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## Effects of hemorrhage on gastrointestinal oxygenation

Received: 7 July 2000  
Final revision received: 27 December 2000  
Accepted: 20 September 2001  
Published online: 10 November 2001  
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**Abstract** *Objectives:* (1) To demonstrate that metabolic parameters are better indicators of tissue hypoxia than regional and whole oxygen consumption ( $\text{VO}_2$ ). (2) To compare intramucosal pH (pHi) in different gastrointestinal segments.

*Design:* Prospective, interventional study.

*Setting:* Research laboratory at a university center.

*Subjects:* Fourteen anesthetized, mechanically ventilated dogs.

*Interventions:* Twenty milliliters per kilogram bleeding.

*Measurements and main results:* We placed pulmonary, aortic and mesenteric venous catheters, and an electromagnetic flow probe in the superior mesenteric artery, and gastric, jejunal and ileal tonometers to measure flows, arterial and venous blood gases and lactate, and intramucosal  $\text{PCO}_2$ . We calculated systemic and intestinal oxygen transport ( $\text{DO}_2$ ) and consumption ( $\text{VO}_2$ ), pHi and arterial minus intramucosal  $\text{PCO}_2$  ( $\Delta\text{PCO}_2$ ). Then, we bled the dogs and repeated the measurements after 30 min. Systemic and intestinal  $\text{DO}_2$  fell ( $26.0 \pm 7.3$  versus  $8.9 \pm 2.6$  and  $71.9 \pm 17.3$  versus

$24.6 \pm 9.6$  ml/min per kg, respectively,  $p < 0.0001$ ). Systemic and intestinal  $\text{VO}_2$  remained unchanged ( $5.5 \pm 1.3$  versus  $5.4 \pm 1.3$  and  $15.7 \pm 5.0$  versus  $14.9 \pm 5.3$  ml/min per kg, respectively). Gastric, jejunal and ileal pHi ( $7.13 \pm 0.11$  versus  $6.96 \pm 0.17$ ,  $7.18 \pm 0.06$  versus  $6.97 \pm 0.15$ ,  $7.12 \pm 0.11$  versus  $6.94 \pm 0.14$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and  $\Delta\text{PCO}_2$  ( $21 \pm 13$  versus  $35 \pm 23$ ,  $15 \pm 5$  versus  $33 \pm 16$ ,  $23 \pm 17$  versus  $38 \pm 20$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) changed accordingly. Arterial and mesenteric venous lactate and their difference, rose significantly ( $1.7 \pm 0.9$  versus  $3.7 \pm 1.4$  and  $1.8 \pm 0.8$  versus  $4.3 \pm 1.5$  mmol/l,  $0.1 \pm 0.6$  versus  $0.6 \pm 0.7$  mmol/l,  $p < 0.05$ ).

*Conclusions:* During hemorrhage, systemic and intestinal  $\text{VO}_2$  remained stable. However, hyperlactatemia and intramucosal acidosis evidenced anaerobic metabolism. pHi changes paralleled in the three intestinal segments.

**Keywords** Intramucosal pH · Tonometry · Shock · Oxygen consumption · Oxygen delivery · Lactate

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### Introduction

Many studies have analyzed the effects of different types of injury on intestinal oxygenation. Nelson et al. showed that, during progressive bleeding, intestinal ox-

xygen uptake ( $\text{VO}_{2i}$ ) is compromised early, even without changes in systemic  $\text{VO}_2$  [1]. This limited ability for oxygen extraction makes the intestine suitable to track oxygen metabolism. Tissue oxygenation monitoring with tonometry, which measures gastrointestinal intramuco-

sal pH (pHi), has been reasonably established in recent years [2]. Grum et al. showed that intestinal pHi reductions correlated with gut  $\text{VO}_2$  decreases [3]. Other investigators have demonstrated the prognostic significance of gastric intramucosal acidosis. [2, 4]. However, there is no definite evidence that gastric intramucosal acidosis resembles the intramucosal acidosis of other gut sections. Some studies have analyzed pHi behavior in different segments of the gastrointestinal tract [5, 6], but their results have been inconclusive.

Our goal was to describe the effects of hemorrhage on intestinal oxygenation. We tried to answer the following questions: (1) Are there traces of tissue hypoxia, evidenced as intramucosal acidosis, before the beginning of  $\text{VO}_2$  dependence on  $\text{DO}_2$ ? (2) What is the relationship between pHi and other parameters of intestinal and systemic oxygenation? (3) Are pHi reductions in stomach, jejunum and ileum equivalent?

## Materials and methods

### Animal preparation

This study was approved by the local animal care committee. Fourteen mongrel dogs, weighing  $22.1 \pm 3.1$  kg (mean  $\pm$  SD), were anesthetized with 30 mg/kg of sodium pentobarbital, with supplementary doses of 1 mg/kg given each hour or as necessary. They were intubated and ventilated with a volumetric respirator (Harvard Apparatus Dual Phase Control Respirator Pump Ventilator, model 613 A, Harvard Apparatus, Southnatick, Mass., USA), with a tidal volume of 15 ml/kg,  $\text{FIO}_2$  of 0.21 and respiratory rate of 15/min. Neuromuscular blockade was provided by intravenous 0.06 mg/kg of pancuronium bromide. Ranitidine, 50 mg, was infused intravenously.

We advanced a Swan-Ganz catheter (flow-directed thermodilution fiberoptic pulmonary artery catheter model P 7110, Abbott Critical Care Systems, Mountain View, Calif., USA) into the pulmonary artery through the right external jugular vein to measure pressures and to sample blood. Catheters were placed in the left femoral artery and vein to measure mean arterial pressure (MAP), to administer drugs and fluids, and to perform bleeding. A gastric tonometer was placed in the stomach to measure pHi and its position was checked manually through palpation.

After a midline laparotomy had been performed, a splenectomy was carried out to prevent autotransfusion. The superior mesenteric artery was dissected and an electromagnetic flow probe was placed around it. A catheter was advanced through a small mesenteric proximal vein to the intestine into the superior mesenteric vein to sample blood. Two small enterotomies were performed to place jejunal and ileal tonometers. After careful hemostasis, the abdominal contents were returned to the cavity and the abdomen was closed.

### Measurements and calculations

Mean arterial pressure (MAP) was measured (Statham P23 AA, Statham, Hato Rey, Puerto Rico) and registered (Gould RS 3400, Gould, Cleveland, Ohio, USA) through the whole experiment. Cardiac output (CO) was measured in triplicate by thermodilution

using 5 ml of saline at  $0^\circ\text{C}$  (Oximetrix  $\text{SO}_2/\text{CO}$  Computer, Abbott Laboratories, North Chicago, Ill. USA). CO was indexed to body weight. Superior mesenteric artery blood flow (SMAF) was measured with an electromagnetic probe (Spectramed Blood Flowmeter model SP 2202 B, Spectramed, Oxnard, Calif., USA) and is related to gut weight.

Arterial, mixed venous and mesenteric venous  $\text{PO}_2$ ,  $\text{PCO}_2$  and pH were measured with a blood gas analyzer (ABL 30, Radiometer, Copenhagen, Denmark). Hemoglobin and oxygen blood saturations (% $\text{HbO}_2$ ) were measured by using a co-oximeter calibrated for canine blood (OSM 3, Radiometer, Copenhagen, Denmark). Arterial, mixed venous and mesenteric venous contents ( $\text{CaO}_2$ ,  $\text{CvO}_2$  and  $\text{CmvO}_2$ ) were calculated as  $\text{Hb} \times 1.34 \times \% \text{HbO}_2 + \text{PaO}_2 \times 0.0031$ . Systemic and intestinal oxygen transport and uptake ( $\text{DO}_2$ ,  $\text{VO}_2$ ,  $\text{DO}_{2i}$  and  $\text{VO}_{2i}$ , respectively) were estimated as  $\text{DO}_2 = \text{CO} \times \text{CaO}_2$ ;  $\text{VO}_2 = \text{CO} \times (\text{CaO}_2 - \text{CvO}_2)$ ;  $\text{DO}_{2i} = \text{SMAF} \times \text{CaO}_2$  and  $\text{VO}_{2i} = \text{SMAF} \times (\text{CaO}_2 - \text{CmvO}_2)$ . Systemic and intestinal oxygen extraction ratios ( $\text{O}_2\text{ER}$  and  $\text{O}_2\text{ER}_i$ ) were calculated as  $(\text{CaO}_2 - \text{CvO}_2)/\text{CaO}_2$  and  $(\text{CaO}_2 - \text{CmvO}_2)/\text{CaO}_2$ , respectively.

Intramucosal  $\text{PCO}_2$  and pHi were measured with tonometers (TRIP NGS II Catheter, Tonometrics Division, Instrumentarium, Helsinki, Finland) [7]. We calculated differences between intramucosal  $\text{PCO}_2$  (gastric, jejunal and ileal) and arterial  $\text{PCO}_2$  (gastric  $\Delta\text{PCO}_2$ , jejunal  $\Delta\text{PCO}_2$  and ileal  $\Delta\text{PCO}_2$ , respectively). To determine whether mucosal anaerobic metabolism developed after hemorrhage, we used the Dill nomogram to predict mesenteric venous % $\text{HbO}_2$  (% $\text{HbO}_{2v}^{\text{Dill}}$ ) from intramucosal  $\text{PCO}_2$  [8].

An enzymatic electrode (Stat profile 9 plus, Nova Biomedical, Waltham, Mass., USA) was used to measure arterial and venous lactate. Intestinal efflux of lactate was calculated as SMAF times arterial minus mesenteric venous lactate difference.

### Experimental procedure

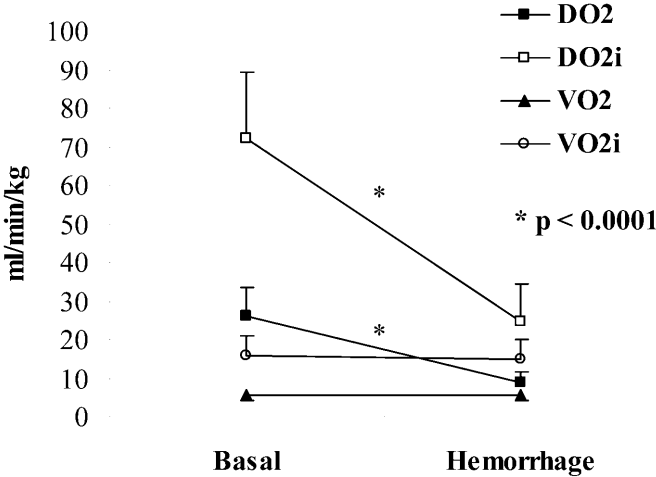
Basal measurements were performed after a stabilization period, which was defined by steady CO, SMAF and mixed venous % $\text{HbO}_2$ . Then, 20 ml/kg of blood was extracted through the femoral artery at a rate of 5 ml/kg per min. The measurements were repeated after 30 min (ischemia). Dogs' temperatures were maintained at  $37^\circ\text{C}$ , with a heating lamp, throughout the experiment.

### Statistical analysis

Measurements are reported as means  $\pm$  SD. The data of the basal period were compared with ischemia with paired *t*-test. Multiple comparisons were analyzed with ANOVA and Student-Newman-Keuls test. Differences with a *p* value of less than 0.05 were considered significant.

## Results

Hemorrhage caused marked effects on hemodynamic and oxygen transport variables (Fig. 1). MAP, CO, SMAF,  $\text{DO}_2$  and  $\text{DO}_{2i}$  fell significantly, but both systemic and intestinal  $\text{VO}_2$  remained stable due to increases in systemic and intestinal oxygen extractions (Table 1). Notwithstanding this, signs of tissue hypoxia were quite evident, like decreases of systemic pH, bicarbonate and arterial, mixed venous and mesenteric venous base excesses (Table 2) and arterial and mesenteric



**Fig. 1** Systemic and intestinal oxygen transport and consumption (DO<sub>2</sub>, DO<sub>2i</sub>, VO<sub>2</sub> and VO<sub>2i</sub>, respectively) in basal and ischemic conditions

venous hyperlactatemia. Gastric, jejunal and ileal ΔPCO<sub>2</sub> and pHi changed accordingly (Fig. 2). pHi variation coefficients were 1.6, 0.8 and 1.6%, respectively, in the basal period, and 2.4, 2.2 and 2.1% during ischemia. However, the decreases of gastric, jejunal and ileal pHi were greater than that of arterial pH (0.16 ± 0.09, 0.21 ± 0.14 and 0.18 ± 0.13 versus 0.07 ± 0.03, respectively; *p* < 0.05). Arterial and mesenteric venous lactate levels rose significantly (1.7 ± 0.9 versus 3.7 ± 1.4, *p* < 0.001, and 1.8 ± 0.8 versus 4.3 ± 1.5 mmol/l, *p* < 0.0001) as did the lactate veno-arterial difference (0.1 ± 0.6 to 0.6 ± 0.7 mmol/l, *p* < 0.05). Intestinal efflux of lactate increased more than 100% (0.037 ± 0.064 versus 0.082 ± 0.114 mmol/min per kg), but it did not reach statistical significance due to a large SD.

Basal and ischemic %HbO<sub>2v</sub><sup>Dill</sup> values, derived from gastric, jejunal and ileal tonometer PCO<sub>2</sub> values, were 19 ± 62% and -17 ± 66% (*p* < 0.02). Ischemic values were not only different from basal ones but became negative (Fig. 3).

**Discussion**

In recent years, tonometry has emerged as a useful tool with which to evaluate gut mucosal oxygen metabolism, as blood flow to the stomach and intestine is early and disproportionately reduced in shock and low-flow states. Intramucosal acidosis can rise from several mechanisms. First, it might appear because of tissue hypoxia. At the onset of anaerobic metabolism, CO<sub>2</sub> rises because of the bicarbonate buffering of protons generated by strong acids and ATP hydrolysis [9]. Tonometry might certainly identify this CO<sub>2</sub> excess. Besides, in hypoperfusion states, aerobically generated CO<sub>2</sub> could also accumulate as a result of lack of removal [10]. Moreover, in experimental endotoxemia, intramucosal acidosis could develop as a signal of real, deep metabolic disorders of sepsis, in the absence of tissue hypoxia and hypoperfusion [11].

In the present study, though DO<sub>2</sub> fell, systemic and intestinal VO<sub>2</sub> were maintained through increases in systemic and intestinal O<sub>2</sub>ER. This was to be expected, as we did not reach the critical DO<sub>2</sub> level needed to jeopardize VO<sub>2</sub>, stated by Nelson et al. as 7.9 ± 1.9 and 9.7 ± 2.7 ml/min per kg for systemic and intestinal VO<sub>2</sub>, respectively [1]. However, and as a key finding of this study, there was multiple evidence of anaerobic metabolism, such as metabolic acidosis, hyperlactatemia and intramucosal acidosis. We reason that, in this model, tissue hypoxia might have been the main mechanism responsible for intramucosal acidosis. During the experiment, intestinal VO<sub>2</sub> remained stable but the veno-arterial lactate difference rose significantly, which can be ascribed to the onset of intestinal anaerobic metabolism.

Schlichtig and Bowles, in a low-flow experimental model and with the aid of the nomogram of Dill, concluded that, below critical DO<sub>2</sub>, the appearance of CO<sub>2</sub> in the gut lumen was due to anaerobic production and not to the accumulation of aerobic source [8]. Briefly, Dill's nomogram rests upon the almost perfect linear relationship between venous PCO<sub>2</sub> and venous %HbO<sub>2</sub> in aerobic conditions, with stable CO<sub>2</sub> to O<sub>2</sub> exchange ratio. It follows that, if the venous PCO<sub>2</sub> is known, venous %HbO<sub>2</sub> is predictable (%HbO<sub>2v</sub><sup>Dill</sup>) and, if it agrees with the measured venous %HbO<sub>2</sub> value, the appear-

**Table 1** Systemic and intestinal hemodynamic and oxygen transport parameters in basal conditions and after hemorrhage

	Basal	Ischemia	<i>p</i>
Mean arterial blood pressure (mmHg)	145 ± 21	88 ± 24	< 0.00001
Cardiac output (ml/min per kg)	121 ± 29	48 ± 14	< 0.00001
Superior mesenteric artery blood flow (ml/min per kg)	338 ± 91	135 ± 55	< 0.00001
Systemic oxygen transport (ml/min per kg)	26.0 ± 7.3	8.9 ± 2.6	< 0.00001
Systemic oxygen consumption (ml/min per kg)	5.5 ± 1.3	5.4 ± 1.3	NS
Intestinal oxygen transport (ml/min per kg)	71.9 ± 17.3	24.6 ± 9.6	< 0.00001
Intestinal oxygen consumption (ml/min per kg)	15.7 ± 5.0	14.9 ± 5.3	NS
Systemic oxygen extraction ratio	0.22 ± 0.06	0.62 ± 0.11	< 0.00001
Intestinal oxygen extraction ratio	0.23 ± 0.07	0.60 ± 0.10	< 0.00001

**Table 2** Arterial, mixed venous and mesenteric venous blood gases in basal conditions and after hemorrhage

	Basal	Ischemia	<i>p</i>
Hemoglobin (g/dl)	16.3 ± 2.1	14.6 ± 2.2	0.04400
Arterial oxygen saturation	0.99 ± 0.02	0.96 ± 0.03	0.00270
Arterial pH	7.33 ± 0.04	7.26 ± 0.06	0.00200
Arterial PO <sub>2</sub> (torr)	101 ± 16	84 ± 13	0.00510
Arterial PCO <sub>2</sub> (torr)	34 ± 4	33 ± 3	NS
Arterial HCO <sub>3</sub> (mmol/l)	17 ± 1	14 ± 2	0.00010
Arterial BE (mmol/l)	-7 ± 2	-12 ± 3	0.00025
Mixed venous oxygen saturation	0.70 ± 0.06	0.36 ± 0.10	< 0.00001
Mixed venous pH	7.31 ± 0.04	7.22 ± 0.07	0.00048
Mixed venous PO <sub>2</sub> (torr)	52 ± 6	33 ± 5	< 0.00001
Mixed venous PCO <sub>2</sub> (torr)	38 ± 8	46 ± 6	0.00710
Mixed venous HCO <sub>3</sub> (mmol/l)	18 ± 3	18 ± 2	NS
Mixed venous BE (mmol/l)	-7 ± 3	-10 ± 3	0.02000
Mesenteric venous oxygen saturation	0.76 ± 0.07	0.38 ± 0.09	< 0.00001
Mesenteric venous pH	7.30 ± 0.04	7.17 ± 0.07	0.00003
Mesenteric venous PO <sub>2</sub> (torr)	51 ± 7	35 ± 5	< 0.00001
Mesenteric venous PCO <sub>2</sub> (torr)	41 ± 4	50 ± 7	0.00035
Mesenteric venous HCO <sub>3</sub> (mmol/l)	20 ± 1	18 ± 3	0.03700
Mesenteric venous BE (mmol/l)	-6.3 ± 1.8	-11.3 ± 4.4	0.00076

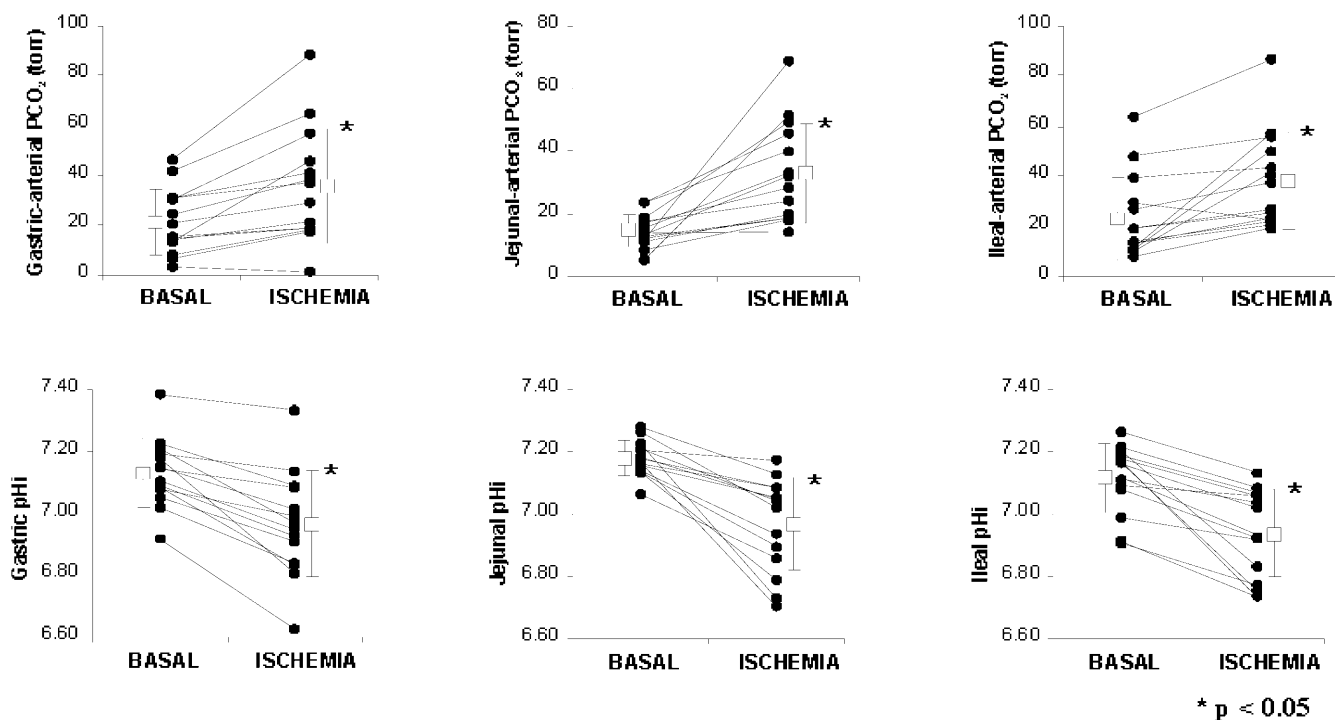
To convert torr to kPa, multiply the value by 0.1333

ance of dissolved CO<sub>2</sub> absolutely indicates aerobic metabolism. On the other hand, %HbO<sub>2v</sub><sup>Dill</sup> less than measured %HbO<sub>2</sub> or less than zero, would indicate the production of metabolic acids like lactate, and then conver-

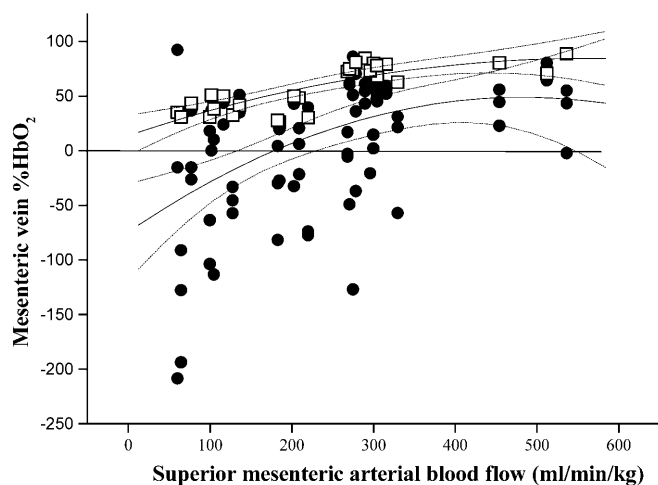
sion of CO<sub>3</sub>H<sup>-</sup> to CO<sub>2</sub> in anaerobiosis. During the ischemic period, our %HbO<sub>2v</sub><sup>Dill</sup> values obtained from gastric, jejunal and ileal mucosal PCO<sub>2</sub> became remarkably negative, which would further imply the presence of anaerobic processes.

The gut is especially sensitive to systemic hypoperfusion. As was pointed out before, the beginning of oxygen supply dependence occurs earlier in the gut than in the whole body [1]. Besides, measurements of regional oxygen transport and uptake parameters have been

**Fig.2** Gastric, jejunal and ileal intramucosal arterial PCO<sub>2</sub> gradients and intramucosal pH (pHi) behaviors in basal and ischemic conditions. *Black dots* are each individual experiment. *Open squares* are mean values ± SD



\* *p* < 0.05



**Fig. 3** Relationship between superior mesenteric arterial blood flow and measured mesenteric venous oxyhemoglobin saturation (squares) and mesenteric venous oxyhemoglobin saturation derived from intramucosal  $\text{PCO}_2$  ( $\% \text{HbO}_{2v}^{\text{Dill}}$ ) (black dots). Solid lines are regression lines. Dashed lines are the 95% confidence bands.  $\% \text{HbO}_{2v}^{\text{Dill}}$  were calculated from Dill's nomogram, that states that under aerobic metabolism and steady conditions, the relationship between venous  $\text{PCO}_2$  and venous  $\% \text{HbO}_2$  is linear [8]

claimed as a way to assess oxygen metabolism. However, in our study, intestinal  $\text{VO}_2$  remained stable in the face of altered metabolic parameters. Similarly, Fink et al. found ileal intramucosal acidosis in the presence of normal mesenteric  $\text{VO}_2$  [12] and Gutierrez et al. have demonstrated that increases in  $\text{DO}_2$  with dobutamine in septic patients can reverse hyperlactatemia and gastric intramucosal acidosis, in spite of unmodified  $\text{VO}_2$  [13]. Other investigators have reported different results. Grum et al. described a consistent correlation between pHi and intestinal  $\text{VO}_2$  during  $\text{DO}_2$  decreases induced by ischemia and hypoxia. Initially, both pHi and intestinal  $\text{VO}_2$  remained stable and fell when critical  $\text{DO}_2$  was achieved [3]. Rozenfeld et al. found that metabolic markers of intestinal hypoxia appeared with the onset of critical  $\text{DO}_2$  [14]. These contrary results could be ascribed to different experimental models of hypoperfusion. In the aforementioned studies there was selective reduction in superior mesenteric blood flow, while our model consisted in hemorrhagic shock.

Several underlying mechanisms could explain tissue hypoxia in the face of preserved intestinal  $\text{VO}_2$ . First, blood flow might have been redistributed to the muscularis mucosae, rendering mucosal layers hypoxic, but with low impact on whole  $\text{VO}_2$ . However, Lundgren et al. demonstrated that decreases in perfusion pressures redistributed flow towards the mucosa [15]. Second, countercurrent irrigation might induce a functional shunt that could place distal microvilli segments at risk [16]. Rozenfeld et al. suggested that during progressive ischemia, mucosa and serosa might become simulta-

neously hypoxic with a "patchy" distribution [14]. Our experimental design might have produced hypoxic areas large enough to cause intramucosal acidosis and lactate generation, but not to lower global intestinal  $\text{VO}_2$ .

Last, we cannot disregard the fact that surgical instrumentation or mucosal barrier ischemic injury could result in bacterial translocation, endotoxemia and subsequent cellular disturbances, which could account for the metabolic derangement observed. In this setting, aerobically generated hyperlactatemia produced by inhibition of pyruvate dehydrogenase, without changes in  $\text{VO}_2$ , may occur [17]. However, ours is an acute experimental model, whose main feature is hypoperfusion.

The other key finding of this study was that the effects of ischemia were equally reflected in stomach, jejunum and ileum. There was no difference in the behavior of  $\Delta \text{PCO}_2$  and pHi in the three segments and the variation coefficients were similar under basal and ischemic conditions. However, there has been much controversy about pHi correlations along the gastrointestinal tract. Poole et al. found, in dogs, that reduction of celiac and mesenteric flows to less than 50% of the basal values resulted in intramucosal acidosis in both territories [18] which was greater in the intestine than in the stomach (7.11 versus 7.30). Hartmann et al. [5] and Montgomery et al. [6] studied hemorrhage effects on gastric, small intestine and colonic pHi in pigs. The extent of the hemorrhage was similar to that of our model (16.9 ml/kg), but only intestinal pHi fell. Larger bleedings reduced pHi in the three segments. Walley et al. exposed pigs to progressive hemorrhage and found that gastric  $\Delta \text{PCO}_2$  at critical gut  $\text{DO}_2$  was extremely high and variable ( $63 \pm 40$  mmHg) compared to jejunal  $\Delta \text{PCO}_2$  ( $17 \pm 15$  mmHg). They concluded that gastric tonometry is noisy and rather inaccurate [19]. Differences in experimental designs or the species involved could account for the variations observed. For instance, reductions of regional blood flow during cardiopulmonary bypass, evaluated by laser Doppler velocimetry, were equal in rabbit stomach, jejunum and ileum [20]. In addition, despite a larger blood supply, gastric blood flow is more decreased than intestinal blood flow during hemorrhagic shock in dogs [21]. Also, a study of the vascular pattern of the intestinal villi performed in different species showed a more uniform histologic structure in the relatively shorter gastrointestinal tract of the dog [22].

In summary, our data show that, at least in this model of hemorrhagic shock, tissue and metabolic markers of hypoxia such as lactic acidosis and intramucosal acidosis may appear early, even in the absence of dependence of oxygen consumption on oxygen transport. In addition,  $\Delta \text{PCO}_2$  and pHi showed a similar response to hemorrhage in the three gastrointestinal segments studied. These findings support the value of gastric tonometry as a useful indicator of splanchnic perfusion.

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