

REVIEW | *Novel Mechanisms of Myocardial Ischemia, Ischemia-Reperfusion, and Protection by Myocardial Conditioning*

Mitochondrial bioenergetics and cardiolipin alterations in myocardial ischemia-reperfusion injury: implications for pharmacological cardioprotection

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Paradies G, Paradies V, Ruggiero FM, Petrosillo G. Mitochondrial bioenergetics and cardiolipin alterations in myocardial ischemia-reperfusion injury: implications for pharmacological cardioprotection. *Am J Physiol Heart Circ Physiol* 315: H1341–H1352, 2018. First published August 10, 2018; doi:10.1152/ajpheart.00028.2018.— Mitochondrial dysfunction plays a central role in myocardial ischemia-reperfusion (I/R) injury. Increased reactive oxygen species production, impaired electron transport chain activity, aberrant mitochondrial dynamics, Ca²⁺ overload, and opening of the mitochondrial permeability transition pore have been proposed as major contributory factors to mitochondrial dysfunction during myocardial I/R injury. Cardiolipin (CL), a mitochondria-specific phospholipid, plays a pivotal role in multiple mitochondrial bioenergetic processes, including respiration and energy conversion, in mitochondrial morphology and dynamics as well as in several steps of the apoptotic process. Changes in CL levels, species composition, and degree of oxidation may have deleterious consequences for mitochondrial function with important implications in a variety of pathophysiological conditions, including myocardial I/R injury. In this review, we focus on the role played by CL alterations in mitochondrial dysfunction in myocardial I/R injury. Pharmacological strategies to prevent myocardial injury during I/R targeting mitochondrial CL are also examined.

cardiolipin; cardioprotection; heart ischemia-reperfusion injury; mitochondrial bioenergetics

INTRODUCTION

Myocardial ischemia is widely recognized as a major cause of morbidity and mortality worldwide. This pathological condition occurs because of obstruction of the blood flow through the myocardium and can provoke tissue damage due to lack of oxygen and nutrients required for energy production to drive the heart contractile cycle. It is well known that myocardial ischemia results in loss of contractile function and myocardial damage as a consequence of cell death from both necrosis and apoptosis (30, 45). Timely reperfusion of the ischemic heart restores blood flow, oxygen supply, and nutrients, improving left ventricular postinfarction contractile function and patient survival (33, 109). Although reperfusion after a prolonged period of ischemia is essential to restore normal cellular homeostasis and salvage myocardium, paradoxically this intervention may result in inflammation and oxidative damage through the induction of oxidative stress leading to cardiomyocyte death and subsequent irreversible

myocardial injury, a phenomenon commonly called “ischemia-reperfusion (I/R) injury.” Much attention has been devoted to characterization of the molecular and cellular basis of the injury response that results when myocardial ischemic tissue is reperfused (58, 71, 84).

It is now widely accepted that mitochondrial dysfunction plays a critical role in determining myocardial I/R injury, and in recent years many reviews have been published on this topic (58, 71, 84, 134). Myocardial I/R is characterized by cardiomyocyte hypercontracture, reduction of left ventricular pressure, augmented vascular resistance, and elevated incidence of ventricular fibrillation. Heart tissue consumes large amounts of energy to maintain contractile activity. To accommodate the high energy requirement to drive the contractile cycle and maintain ionic homeostasis, cardiomyocytes have a high mitochondrial density that comprises ~30% of the total intracellular volume (76). The major role of mitochondria in the heart is the production of ATP through the respiratory metabolism and oxidative phosphorylation (OXPHOS) process. About 90% of cellular ATP produced by cardiomyocytes is used to support the contraction-relaxation cycle within the myocardium. Even subtle alterations in mito-

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chondrial function can cause a significant change in cardiomyocyte energy production and further harm cardiovascular health. Mitochondria are intimately involved in the processes that lead to cell death, in both necrotic and apoptotic forms, during heart I/R and are therefore a potential target for cardioprotective interventions (30, 33, 45, 71).

Accumulating evidence suggests that oxidative stress plays a central role in myocardial I/R injury (21, 46, 66, 76, 136). Oxidative stress occurs when the antioxidant system is overwhelmed by overproduction of reactive oxygen species (ROS). Mitochondrial respiration is considered the major site of ROS production, which can be greatly enhanced when mitochondrial respiration is stimulated under conditions of impaired redox state and reduced availability of ADP (4, 15, 21, 61, 66, 71, 108), a condition occurring in heart I/R. Thus, mitochondrial respiration is considered an important source of ROS and hence a potential contributory factor to myocardial I/R injury (21).

Lipids are essential components of mitochondrial membranes and are required for maintaining the integrity and the proper functioning of mitochondria; however, because of their high content in unsaturated fatty acids, they are particularly vulnerable to peroxidation. It is well known that lipid peroxidation plays a major role in ROS toxicity, resulting in generalized deterioration of mitochondrial membrane structure and function in a number of metabolic disorders, including myocardial I/R injury (6). Among phospholipid species of the inner mitochondrial membrane (IMM), cardiolipin (CL) is of particular importance because of its key role in mitochondrial bioenergetics (88, 91, 93, 106), in mitochondrial dynamics and quality control through fission and fusion (9, 34, 59), in mitophagy to remove damaged mitochondria, as well as in the apoptotic process (90, 111) (Fig. 1). CL is rich in unsaturated fatty acids, which render this compound particularly prone to peroxidation. It is conceivable that oxidative damage to CL would be deleterious to normal mitochondrial function, and this may have important implications in a number of pathophysiological situations, including myocardial I/R injury (22, 71, 93, 113).

In the present review, we focus on the role played by CL alterations in mitochondrial dysfunction during myocardial I/R injury and on the underlying molecular mechanisms. Several pharmacological strategies to prevent or mitigate myocardial I/R injury, directly or indirectly targeting mitochondrial CL, are also examined.

MITOCHONDRIAL FUNCTION IN MYOCARDIAL I/R INJURY

Myocardial I/R causes a number of cardiac injuries including arrhythmias, myocardial stunning, microvascular obstruction, no reflow, and cell death from both necrosis and apoptosis. The sequence of events occurring upon myocardial I/R has been widely investigated and described in several recent reviews (16, 17, 58, 71, 84, 121, 134). Many of the intracellular changes occurring in cardiac I/R can be attributed to the deprivation of oxygen and nutrient supply, which results in a series of abrupt metabolic changes in the myocardium (Fig. 2). The reduced oxygen availability during ischemia alters the OXPHOS process, leading to mitochondrial membrane depolarization, ATP depletion, and inhibition of cardiac contractile function. In the absence of oxygen, cellular metabolism

switches to anaerobic glycolysis, which leads to lactate accumulation and cytosolic acidification. The low pH and aberrant ATP-dependent pump/exchanger ion activities result in a net Ca^{2+} accumulation and ROS production inside the cardiomyocyte that may lead to cell death (21, 45, 134).

Reperfusion is an essential intervention to salvage myocardial tissue in acute ischemia and in the early postoperative period subsequent to cardiac surgery. Reperfusion, by restoring myocardial oxygen supply, reestablishes aerobic metabolism, normal cellular homeostasis, cardiomyocyte energization, and salvage of myocardium. However, reperfusion itself comes with a set of problems that exacerbate some of the cytosolic and mitochondrial imbalances, particularly Ca^{2+} and ROS increase, which may contribute, in addition to other factors, to myocardial injury (3, 4, 108). Reperfusion injury may result in increased infarct size, further impairment of myocardial contraction, and the development of reperfusion arrhythmia (33, 45, 58, 71, 84, 134).

Mitochondria synthesize most of the cell's ATP by OXPHOS. Structural and functional integrity of mitochondrial membranes are essential for ATP production and cardiomyocyte function. Myocardial I/R can impair mitochondrial homeostasis, with dramatic consequences on mitochondrial function and cell survival. Impaired mitochondrial energy production, mitochondrial ionic imbalance, and cell stress signaling can lead to mitochondrially mediated cell death (33, 45, 58, 71, 77, 84, 134).

OXIDATIVE STRESS AND MITOCHONDRIAL FUNCTION IN MYOCARDIAL I/R

Mitochondria are considered to be major sources of ROS in a variety of organs, especially in those that are metabolically very active, e.g., the heart. It is known that mitochondria most likely generate ROS during the course of normal OXPHOS process. The mitochondrial electron transport chain (ETC) comprises a series of multisubunit complexes (complexes I–IV) that are coupled to two mobile carriers [coenzyme Q and cytochrome *c* (Cyt *c*)]. Electrons are transferred to molecular oxygen via the ETC, resulting in the reduction of oxygen to water at the level of complex IV. The energy released as electrons move through the ETC is used to transport protons from the mitochondrial matrix to the intermembrane space to

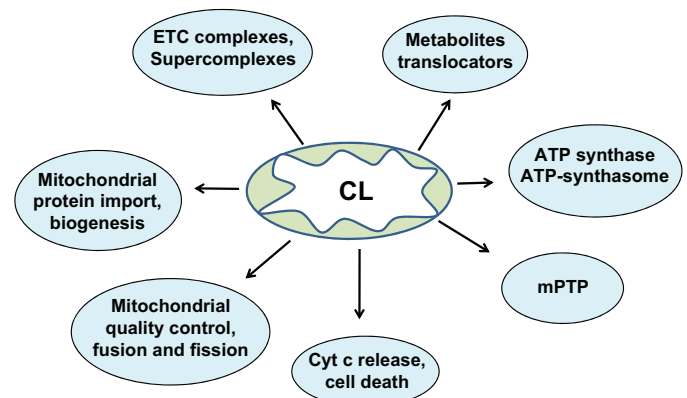


Fig. 1. Proposed roles of cardiolipin (CL) in mitochondrial function. mPTP, mitochondrial permeability transition pore; ETC, electron transport chain; Cyt *c*, cytochrome *c*.

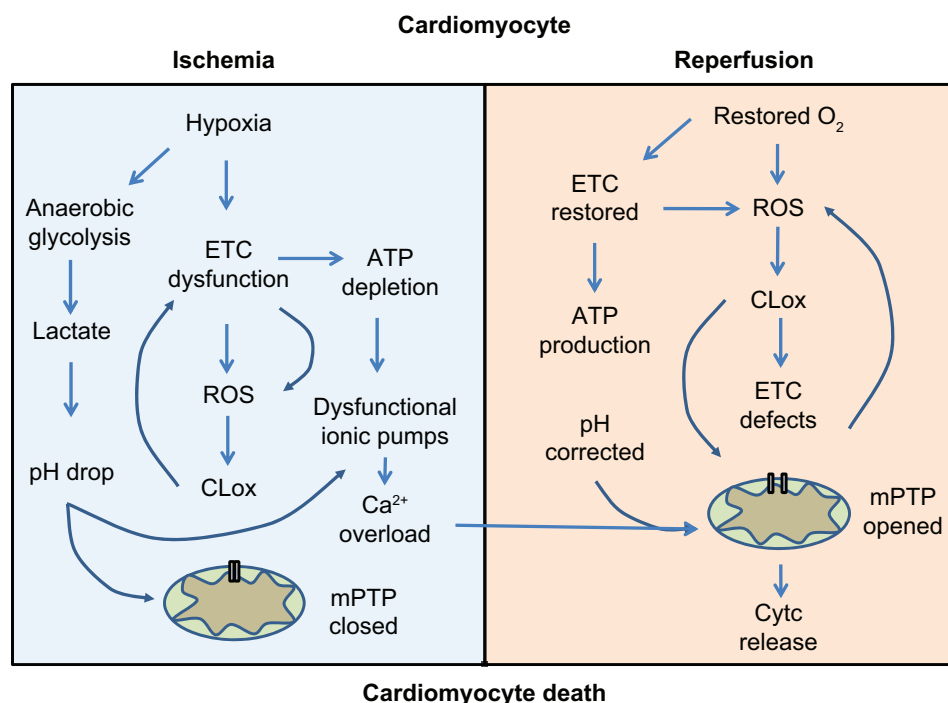


Fig. 2. Schematic illustrating the main components of myocardial ischemia-reperfusion injury. During ischemia, hypoxia switches cell metabolism to anaerobic glycolysis, resulting in lactate production and intracellular acidification, a condition that prevents mitochondrial permeability transition pore (mPTP) opening and leads to dysfunctional ion pump activity with subsequent Ca^{2+} overload. The lowered electron transport chain (ETC) activity leads to reactive oxygen species (ROS) production and cardiolipin oxidation, propagating ETC dysfunction and amplifying ROS production. During reperfusion oxidative phosphorylation is restored, leading to ATP production, pH correction, and reactivation of the ion pumps. Because of O_2 burst, ETC activity results in ROS production and cardiolipin oxidation, which further exacerbates ETC dysfunction and ROS production. The restoration of mitochondrial membrane potential drives Ca^{2+} into mitochondria, which, in addition to oxidized cardiolipin (CLOx), promote mPTP opening and cytochrome *c* (Cyt *c*) release, leading to cardiomyocyte death.

form an electrochemical gradient that is the major contributor to the IMM potential. Complex V (ATP synthase) uses the stored energy of this proton gradient to synthesize ATP, which is then transported by the adenine nucleotide translocator (ANT) to the intermembrane space in exchange with ADP.

It is estimated that ~0.2–2% of the oxygen taken up by the cell is converted by mitochondria to ROS (19, 21). The rapid movement of electrons through the ETC can result in the leakage of electrons that can form $\text{O}_2^{\cdot-}$. The major sites of $\text{O}_2^{\cdot-}$ production are at the level of complex I and complex III (86). Complex I releases $\text{O}_2^{\cdot-}$ into the matrix, whereas complex III releases $\text{O}_2^{\cdot-}$ into both the matrix and intermembrane space. Although complexes I and III are generally considered the major sites of ROS production in I/R, a recent study (23) has suggested that complex II may be an additional site of ROS production. In fact, it has been proposed that superoxide production occurs because of a large accumulation of succinate in the heart during ischemia and its rapid oxidation by reverse electron transport (RET) at the start of reperfusion. This induces a highly reduced state of the ubiquinone binding site on the matrix face of complex I that drives superoxide production (23). The ROS generated by RET may then trigger mitochondrial permeability transition pore (mPTP) opening, promoting cardiac injury. This mechanism of superoxide production early in reperfusion has been proposed as a key player in myocardial I/R injury. However, some criticism has been raised in the literature around this proposal (7). In fact, it has been reported that in perfused rat heart subjected to global ischemia increased ROS production during reperfusion primarily occurred after, rather than before, mPTP opening. In addition, succinate accumulation during ischemia is not attenuated by ischemic preconditioning despite powerful cardioprotection (7).

Mitochondria can also produce nitric oxide, which can be converted to various reactive nitrogen species (RNS) such as

nitroxyl anion (NO^-) or toxic peroxynitrite (ONOO^-), an oxidant that suppresses mitochondrial respiration by modulating the nitration of complexes I and IV (133, 136). Besides interfering with respiratory complexes, these RNS can also trigger free radical-mediated chain reactions that, in turn, damage proteins, lipids, and DNA (21). ROS are also produced in extramitochondrial compartments by enzymatic reactions catalyzed by xanthine oxidase, D-amino acid oxidase, P-450 cytochromes, and proline and lysine hydroxylase. ROS-dependent ETC defects can cause a collapse of membrane potential with further generation of ROS, triggering a vicious cycle that ultimately leads to cell death.

ROS AND MITOCHONDRIAL LIPID PEROXIDATION

Phospholipids are essential components of the mitochondrial membranes, where they play multiple structural and functional roles. They modulate proper mitochondrial membrane integrity, permeability, and fluidity, which are required for the optimal functional activities of proteins and enzymes. Mitochondrial membrane phospholipids are rich in polyunsaturated fatty acids that may undergo peroxidation, generating hydroperoxides, endoperoxides, and a broad range of reactive intermediates, among them 4-hydroxy-*trans*-2-nonenal (HNE), one of the most important signaling molecules (126). This compound exhibits a variety of biological activities, including inhibition of protein and DNA synthesis and inactivation of enzymes. HNE is involved in multiple signaling events in a physiological context (132). Recently, *in vitro* and *in vivo* studies have provided evidence for the formation of HNE from CL oxidation via cross-chain peroxy radical addition and decomposition under free radical conditions (132). This finding may have important implications in the apoptotic process and other biological activities of HNE. HNE has also been implicated in the pathogenesis of myocardial I/R (107), and its

removal by mitochondrial isoform aldehyde dehydrogenase 2 is a promising target for pharmaceutical intervention (20). Lipid peroxidation may also indirectly contribute to myocardial I/R injury, because it enhances phospholipid susceptibility to degradation by phospholipases and alters membrane Ca^{2+} permeability and homeostasis (131).

Oxidation of phospholipids is considered one of the major causes of mitochondrial dysfunction in a variety of physiopathological situations, including myocardial I/R injury. In fact, mitochondrial phospholipid oxidation alters the structural and functional organization of the lipid bilayer, changing membrane fluidity and permeability and thereby affecting respiration and the OXPHOS process, maintenance of mitochondrial membrane potential, and mitochondrial Ca^{2+} homeostasis.

CL AND MITOCHONDRIAL FUNCTION

CL is an atypical, dimeric phospholipid located almost exclusively at the level of IMM, where it is also biosynthesized (106). A large body of evidence indicates that this phospholipid plays a key role in mitochondrial bioenergetics (88, 91, 93, 106). In fact, CL interacts with many IMM proteins and enzymes, including, among others, proteins that are components of complexes involved in OXPHOS, such as complexes I, III, IV, V, and Cyt *c*, and in the metabolite translocation across the IMM, such as ANT and phosphate carrier (PiC) (63). Crystallographic studies have shown the presence of a few tightly bound CL molecules in the crystal structures of ETC protein complexes (105) and ANT (63, 135) suggesting that these molecules are integral components of these proteins and are required for their proper folding and optimal functioning. For complexes III and IV an active role of CL in proton translocation has been also suggested (68, 87).

Mitochondrial ETC complexes are organized into supercomplexes or “respirosomes” rather than existing as individual complexes in the IMM (38, 42). Several models of supercomplexes, involving components of the ETC (complexes I, III, and IV), complex V, and ANT, have been proposed (1). In mammalian mitochondria, supercomplexes are comprised of complex I associated with complex III dimers and up to four monomers of complex IV (110). Such supercomplex organization of the ETC provides structural/functional linkages between the individual complexes, thereby facilitating the tight coupling of electron transfer and minimizing the risk of ROS generation. It has been shown that, besides interacting with individual complexes, CL is required for the proper assembly, stabilization, and functioning of the mitochondrial supercomplexes (26, 83). In addition, CL seems to be required for the assembly of ANT, PiC, and ATP synthase into a large supercomplex called ATP synthasome that has been suggested to improve the efficiency of the OXPHOS process (26). CL is linked to the operation of OXPHOS proteins functioning as a proton trap, restricting pumped protons within its phosphate head group domain and supplying protons for the ATP synthase (47).

It is conceivable that CL abnormalities, notably CL oxidation, which may occur under conditions of oxidative stress, can negatively impact the activity and efficiency of ETC protein complexes involved in OXPHOS, thereby affecting mitochondrial bioenergetics (91). Alterations in mitochondrial CL pro-

file may occur as a consequence of loss in CL content due to impaired CL synthase activity, changes in fatty acyl chain composition due to altered CL remodeling, and oxidation due to ROS attack. CL molecules are rich in unsaturated fatty acids, particularly linoleic acid, in heart and liver tissues or docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and arachidonic acid in brain tissue. This unique acyl composition is not derived from de novo synthesis of CL but rather from a remodeling process in which CL undergoes cycles of deacylation and reacylation (18, 106, 124). In addition, CL remodeling is believed to replace damaged acyl chains under normal conditions. This remodeling process may also generate CL species that are easily susceptible to oxidative damage by ROS under pathological conditions, further exacerbating CL peroxidation and oxidative stress. Thus, altered CL remodeling has been implicated in the etiology of mitochondrial dysfunction associated with a variety of pathophysiological conditions including diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular diseases, all of which are characterized by increased oxidative stress, CL alterations, and enrichment of DHA content in CL (115, 118). Acyl-CoA:lysocardiolipin acyltransferase (ALCAT)-1 catalyzes the reacylation of lysocardiolipin to CL, a key step in CL remodeling (18, 106, 124). CL remodeling by ALCAT-1 also leads to the synthesis of CL with aberrant acyl composition commonly found in heart disease, including loss of linoleic acid and enrichment of DHA content in CL (115, 118). It has been suggested that CL remodeling by ALCAT-1 may be a common denominator in oxidative stress and mitochondrial dysfunction associated with cardiovascular diseases (73, 74). Consequently, inhibition of ALCAT-1 by chemical reagents may provide a potential treatment for these pathological conditions.

CL molecules are associated with complexes I and III, which are the major mitochondrial source of ROS production. Because of their location in the IMM and because of their high content of polyunsaturated fatty acids, CL molecules are particularly susceptible to oxidation. CL alterations due to oxidation, depletion, and remodeling are emerging as important contributory factors in mitochondrial dysfunction in a variety of metabolic disorders and physiopathological settings, including myocardial I/R, diabetes, aging, and age-related cardiovascular and neurodegenerative disorders (22, 93, 96). Oxidized CL is also emerging as a key player in the modulation of several mitochondrial steps of the apoptotic process (90, 111) and mPTP opening (99). Moreover, it has also been proposed that oxidized CL migrates to the outer mitochondrial membrane (OMM), where it participates in the mitophagic pathway (8).

CL AND MITOCHONDRIAL DYNAMICS

Mitochondria are intimately involved in cell fate during disease; therefore, it is essential to have stringent quality control mechanisms to ensure a healthy mitochondrial network. Quality control mechanisms are largely regulated by mitochondrial dynamics and mitophagy, through processes such as mitochondrial fission and fusion that facilitate the equilibration of mitochondrial components such as DNA, proteins, and metabolites (62). The process of mitophagy is responsible for the degradation and recycling of damaged mitochondria. Recent *in vitro* and *in vivo* studies show that CL is involved in several steps of mitochondrial dynamics and

morphology, including fusion and fission processes (9, 59, 62), in mitophagy, and in protein insertion and assembly into the mitochondria (81). The involvement of CL in mitochondrial dynamics can be attributed, most probably, to its unique biochemical and biophysical properties (106). CL is a dimeric phospholipid with a small acid-head group and four long acyl chains, thus rendering it effectively cone shaped. Consequently, CL exhibits complex phase behavior in membrane with a propensity to stabilize negative membrane curvature and to transition from a lamellar, bilayer phase to an inverted hexagonal, nonbilayer configuration. These biophysical properties of CL may be relevant to lipid rearrangement events that occur during mitochondrial fission and fusion processes. Indeed, the involvement of dynamic-related protein-1 (DRP1) in promoting mitochondrial fission is critically dependent on CL interaction (119). It has been proposed that DRP1 and CL function cooperatively in facilitating membrane remodeling and fission during mitochondrial division (119). It is reasonable to hypothesize that CL alterations that occur during heart I/R (41, 72, 92) may alter the interaction between CL and DRP1, thus affecting mitochondrial fission and dynamics and thereby contributing to mitochondrial dysfunction. Impairment of mitochondrial dynamics has been proposed to contribute to the pathogenesis of myocardial I/R (8). It has been shown that during heart reperfusion mitochondria undergo fission, while there is a decrease in mitochondrial fusion (79). Increased mitochondrial fission results in an enhanced susceptibility to mPTP opening, which leads to the release of Cyt *c* and other caspase family proteins, resulting in activation of apoptotic cell death at the time of myocardial reperfusion (79). Therefore, mitochondrial fusion and fission proteins may provide novel therapeutic targets for treating several myocardial disorders, such as I/R injury, heart failure, and left ventricular hypertrophy (89).

CL IN MITOPHAGY AND APOPTOSIS

Mitophagy refers to the selective removal of superfluous or damaged mitochondria by autophagosomes (129). This is a critical mechanism in control of mitochondrial quality. In normal functioning mitochondria CL is confined to the matrix-oriented leaflet of the IMM. It has been hypothesized that the migration of CL from the IMM to the OMM in mitochondria may be a message for mitophagy (78). Under low and mild stress conditions, migrated CL on the surface of the OMM combines with light chain 3 (LC3), a member of the Atg8 family in mammals, contributing to the recognition of injured mitochondria and initiating autophagosome formation leading to the development of mitophagy (24). However, oxidation of CL is far greater in response to severe stress than under normal or mild-damage conditions. During apoptotic/high stress conditions, large amounts of ROS are produced, leading to CL oxidation. In addition, CL may form a complex with Cyt *c*, converting it to a peroxidase in the presence of H₂O₂, leading to additional formation of oxidized CL (78). The accumulation of oxidized CL in OMM results in recruitment of Bax and formation of the mPTP, which, in turn, leads to Cyt *c* release from mitochondria to the cytosol, thus triggering the apoptotic process (see below). The different characteristics of CL in apoptosis and mitophagy may result from the various associated oxidation reactions.

ROLE OF CL IN MYOCARDIAL APOPTOSIS IN I/R

Myocardial apoptosis is a cellular death program finely regulated by many regulatory factors. Loss of cardiomyocytes via apoptosis contributes to the decline of ventricular function during myocardial I/R. Cardiac myocytes are differentiated cells that cannot be replaced after death; therefore, their loss compromises the ability of the myocardium to sustain contractile function. Myocardial apoptosis is dominant in the pathogenesis of myocardial I/R and in maintenance of myocardial dysfunction after reperfusion (77, 130). Myocardial ischemia is associated with an enhanced rate of necrosis, whereas reperfusion leads to increased apoptosis (80). It is widely accepted that CL modulates several mitochondrial steps of the apoptotic process leading to cell death (90, 111). The participation of CL in apoptosis is attributed to its association and interaction with a number of cell death-inducing proteins, mainly Cyt *c* (54, 125). CL directly binds to Cyt *c* at the level of the IMM. During apoptotic signaling Cyt *c* is released from the IMM to the cytosol, where it triggers the caspase cascade. Cyt *c* is bound to the outer leaflet of the IMM through both electrostatic and hydrophobic interactions with CL (54). Oxidative damage of CL promotes the detachment of Cyt *c* from the IMM, and this event is considered the initial step in the release of Cyt *c* from mitochondria (104). During the apoptotic process, almost 40% of CL present in the IMM is translocated to the OMM, where it participates in the formation of Cyt *c*-CL complex, which displays peroxidase activity (57). This complex induces CL peroxidation, which, in the presence of Ca²⁺, may promote mPTP opening (99). This event allows the release of Cyt *c* from mitochondria, thus triggering the execution phase of the apoptotic process. The relevance of Cyt *c*-CL complex peroxidase activity to I/R myocardial injury has recently been shown (5). It has been reported that an increase in mitochondrial ROS production, coupled with electron transfer through the Cyt *c* segment of the ETC, oxidizes Cyt *c* at the Met⁸⁰ residue, followed by CL loss. The content of Cyt *c* methionine oxidation increases after heart I/R (54).

Because of the role of CL in multiple reactions of mitochondrial function and dynamics, it is conceivable that alterations occurring in CL structure, content, and acyl chain composition may have important implications in mitochondrial dysfunction and hence in mitochondrial physiopathology, including myocardial I/R injury.

CL AND MITOCHONDRIAL ETC IN MYOCARDIAL I/R

Mitochondria-mediated ROS generation may contribute to myocardial tissue alterations during I/R. Oxygen free radicals are produced not only during reperfusion and reoxygenation after ischemia or hypoxia but also during ischemia (127) and hypoxia (128). The presence of residual O₂ in cardiomyocyte is a critical element for mitochondrial ROS generation during ischemia, in that electron transfer through the ETC becomes markedly slowed and the respiratory complexes are in a highly reduced state, so that electrons leak to combine with O₂, producing O₂⁻ radicals. Another possibility is that under a condition of limited O₂ a slower electron transfer through complex IV leads to an increased level of reduced Cyt *c*, thus lowering Cyt *c*-mediated O₂⁻ scavenging capability (117).

CL molecules are an early target for ROS attack because of their high content of linoleic acid and their vicinity to the site

of ROS production in the IMM, although tetralinoleoyl CL in mammalian cells is in a compact configuration, with double bonds relatively shielded from oxidative attack. A decrease in CL level and an increase in CL oxidation have been reported in rat heart mitochondria during ischemia (41, 71, 72, 92). This oxidation/depletion of CL seems to be responsible, in addition to other factors, for the altered activity of respiratory chain complexes I and III (97, 98, 103). The impairment of the activities of these two complexes is one of the earliest ischemia-induced alterations in mitochondrial function. Ischemia-associated CL oxidation may also be implicated in the release of Cyt *c* from mitochondria (13). In fact, as described above, CL oxidation promotes the detachment of Cyt *c* from IMM, which is a requirement for Cyt *c* release from mitochondria. The Cyt *c* release occurs without mPTP opening but is associated with a depletion of Bcl-x_L content that is implicated in the regulation of OMM permeability that leads to Cyt *c* release in apoptosis (13). In addition, oxidized Cyt *c* acts as an effective superoxide scavenger within the mitochondria (117); thus its loss during ischemia may contribute to enhanced mitochondrial oxidative stress and mitochondrial dysfunction.

Ischemic damage to complexes I and III enhances their capacity to generate O₂⁻, setting the stage for a burst of ROS production upon reperfusion. Moreover, the increased generation of ROS by the ETC complexes may, in turn, damage adjacent complexes, propagating ETC dysfunction and amplifying ROS generation and mitochondrial dysfunction. Studies from our and other laboratories have shown alterations in bioenergetic parameters, such as decreased rate of mitochondrial oxygen consumption, reduced activity of complexes I, III, and IV, and increased basal rate of H₂O₂ production in mitochondria isolated from Langendorff-perfused rat heart subjected to global ischemia (42, 69, 72, 97, 98, 103). These alterations are associated with an oxidation/depletion of CL. Liposomal delivery of exogenous intact CL, but not oxidized CL, to mitochondria isolated from I/R rat heart almost completely restores the activity of these respiratory enzyme complexes to preischemia levels. Other phospholipids, such as phosphatidylcholine and phosphatidylethanolamine, were unable to replace CL in this effect (98). Collectively, these results suggest that the alterations in the respiratory chain complexes in I/R rat heart mitochondria may be due to oxidation/depletion of CL, which is required for the optimal function of these enzyme complexes. This is also supported by the finding that antioxidant compounds, administered before ischemia and during reperfusion, were able to prevent both the oxidation/depletion of CL and the alterations in the activity of these enzyme complexes (2, 41, 101). In addition to CL alterations, other mechanisms have been suggested to be involved in the damage of ETC activity during heart I/R. Complex I undergoes conformational change in response to ischemia, shifting from an active to a deactive form, and complex III iron-sulfur protein is damaged during heart I/R (71).

As mentioned above, mitochondrial ETC complexes assemble in higher-order structures referred to as supercomplexes. CL seems to be required for these supercomplex assemblies and stabilization, in addition to its occurrence as an integral part of individual complexes (26, 83). Because of the oxidation and depletion of mitochondrial CL in myocardial I/R, it is conceivable that these CL alterations may contribute to the destabilization and dysfunction of ETC supercomplexes. Con-

sistent with this, recent studies on mitochondria isolated from I/R rat heart have shown the destabilization of mitochondrial ETC supercomplexes (I, III, and IV) after sustained reperfusion (55). It has also been proposed that upon reperfusion partial recovery of ETC activity without supercomplex reassembly results in altered OXPHOS and enhanced O₂⁻ production that, in turn, may damage adjacent complexes, propagating ETC dysfunction and amplifying ROS production (46).

CL AND MPTP IN MYOCARDIAL I/R INJURY

Mitochondria are the primary source of ATP, which is needed to drive the contractile cycle and maintain ionic homeostasis in cardiomyocytes. ATP production by OXPHOS requires the permeability barrier of the IMM to be preserved. Under physiological conditions, the IMM is impermeable to all metabolites and ions. Mitochondria contain a latent nonspecific pore within the IMM known as mPTP (10, 11, 48, 50). Opening of this pore induces passive diffusion of any molecules of 1.5 kDa, collapse of membrane potential, uncoupling of OXPHOS, and reversal of the F₀F₁-ATP synthase, causing hydrolysis of ATP that is produced by the glycolytic process. All these events lead to mitochondrial dysfunction and cell death predominantly through necrosis. Despite extensive studies, the exact molecular identity of the mPTP has not been yet elucidated. Several molecules have been proposed as potential candidates in the formation and modulation of the mPTP, including cyclophilin D (Cyp D) in the matrix, ANT and PiC in the IMM, and voltage-dependent anion channels (VDACs) in the OMM (10, 11, 47). Cyp D, a nuclear encoded mitochondrial isoform of cyclophilin, is considered a key component of mPTP, as shown by the inhibition of mPTP opening by cyclosporin A (CsA) (48). ANT is another putative component of the mPTP; however, other studies using knockout mice have shown that this protein carrier is not directly involved in mPTP but rather may have a regulatory role (65). An involvement of PiC in mPTP formation has been also proposed, as shown by the finding that Cyp D binds to this protein in a CsA-sensitive manner (48). More recently, mitochondrial F₀F₁-ATP synthase has been proposed as a molecular component of the mPTP (44, 67). CL molecules have been shown to be associated with ATP synthase and also to be required for its functioning (36). In fact, CL interacts specifically with the rotor of this multisubunit protein complex, either facilitating its rotation or participating directly in the rotation supported by the transmembrane proton motive force (35). The involvement of F₀F₁-ATP synthase in mPTP formation is supported by the finding that Cyp D comigrates with mitochondrial F₀F₁-ATP synthase in blue native gel and the subunit OSCP as a binding site (44). Two potential sites of pore formation in mitochondrial ATP synthase complex have been suggested: the monomer-monomer interface of the dimer and the C ring by itself or in the context of mitochondrial F₀F₁-ATP synthase (12, 44). In mitochondria, F₀F₁-ATP synthase and its associated substrate suppliers, PiC and ANT, can form the ATP synthasome complex (26). It has been proposed that this supercomplex might be involved in the formation/regulation of mPTP (50, 60). The oligomerization of the ATP synthasome seems to be modulated by CL (25), which associates and interacts with all the protein components of this supercomplex, gluing these proteins together. It has also been suggested that Ca²⁺ ions, which are the main inducers of

mPTP opening, bind to annular CL at the interface between PiC, ANT, and F₀F₁-ATP synthase (50). Under conditions promoting mPTP opening, Ca²⁺ binds to CL, triggering conformational changes in the protein components of the ATP synthasome and thus generating the pore. It is reasonable to hypothesize that alterations occurring in the structure, fatty acyl composition, and particularly degree of CL oxidation may disturb the interactions between the protein components of the ATP synthasome, inducing destabilization and conformational changes in this supercomplex, thus favoring, in the presence of Ca²⁺, mPTP opening (Fig. 3). Additional support for this hypothesis comes from our *in vitro* study (99) on isolated rat heart mitochondria showing that oxidized CL sensitizes the organelle to Ca²⁺-induced mPTP opening.

It is well recognized that the mPTP plays a major role in cardiomyocyte cell death during myocardial I/R (50, 51). It has been shown that the mPTP remains closed during ischemia because of the intracellular acidosis caused by lactate accumulation (49). Postischemic reperfusion results in an influx of Ca²⁺ into mitochondria, a burst of ROS production, and a rapid correction of the acidosis, all events that may contribute to the increase in the probability of mPTP opening (Fig. 2).

Ca²⁺ is the most prominent inducers of the mPTP opening (11, 50). In addition to Ca²⁺, a number of other factors are involved in the activation of mPTP opening, including ROS and oxidized CL (100). Our study (99) on isolated rat heart mitochondria has shown that adding exogenous oxidized CL sensitizes mitochondria to Ca²⁺-induced mPTP opening. This synergistic effect of Ca²⁺ and oxidized CL on mPTP opening suggests that both these compounds could play a coordinated role in this process by interacting with components of the mPTP, probably ANT, PiC, and F₀F₁-ATP synthase to which CL molecules are tightly associated in the ATP synthasome complex. Given that the mitochondrial levels of Ca²⁺ and oxidized CL increase during I/R, it is reasonable to hypothesize that both of these two factors may contribute to mPTP opening during postischemic heart reperfusion (92, 100). In addition, the induction of mPTP opening by oxidized CL and Ca²⁺ is associated with the release of Cyt *c* from mitochondria, which can lead to cardiomyocyte cell death after myocardial I/R (100). Therefore, preventing CL alterations may provide a novel therapeutic target for treating myocardial I/R injury.

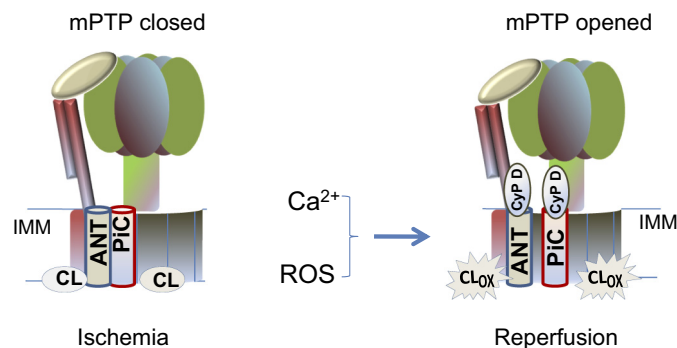


Fig. 3. Proposed mechanism for the involvement of oxidized cardiolipin (CLOx) in mitochondrial permeability transition pore (mPTP) opening. IMM, inner mitochondrial membrane; CL, cardiolipin; Cyp D, cyclophilin D; ANT, adenine nucleotide translocator; PiC, phosphate carrier.

Table 1. Pharmacological agents against mitochondrial dysfunction in myocardial ischemia-reperfusion directly or indirectly preventing cardiolipin alterations

Compound	References
Melatonin	31, 32, 95, 100, 101
Bendavia peptide	28, 64, 122
Ranolazine	3, 41
Propofol	112

CL-TARGETING THERAPEUTIC AGENTS IN MYOCARDIAL I/R INJURY

Mitochondria play an important role in myocardial I/R injury, as disturbance of mitochondrial bioenergetics and dynamics is a major cause of cardiac dysfunction. Thus mitochondria-targeted pharmacological interventions may provide an effective strategy to prevent or mitigate potential adverse side effects (52). As discussed above, mitochondrial CL alterations are intimately implicated in mitochondrial dysfunction during myocardial I/R injury, by affecting ETC and OXPHOS processes and mitochondrial dynamics and inducing mPTP opening. Several compounds targeting mitochondrial CL directly or indirectly have been shown to provide myocardial protection against I/R injury, and some of them are currently being tested in clinical trials (Table 1). In this section, pharmacological agents that can provide cardioprotection against I/R injury through a CL-mediated effect are examined.

Melatonin, the major secretory product of the pineal gland, is a well-known antioxidant agent that is highly concentrated inside mitochondria, where it exerts an effective antioxidant activity, thus protecting mitochondrial bioenergetic function (95, 123). Melatonin is also validated to maintain a healthy mitochondrial network by modulating mitochondrial biogenesis, dynamics, and mitophagy (27). Melatonin treatment has strong protective effect against mitochondrial bioenergetic alterations in a rat model of myocardial I/R, limiting ROS production and preventing CL alterations and loss of ETC complex I and III activities and of state 3 respiration (95, 101). In addition, melatonin inhibits mPTP opening and the release of Cyt *c* in mitochondria isolated from I/R rat heart as well as in *in vitro* experiments on isolated rat heart mitochondria (100). The protective effect of melatonin against CL alterations, notably CL oxidation, in myocardial I/R can be reasonably explained by the ability of this compound to prevent the peroxidation of linoleic fatty acids, which are the main constituents of heart CL molecules. In fact, results reported in the literature demonstrate that melatonin and its derivatives display strong *in vitro* lipid peroxyl radical scavenging properties (82).

The protective effect of melatonin against mitochondrial dysfunction during rat heart I/R is associated with an improvement of postischemic hemodynamic function of the Langendorff heart on reperfusion and reduction in infarct size and necrotic damage (100). This protective effect by melatonin could be explained partly by its ability to preserve CL integrity from ROS attack (102). Collectively, these results emphasize that melatonin-induced mitochondrial adaptive changes are likely of great value for the cardioprotective actions of this indoleamine (32, 75, 94). Because of the lack of side effects, melatonin may represent an effective therapeutic strategy to combat a variety of oxidative stress-induced mitochondria-

related diseases, including myocardial I/R. Moreover, because of the ability of melatonin to protect human cells and reduce infarct size in an animal model of myocardial infarction (MI), the rationale exists to translate these results into the clinical setting (32). Indeed, very recently, it was reported that administration of melatonin in patients with ST segment elevation MI who presented early after symptom onset was associated with a significant reduction in infarct size after primary percutaneous coronary intervention (31). This promising result needs to be validated in larger clinical trials. However, other studies have shown that administration of melatonin did not improve the myocardial salvage index after primary percutaneous coronary intervention in patients with ST elevation during MI compared with placebo (37). The lack of a positive effect could be due to an ineffective dose of melatonin and/or to the timing of administration.

Recent studies have supported the development of a new class of cell-permeant peptides that accumulate inside mitochondria and selectively target CL (122). One of these peptides, MTP-131 (also called Bendavia or elamipretide), was shown to be effective in preserving contractile force after cardiac I/R, significantly reducing infarct size in numerous experimental animal species, including large animals (14, 64, 122). Bendavia, by binding selectively to CL via both electrostatic and hydrophobic interactions, prevents CL from converting Cyt *c* into a peroxidase, interrupting the vicious cycle of ROS-mediated CL oxidation while protecting Cyt *c* electron-carrying function (122). As a result, Bendavia preserves the normal structure of mitochondrial cristae, thus improving respiratory supercomplex assembly and function and the OXPHOS process. Bendavia represents a new class of compounds that can recharge the cellular powerhouse and restore bioenergetics (122). The mechanism of action of this compound appears to be distinct from direct mPTP inhibition, mitochondrial uncoupling, or ROS scavenging activity. In both small- and large-animal experiments, Bendavia has been reported to reduce MI size when administered at the onset of reperfusion and to prevent adverse left ventricular remodeling after MI (28). In addition, Bendavia improves postinfarction cardiac function, restores mitochondrial energy metabolism gene expression, and suppresses cardiac fibrosis in the border zone of the infarcted heart in rats (28, 114). This agent has been also investigated in several phase II clinical trials to evaluate its safety, tolerability, and efficacy on myocardial reperfusion injury in patients. However, in a clinical trial to evaluate myocardial effects of Bendavia for reducing reperfusion injury in a carefully selected population of patients with anterior ST segment elevation MI with acute coronary events, this agent administered before percutaneous coronary intervention was not associated with a decrease in MI size or clinical outcomes (43). Potential reasons for the neutral results of this study may include ineffective dose and timing of administration of this compound and also difficulties of Bendavia to target mitochondria in these patients. Thus, additional studies are needed to confirm the beneficial effect of this compound against myocardial I/R injury.

Mitoquinone (MitoQ), a coenzyme Q analog, selectively accumulates into mitochondria, where it is reduced by the respiratory chain to its active ubiquinol form, which is a particularly effective antioxidant, preventing mitochondrial oxidative damage (85). MitoQ has been shown to protect cardiac function in an animal model of heart I/R by preventing mito-

chondrial swelling, Cyt *c* release, mitochondrial dysfunction, and cell death (2). It has been suggested that the mechanism of cardioprotection by this agent is likely due to its antioxidant efficacy to prevent phospholipid peroxidation, including CL oxidation. ROS production and mitochondrial dysfunction during cardiac graft reperfusion is a major factor in posttransplant I/R injury. MitoQ has been shown to decrease I/R injury in a murine syngeneic heart transplant model (29).

Cationic derivatives of plastoquinones are another class of antioxidants that selectively accumulate within mitochondria because of their strong negative membrane potential (116). It has been proposed that one of the mechanisms through which these compounds exert their protective action against mitochondrial oxidative damage is the prevention of mitochondrial CL oxidation by ROS attack (39). This protective effect of plastoquinones may underlie their beneficial effects against several physiopathological states, including heart I/R.

Propofol is an anesthetic compound frequently used during cardiac surgery and in postoperative sedation (53). This drug acts as a free radical scavenger and may also inhibit plasma membrane calcium channels. Propofol has been shown to protect the Langendorff-perfused rat heart against reperfusion injury and damage caused by H₂O₂-induced oxidative stress (56). The proposed mechanism for propofol-induced cardioprotection is at the mitochondrial level through the inhibition of mPTP opening and the protection of functional activity of ETC complexes via preservation of CL integrity (112).

Ranolazine is a clinically used drug known to reduce cardiac dysarrhythmias (120) and protect myocardial tissue damage after I/R (41). The cardioprotective effect of ranolazine is associated with preservation of mitochondrial function, more specifically at the level of respiratory chain complex I and its supporting structures such as supercomplexes. CL is bound to complex I, and it is essential for maintaining structural and functional integrity of this complex and for its assembly into supercomplexes (40). During ischemia, mitochondria produce ROS at ETC sites, particularly at the level of complex I, and this contributes to the ischemic damage that, in turn, augments myocyte injury during subsequent reperfusion (41, 70). It has

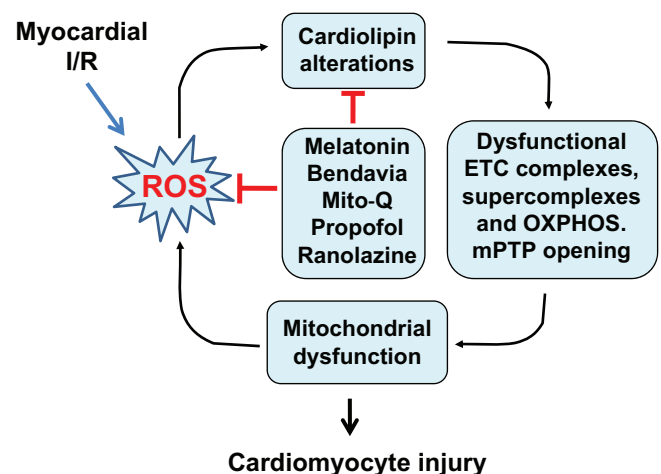


Fig. 4. Involvement of cardiolipin alterations in mitochondrial dysfunction in myocardial ischemia-reperfusion (I/R) and cardioprotective effect by pharmacological agents. ROS, reactive oxygen species; ETC, electron transport chain; OXPHOS, oxidative phosphorylation; mPTP, mitochondrial permeability transition pore. For details see the text.

been reported that ranolazine, when present during ischemia, prevents oxidative damage to CL, thereby maintaining structural and functional integrity of complex I and supercomplexes (41). Preservation of CL integrity and mitochondrial bioenergetics by ranolazine in I/R rat hearts could be ascribed to the ability of this drug to decrease mitochondrial Ca^{2+} overload and mitochondrial ROS production.

CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

I/R injury is an important cause of impaired heart function in the early postoperative period subsequent to cardiac surgery and in acute myocardial ischemia. A large body of evidence supports a crucial role of mitochondrial dysfunction in myocardial I/R injury. Increased ROS generation, defects in ETC activity and the OXPHOS process, mPTP opening, and aberrant mitochondrial dynamics are considered contributory factors to mitochondrial dysfunction in myocardial I/R injury. Accumulating evidence suggests that CL is actively involved in multiple reactions of mitochondrial bioenergetics, dynamics, mitophagy, and apoptosis. Therefore, abnormalities occurring in the CL profile may underlie mitochondrial dysfunction during myocardial I/R as well as in other physiopathological settings. This review highlights the role played by CL alterations in mitochondrial dysfunction associated with myocardial I/R injury. Additional studies are needed that more clearly delineate the molecular mechanisms through which CL alterations affect mitochondrial function in myocardial I/R injury. Pharmacological interventions designed to prevent or reduce CL-related mitochondrial dysfunction would be beneficial in managing myocardial I/R injury. Several compounds directly or indirectly targeting mitochondrial CL have been shown to be effective in protecting mitochondrial function in myocardial I/R (Fig. 4). The results of larger clinical trials of these interventions are now required to evaluate their therapeutic efficacy and safety and, more widely, the potential of targeting mitochondrial CL for cardioprotection. Mitochondrial dysfunction in the pathogenesis of myocardial I/R injury is a complex process involving different metabolic pathways. Thus, the use of combination therapies targeting mitochondria might have greater cardioprotective efficacy in the clinical setting.

DISCLOSURES

No conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise, are declared by the authors.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

V.P. and G. Petrosillo prepared figures; G. Paradies, V.P., and G. Petrosillo drafted manuscript; G. Paradies, F.M.R., and G. Petrosillo edited and revised manuscript; G. Paradies and F.M.R. approved final version of manuscript.

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