

PROTEASES II

Potential Role in Health and Disease

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PLENUM PRESS • NEW YORK AND LONDON

014760017
18-0929
0000409

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

International Symposium on Proteases: Potential Role in Health and Disease (2nd: 1987: Rothenburg ob der Tauber, Germany)

Proteases II: potential role in health and disease.

(Advances in experimental medicine and biology; v. 240)

"Proceedings of the Second International Symposium on Proteases: Potential Role in Health and Disease, held May 17-20, 1987 in Rothenburg ob der Tauber, Federal Republic of Germany"—T.p. verso.

Includes bibliographies and index.

1. Proteolytic enzymes—Congresses. 2. Proteolytic enzymes—Pathophysiology—Congresses. 3. Proteolytic enzyme inhibitors—Congresses. I. Hörl, Walter H. II. Heidland, August. III. Title. IV. Series. [DNLM: 1. Peptide Hydrolases—congresses. 2. Protease Inhibitors—congresses. W1 AD559 v.240 / QU 136 I61 1987]

QP609.P78157 1987

612'.01516

88-25549

ISBN 0-306-43018-5



GH 89/799

Proceedings of the Second International Symposium on Proteases:
Potential Role in Health and Disease, held May 17-20, 1987, in
Rothenburg ob der Tauber, Federal Republic of Germany

© 1988 Plenum Press, New York
A Division of Plenum Publishing Corporation
233 Spring Street, New York, N.Y. 10013

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Printed in the United States of America

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FIBRINOLYSIS CAUSED BY CARDIO-PULMONARY BYPASS AND SHED
MEDIASTINAL BLOOD RETRANSFUSION - IS IT OF CLINICAL RELEVANCE?

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of blood saving methods during cardiac surgery is well accepted. It is commonly known that, in spite of heparin treatment, systemic coagulation and fibrinolysis will be activated by cardio-pulmonary bypass (CPB). Whether this activation is of clinical relevance was many times a point of discussion (1). Similar changes were found in the shed mediastinal blood postoperatively (2), which was retransfused to reduce homologous blood requirement (3). It is generally accepted now, that this method leads to a reduction of homologous blood requirement in cardiac surgery (4), but some reservations were made because of the low quality of the chest tube blood (5).

The aim of our study was to investigate the degree of fibrinolysis in the shed blood and in patients' circulation, the influence of lysosomal enzymes of desintegrated or activated granulocytes upon fibrinolyses, and to answer the question, whether retransfusion of shed mediastinal blood causes clinically relevant changes in patients' hemostasis.

METHODS

In twenty adult patients undergoing cardiac surgery parameters of fibrinolysis were analysed at the following instances: 1. before operation, 2. after CPB (comparing the data obtained at these two instances the effect of CPB on fibrinolysis can be estimated), 3. in the intensive care unit before and 4. 20 minutes after retransfusion. Samples were taken from patients' circulation as well as from the chest tube drainage. The applied analytical methods for measurements of plasminogen, antiplasmin, D-dimer, early fibrin(ogen) degradation products (N-terminal B β -fragments 1-42 and 15-42) and elastase from PMN granulocytes complexed with α_1 -proteinase-inhibitor (E- α_1 PI) are shown in Table 1. Retransfusion was only performed when at least 250 cc blood were collected and when it was indicated by the patient's circulatory state.

Table 1. Methods

plasminogen	-	chromogenic substrate S 2251 (Kabi)
antiplasmin	-	chromogenic substrate S 2251 (Kabi)
D-dimer	-	monoclonal antibodies (ELISA/MabCo)
N-terminal B β -fragments	-	monoclonal antibodies (ELISA/NIH)
E-a ₁ PI	-	PMNE (ELISA/Merck)

For statistical analysis the paired t-test comparing the measurements before and after retransfusion was applied. A p-value < 0,05 was considered to be significant. Results are given as mean \pm SD.

RESULTS

The mean amount of the first chest blood retransfusion was 325 \pm 77 cc (ranging from 250 - 520 cc). The mean hemoglobin content of the chest drainage was 69 g/l, the mean hematocrit 21 % (ranging from 13 - 29 %), the protein content 40.1 \pm 5.4 g/l.

Figure 1 shows the course of plasminogen and antiplasmin activity, the dotted line representing the value corrected for preoperative protein. When using this correction for hemodilution no statistically significant influence of CPB on these parameters was found. However, antiplasmin activity in the drainage fluid was significantly reduced. No difference of activity in the patients' blood could be demonstrated before and after retransfusion. The surprising fact that no reduction of plasminogen activity in the chest drainage was measured might be explained by the influence of fibrin and fibrin(ogen) split products on the measurement of plasminogen (6).

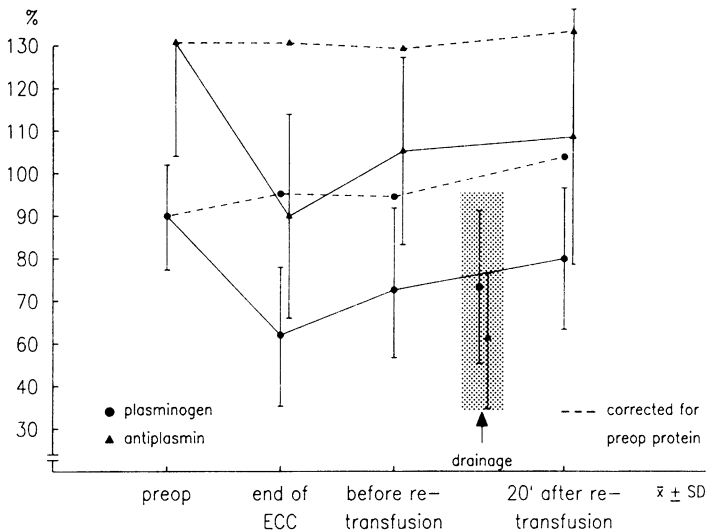


Fig. 1 Course of plasminogen and antiplasmin. The dotted line represents the value corrected for preoperative protein.

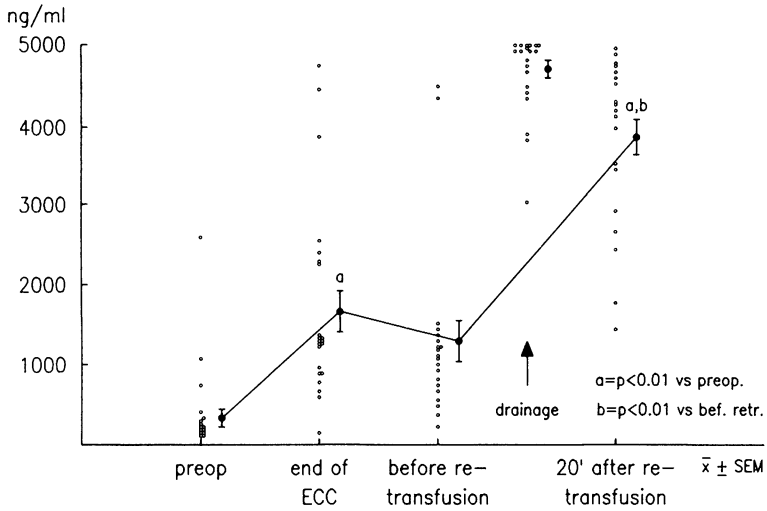


Fig. 2 Cross-linked fibrin fragments. Retransfusion of shed blood caused a significant ($p < 0,01$) increase of the concentration in patients' circulation compared to values before retransfusion.

The cross-linked fibrin fragments (Figure 2) showed a wide variation after CPB. The concentration decreased after operation, but developed a tremendous increase up to 5,000 ng/cc in the drainage fluid. The retransfusion caused a significant increase of cross-linked fibrin fragments in patients' blood.

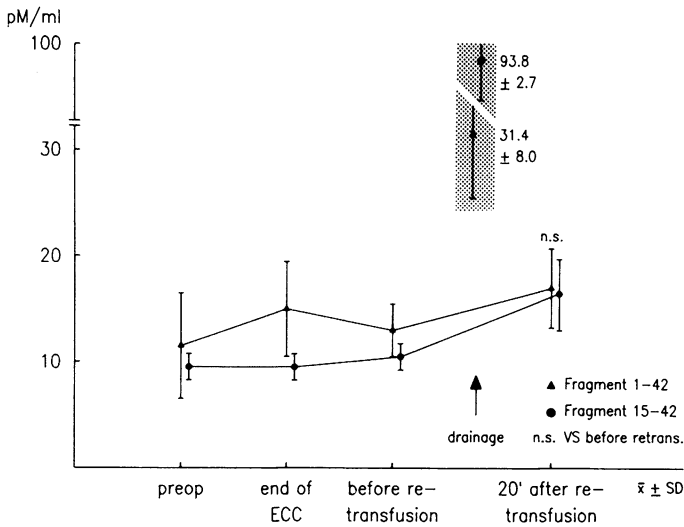


Fig. 3 B β -related peptides. Note the interruption of the Y-axis. Despite the high concentration in the drainage blood there was - in contrast to the cross-linked fibrin fragments - no significant increase in patients' circulation after retransfusion.

The B β -related peptides (Figure 3) showed a comparable course during CPB with an increase of the 1-42 fragments which was not significant. In the chest tube drainage a more pronounced increase of B β 15-42 peptides was found. However, there were no differences of B β -related peptides in patients' blood before and after retransfusion.

The PMN E-a₁PI complex (Figure 4) showed a tenfold increase in patients' blood after CPB, but there was an extraordinary increase in the drainage fluid with a mean concentration of 13,000 ng/cc - more than hundredfold the preoperative value. Retransfusion also caused a significant increase of the E-a₁PI complex in patients' blood. These values were significantly higher than those obtained prior to retransfusion.

No significant correlation between either blood loss or time lag between operation and retransfusion and fibrinolysis, represented by the antiplasmin activity, could be found in the shed blood. After retransfusion blood loss did not exceed the average of normal range.

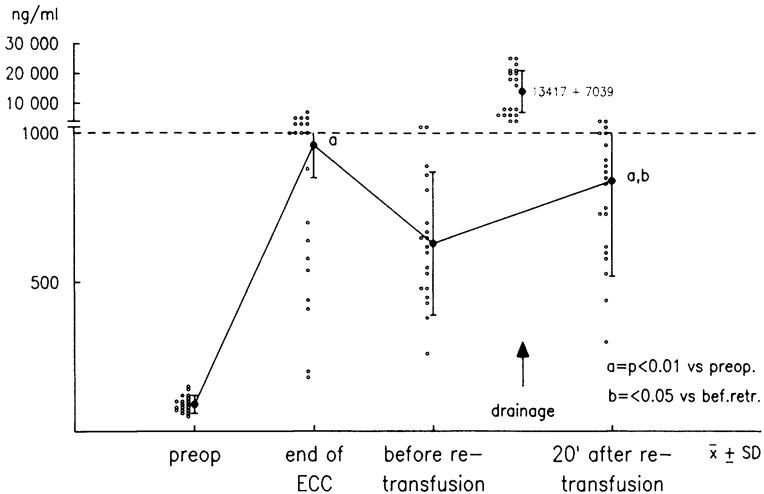


Fig. 4 PMN E-a₁PI complex. Note the interruption and different scale of the Y-axis. There was a tremendous increase in the shed blood. Retransfusion of shed blood caused a significantly increased level of the complex in patients' blood.

DISCUSSION

Shed mediastinal blood is not comparable to autologous or homologous (7) blood in regard to hemoglobin content, hematocrit or coagulation properties. However, in former investigations (8), comparing two groups of patients with and without retransfusion of shed mediastinal blood, no difference in the postoperative blood loss could be observed.

In the present study an activation of the fibrinolytic system in shed mediastinal blood was found. The magnitude of fibrinolytic activation in shed blood was comparable to that measured during CPB. This activation of the fibrinolytic system was indicated by comparable decreases of antiplasmin activity in patients' blood after CPB as well as in the shed blood. However, retransfusion of shed blood did not cause an additional decrease of antiplasmin in the patients' circulation.

B β -related peptides are a most sensitive marker of the endogenous activation of the fibrinolytic system, which can reveal sub-clinical activation of fibrinolysis (9). A pronounced increase of fibrin(ogen) split products was found in the shed blood. After retransfusion only the D-dimers showed a significant increase in patients' blood, whereas the concentration of B β -related peptides showed no increase. This can be explained by the lower molecular weight and therefore faster clearing rate of these peptides.

The constellation of increased fibrin(ogen) split products and stable antiplasmin activity after retransfusion can be interpreted as a waste effect of retransfusion. That means, the enhanced fibrinolytic or proteolytic activity within the shed blood is inhibited by the physiologic inhibitors. Some of these complexes and the split products obviously remain in the circulation after retransfusion without inducing fibrinolytic activity within the patient.

In this study the elevated levels of complexed elastase after CPB correspond to the results of other authors (10) indicating an activation or desintegration of PMN granulocytes due to CPB. The extraordinary increase of E-a₁PI in the shed blood may be explained by desintegration of granulocytes caused by mechanical alteration due to pericardial and/or pleural movement in the thorax and in the chest tubing.

Which conclusions can be drawn from the results of this study?

The fibrinolytic and unspecific proteolytic activity in the drainage fluid does not induce fibrinolytic activation after retransfusion. The increased level of fibrin(ogen) split products seems not to be clinically relevant, at least not with the amounts having been retransfused. It can be concluded that retransfusion of shed mediastinal blood is a save method of autologous volume substitution in the early postoperative period. However, it has to be taken into account that retransfusion of greater volumes of shed blood may cause a considerable impairment of coagulation and/or the fibrinolytic system. This deterioration might be induced by the infusion of fibrin(ogen) split products and/or the release of the content of desintegrated granulocytes. In this respect the possible role of pharmacological intervention by protease inhibition should be object of further investigations.

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