple (GSSG/2GSH) [71]. The most important antioxidative enzymes of the heart are SOD, CAT and GPx. SOD catalyzes the dismutation of O_2^- to hydrogen peroxide (H_2O_2). Catalase and peroxidase remove H_2O_2 and, moreover, GPx can reduce lipid peroxides. Under normal conditions an equilibrium exists between the formation and removal ROS. If ROS are formed in excess or the defensive antioxidative mechanism are inefficient, oxidative stress develops [3, 69]. Free radical-scavenging enzymes such as SOD and CAT are the first line of cellular defense against oxidative injury, decomposing O_2^- and H_2O_2 before interact-

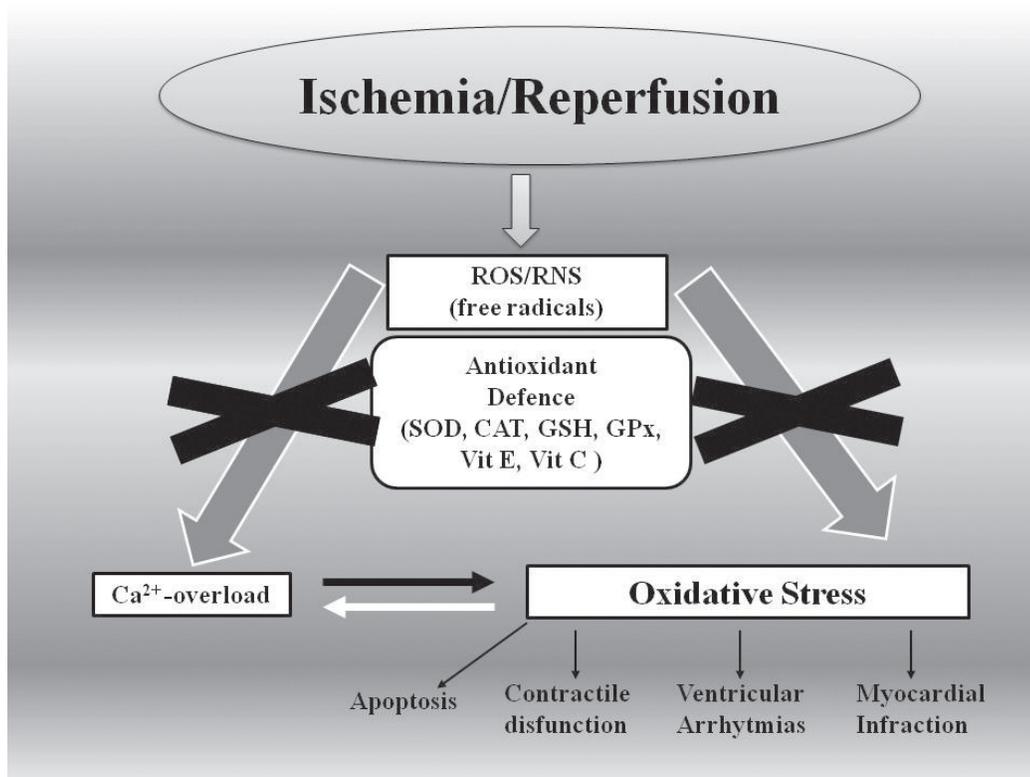


Fig. (1). Role of oxidative stress and antioxidant defense in the heart following ischemia/reperfusion.

ing to form the more reactive hydroxyl radical (OH) [11, 72] showed that CAT activity significantly increased after reperfusion, suggesting that the antioxidant defense system protects the cell against reactive species. High levels of SOD and CAT were found in patients with coronary heart disease by Weinbrenner *et al.* [73] and Kesavulu *et al.* [74], respectively. Bagatini *et al.* [75], also observed an increase in SOD and CAT activities in whole blood of myocardial infarction patients. A possible explanation for this is that the rise in SOD and CAT activity could be a compensatory mechanism to prevent tissue damage caused by oxidative stress [74]. Conversely, Senthil *et al.* [76] and Pandey *et al.* [77] observed decreasing SOD and CAT activities in erythrocytes of cardiogenic shock patients and in human blood platelets in myocardial infarction. These findings may be explained by a decrease in antioxidant enzymes followed by an increase in their activity levels after ROS generation, such as in myocardial injury followed by reperfusion [78]. Another point to be discussed here is that SOD and CAT are intracellular enzymes that can also increase due to tissue damage in myocardial infarction. In the same line of thought, Nikolic-Heitzler *et al.* [79], studying oxidative stress in myocardial infarction patients treated by percutaneous coronary intervention, found an increase in antioxidant capacity, and this rise was assigned to the release of intracellular antioxidants caused by tissue damage in myocardial infarction (Fig. 1).

2. PRO-INFLAMMATORY CYTOKINES AFTER MYOCARDIAL INFARCTION

2.1. TNF- α

TNF- α belongs to a superfamily of ligand/receptor proteins called the tumor necrosis factor/tumor necrosis factor

receptor superfamily proteins (TNF/TNFR SFP). TNF- α possess a trimeric symmetry with a structural motif called the TNF homology domain (THD), which is shared with all other members of the TNF proteins. This THD binds to the cysteine-rich domains (CRDs) of the TNF receptors (TNFRs), and variations of these CRDs lead to heterogeneity of the TNFRs [80]. TNFRs are either constitutively expressed (TNFR1, p55-R) or inducible (TNFR2, p75-R) [81].

TNF- α is able of exerting diverse effects on all cell types implicated in cardiac injury and repair. TNF- α improves cardiomyocyte apoptosis [82]. Suppresses cardiac contractility [83, 84] and stimulates expression of chemokines, proinflammatory cytokines and adhesion molecules by endothelial cells and leukocytes, in addition regulates extracellular matrix metabolism, in cardiac fibroblasts, by enhancing Matrix metalloproteinases activity and by decreasing collagen synthesis [85].

Various studies tried to explain the diverse effects of TNF- α in the infarcted myocardium. Sun *et al.* demonstrated that elevated local TNF- α in the infarcted myocardium contributes to acute myocardial rupture and chronic left ventricle dysfunction by inducing exuberant local inflammatory response, matrix and collagen degradation, increased matrix metalloproteinase activity, and apoptosis [86].

Several other studies have demonstrated an essential role for TNF- α in mediating inflammatory injury following infarction [23, 87].

Contradictory findings regarding the effects of TNF- α neutralization on the infarcted heart were found in inhibition studies. Several studies demonstrated injurious effects of TNF- α signaling in mediating infarct expansion and cardiac

dysfunction. In particular Berthonneche *et al.* demonstrated that TNF- α plays a major role in cardiac alterations 7 days after myocardial infarction in rats and contributes to hemodynamic derangement, but not to cardiac remodeling, in subsequent Cardiac Heart Failure [88] and Sugano *et al.* proved that the suppression of TNF- α bioactivity from the early stage of infarction with the Soluble TNF- α receptor 1 plasmid improved cardiac function and reduced infarct size [89].

While other authors indicated protective effects of TNF- α signaling in the infarcted myocardium. Moden *et al.* demonstrated that the TNF- α inhibition using gene therapy with soluble TNF α receptor had deleterious effects in a mouse infarction model promoting cardiac rupture and enhancing adverse remodeling [90].

In addition, Kurrelmeyer *et al.* in an animal experimental study showed that the peak frequency and extent of apoptosis were accelerated in the TNFR1/TNFR2-deficient mice when compared with the wild-type mice. The increase in apoptosis in the TNFR1/TNFR2-deficient mice did not appear to be secondary to a selective up-regulation of the Fas ligand/receptor system in these mice. These data suggest that TNF signaling gives rise to one or more cytoprotective signals that prevent and/or delay the development of cardiac myocyte apoptosis after acute ischemic injury [91].

The results of these studies showed that TNF- α may induce cytoprotective signals able of preventing or delaying the development of myocyte apoptosis after myocardial infarction. TNF- α may exercise distinct biological effects through the TNFR1 and TNFR2 receptor. Monden *et al.* suggest that effects mediated through TNFR1 are harmful, inducing cardiac dysfunction, whereas TNFR2-mediated actions may be protective by attenuating adverse remodeling [93].

In a recent study, Yu *et al.* investigated direct effects of hypoxia on TNF- α expression of cardiomyocytes, the role of hypoxia inducible factor-1 α (HIF-1 α) in TNF- α regulation and potential secretory pathway of TNF- α . Elevated TNF- α expression and HIF-1 α activation in primary cultured cardiomyocytes under hypoxia were detected by real-time PCR, Western blotting and immunofluorescence. Results of this study indicate that under hypoxia, HIF-1 α initiates expression of TNF- α , mediated by exosomes in cardiomyocytes [94].

The contradictory findings of the various studies about the role of TNF- α in myocardial infarction highlight the complex and pleiotropic actions of the cytokines in biological processes and may explain the unpredictable effects of cytokine-targeted therapeutic strategies in clinical trials for example the clinical significance of early TNF- α elevation in patients ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI) and successful primary percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) [94].

2.2. IL-1 Family

The Interleukin-1 (IL-1) gene family consists of three members: IL-1 α , IL-1 β and IL-1 receptor antagonist (IL-1ra). IL-1 α and IL-1 β play an agonist role, while IL-1ra is a specific receptor antagonist [95].

IL-1 α and IL-1 β are able to induce the release and function of chemokines, growth factors, other cytokines, and adhesion molecules. In several experimental models of myocardial infarction has been demonstrated an upregulation of IL-1 α and IL-1 β [19, 96].

In patients affected by acute myocardial infarction has been recorded, a significant increase of IL-1 β plasma levels [97]. Suzuki *et al.* demonstrated that IL-1ra introduced by gene transfection protected myocardium from ischemia-reperfusion injury by attenuating the inflammatory response, which was associated with decreased apoptosis. This suggests a potentially important role of IL-1/IL-1ra in myocardial ischemia-reperfusion injury and the value of IL-1ra-gene therapy for myocardial preservation; so, this study advances an injurious role for IL-1 in the ischemic myocardium [98].

In opposition of the study of Suzuki *et al.* another investigation performed by Hwang *et al.* suggested a protective role of IL-1 in myocardial infarction demonstrating that IL-1 β neutralization in the acute phase of myocardial infarction caused an increase of cardiac rupture and enhanced adverse remodeling [99].

The proinflammatory cytokine interleukin IL-1 signals exclusively through the type I IL-1 receptor (IL-1RI). IL-1 expression is markedly induced in the infarcted heart; however, its role in cardiac injury and repair remains controversial [100]. Following reperfused infarction IL-1RI null mice exhibited decreased infiltration of the infarcted myocardium with neutrophils and macrophages and reduced chemokine and cytokine expression. IL-1 signaling is essential for activation of inflammatory and fibrogenic pathways in the healing infarct, playing an important role in the pathogenesis of remodeling after infarction. Thus, interventional therapeutics targeting the IL-1 system may have great benefits in myocardial infarction [100, 101].

Different studies have identified a role of IL-1 in the development of adverse cardiac remodeling. However, in animal models of Acute myocardial infarction IL-1 has been shown to be cardioprotective in preconditioning, raising the question of clinical safety of therapeutic IL-1 blockade for autoinflammatory diseases or for the prevention or the treatment of Acute myocardial infarction. Toldo *et al.* proposed to evaluate the effects of pretreatment with recombinant human interleukin-1 receptor antagonist (rhIL-1Ra) on ischemia reperfusion (I/R) injury to the heart and showed that IL-1 blockade therapies using rhIL-1Ra prior the onset of Acute myocardial infarction protects the myocardium and preserves cardiac function in an animal model [102].

2.3. The IL-6 Family of Cytokines

The family of IL (interleukin)-6-type cytokines comprises IL-6, IL-11, LIF (leukaemia inhibitory factor), OSM (oncostatin M), CNTF (ciliary neurotrophic factor), CT-1 (cardiotrophin-1) and CLC (cardiotrophin-like cytokine) and neurotrophin-1/B-cell stimulating factor-3 (NNT-1/BSF-3). They activate target genes involved in differentiation, survival, apoptosis and proliferation. The members of this cytokine family have pro- as well as antiinflammatory properties and are major players in haematopoiesis, as well as in acute-phase and immune responses of the organism. All IL-6-

related cytokines signal through multisubunit receptors that share the transmembrane glycoprotein (gp)130. Many experimental studies demonstrated induction of members of the IL-6 family in healing infarcts [103].

In the ischemic myocardium, the IL-6 synthesis is quickly induced in mononuclear cells and cardiomyocytes [23, 104, 105].

In fibroblasts and surviving cardiomyocytes the Cardiotrophin-1 is upregulated and manifests a delayed period of expression [103, 106], while LIF [22] and oncostatin-M [107] are induced during the inflammatory phase of healing.

Despite the numerous studies performed the functional role of IL-6 in infarct healing remains unknown. Members of the IL-6 family have intense effects on cardiac myocytes both in the protection from apoptosis and promotion of cardiac hypertrophy [108].

CT-1 can protect adult cardiac cells both *in vitro* and *in vivo* when added both prior to or after the hypoxic/ischemic stimulus. CT-1 administration resulted in decreased infarct size and reduced cardiomyocyte apoptosis in a rat model of myocardial ischemia and reperfusion [109]. In a mouse model of reperfused infarction, CT-1 absence did not modify infarct size, so the study suggest that endogenous CT-1 does not play an essential role in acute ischemic cardiac injury [110]. While a prolonged CT-1 upregulation in the infarcted myocardium may modulate the fibrotic response through effects on fibroblast proliferation [111].

The role of endogenous LIF expression in the infarct remains is not well known, LIF enhances survival of cardiomyocytes and induces regeneration of myocardium after myocardial infarction and induced angiogenesis, improving recruitment of bone marrow-derived cells into the heart [112].

IL-6 is able of modulating the phenotypic characteristics and gene expression of many cell types involved in infarct healing [113]. However, Fuchs *et al.* [114] found that the absence of IL-6 did not affect infarct size, left ventricular function and post-infarction remodeling in non-reperfused infarcts.

2.4. The Chemokine Family in Myocardial Infarction

Chemokines are a family of small cytokines, or proteins (8-14 kDa) secreted by cells with a strikingly similar tertiary structure. Their name is derived from their ability to induce directed chemotaxis in nearby responsive cells; they are chemotactic cytokines. Proteins are classified as chemokines according to shared structural characteristics such as small size, and the presence of four cysteine residues in conserved locations that are key to forming their 3-dimensional shape [115]. Chemokines are divided into subfamilies on the basis of the number and sequential relationship of their conserved cysteine residues (CXC, CC, XC and CX3C subfamilies). The principal targets of Chemokines are bone marrow-derived cells they have a fundamental role in basal and inflammatory leukocyte locomotion and trafficking [116, 117].

Chemokines are able of eliciting a variety of responses concerning leukocyte activation, degranulation and apoptosis, in addition some studies suggests that chemokines exert

important actions on many cell types beyond the immune system, including endothelial cells (resulting in angiogenic, or angiostatic effects), smooth muscle cells, neurons and epithelial cells [118].

Chemokines can be shared in two groups: homeostatic chemokines (constitutively expressed in certain tissues and responsible of basal leukocyte trafficking), and inducible chemokines (upregulated by inflammatory stimuli, in the inflammatory reactions and inducing leukocyte recruitment) [119, 120].

The stimulus for the production of chemokines is a fundamental feature of the postinfarction inflammatory response [121-123].

Variuos experimental models of myocardial infarction showed a strong induction of several members of the chemokine family in the ischemic heart supporting their role in leukocyte recruitment, infarct angiogenesis and fibrous tissue deposition [124].

Monocyte chemoattractant protein (MCP)-1/CCL2 is expressed by mainly inflammatory cells and stromal cells, such as endothelial cells, mediates recruitment of mononuclear cells, modulates monocyte and lymphocyte phenotype and regulates fibrous tissue deposition and angiogenesis and its expression is upregulated after proinflammatory stimuli and tissue injury. MCP-1 can function as a traditional chemotactic cytokine and also regulates gene transcription, indeed MCP-1 is markedly induced in the infarcted myocardium and plays an important role in infarct healing and post-infarction remodeling [125]. In studies utilizing MCP-1 null mice was been demonstrated a decreasing macrophage recruitment in the infarcted heart, delayed phagocytosis of dead cardiomyocytes, diminished fibroblast infiltration and attenuated left ventricular remodeling [126]. During the inflammatory stage of infarct healing, MCP-1 mediates macrophage recruitment and timely clearance of dead cells from the infarct; however, prolonged induction of the chemokine in the infarcted heart may result in extension of granulation tissue formation and adverse remodeling of the ventricle [127]. The recently identified novel zinc-finger protein, called MCP-1-induced protein, promotes a series of signaling events that causes oxidative and endoplasmic reticulum (ER) stress, leading to autophagy that can result in cell death or differentiation, depending on the cellular context [128] (Fig. 2).

The mechanisms with MCP-1 causes migration of cells through binding to its receptor CCR2, present on the target cells, has been studied extensively [129]. Various studies demonstrated the role of MCP-1 in a variety of inflammatory diseases. The signal transduction events initiated by MCP-1 binding to CCR2 could result in induction of genes that could play a significant role in the development of inflammatory processes, but, the genes induced by MCP-1 and their potential role in inflammatory processes is not well understood [130, 131].

Experimental studies have identified a novel CCCH zinc finger protein, which was significantly induced by MCP-1 in human monocytes and thus designated as MCP-induced protein (MCP-IP), as negative regulator of macrophage activation.

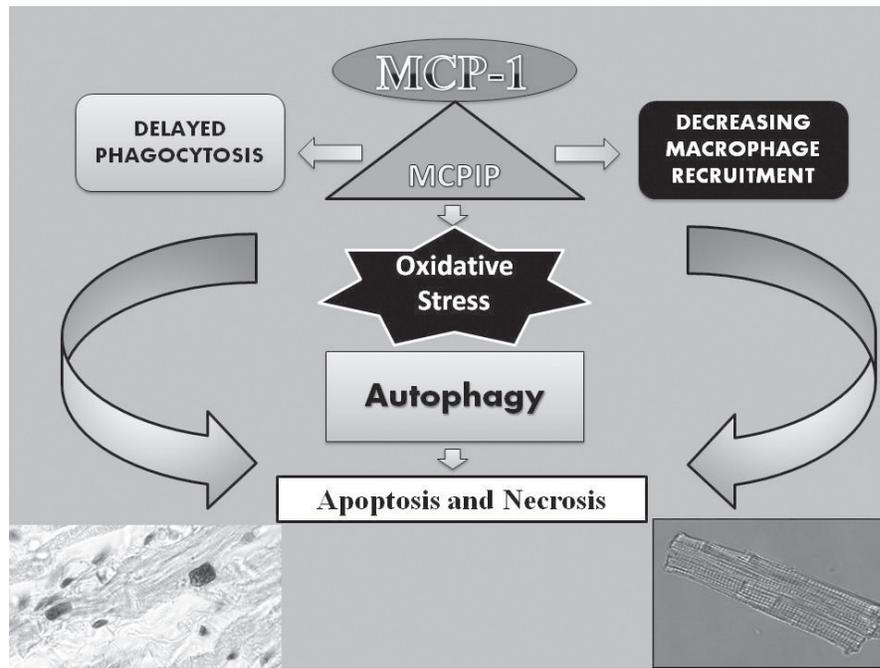


Fig. (2). Schematic representation of the MCP-1/MCPIP-induced processes in myocardial infarcted.

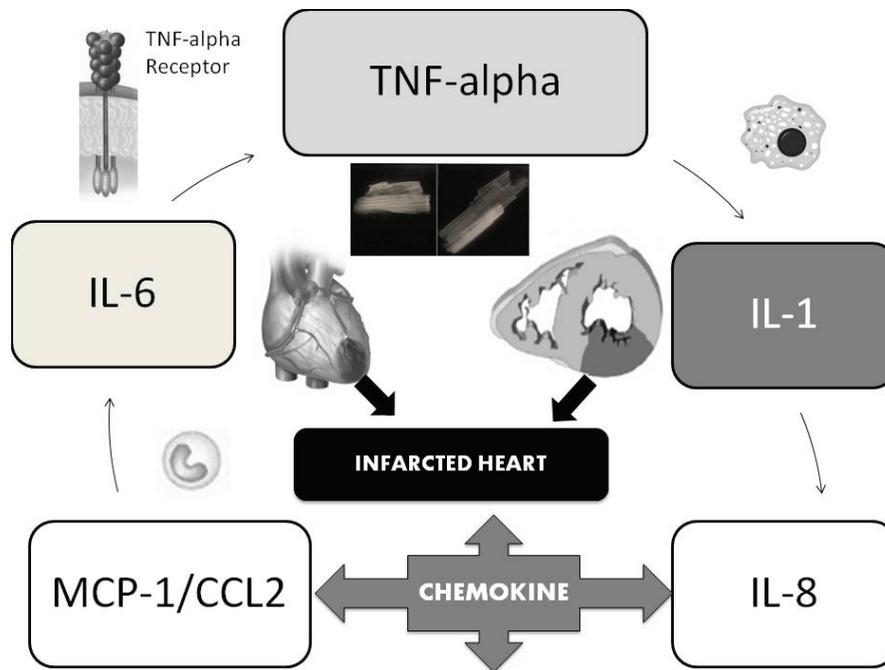


Fig. (3). Pro-inflammatory cytokines in the heart following acute ischemia.

The scientific evidence demonstrated that MCP-1 induction of a novel class of zinc-finger proteins in human peripheral blood monocytes is a consequence of the chain of events triggered by MCP-1 binding to CCR2 [131, 132]. The MCPIP turned out to be the first member of a novel family of CCCH zinc-finger proteins containing 4 members that we designate MCPIP 1, 2, 3, and 4, encoded by *zc3h12a*, *zc3h12b*, *zc3h12c*, and *z2ch12d*, respectively. The best-studied member MCPIP1 is often simply called MCPIP. A genome-wide analysis of the CCCH zinc-finger gene family discovered 58 such genes in mice and 55 in humans. At least 7 of them were

found to be expressed in macrophage-related organs such as thymus, spleen, lung, intestine, and adipose tissues [133]. MCPIP was found to be capable to control inflammatory response by inhibition of nuclear factor- κ B activation through its deubiquitinase activity or by degradation of mRNA encoding a set of inflammatory cytokines through its RNase activity [128].

In the family of chemokine, IL-8/CXCL8 is the prototypic of CXC chemokine, and plays a critical role in regulation of neutrophil influx and activation with angiogenic properties [134-136].

In animal models (canine and rabbit) of experimental myocardial infarction the IL-8 upregulation has been explained [137, 138]. IL-8 induces the neutrophil respiratory burst and granule release, and enhances cellular adhesion, a β 2 integrin-dependent event. The activation of β 2-integrin induced by IL-8 may be mediated through mitogen-activated protein kinase (MAPK) and protein kinase C (PKC) signaling. IL-8 may also have effects beyond its neutrophil chemotactic properties [139]. In a rabbit model study of myocardial ischemia-reperfusion injury the authors showed that IL-8 neutralization significantly reduces the degree of necrosis without affecting neutrophil infiltration [140] (Fig. 3).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors confirm that this article content has no conflict of interest.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Declared none.

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