Autologous Cardiomyotissue Implantation Promotes Myocardial Regeneration, Decreases Infarct Size, and Improves Left Ventricular Function

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Background—Cell therapy for myocardial infarction (MI) may be limited by poor cell survival and lack of transdifferentiation. We report a novel technique of implanting whole autologous myocardial tissue from preserved myocardial regions into infarcted regions.

Methods and Results—Fourteen rats were used to optimize cardiomyotissue size with peritoneal wall implantation (300 μm identified as optimal size). Thirty-nine pigs were used to investigate cardiomyotissue implantation in MI induced by left anterior descending balloon occlusion (10 animals died; male-to-female transplantation for tracking with in situ hybridization for Y chromosome, n=4 [2 donors and 2 MI animals]; acute MI implantation cohort at 1 hour, n=13; and healed MI implantation at 2 weeks, n=12). Assessment included echocardiography, magnetic resonance imaging, hemodynamics, triphenyltetrazolium chloride staining, and histological and molecular analyses. Tracking studies demonstrated viable implants with donor cells interspersed in the adjacent myocardium with gap junctions and desmosomes. In the acute MI cohort, treated animals compared with controls had improved perfusion by magnetic resonance imaging (1.2±0.01 versus 0.86±0.05; P<0.01), decreased MI size (magnetic resonance imaging: left ventricle, 2.2±0.5% versus 5.4±1.5%, P=0.04; triphenyltetrazolium chloride: anterior wall, 10.3±4.6% versus 28.9±5.8%, P<0.03), and improved contractility (dP/dt, 1235±215 versus 817±817; P<0.05). In the healed MI cohort, treated animals had less decline in ejection fraction between 2 and 4 week assessment (−3.4% versus −13±4%; P<0.05), less decline in ±dP/dt, and smaller MI (triphenyltetrazolium chloride, 21±11% versus 3±8%; P=0.006) than control animals. Infarcts in the treated animals contained more mdr-1+ cells and fewer c-kit+ cells with a trend for decreased expression of matrix metalloproteinase-2 and increased expression of tissue inhibitor of metalloproteinase-2.

Conclusion—Autologous cardiomyotissue implanted in an MI area remains viable, exhibits electromechanical coupling, decreases infarct size, and improves left ventricular function. (Circulation. 2011;123:62-69.)

Key Words: myocardial infarction • remodeling • stem cells

Myocardial infarction (MI) and its resultant left ventricular (LV) dysfunction remain a leading cause of mortality and morbidity. Different therapies for myocardial regeneration have been investigated with varying results and no definitive beneficial effects.1–11 Concomitantly, the intrinsic regenerative potential of the myocardium has been increasingly recognized.12–14 Adult cardiac stem cells injected into vasculature of rats after MI are able to differentiate into cardiomyocytes and arterioles.15,16 In addition, it has been increasingly recognized that the delivery modality is a key limiting step in attempts at myocardial regeneration and angiogenesis with poor survival of transplanted cells (possible related to “milieu”) and limited deposition and retention of injected cytokines.17–20 This, coupled with mounting evidence relative to the lack of transdifferentiation potential of adult non–cardiac-derived stem cells, warrants a novel approach to myocardial regeneration.21,22

Clinical Perspective on p 69

We have developed a novel approach to adult cardiomyocyte transplantation. In a porcine model of MI, core biopsies of myocardial tissue are obtained from the preserved basal ventricular septum and used for implantation into the myocardial scar...
with their intact milieu and without the need for tissue culture and processing. Here, we present the results of preclinical studies for this new technique in the treatment of MI.

**Methods**

All experiments were performed in accordance with National Institutes of Health guidelines and were approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center.

**Myotissue Sizing Experiments**

Fourteen inbred rats (50 to 60 g) were used. Donor rats (n=3) were euthanized with CO₂ inhalation, and the heart was excised and placed in normal saline. Strips of varying diameters (100 to 500 μm) were obtained under a dissection microscope. Eleven rats were then anesthetized with intraperitoneal ketamine/xylazine (0.1 mL /100 g). The abdominal skin was incised and rectus muscle was exposed. Strips were implanted, and rectus fascia was closed with 10–0 Prolene suture. Animals were divided into 5 groups (n=2 per group) with implantation of 100-, 200-, 300-, 400-, and 500-μm strips (1 strip per animal). The animals were allowed to recover and were euthanized after 1 week, and the abdominal wall was formalin fixed, paraaffin embedded, and sectioned for hema-toxylin and eosin staining.

**Porcine Balloon Occlusion Catheter Model of Anterior MI**

Thirty-nine 30- to 40-kg Yorkshire pigs were anesthetized with intramuscular ketamine (10 mg/kg) and 10 mg/kg thereafter to prevent rejection (not HLA matched). Animals in the acute MI cohort underwent cardiovascular magnetic resonance on a 1.5-T General Electric TwinSpeed Scanner (GE Healthcare Technologies, Milwaukee, WI) 4 weeks after infarction as previously described. The following evaluations were performed: extent of myocardial necrosis/infarction defined by the volume of myocardium demonstrating hyperenhancement on delayed contrast imaging, resting regional and global LV systolic function, and resting first-pass regional myocardial perfusion.

**Infarct Volume, Myocardial Perfusion, and Functional Assessment by Cardiac Magnetic Resonance**

Animals in the acute MI cohort underwent cardiovascular magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) was not performed because of multiple procedures in this cohort to reduce time under anesthesia. End-systolic and end-diastolic LV cavity dimensions at the level of midpapillary muscles were determined in the M mode. EF was calculated from the following formula: EF = (LVEDV - LVESV) / LVEDV, where LVEDV is the end-diastolic volume, and LVESV is the end-systolic volume. LV ejection fraction (EF) and LV end-diastolic dimension were derived from the Teicholz formula: (end-diastolic dimension – end-systolic dimension) / end-diastolic dimension x 100. Measurements were repeated at 4 weeks after infarction at the time of tissue harvest. In the acute cohort, echocardiography was performed at the time of death (at 4 weeks). Echocardiographic analysis was performed qualitatively and quantitatively by 2 experienced echocardiographers in a blinded fashion.

**Hemodynamic Assessment**

LV pressure was measured with a high-fidelity micromanometer catheter placed in the LV cavity in a retrograde fashion. The rate of change of LV pressure was measured and averaged over 10 beats (dP/dt). Left atrial pressure was measured with a 3.5-JL 5F catheter advanced (retrograde) to left atrium. All data were recorded digitally and stored for offline analysis (Sonosoft, Sonometrics Corp, London, ON, Canada).
Histology, Morphometric Analysis, and Immunohistochemistry

Four weeks after the initial infarction, animals were euthanized under general anesthesia, and the hearts were harvested and cut into 5 transverse slices. The apical and middle slices were used for myocardial viability with 1% triphenyltetrazolium chloride (TTC) in phosphate buffer (Sigma Chemical) and incubated for 20 minutes at 38°C as previously described.25-26 Stained slices were placed on clear acetate glass, and the infarct area was measured by planimetry (by 2 independent observers). The remaining cardiac tissue was placed in 10% formalin for paraffin embedding and processed for immunohistochemistry staining. Tissue was also snap-frozen in liquid nitrogen at −80°C for subsequent protein and RNA analyses (for matrix metalloproteinase-2 [MMP-2] and tissue inhibitor of metalloproteinase-2 [TIMP-2] expression). Paraffin tissues were subjected to antigen retrieval techniques (immersion in boiling citrate buffer). Immunohistochemistry was performed with mdr-1 at 1:40 dilution (Chemicon International, Temecula, CA), c-kit at 1: 200 dilution (Dako, Carpinteria, CA),27 anti-connexin 43 (Zymed, San Francisco, CA) at 1:250 dilution, anti–pan-cadherin (Zymed) at 1:250 dilution, and platelet endothelial cell adhesion molecule-1 (PECAM-1) at 1:250 dilution (Santa Cruz Biotechnology, Inc, Santa Cruz, CA). Apoptotic cells were visualized with terminal deoxynucleotidyl transferase dUTP nick-end labeling (TUNEL) assay as previously described18 (Apoptag kit, Chemicon). Anti-isotype secondary antibodies (dilution, 1:250) and a streptavidin-biotin system with a diaminobenzidine development system was used to visualize the “stem” cells and PECAM-1” cells. Sections were counterstained with hematoxylin. Cells were counted with image analysis software (SpotAdvanced, Sterling Heights, MI); 10 representative ×10-power fields for stem cells and 10 ×40-power fields for PECAM-1, and assessment was blinded to treatment assignment. Data are presented as the average number of cells per 1 mm².

Molecular Studies

Myocardial tissue samples were lysed in radioimmunoprecipitation assay solution (Boston Bioproducts, Ashland, MA). Protein concentrations were determined by Bradford assay. Equal amounts of protein were subjected to fractionation on 10% SDS-polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis under reducing conditions. Protein extracts were transferred to polyvinylidene difluoride membranes (Millipore, Bedford, MA). MMP-2 and TIMP-2 (Chemicon) were detected with specific antibodies. Immunoblots were visualized with appropriate secondary antibodies conjugated to horseradish peroxidase and chemiluminescence detection reagents (Amersham, Life Science, Arlington Heights, IL). Values of image densitometry were obtained with ImageJ software and adjusted by the ratio of sample loading as determined by Ponceau Red staining.

Statistical Analysis

Data analysis and graphing were performed with the Statview software package (SAS Institute Inc, Cary, NC). Groups were compared through the use of 2-tailed Student t test with a cutoff for statistical significance of P=0.05. For comparisons of data at 2 and 4 weeks, paired t tests were used to compare means within groups, whereas unpaired tests were used to compare means between groups. Normal distribution of the data was verified before parametric analysis was performed. Correction was made for multiple comparisons. Data are expressed as mean±SD.

Results

Sizing Experiments

Abdominal wall sections were obtained from implanted rats. Tissues ≤300 μm remained viable at 1 week after implantation in all animals. Tissues 400 and 500 μm in diameter showed necrosis, indicating that the maximal tissue size for implantation would be 300 μm, probably related to revascularization of the implant (Figure 1).

Feasibility and Safety of Cardiomyotissue Implantation

The initial creation of the MI model with balloon occlusion was associated with 31% mortality secondary to ventricular fibrillation during balloon occlusion. Twenty-seven of 37 animals survived: 2 for male-female transplantation, 13 in the acute MI cohort (6 sham and 7 treated animals), and 12 in the healed infarct cohort (6 sham and 6 treated animals). There was no additional mortality associated with cardiomyotissue implantation. The animals tolerated both the biopsy of the basal septum and the anterior wall implantation without hypotension or sustained arrhythmias.

Histological Analysis and Male-Into-Female Transplantation Model

Histological analysis by hematoxylin and eosin staining confirmed the presence of extensive areas of infarction and fibrosis in the anteroseptal area. In the treated animals, all implants were identified and were viable (marked with 6–0 suture) in multiple tissue sections (Figure 2A). This was
confirmed by identification of male Y chromosome–positive implants in female recipients by in situ hybridization (Figure 2B). In addition, small infiltrates of inflammatory cells were identified at the implant site, most likely resulting from donors not HLA matched to recipients (only prednisone for immunosuppression). Staining for gap junctions with anti–connexin 43 antibody and for desmosomal junctions with anti–pan-cadherin antibody on sequential sections showed the presence of both gap junctions and desmosomes in the male-derived implants and connected these cells to surrounding female host tissue (Figure 2C and 2D). There was no evidence of apoptosis by TUNEL staining within the implant (Figure 3A and 3B). There was also no evidence of apoptosis in implants from acute and healed MI cohorts. In situ hybridization Y chromosome–positive cells were noted outside the implant area dispersed among negative cells, indicating possible migration and proliferation of implanted cells into the surrounding myocardium (Figure 3C).

Acute MI Cohort

MRI and Echocardiography Results

The perfusion ratio of anterior to septal wall was greater in the treated animals than in controls (1.2±0.01 versus 0.86±0.05; P<0.01; Figure 4A). Mean infarct volume (delayed enhancement) was smaller in treated than in control animals (2.2±0.5 versus 5.4±1.5; P=0.04; Figure 4B). Percent wall thickening was 9-fold greater in the anterior wall of treated animals compared with controls (60.5±40.2 versus 7.0±9.5; P=0.069). No such difference was seen in the nonimplanted septum (46.7±61 in treated versus 11.6±31 in controls; P=0.4). The difference in the overall EF between the 2 groups of 5% did not reach statistical significance (37.0±8.0% in treated animals versus 32.5±6.4% in controls; P=0.28). By echocardiography, the difference in overall EF between the 2 groups of 7% did not reach statistical significance (41±11% in treated animals versus 33±5% in controls; P=0.16).

Hemodynamics (dP/dt)

Contractility as measured by positive maximal dP/dt was greater in the treated animals compared with controls (1235±215 versus 817±817; P<0.05), indicating that the overall systolic myocardial function was improved in treated animals.

TTC Staining

The percent infarct size of the anterior wall area in the treated animals was 3-fold smaller than in controls (10.3±4.6 versus 28.9±5.8; P<0.03; Figure 5). There was no difference between the 2 groups in percent infarct size of the septal area (21.6±5.3 versus 21.5±2.5; P=0.8).

Healed MI Cohort

Echocardiographic Assessment of LV Function

Treated animals had the same EF at 2 and 4 week time points (49±6.5% versus 46±7.4%; P=0.5; Figure 6A). In contrast, EF decreased significantly in control animals between 2 and 4 weeks (50±10.4% versus 36±8.7%; P=0.038). Treated animals had significantly less decline in EF than controls (−3±4% versus −13±4%; P=0.003).

Hemodynamics

Both systolic (positive dP/dt) and diastolic (negative dP/dt) function and LA pressures did not change in the treated animals between weeks 2 and 4 after infarction (Figure 6B). Control animals, on the other hand, had decreased positive dP/dt and negative dP/dt and increased left atrial pressures. In addition, treated animals had better hemodynamic parameter change between 2 and 4 weeks compared with controls (dP/dt: −6±61 versus −134±119, P=0.04; left atrial pressure: −1.4±1.32 versus 5.3±0.8 mmHg, P<0.05).

Morphometric Analysis

Percent infarct size in the anterior wall of treated animals was significantly smaller than control animals (21±11 versus 38±8; P=0.006). There was also a significant difference in
the infarct size in the untreated septum, suggesting a global effect of cardiomyotissue on myocardial salvage (16±11 versus 27±10; P=0.02), an effect not seen in acute MI cohort. TTC staining assessment was consistent between the 2 independent observers (r=0.82, P=0.0005).

Adjacent to the implants and within the infarct region, a 2-fold greater number of cells positive for mdr-1 were observed (Figure 7). C-kit+ cells, on the other hand, were more abundant in control animals. PECAM-1 staining identified increased numbers of capillaries and neovessels in the treated animals (Figure 8). In addition, neovessels appeared larger in caliber in the implanted animals, possibly suggesting a more advanced stage of angiogenesis and arteriolization.

**Molecular Analysis**

We explored the expression of MMP-2 and TIMP-2, known to be involved in remodeling after infarction.28 Preserved myocardial function in treated animals correlated with 2-fold lower levels of MMP-2 and 2-fold higher levels of TIMP-2 (Figure 8).

**Discussion**

Cell-based therapies for myocardial regeneration have demonstrated variable initial results.4–7,29 We have developed a new method of myocardial autotransplantation that obviates the need for cell culture and could be implemented during planned revascularization procedures. Implantation of cardiomyotissue appears to reduce infarct size and to prevent the decline in myocardial function after extensive anterior MI. This was evident in the preservation of EF, LV dimensions, and hemodynamic parameters and the decrease in infarct size in the treated animals compared with controls. In addition, implants remain viable and appear to express connexin 43

![Figure 5.](image)

**Figure 5.** Measurement of the gross percent of MI in the anterior and septal regions of the myocardium by TTC staining. Percentage infarction in the anterior (treated) area is smaller in treated (black bar) than in control (gray bar) animals. Percentage infarction in the septal (untreated) area is the same in treated and control animals (right).

![Figure 6.](image)

**Figure 6.** Top right, Cardiomyotissue implantation in the myocardial infarct zone 2 weeks after MI prevents deterioration in EF. EF remained the same in the treated animals between weeks 2 and 4. EF decreased in controls. Top left (bottom), Left-sided filling pressures show elevation in controls (14 to 20 mm Hg; P=0.02). Left atrial pressure remained normal in treated animals. Bottom, Hemodynamic assessment of contractility (dP/dt, right) and relaxation (−dP/dt, left). dP/dt and −dP/dt declined in the control animals. No such adverse effect was seen in the treated animals.
and N-cadherin (gap junctions and desmosomes between the implant and surrounding myocardium). The effects in acute MI cohort were more robust than in the healed MI cohort, but this finding may be related in part to shorter treatment duration in this cohort. Our study was controlled for nonspecific effects of implantation by use of sham implants.

We propose that several mechanisms and intrinsic properties of whole-tissue implantation may be responsible for preventing the decline in myocardial function. It may avoid cell shearing and preserve tissue architecture and growth factor milieu within the extracellular matrix scaffold.30 Fully developed cardiomyocytes within the implant may be more likely to remain viable and to contribute to increased contractility. The viability was poor in prior studies when cell suspensions were transferred.19 In contrast, in our non–HLA-matched male-to-female implantation experiments, we observed good whole-implant viability without evidence of necrosis or apoptosis even in the presence of a low-level inflammatory reaction. In addition, myocardial implants appear to express both connexin 43 (gap junctions) and N-cadherin (desmosomes), which suggests electromechanical integration with the host myocardium, although this remains to be proven definitively in further studies. This finding may imply that unlike skeletal myoblasts that are electrically isolated,31 myotissue implants will be less likely to cause ventricular arrhythmias.

In addition, we hypothesize that our biopsies may contain resident stem cells that may contribute to myocardial repair.15,16 The overall contribution of resident stem cells to preservation of LV function in still uncertain, as is the Figure 7. A, Adult cardiac stem cell quantification. Representative mdr-1 (top) and c-kit (bottom) staining in a treated animal (at ×20; bar=1 mm). Bar graphs represent cells per 1 mm² in treated animals vs controls. Higher numbers of mdr-1+ cells (17 vs 9; P=0.038) but lower numbers of c-kit+ cells (1 vs 8; P=0.034) were seen in treated animals.

Figure 8. Top right, Increased vascular-ity in the implant-treated animals by PECAM-1 (CD31) staining. Vessels appeared more numerous and larger in caliber and lumen in treated animals. Magnification ×10. Top left, Quantification of the number of capillaries and neovessels by PECAM-1 (CD31) staining. Number of vessels was counted in a ×40 field and is represented per 1 mm². Implanted animals had 3-fold greater number of vessels (195±93 vs 82±65; P=0.04). Bottom, MMP protein expres-sion. MMP-2 (left) and TIMP-2 (right) expression levels in infarcted (MI) and noninfarcted tissue (C) of treated (black) animals and controls (gray) with myotis-sue transplantation. MMP-2 levels tended to be 2-fold lower and TIMP-2 levels tended to be 2-fold higher in treated animals.
definition of a stem cell and its recognition based on cell surface markers. Furthermore, the differentiation potential of the adult cardiac stem cells may be limited by the trophic factor–impoverished milieu of the infarct. By implanting the cardiac progenitor cells together with adjacent intact differentiated cardiomyocytes, however, we could have potentially provided them with those trophic factors necessary for differentiation. There was an overall increase in numbers of mdr-1+ stem cells in the infarct zone of treated animals surrounding the implant sites. Mdr-1+ cells have been shown to differentiate into myocytes, endothelial cells, smooth muscle cells, and fibroblasts.

To explain the improvement in myocardial function in treated animals, we also looked at the postimplantation levels of PECAM-1 staining, which showed increased vessels with larger vessel caliber in treated animals. This may be suggestive of more advanced stage of angiogenesis with arteriolization in the treated animals. In the acute model of MI, we have been able to demonstrate increased perfusion by MRI imaging in animals treated with cardiomyotissue implantation compared with controls.

We observed that treated animals tended to have lower levels of MMP-2 and higher levels of TIMP-2, with more favorable hemodynamic parameters in treated animals. As demonstrated in murine models of MI, MMP-2 expression increases and is maintained for several weeks after infarction. MMP-2 knockout mice appear to have decreased dilation response after infarction. TIMP knockout mice, on the other hand, have an exaggerated unfavorable remodeling with higher incidence of LV rupture and mortality. Whether this effect of cardiomyotissue transplantation on MMP-2 and TIMP-2 expression is direct or indirect remains to be elucidated. The cardiomyotissue likely has higher compliance than the anterior myocardial scar and thus may improve remodeling via so-called matrix-associated myocardial stabilization and paracrine effects.

The reduction in infarct size by TTC staining and delayed enhancement MRI imaging seen in this model would argue, however, that this passive matrix myocardial stabilization is not the sole mechanism of improvement of myocardial function.

Finally, the effects of cardiomyotissue implantation can be contrasted with the effects of skin microorgan transplantation. Although skin microorgan implantation improved perfusion, no effect on LV function was observed. In addition to improving perfusion, cardiomyotissue implantation resulted in improved LV function.

Limitations
This preliminary “proof of concept” study suffers from the limitation of lack of long-term follow-up and safety data. A major limitation was that randomization was not based on baseline infarct size and LV function. Furthermore, the worsening LV function in the acute MI control cohort conflicts with previous studies that surprisingly showed preserved LV function. Such preclinical experiments are planned before this technology can be introduced into clinical trials. The efficacy in chronic ischemia and heart failure models will also have to be explored. In addition, testing of the performance of this technology in the context of maximal medical therapy with angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors that prevent adverse remodeling in the clinical setting will be important.

Conclusions
We presented here a novel approach to cellular therapy for MI, which involves septal biopsy and implantation of the intact tissue into the infarcted area. This novel implantation technique has low mortality in our swine model of MI and is technically simple to perform. These whole-biopsy implants were efficacious in preventing myocardial dysfunction as measured by MRI, echocardiography, and hemodynamic parameters and in decreasing infarct size. They obviate the need for tissue manipulation and culture. The implants are viable at 2 weeks after implantation and may be electromechanically coupled with the host myocardium. Further studies are needed to explore the beneficial mechanism of this novel technology.

Acknowledgments
We would like to thank Dr Anthony Rosenzweig for his advice and help with manuscript preparation and Justine Curley-Cohen for her help with histology.

Sources of Funding
This work was supported in part by National Institutes of Health grant HL63609, a Center for Integration of Medicine and Innovative Technology grant, and the DeBakey Foundation at Balamand University (Dr Laham).

Disclosures
The Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and 2 coauthors (Drs Wykzyrowska and Laham) hold patent rights to the technology described in this article. The other authors report no conflicts.

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**CLINICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Myocardial infarction and the resultant left ventricular dysfunction remain a leading cause of mortality and morbidity. Different therapies for myocardial regeneration have been investigated with varying results and no definitive beneficial effects. Concomitantly, the intrinsic regenerative potential of the myocardium has been increasingly recognized. Adult cardiac stem cells injected into vasculature of rats after myocardial infarction are able to differentiate into cardiomyocytes and arterioles. In addition, it has been increasingly recognized that the delivery modality is a key limiting step in attempts at myocardial regeneration and angiogenesis with poor survival of transplanted cells (possibly related to “milieu”) and limited deposition and retention of injected cytokines. This, coupled with mounting evidence relative to the lack of transdifferentiation potential of adult non–cardiac derived stem cells, warrants a novel approach to myocardial regeneration. We have developed a novel approach to adult cardiomyocyte transplantation using autologous transplantation of normal cardiac myocardial tissue into areas of acute or healed myocardial infarction. Our results suggest a reduction in infarct size, improved left ventricular function and hemodynamics, improved remodeling, and possibly regeneration of damaged myocardial with resident stem cells from transplanted tissue.
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Circulation. published online December 20, 2010;
Circulation is published by the American Heart Association, 7272 Greenville Avenue, Dallas, TX 75231
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Print ISSN: 0009-7322. Online ISSN: 1524-4539

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Appendix 1 (supplemental information)

Description of the bioptome:
The bioptome performs a gun biopsy of the septum by exposing the sharp blade shown below within the tissue. As the bioptome window is placed in a closed position the biopsy material is protected inside. The bioptome can then be reinserted into the anterior wall infract/scar area and the bioptome window is opened again exposing the biopsy. The bioptome is then turned 180 degrees such that the biopsy is removed out of the bioptome, deposited in the scar and not dragged back as the bioptome is retracted back. This bioptome was in this case a biopsy and an implantation device.

MRI sequences for myocardial perfusion assessment:
The animals were placed in the right antecubital position, and a phased-array cardiac coil was placed around the chest. Mechanical ventilation and gaseous anesthesia was continued during scanning. Scout images were obtained to determine the short and long axis views of the heart. Fast imaging employing steady-state acquisition (FIESTA) pulse sequence was used to assess global and regional LV function. Short axis cine images were acquired with ECG gating with breathhold. The heart was imaged from base to apex with eight to ten LV short axis slices. The image parameters were as follows: TR/TE=3.8/1.7ms, flip angle was 45°, 224 × 224 matrix, 8 mm slice thickness no gap, bandwidth 125 kHz, field of view 26 cm and 1 NEX. MR Perfusion images were acquired in three slices each matched to short axis cine slice, representing the basal, midventricular, and apical myocardial segments, with ECG gated and non-breathhold fast gradient echo-echo train with multi phase (FGRET-MP) pulse sequence. After three to five heart beat initiation of the sequence as the baseline images, first-pass perfusion images were acquired after intravenous injection of 0.1 mmol/kg bodyweight gadolinium-DTPA (Magnevist, Berlex Laboratories, NJ) which was injected at
the rate of 3.0 ml/sec, followed by a 20 ml saline flush at the rate of 3.0 ml/sec by an infusion pump, total 50 phases were acquired each slice. Imaging parameters included the following: TR/TE=9.3/1.8 ms, inversion time 160 ms, echo train length of four, 128 × 128 matrix, flip angle 25°, 26 cm field of view, 8 mm slice thickness, 2 mm section spacing, 125 kHz bandwidth.

Infarct size was analyzed by using the delayed enhancement CMR technique. After completion of the cine and first-pass perfusion imaging, delayed enhancement images were acquired 15 min after a bolus injection 0.2 mmol/kg bodyweight gadolinium-DTPA. By using an ECG-gated, breathhold, 2D interleaved, inversion recovery, fast-gradient recoiled echo pulse sequence. A total of 8-10 continuous short-axis slices were prescribed to cover the entire LV from base to apex. Imaging parameters were as follow: TR/TE=6.7/3.2 ms, inversion recovery time 180 ~ 220 ms, flip angle=20°, 256 × 192 matrix, 8 mm slice thickness / no gap, bandwidth 31.25 kHz, 26 cm field of view and 2 NEX, Inversion recovery time was adjusted as needed to null the normal myocardium.

All the measurements were analyzed offline by an independent blinded investigator with commercial software (MASS by Medis Inc., Netherlands). For the myocardial perfusion analysis, short axis images were sorted according to slice position and acquisition time, the LV endocardial and epicardial contours were draw manually and six equiangular segments (anterior, antero-lateral, infero-lateral, inferior, infero-septal, antero-septal) per slice were generated automatically, the anterior septal insertion of the right ventricle as a reference point. The upslope of myocardial signal in six segments were divided by the upslope of the signal in the left ventricular cavity, which was regarded as a measure of the input function. Infarct size was determined as a percentage of LV (%LV) as the total of hyperenhanced pixels from each of the 8-10 continuous short axis slices divided by the total number of pixels within the LV myocardium multiplied by 100. The area of delayed-enhancement was defined as the pixels where the signal intensity differed by + 2 SDs from the signal enhancement in the remote myocardium (inferior wall) in the same slice.

Figure 1: Implantation: Right Ventricular (RV) free wall was incised and a bioptome (Cook Inc) introduced through an 8 Fr sheath. 6-10 biopsies were obtained from the ventricular basal septum. The same bioptome was used as an implantation device to deposit implants into the anterior myocardial scar. Sham operated animals also underwent a right thoracotomy and septal biopsy but an empty bioptome was introduced into the anterior wall scar.
자가 심근조직 내 줄기세포를 이용하여 심장기능 개선이 가능한가?

백상홍 교수 가톨릭대학교 서울성심병원 순환기내과

Summary

배경
심근경색증에 대한 기존의 세포치료는 세포생존율과 분화능이 낮으므로 심각한 제한이 있다. 저자들은 자가 심근조직을 심근 경색부위에 이식하는 새로운 기법의 결과를 보고하고자 한다.

방법 및 결과
쥐 40마리를 대상으로 심근조직과 복막이식을 시행하여 실험조건을 최적화하였다. 총 39마리의 좌관상동맥에 폐전을 이용하여 심근경색을 유도하고, 이후 심근조직 이식을 시행하였다. 실험 중 실험동물 10마리가 사망하였고, 수컷에서 암컷으로 이식(n=4), 급성 심근경색 이식 1시간 후 치료군(n=13), 지연된 심근경색으로 심근발생 2주 후 치료군(n=12)으로 구성되었다. 결과분석은 심초음파 MRI, 영역학, TZQ염색, 조직학 및 분자학적 규명으로 시행하였다. 세포투여결과에서 조직이식 후 2주 심근에 gap junction, desmosomes을 유지하면서 이식 세포가 이식되었다. 급성 심근경색 치료군은 대조군보다 MR1 경사상 힐레이션(1.2±0.01 vs. 0.86±0.05; P<0.01), 심근경색기 감소(MRI 좌심실 2.2±0.5% vs 5.4±1.5%, P<0.04; TZQ염색 부위 감소: 정상 10.3±4.6% vs. 28.9±5.8% P<0.03). 수축력 증가(ΔP/dt 1235±215 vs. 817±817 P<0.05) 등이 증가되었다. 지연된 심근경색군에서 세포치료의 경우 2-4주 사이의 효과를 평가하면 대조군에 비하여 좌심실구체의 감소가 적었고(3±4% vs. -13±4%; P<0.05). ΔP/dt 감소가 적었으며, TZQ염색 양적기 감소하는(21±11% vs. 3±8% P<0.006) 등의 소견이 관찰되었다. 또한, 치료군에서 mdr-1 양성세포가 많고 c-kit 양성세포가 적은 경우는 MMP-2 발현 감소와 TIMP-2 발현 증가의 경향이 있었다.

결론
자가 심근조직 이식은 심근경색 이후 생체생존률 개선 electromechanical coupling 존재 심근경색기 감소, 좌심실기능 개선효과를 보였다.
**Commentary**

심근경색에 의한 좌심실 기능저하는 심혈관질환 유병률과 사망률에 기인하는 주요한 위험요인이다. 10여 년 이래 측정을 이용한 고식적인 심근재생치료기술 개발의 다양한 전략은 여러 가지 상이한 결과를 도출하였고, 결국 치료효과에서 투자한 이득은 적은 것으로 알려졌다. 그러나 최근에 심근의 내면적 재생능력이 부각되면서, 성체 심근줄기세포 투여 시 심근세포와 혈관세포로 분화되는 것이 입증되었다.

그리고 세포 전달방법도 이식된 세포의 생존능과 고효능에 관여하는 심근 및 혈관재생에 중요한 단계이다. 심장에서 유래하지 않은 성체줄기세포의 심근세포로의 분화능이 현저히 떨어지는 기존의 많은 연구결과를 참조하면, 심근 조직을 통한 세포치료 전략은 가능성이 있었다. 본 연구결과는 심근계측에서 지가 심근조직이의 가능성을 제시하며, 심근경색 크기감소화심실기능 및 혈액 혈압수치개선, 심근재생성 개선 그리고 이식조직으로부터 장존한 줄기세포의 심근재생가능성을 제시한다. 그러나 지가 심근조직확득의 용이성과 안전성 측면에서 더욱 개선된 방법과 추가 연구가 필요할 것으로 생각된다.