ASYMMETRIC DIMETHYLARGININE (ADMA) INDUCES VASCULAR ENDOTHELIUM IMPAIRMENT AND AGGRAVATES MYOCARDIAL ISCHEMIA-REPERFUSION INJURY IN RATS

Bonomo Sara M., De Gennaro Colonna Vito, Manfredi Barbara, Ferrario Paolo, Bianchi Mauro, Berti Marco, Guazzi Marco, Berti Ferruccio, Rossoni Giuseppe

Department of Pharmacology, Chemotherapy and Medical Toxicology, University of Milano, Via Vanvitelli 32, Italy; Institute of Cardiology, Monzino Cardiology Center, IRCCS, Milan, Italy; Cardiopulmonary Laboratory, Cardiology Division, University of Milano, San Paolo Hospital, Milano, Italy

Asymmetric dimethylarginine (ADMA) is a naturally occurring inhibitor of nitric oxide (NO) synthesis that accumulates in a variety of diseases associated with endothelial dysfunction and enhanced atherosclerosis. Thus ADMA, which was identified as circulating in human plasma at concentration ten times that of N<sup>0</sup>-monomethyl-L-arginine, is considered the most important regulator of the L-arginine/NO pathway in vivo. This study investigated whether ADMA (10 mg/kg day for 14 days) affected endothelial function and aggravated post-ischemic ventricular dysfunction in the perfused rat heart. Systolic blood pressure and heart rate, plasma levels of ADMA and nitrite/nitrate were measured in vehicle- and ADMA-treated rats. Perfused hearts were submitted to global ischemia-reperfusion and vascular endothelial dysfunction was examined with angiotensin II in coronary vessels and aortic rings. Endothelial NO synthase (eNOS) and angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) mRNA expression in aortic and cardiac tissues were measured. ADMA-treated rats had higher systolic blood pressure (1.3-fold, P<0.01) and slower heart rate (16%, P<0.05) than controls. Plasma ADMA rose (1.9-fold, P<0.01) and nitrite/nitrate concentration decreased 59% (P<0.001). Ventricular contraction (stiffness) increased significantly, with worsening of post-ischemic ventricular dysfunction. In preparations from ADMA-treated rats the coronary vasculature’s response to angiotensin II was almost doubled (P<0.01) and the maximal vasorelaxant effect of acetylcholine in aortic rings was significantly lower than in preparations from vehicle-treated rats. In cardiac and aortic tissues eNOS mRNA and ACE mRNA levels were similar in controls and ADMA-treated rats. The increased plasma levels of ADMA presumably cause endothelial dysfunction because of a deficiency in NO production, which also appears involved in the aggravation of myocardial ischemia-reperfusion injury.