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# Histochemical demonstration of endothelial superoxide and hydrogen peroxide generation in ischemic and reoxygenated rat tissues

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## Abstract

**Objective:** The aims were to test and evaluate two novel and independent histochemical methods for detecting the initial postischemic burst of superoxide and hydrogen peroxide in buffer perfused rat tissues during reflow after 60 min warm ischemia.

**Methods:** The first is a high manganese/diaminobenzidine technique, in which superoxide oxidises  $Mn^{2+}$  to  $Mn^{3+}$ , which in turn oxidizes diaminobenzidine to form amber colored polymers, observable by light microscopy. The second is a high iron/diaminobenzidine technique, in which hydrogen peroxide oxidizes diethylenetriaminepenta-acetate chelated  $Fe^{2+}$  to form intermediate species, which in turn oxidize diaminobenzidine similarly to  $Mn^{3+}$ . Various isolated organs of the rat were rendered ischemic for 60 min, and reperfused with oxygen or air equilibrated buffers containing diaminobenzidine and either  $Mn^{2+}$  or  $Fe^{2+}$ . Tissues were fixed by perfusion with Trump's solution and processed for light microscopy.

**Results:** Both manganese and iron methods consistently showed the appearance of reaction product on the luminal surfaces of arterial, capillary, and venular endothelial cells in lung, heart, and intestine of the rat during the first 2 to 3 min of reoxygenation after ischemia. The histochemical reactions were nearly absent in non-manganese treated and non-iron-treated controls. Superoxide dismutase strongly inhibited  $Mn^{2+}$ /diaminobenzidine reaction product formation and catalase strongly inhibited  $Fe^{2+}$ /diaminobenzidine reaction product formation, when tested in specially perfused lung preparations in which these specific antioxidant enzymes were concentrated.

**Conclusions:** These histochemical techniques provide direct, visual evidence that a burst of reactive oxygen species is generated in postischemic rat tissues. The  $Mn^{2+}$ /diaminobenzidine and  $Fe^{2+}$ /diaminobenzidine techniques permit investigation of the endothelium derived reactive oxygen by simple laboratory procedures available to almost any investigator at low marginal cost. The endothelial oxidants so revealed may be of pathophysiological significance in a variety of cardiovascular disorders.

**Key words:** endothelium; histochemistry; hydrogen peroxide; iron; ischemia; LDL; manganese; oxidants; reperfusion injury; superoxide.

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## Introduction

The intriguing concept of oxygen dependent reperfusion injury has been much discussed and debated [1-6] since the initial description by Hearse et al. in 1973 of oxygen dependent enzyme release from previously ischemic rat hearts [7]. The potential of the myocardium and other tissues to sustain a form of oxygen mediated injury upon reperfusion, which amplifies primary hypoxic injury during ischemia, has been referred to as the “oxygen paradox” [8]: namely, that although the reintroduction of oxygen to ischemic tissue is obviously necessary to restore normal function, postischemic tissues may simultaneously suffer from a form of oxygen toxicity that is thought to be initiated by partially reduced, reactive oxygen species, including superoxide ( $O_2^-$ ), hydrogen peroxide ( $H_2O_2$ ), and the hydroxyl radical (HO) [10-14].

The deleterious chemical reactions proposed to occur during reperfusion after ischemia begin with the enzymatic production of superoxide radicals, which either spontaneously or in the presence of superoxide dismutase (SOD) combine to form hydrogen peroxide and dioxygen. Superoxide radicals may be generated in postischemic tissues by NADH dehydrogenase within mitochondria [15, 16], by NADPH oxidase in activated leukocytes [17], or possibly [2, 18, 19], but not necessarily [20], by the action of xanthine oxidase upon xanthine and hypoxanthine substrates that accumulate during ischemia. According to the oxygen radical hypothesis of reperfusion injury, the reintroduction of oxygen during reflow drives these enzymatic reactions to generate a burst of  $O_2^-$  radicals and  $H_2O_2$  that may initiate a variety of pathological processes, including lipid peroxidation [14, 21], alterations in capillary permeability [22, 23], chemotaxis of leukocytes [24, 25], and inactivation of mitochondrial enzymes [26].

Such undesirable effects are especially likely when the increased rate of oxidant formation exceeds the scavenging capacity of physiological defense systems, such as superoxide dismutase and catalase, which may be partially degraded by the ischemic event [27]. Studies of isolated perfused hearts using electron spin resonance techniques have provided evidence that increased numbers of oxygen centered free radicals are indeed generated during the first two to three minutes of reoxygenation after ischemia [28-31]. To complement these electron spin resonance studies, we explored a number of histochemical approaches to the detection of reactive oxygen species in perfused organs that would potentially reveal not only the presence of specific oxidants, but also the sites of their formation.

Highly reactive oxygen metabolites are intrinsically difficult to detect, owing to their exceedingly short life times, ranging from roughly a nanosecond for HO, to a millisecond for  $O_2^-$  to a few seconds for  $H_2O_2$  [32-33]. Accordingly we concluded that conventional histochemical techniques, in which special stains are applied after the tissue is fixed and sectioned, would be unlikely to demonstrate the sources of reactive oxygen. Instead, we adopted supravital or intravital techniques using perfused organs. The organs were perfused with histochemical reagents which, in the presence of reactive oxygen species, react to form insoluble precipitates that can be observed by light microscopy.

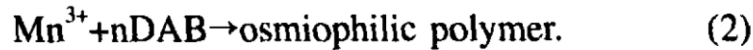
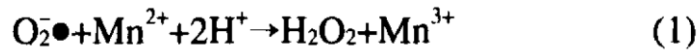
After testing a variety of other routes to the formation of such reaction products we found two independent methods that have given remarkably consistent and mutually confirmatory results. The first is a modification of Karnovsky's manganese/diaminobenzidine technique [34],

previously reported to show superoxide generation by leukocytes. The second is a modification of the high iron/ diamine technique for peroxides [35], suitable for studies of living tissue at physiological pH. In this paper we describe application of these modified histochemical methods to characterize the burst of oxidant production by endothelial cells during reoxygenation of a variety of previously ischemic tissues. The results of our initial survey, obtained using simple light microscopy, have provided internally consistent evidence of endothelial superoxide and hydrogen peroxide generation in posts ischemic lung, heart, and intestine of the rat.

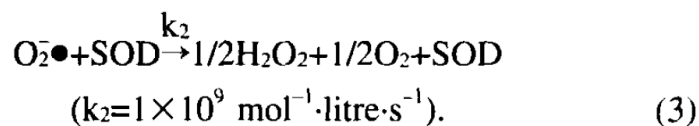
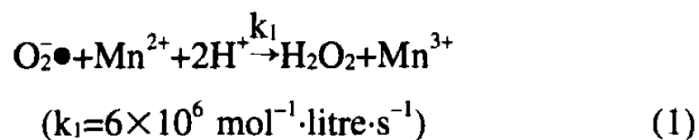
## Methods

### *Approach to O<sub>2</sub><sup>-</sup> histochemistry*

In principle, Karnovsky's method [34] for superoxide works as follows. Cells stimulated to produce superoxide are exposed to a physiological solution containing added divalent manganese and diaminobenzidine (DAB). Then,



Superoxide, which can act as either an oxidant or a reductant [36], in the present case oxidizes divalent manganese quite rapidly ( $k = 6 \times 10^6 \text{ M}^{-1}\text{sec}^{-1}$ ) [37] to the trivalent state, with concomitant generation of hydrogen peroxide. This reaction is readily demonstrated in simple spot tests by the rapid color change visible upon addition of granular potassium superoxide to solutions of manganous chloride. Similarly, the ability of manganic ions to oxidize diaminobenzidine may be readily observed by the addition of manganic acetate (in ethanol) to test solutions of diaminobenzidine, reaction (2) probably proceeding by a radical chain mechanism [38, 39]. In optimizing the original manganese/diamine histochemical method for use in perfused organ preparations, we realized that higher manganese concentrations might be required for efficient trapping of superoxide in intact tissues containing superoxide dismutase. The rationale is based upon the fundamental competition between the introduced manganese and native superoxide dismutase for reaction with O<sub>2</sub><sup>-</sup>:



Because the pseudo-first order rate constant for the latter reaction (3) is three orders of magnitude greater than that for reaction of  $\text{O}_2^{\bullet-}$  with  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$  (1), the proportion of nascent superoxide scavenged by  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$ , namely

$$p = \frac{k_1[\text{Mn}^{2+}][\text{O}_2^{\bullet-}]}{k_1[\text{Mn}^{2+}][\text{O}_2^{\bullet-}] + k_2[\text{SOD}][\text{O}_2^{\bullet-}]} \quad (4)$$

may be substantially less than unity if the manganese concentration is small. Taking published values for rate constants  $k_1$  and  $k_2$  [37, 40] and estimated tissue superoxide dismutase at  $10^{-6}$  to  $10^{-5}$  M [41, 42], the scavenging efficiency of divalent manganese,  $p$ , would be approximately 9%, 50%, and 91% respectively for 1, 10, and 100 mM  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$ . Accordingly, we adopted the use of higher manganese concentrations than the 0.5 mM originally described for studies of leukocytes and found the most clear and satisfactory results with 40 mM manganese. We refer to this modification as the high manganese/diamine method.

### *Approach to $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$ histochemistry*

The principle of the iron/diamine technique is that hydrogen peroxide rapidly oxidizes aqueous diethylenetriamine- $\text{N,N,N,N'',N''}$ -penta-acetate (DTPA) chelated ferrous iron ( $k = 1.4 \times 10^3 \text{ M}^{-1}\text{sec}^{-1}$ ) [43], which is soluble and relatively stable at physiological pH. Unlike ethylenediaminetetraacetate (EDTA)- $\text{Fe}^{2+}$ , nitrilotriacetate- $\text{Fe}^{2+}$ , and citrate- $\text{Fe}^{2+}$ , the DTPA-ferrous complex does not auto-oxidize rapidly in the presence of molecular oxygen [44]. Thus the ferrous chelate of DTPA can be made fresh prior to an experiment and will remain in the ferrous oxidation state until it is oxidized by  $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$  to the ferric state. Ferric iron, in turn, is then able to oxidize diaminobenzidine to form a satisfactory histochemical marker [44, 45]. The melanin-like diaminobenzidine polymers, created by both the  $\text{Mn}^{2+}/\text{DAB}$  and  $\text{Fe}^{2+}/\text{DAB}$  methods, are widely exploited as sensitive histochemical markers [39, 46]. They are insoluble in aqueous or organic solvents and do not migrate from their original sites of deposition.

In the initial studies reported here, various organs of the rat, including lungs, heart, kidneys, pancreas, and intestine, were perfused with blood free buffer solutions and subjected to a cycle of ischemia and reperfusion with either oxygen or air equilibrated buffers containing  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$  salts or  $\text{Fe}^{2+}$ -DTPA and 2.5 mM diaminobenzidine (1 mg/ml). Staining reactions were stopped and the

tissues fixed by perfusion with cold 0.9% saline, followed by cold Trump's fixative, and the tissues were subsequently processed for routine light microscopic examination.

### ***Materials***

All inorganic salts were of reagent grade or better. Catalase, DTPA, glutaraldehyde, HEPES (N[2-hydroxyethyl]piperazine- N'-[2-ethanesulfonic acid]), superoxide dismutase (3000 U/mg), and Tris(hydroxymethylaminomethane), were obtained from Sigma Chemical Company (St Louis, MO, USA). 3-3'Diaminobenzidine tetrahydrochloride dihydrate was obtained from Aldrich Chemical Company (Milwaukee, WI, USA).

### ***Solutions***

Buffers containing 40 mM divalent manganese in combination with either 80 mM acetylsalicylate or 40 mM trisodium citrate, and buffers containing 10 mM FeSO<sub>4</sub> in combination with 10 mM DTPA, were prepared as indicated in Table 1. In the manganese/diaminobenzidine experiments sodium azide (1 mM) was added, as specified by Karnovsky [34] to minimize the spurious formation of diaminobenzidine reaction product by peroxidase [47, 48] and mitochondrial cytochrome oxidase [39]. In the Fe<sup>2+</sup>/DTPA experiments 10 mM sodium azide was added to inhibit endogenous catalase, which appeared otherwise to compete strongly with Fe<sup>2+</sup> for reaction with H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>. The pH was adjusted to 7.4 with drop by drop addition of 0.5 N NaOH with stirring, and the solutions were filtered just before use.

Diaminobenzidine stock solution was made by dissolving 10 mg/L in distilled water and slowly adjusting pH to neutrality with drop by drop addition of 0.5 N NaOH (about 3 ml/100 ml) with vigorous stirring to prevent precipitation of diaminobenzidine by drops of concentrated base. The molarity of the stock solution was 25 mM, and its osmolarity, when titrated to near neutral pH, was approximately 225 mOsmol/L. A working solution containing 2.5 mM diaminobenzidine (1 mg/ml) and either manganous or ferrous salts was prepared by mixing the 10 mg/ml diaminobenzidine stock solution and buffer in a ratio of 1:9. The calculated osmolarity of the working solutions was in the physiological range of 280 to 300 mOsmol/L. After organ perfusion, the collected effluent was detoxified before disposal by the addition of saturated potassium dichromate solution to oxidize residual diaminobenzidine [49].

### ***Transendothelially perfused lungs***

According to a protocol approved the Purdue animal care and use committee, male Wistar derived rats, weighing 350 to 400 g, were anaesthetized with intraperitoneal pentobarbital sodium (60 mg/kg). The trachea of each rat was intubated with a Teflon cannula. The chest was opened with heavy scissors and the sternum and ventral portions of the ribs removed to expose the heart and lungs. The pericardium was incised and the pulmonary artery cannulated with a blunted 16 g needle via a puncture wound in the right ventricle. A solution of 0.9% NaCl at 37 °C, previously bubbled and equilibrated with 100% oxygen, was perfused through the pulmonary artery cannula, at which time the right atrial appendage was excised to promote systemic venous drainage. Perfusion continued for a total volume of 100 ml, the lungs at this point being completely white and free of blood.

The aortic root was then ligated to oppose left heart outflow. Pulmonary artery perfusion was then continued at a rate of 5 ml/min with 30 ml of warm, oxygen saturated buffer until a steady, clear flow of effluent from the tracheal cannula was observed, during which time both lungs became opalescent and completely fluid filled. At this point "transendothelial perfusion" of the lung was established, during which gas in the alveoli and airways was displaced with protein free perfusate that drained through the tracheobronchial tree. To minimize the volume and cost of perfusate in the experiments using superoxide dismutase, the right pulmonary hilus was ligated, and only the left lung was subsequently perfused.

**Table 1 Compositions and osmolarities of blood free buffer solutions for histochemical studies of superoxide and hydrogen peroxide generation in perfused organs of the rat. Values in mmol/L, mOsm/L.#**

<i>Salt</i>	<i>Fe-DTPA</i>	<i>High Mn ASA</i>	<i>No Fe DTPA</i>	<i>No Mn ASA</i>
NaCl	80(160)	0(0)	90(180)	60(120)
MnCl <sub>2</sub>	0(0)	40(120)	0(0)	0(0)
FeSO <sub>4</sub> and/or DTPA	10(80)	0(0)	10(80)	0(0)
ASA sodium salt	0(0)	80(160)	0(0)	80(160)
CaCl <sub>2</sub>	2(6)	2(6)	2(6)	2(6)
KCl	4(8)	4(8)	4(8)	4(8)
Tris	0(0)	4(7)	0(0)	4(7)
HEPES	4(6)	0(0)	4(6)	0(0)
NaN <sub>3</sub>	10(20)	1(2)	10(20)	1(2)
<b>Calculated osmolarity</b>	<b>(290)</b>	<b>(303)</b>	<b>(290)</b>	<b>(303)</b>

# Values in parentheses are osmolarities at pH 7.4. Abbreviations: ASA = acetylsalicylic acid; DTPA = diethylenetriamine-N,N,N',N'',N'''-pentaacetate; HEPES= N[2-hydroxyethyl]piperazine-N'-[2-ethanesulphonic acid]; Tris = trishydroxymethylaminomethane. Tris and HEPES buffers were used in lieu of phosphate buffer to avoid precipitation of Mn<sup>2+</sup> and Fe<sup>2+</sup> ions by phosphate. HEPES was used in the ferrous DTPA experiments to avoid precipitate formation that occurred in preliminary experiments with Tris. In a minority of experiments iso-osmotic trisodium citrate was substituted for ASA sodium salt, without influence on the results.

We employed this “transendothelial” perfusion scheme because it offers two specific advantages in the histochemical study of pulmonary ischemia and reoxygenation. First, because air is excluded from the alveoli, it is possible to create well defined states of profound hypoxia and reoxygenation by manipulation of the oxygen tension in the perfusate. Second, because the transendothelial perfusion scheme guarantees contact of histochemical reagents with both endothelial and epithelial cell types, the model is particularly well suited to identifying the various lung cell types that form superoxide. In a classical perfused and ventilated lung model, the epithelial cells might not have been sufficiently exposed to the histochemical reagents.

### ***Buffer perfused hearts***

Rats were anaesthetized as in perfused lung preparations and the hearts excised as follows. A number 2 silk suture was placed loosely around the aortic root, and the aorta incised and cannulated with a blunted 17-gauge needle, excluding air bubbles, such that the tip of the cannula rested 1 to 2 mm above the aortic valve. The heart was quickly removed and placed in a dish of ice cold 0.9% NaCl solution. Myocardial contractions ceased within 5 sec. The cannula was secured with the silk suture and mounted on a stopcock. Then the heart was flushed with 30 ml of warm oxygenated Tris buffer solution (without  $Mn^{2+}$ ,  $Fe^{2+}$ , or diaminobenzidine) to clear coronary circulation of blood.

### ***Buffer perfused abdominal organs***

The chest and abdomen of each anaesthetized rat were opened in the midline with heavy scissors. The descending thoracic aorta was cannulated with a blunted 16-gauge needle, such that the catheter tip was at the level of the diaphragm. The abdominal circulation was perfused with 100 ml of Tris buffer solution at 37 °C, the right atrial appendage having been excised to promote drainage of venous effluent, which was removed by suction.

### ***Ischemia-reoxygenation protocol***

In all three organ preparations ischemic anoxia was initiated by first perfusing with warm, 37 °C, argon equilibrated, 4 mM Tris or HEPES buffer solution without manganese or iron (Table 1). Perfusion was then stopped for 60 min, during which time the tissue was surrounded by warm argon equilibrated buffer solution, which either was irrigated through the thoracic or abdominal cavity for lung and abdominal organ preparations, or surrounded the heart in a sealed specimen jar at 37 °C for isolated heart preparations.

After 60 min ischemia, histochemical staining was performed in situ by vascular perfusion with either  $Mn^{2+}$ /DAB buffer, or  $Fe^{2+}$ /DAB buffer (Table 1), previously bubbled vigorously for 5 min with 100% oxygen gas in the  $Mn^{2+}$ /DAB experiments (to give an oxygen tension of 93 kPa) [50] or shaken with room air in the  $Fe^{2+}$ /DAB experiments (to give an oxygen tension of 20 kPa). Room air was used in the  $Fe^{2+}$ /DAB experiments to minimize auto-oxidation of ferrous iron. Experimental and theoretical studies in a related model of ischemia and reperfusion showed little difference in oxygen mediated injury during reoxygenation at 20 vs. 93 kPa [50]. Organs were perfused with a hand held syringe at rates sufficient to give normal arterial pressures in



preliminary experiments in which pressure was measured using a solid state pressure transducer. Reperfusion with histochemical reagents was continued for 3 min in lungs and for 2 min in hearts. This 2 to 3 min time window represents the earliest phase of reoxygenation, during which others have found evidence of free radical generation by electron spin resonance spectroscopy [28-31].

After in situ histochemical staining, the perfused vascular beds were flushed with chilled (6 °C) 0.9% NaCl to remove excess diaminobenzidine, and the tissues then fixed by perfusion with chilled Trump's solution (1 % glutaraldehyde, 4% formaldehyde, 90 mM phosphate, pH 7.4). Tissues were stored in vials of fixative overnight and processed for light microscopy.

### ***Microscopy***

All tissues were dehydrated in graded alcohol solutions, embedded in paraffin wax, sectioned, dewaxed, and mounted on glass slides. Sections were stained routinely with hematoxylin and eosin and in some experiments with methyl green. Black and white photomicrographs were taken using 35 mm Kodak T-max black and white print film. Prints were made on Ilford multigrade paper.

### ***Controls***

In the present initial studies of various tissues of the rat, not all controls were done for each tissue type. Instead, tissues that were technically best suited to a particular type of control study were identified. These included (1) nonischemic hearts, in which histochemical perfusion was performed immediately after cannulation of the aortic root; (2) non-reoxygenated hearts, in which reperfusion after ischemia was done with argon saturated rather than oxygen saturated  $Mn^{2+}$ /DAB or  $Fe^{2+}$ /DAB buffers; (3) non-manganese-treated and non-iron-treated hearts or lungs, in which there was isotonic substitution of sodium for either manganese or iron in the postischemic perfusate; and (4) superoxide dismutase and catalase treated lungs, in which specific enzymatic scavengers of either  $O_2^-$  or  $H_2O_2$  were added to the reoxygenation perfusate. The isolated heart was selected for non-ischemic controls, because this tissue can be rapidly harvested with minimal ischemia time and minimal physical disturbance of vascular endothelial cells that might cause their activation. The transendothelially perfused lung was selected for studies of superoxide dismutase and catalase, because these high molecular weight enzymes tend to become concentrated in the pulmonary vasculature of this preparation. (Note: Oxygen or argon equilibration of buffers must be done by bubbling the gas in solutions using large diameter tubing, which makes large diameter bubbles. Small bubbles tend to persist and become trapped in blood vessels, blocking continued perfusion.)

### ***Morphometry***

Vascular profiles of hematoxylin-eosin counterstained slides were examined by light microscopy at 100 X magnification by an observer who was unaware of the treatment or control group designation of the specimen. Diaminobenzidine reaction product appeared as amorphous amber brown ( $Mn^{2+}$ /DAB) or gray-black ( $Fe^{2+}$ /DAB) deposits within blood vessels, which were scored as positive if reaction product was clearly visible and in contact with the vessel wall. Counts of

profiles of positively stained arteries: capillaries, and veins were made within a 800 x 800  $\mu$  test area, delimited by a micrometer eyepiece on the light microscope. Profiles intersected by the left and upper margins of the counting frame were included, and those intersected by the right and lower margins were excluded to avoid systematic bias, as previously described [51, 52]. The tissue on a 1 v 3 inch glass slide was scanned in vertical strips at successive 2.5 mm horizontal increments from left to right. Such systematic sampling with a random start is superior to purely random sampling, because it yields smaller errors [51].

To account for possible differing degrees of lung inflation in the analysis of lung specimens, counts of vascular profiles were divided by the measured fraction of lung parenchyma (typically about 0.5) and expressed as the number of positive vessels per square centimeter of parenchymal tissue. The areal fraction of pulmonary parenchyma, defined here as all lung tissue excluding airways, alveoli, and intravascular spaces, was measured as the fraction of approximately 400 test points in the counting frame overlying parenchymal structures at systematically spaced horizontal and vertical levels of the specimen.

The mean numerical densities of positively stained arteries, capillaries, and veins per  $\text{cm}^2$  were then tabulated for the various tissues undergoing experimental and control treatments and compared by a one way analysis of variance. If a Bartlett's chi-square test for homogeneity of variance failed, a suitable transformation was found, as described by Anderson [53], and the analysis of variance repeated on the transformed data to test the null hypothesis that the observed densities of stained vessels were not different among tissues in the various experimental and control groups. Since density of positively stained capillaries produced by manganese ASA buffer was not significantly different from that of manganese citrate buffer, results from both buffers were pooled for later analysis. Specific comparisons of the effects of experimental versus control treatments were made using a Scheffe multiple comparison test, which allows comparison of multiple lumped control groups with one or more experimental groups. The number of observations in each group need not be the same. (In the case of only two groups, the Scheffe test is mathematically equivalent to the t-test.) A p value of 0.01 or less was considered significant.

## **Results**

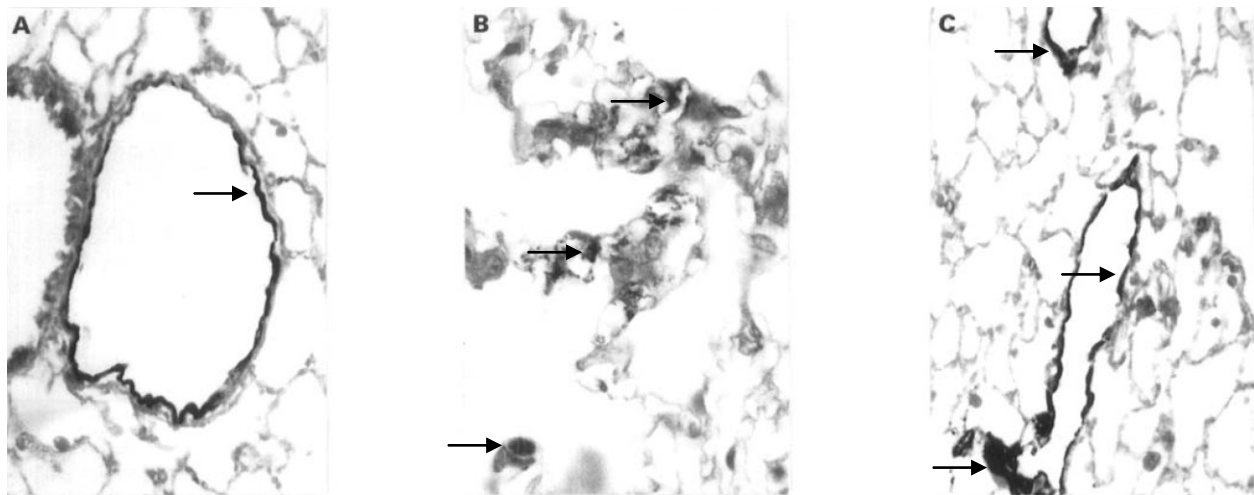
### ***Spot tests of the methods***

Buffer solutions containing 40 mM  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$ /2.5 mM diaminobenzidine readily produced voluminous brown-black precipitates after addition of authentic granular potassium superoxide. Similarly, buffer solutions containing 10 mM  $\text{Fe}^{2+}$ -DTPA/2.5 mM diaminobenzidine readily produced voluminous brown precipitates after drop by drop addition of 3% hydrogen peroxide solution. Both of these spot test reactions caused the water clear  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$  or  $\text{Fe}^{2+}$ /DAB solutions to become completely opaque within seconds. Superoxide dismutase (1 mg/ml) inhibited formation of the  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$ /DAB reaction product in vitro. Catalase (1.2 mg/ml) greatly reduced formation of the  $\text{Fe}^{2+}$ /DAB reaction product in vitro. Reaction product did not form upon addition of hydrogen peroxide to  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$ /DAB solution. As expected on the basis of spontaneous dismutation,

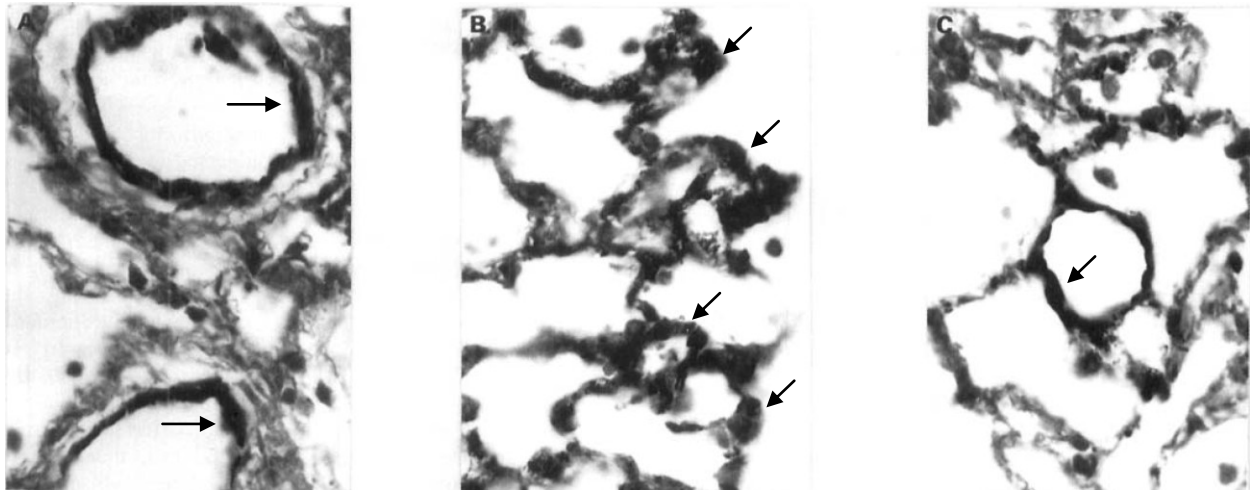
however, reaction product did form upon addition of potassium superoxide to Fe-DTPA/DAB solution, but when catalase (1.2 mg/ml) was added to Fe-DTPA/DAB solution (without azide) prior to potassium superoxide, the amount of reaction product formed was markedly less. These simple tests of prepared buffer solutions confirmed the specificity of the two techniques for  $O_2^-$  and  $H_2O_2$  respectively.

### ***Results in lung -- production of the reaction products in situ***

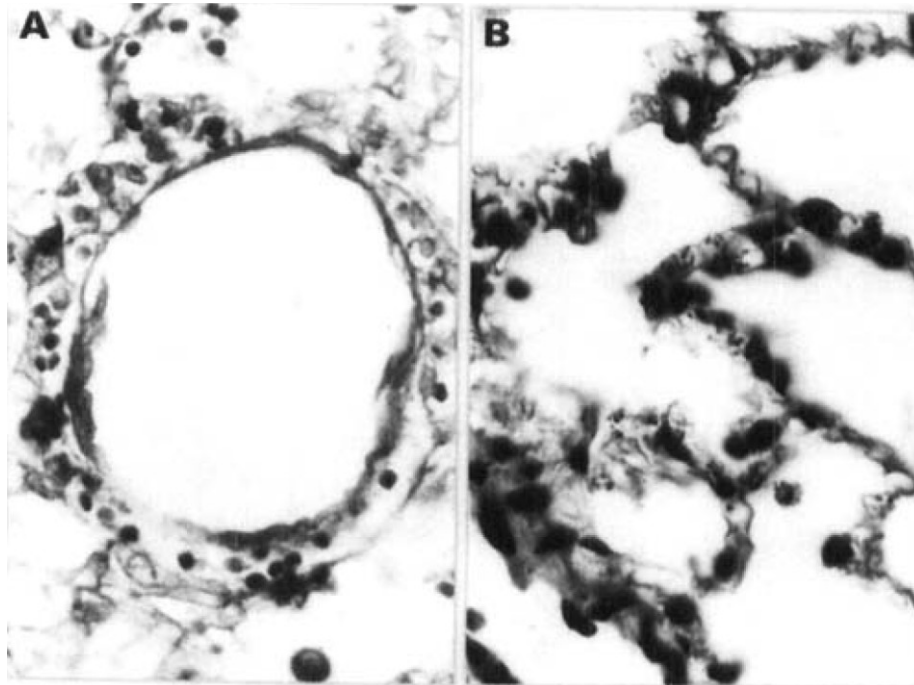
Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the fundamental phenomena of reaction product formation in pulmonary arteries, capillaries, and veins of the rat in sections of rat lungs rendered ischemic for one hour and reperfused, as just described, with either  $Mn^{2+}$ /DAB containing buffer (fig 1) or  $Fe^{2+}$ /DAB containing buffer (fig 2). In fig 1(A) a larger pulmonary artery is shown adjacent to epithelial lined bronchus at low magnification. A ring of dark reaction product is closely associated with the pulmonary vascular endothelium. In fig 1(B) pulmonary capillaries are shown at higher magnification. Dark granular reaction product is adherent to the walls of the capillary lumens. In fig 1(C) the luminal faces of larger pulmonary veins are similarly coated with reaction product. Comparison of figs 1 and 2 reveals that remarkably similar staining patterns are created by the companion histochemical techniques for  $O_2^-$  and  $H_2O_2$  in pulmonary arteries, capillaries, and veins.



***Figure 1 Photomicrographs showing results of the high manganese/diamine histochemical procedure for superoxide formation in rat lung during 3 min of reoxygenation after 60 min ischemia. Rat lungs were rendered ischemic for one hour and then reperfused with Mn and diaminobenzidine (DAB) containing buffer: (A) Pulmonary artery is shown adjacent to a bronchus. A ring of dark reaction product is closely associated with the pulmonary artery endothelium (arrow). 100X. (B) Dark granular reaction product coats walls of alveolar capillaries. 400X. (C) Dark reaction product coats the luminal surfaces of large pulmonary veins seen in longitudinal and cross sections. 100X. At the microscope the Mn/DAB reaction product was amber brown against the background of the methyl green counterstain.***



***Figure 2 Photomicrographs illustrating results of the ferrous DTPA/DAB procedure for hydrogen peroxide formation in transendothelially perfused rat lungs during reoxygenation after 60 min ischemia. Dark reaction product in a branched pulmonary artery (A), pulmonary capillaries (B), and pulmonary venule and nearby capillaries (C) is similarly distributed to the Mn/DAB reaction product in fig 1. At the microscope the Fe/DAB reaction product was brownish black. Methyl green counterstain. 400X.***



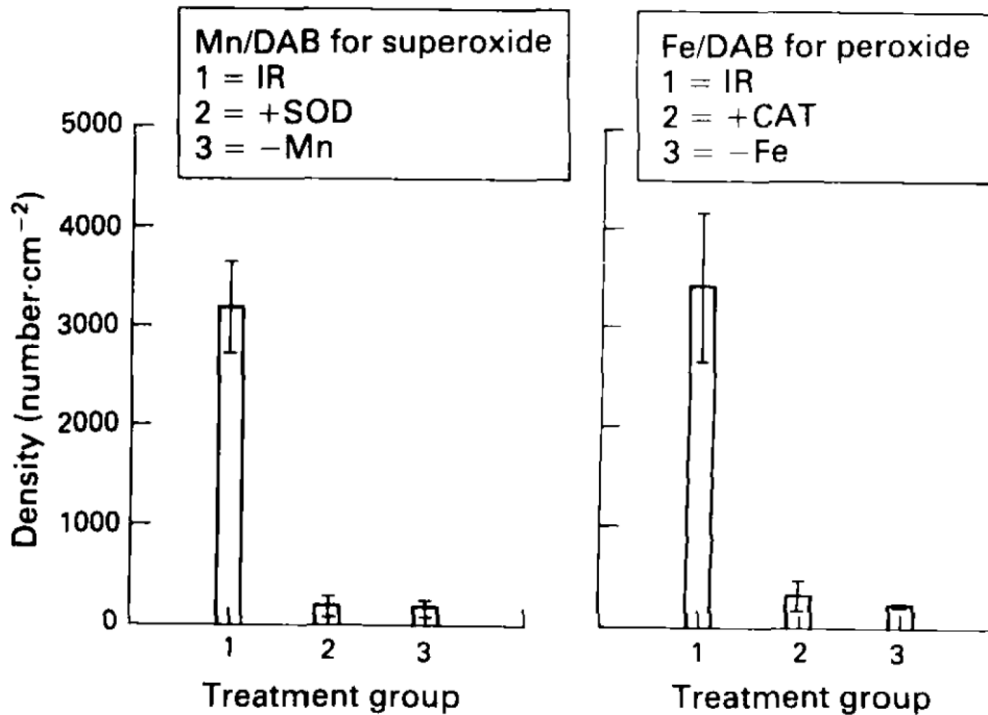
**Figure 3** *Superoxide dismutase (SOD) and catalase treated control lungs. (A) Pulmonary venule and nearby capillaries from a SOD treated rat lung (3000 U=1 mg/ml SOD in perfusates during both ischemia and reflow) subjected to an otherwise identical ischemia-reoxygenation protocol to the animal in fig 1 using the Mn/DAB technique for superoxide. No reaction product is seen in the SOD treated control vessels, a finding characteristic of all sections of lung from this animal. Methyl green counterstain. 400X. (B) Lung from a catalase treated rat (13,000 U=1.2 mg/ml catalase in perfusates) subjected to an otherwise identical ischemia-reoxygenation protocol to the animal in fig 2 using the ferrous DTPA/DAB technique for hydrogen peroxide. Scattered punctate deposits of reaction product are seen in the catalase treated control capillaries (centre); however the density of reaction product is in capillaries markedly less than in non-catalase treated experimental lungs (fig. 2(B)). Haematoxylin-eosin counterstain. 400X.*

Figure 3 shows pulmonary vessels from rats treated separately with buffer containing either superoxide dismutase (3000 Units/ml), during both ischemia and reperfusion with  $Mn^{2+}$ /DAB (A), or catalase (13,000 Units/ml and 0 mM azide), during both ischemia and reperfusion with  $Fe^{2+}$ /DAB (B). The two specific antioxidant enzymes greatly attenuated reaction product formation, providing strong evidence for the specificity of the histochemical reactions for superoxide and hydrogen peroxide, respectively.

Results of morphometric analysis of ischemic and reoxygenated rat lungs in the absence or presence of superoxide dismutase, catalase,  $Mn^{2+}$ , or  $Fe^{2+}$  are presented in fig 4\*. The numbers of ischemic and reoxygenated vessels that were stained positively with the companion techniques for  $O_2^-$  and  $H_2O_2$  were quite similar. The addition of highly selective enzymatic scavengers of either  $O_2^-$  or  $H_2O_2$  (superoxide dismutase and catalase) sharply attenuated reaction product formation, measured as the observed density of positively stained vessels.

There was also minimal reaction product in pulmonary parenchyma rendered ischemic for 60 min and reperfused with diaminobenzidine containing buffer, in which sodium was isotonicly substituted for either  $Mn^{2+}$  (minus Mn control) or  $Fe^{2+}$  (minus Fe control). Thus when either specific probe,  $Mn^{2+}$  or  $Fe^{2+}$ , was omitted from the perfusate, reaction product formation was nearly eliminated. Similar results were obtained when  $Zn^{2+}$  was substituted for  $Fe^{2+}$  in the  $Fe^{2+}$ /DAB procedure. These control experiments exclude simple polymerization of diaminobenzidine by tissue peroxidases or mitochondrial cytochrome oxidase as a major mechanism of endothelial reaction product formation. These controls also show that ischemic endothelial cells do not take up diaminobenzidine simply by virtue of having been ischemic.

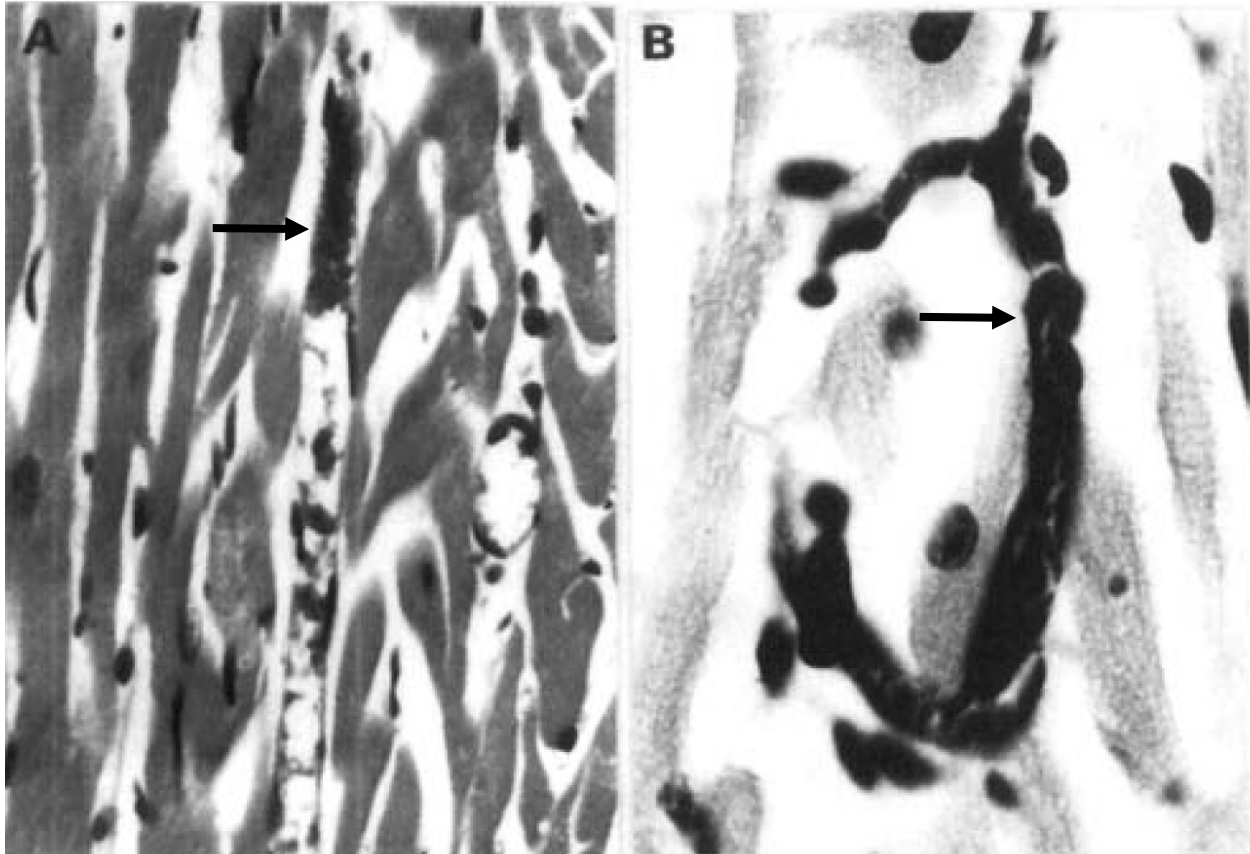
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\* Note: stereological theory predicts that the measured intersection densities in figures 4 and 7 are exactly one half the length densities (total length per unit volume) of stained vessels, assuming that the various vessels are randomly orientated in space and that they assume all orientations with equal likelihood. These assumptions would appear approximately true for all but the largest vessels, which have a trivial influence on the final results.



**Figure 4** Quantitative morphometric results for transendothelially perfused rat lungs subjected to a cycle of ischemic anoxia and reperfusion with histochemical reagents to detect the production of superoxide or hydrogen peroxide. Treatment groups include ischemia and reperfusion (IR). IR with superoxide dismutase (+SOD), IR with catalase (+CAT), IR minus manganese (-Mn), and IR minus ferrous iron (-Fe). Vascular profiles of hematoxylin and eosin counterstained sections were examined by light microscopy at 100X magnification. Blood vessels containing histochemical reaction product were counted in non-overlapping fields. With the  $Mn^{2+}/DAB$  technique for superoxide 9% of all positive vessels were pulmonary arteries, 67% were capillaries, and 24% were venules or veins. With the  $Fe^{2+}/DAB$  technique for hydrogen peroxide 2% of all positive vessels were pulmonary arteries, 92% were capillaries and 6% were veins. Columns are mean values for  $n > 3$  rats in each group, bars = standard errors. The total numbers of positively stained vessels (arteries + capillaries +veins) in the ischemia and reoxygenation groups are significantly greater than those in the corresponding antioxidant enzyme treated groups and significantly greater than those in the groups treated without manganese or ferrous probes ( $p < 0.01$  for  $Mn^{2+}/DAB$ , and  $p < 0.01$  for  $Fe^{2+}/DAB$ ; square root transformed data).

### ***Results in heart - effects of prior ischemia and reoxygenation***

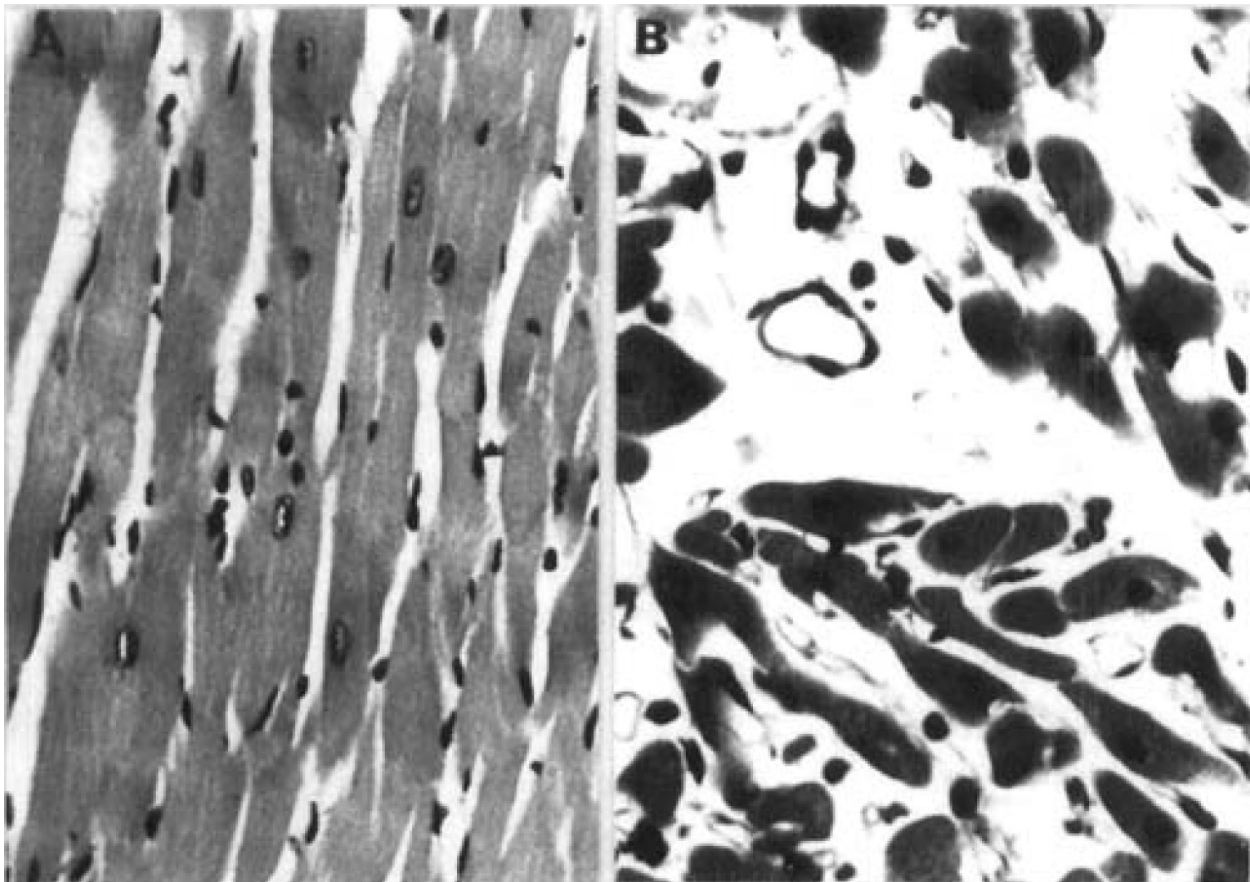
Figure 5 (A and B) shows postischemic myocardial capillaries in isolated rat hearts subjected to a cycle of 60 min ischemic anoxia and 2 min reperfusion with either oxygen equilibrated  $Mn^{2+}$ /DAB buffer or air equilibrated  $Fe^{2+}$ /DAB buffer, respectively. Upon light microscopic examination coronary vessels show similar deposition of endothelium associated reaction product overlying the luminal surfaces of the endothelium with both techniques.



***Figure 5 Postischemic myocardium in an isolated rat heart subjected to a cycle of 60 min ischemic anoxia and 2 min reperfusion with oxygen equilibrated, DAB containing buffer, to which was added the molecular probe  $Mn^{2+}$  for superoxide (A) or  $Fe^{2+}$ -DTPA for hydrogen peroxide (B). Capillaries containing granular reaction product are shown in longitudinal section. Similar results are obtained with the two histochemical probes. Upon light microscopic examination, coronary vessels show deposition of reaction product on the luminal surfaces of the endothelium. In the examples shown reaction product completely or partially filled the capillary lumens. Haematoxylin-eosin counterstain. Original magnification 400X. Specimen (B) was illuminated with red light for photomicroscopy.***



Concretions of reaction product often appeared so voluminous as to nearly fill the lumens of many smaller vessels. With hematoxylin and eosin counterstain  $Mn^{2+}$ /DAB reaction product, indicative of superoxide formation, is amber, and the  $Fe^{2+}$ /DAB reaction product, indicative of hydrogen peroxide formation, is charcoal gray to black. Both reaction products are loosely, rather than tightly, associated with the vascular wall and appear to behave physically like a semi-rigid coat of paint on the endothelial surface. Although some functional differences in pulmonary versus systemic vascular endothelial cells are known, for example in angiotensin converting enzyme activity, oxidant formation by rat coronary vessels appears to be similar that of rat pulmonary vessels.

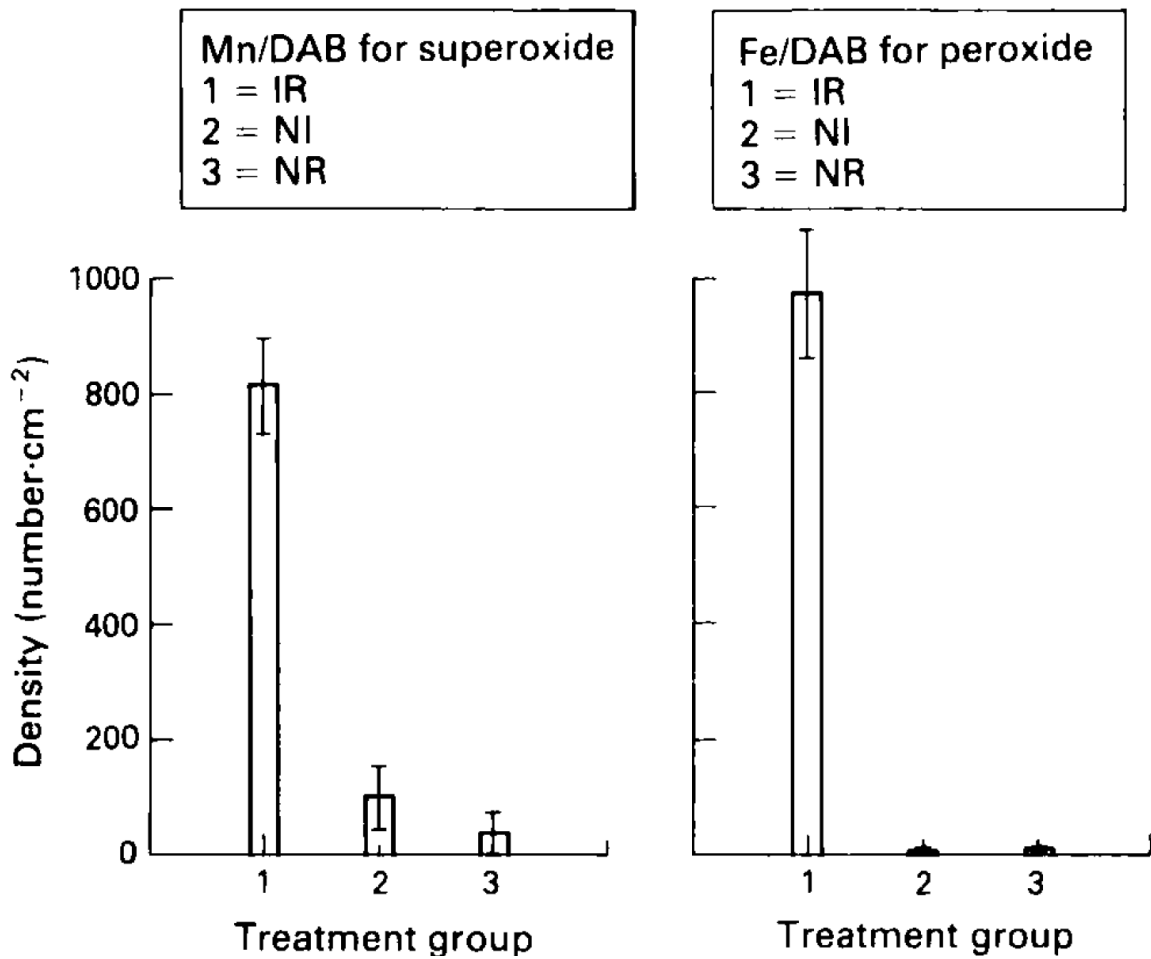


***Figure 6 Non-ischemic myocardium. Sections of non-ischemic rat hearts otherwise treated similarly to hearts shown in fig 5 with (A)  $Mn^{2+}$ /DAB or (B)  $Fe^{2+}$ /DAB histochemical probes. Open capillaries without reaction product are shown in longitudinal section (A) and in transverse section (B). Hematoxylin-eosin counterstain. Absence of prior ischemia sharply reduces endothelial reaction product formation in comparison to that seen in postischemic tissues.***

As controls, sections of non-ischemic rat hearts, perfused with the histochemical probes immediately after harvesting, are illustrated in fig 6. Similarly, ischemic hearts reperfused with oxygen depleted (argon bubbled and equilibrated) buffers, containing either  $Mn^{2+}/DAB$  or  $Fe^{2+}/DAB$ , showed markedly reduced accumulation of reaction product, indicating the oxygen dependence of reaction product formation. In hearts, as in lungs, the quantitative pattern of vascular staining in experimental versus control tissues was similar for the companion histochemical methods (fig 7).

### ***Results in abdominal organs***

In similar experiments involving 60 min ischemia and reperfusion of abdominal organs we found abundant postischemic reaction product formation in the microvascular channels of rat small intestine. Postischemic renal glomerular capillaries also appeared to be sources of  $O_2^-$  and  $H_2O_2$ , but to a lesser extent than pulmonary, coronary, and intestinal vessels. Capillaries within the islets of Langerhans in the pancreas showed moderate postischemic reaction product formation. Thus our initial surveys of various tissues in the rat suggest that endothelial production of superoxide and hydrogen peroxide is a widespread phenomenon, occurring in arterial, venous, and capillary endothelium of pulmonary vessels and in systemic vessels as well.



**Figure 7** Quantitative morphometric results for isolated perfused rat hearts subjected to a cycle of ischemic anoxia and reperfusion with histochemical reagents to detect the production of superoxide or hydrogen peroxide. Treatment groups include hearts subjected to ischemia and reperfusion (IR), non-ischemic hearts (NI), and non-reoxygenated hearts that were reperfused with argon equilibrated buffer (NR). With the Mn/DAB technique for superoxide, 10% of all positive vessels in IR hearts were coronary, arteries. 85% were capillaries, and 5% were veins. With the Fe/DAB technique for hydrogen peroxide, 4% of all positive vessels were coronary arteries, 91 % were capillaries and 5% were veins. The total numbers of positively stained vessels (arteries + capillaries + veins) in the ischemia and reoxygenation groups are significantly greater than those in the corresponding non-ischemic and non-reoxygenated groups ( $p < 0.01$  for Mn/DAB, and  $p < 0.01$  for Fe/DAB; square root transformed data). Other details similar to fig 4.

## Discussion

A major scientific hurdle to the study of free radical mechanisms in the genesis of reperfusion injury has been the lack of a simple, direct demonstration of the existence of reactive oxygen species in affected tissues. As estimated by recently developed computer models of ischemic and reoxygenated tissues [55], the instantaneous, volume averaged concentrations of superoxide and hydrogen peroxide are likely to be extremely low (in the range of a few micromolar) and the half lives of these species are likely to be extremely short (a few seconds at most). To detect these short lived oxidants in tissue we used the preplaced molecular probes,  $Mn^{2+}$  and  $Fe^{2+}$ , which, when oxidized, could initiate polymerization of diaminobenzidine to form a nearly ideal histochemical marker. This strategy has revealed endothelial sources of potentially toxic oxidants at the light microscopic level with clarity and specificity previously unachieved.

The agreement between the two techniques for  $O_2^-$  and  $H_2O_2$  both qualitatively and quantitatively is noteworthy. Since spontaneous or superoxide dismutase catalyzed dismutation of  $O_2^-$  to  $H_2O_2$  is certain to occur, the correlation of the results of the manganese/diamine technique with those of the iron/diamine technique strongly suggests that the same biological process is being detected and tends to dispel doubts about possible non-specific interferences that might have created false positive results with either technique alone.

Technically, the high manganese/diamine and high iron/diamine techniques have several desirable features, compared to other potential approaches for studying oxygen radicals in biology. High cost and physically complex equipment are not required. The necessary apparatus is readily available to almost any scientist. The methods are easy to perform, and experiments can be done in a few hours. Tissue processing by routine methods can be done at minimal expense. The tissue markers for superoxide and hydrogen peroxide formation are clearly distinguishable from counterstains and remain stable after mounting, providing permanent records for study. The use of histochemical end points allows the investigator to see and understand discrete cellular sources of reactive oxygen species in structural context. Moreover, although the present studies used light microscopy, the polymeric diaminobenzidine reaction product is osmiophilic and readily observable by electron microscopy as well [34, 47].

The histochemical findings reported here for intact tissues support the previous work of Ryan, Ratych, Zweier, and their respective coworkers in cell cultures [30, 56, 57], suggesting that endothelial cells, although not “professional phagocytes”, can nonetheless both produce and be damaged by bursts of toxic oxidants and can function effectively as phagocytic cells [58]. This specific localization of initial postischemic free radical production to endothelial cells that we observed in situ may be of special pathophysiological importance, because a variety of secondary mechanisms and biochemical cascades -- including edema, microthrombosis, the no reflow phenomenon of Ames [59], and leukocyte infiltration -- could be initiated by such endothelial activation. The importance of leukocyte infiltration, perhaps triggered by endothelial oxidants, has been suggested by recent work of Granger [60, 61] showing reduced reperfusion injury of intestine in animals either treated with anti-leukocyte antibodies or rendered leukopenic. Although in the present study we used a bloodless perfusate, free of leukocytes, platelets, clotting factors, and endogenous inflammatory mediators, we imagine that amplification loops,

mediated by leukocytes and other components of whole blood, could greatly multiply tissue effects of endothelial superoxide and hydrogen peroxide generation.

The localization of superoxide and hydrogen peroxide generation to the outer luminal surfaces of endothelial cells is in agreement with the recent studies of Schlafer and coworkers [62], who used a completely independent technique for histochemical localization of hydrogen peroxide in ischemic and reperfused isolated rabbit hearts. They found a confluent extracellular distribution of cerium reaction product, indicating the presence of H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>, on the luminal surfaces but not on the abluminal surfaces of vascular endothelial cells in a pattern that was virtually identical to the distribution of Mn/DAB and Fe/DAB reaction products in our studies. Formation of the cerium reaction product was profoundly inhibited by added catalase. One technical advantage of the high iron/diamine technique for hydrogen peroxide compared to the cerium technique, however, is that the reaction product is readily visible with the light microscope at minimal expense, whereas the cerium reaction product is readily detected only by electron microscopy.

The most straightforward explanation of these findings is that superoxide is made by a directional cell surface enzyme, and essentially secreted into the extracellular space. Of course, it is possible that superoxide and hydrogen peroxide were detected only in the vascular lumens either because superoxide dismutase and peroxidases (in peroxisomes) destroy these toxic oxidants within cells, or because there was limited penetration of the manganese and ferrous ion probes into cells. Logically, however, if one sees reaction product with the high manganese/diamine or ferrous DTPA/diamine techniques, it suggests that oxidants are being made, but if one does not see reaction product, it does not mean that oxidants are not being made.

Nevertheless, the concept of extracellular superoxide production does help to resolve a paradox in the literature: namely that the high molecular weight proteins, superoxide dismutase and catalase, given intravenously, have been effective in many experiments in protecting against reperfusion injury [63-67], even though it is unlikely that these enzymes efficiently cross the cell membranes to enter intracellular sites of action. If indeed a major fraction of oxygen radical mediated injury is initiated by an intravascular cloud of reactive oxygen species, then intravenous high molecular weight scavengers would constitute rational antiradical therapy.

## **Conclusion**

Superoxide and hydrogen peroxide generation by vascular endothelial cells in the lungs, heart, kidney, intestine, and pancreatic islets of the rat can be demonstrated in situ by two independent histochemical methods during the first two to three minutes of reoxygenation following 60 minutes of ischemia. The results of the present histochemical studies provide direct visual evidence of a burst of reactive oxygen species in a number of postischemic tissues of the rat.

Although the response to endothelial oxidant production in a given in vivo setting will depend upon a balance of many factors present in plasma and in formed blood elements, the ability to visualize the sites of formation of oxygen radicals in simple experimental models by straightforward light microscopic techniques provides a route to the exploration of a variety of

interesting hypotheses about endothelial cell function in health and disease. Quite possibly, a variety of important pathophysiological processes, including microvascular thrombosis, leukocyte infiltration, and low density lipoprotein oxidation may be triggered by endothelium derived reactive oxygen species.

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