

IMPACT AND MID-TERM ASSESSMENT OF CORONARY PATIENTS REHABILITATED WITH INTERMITTENT SIMULATED HYPOXIA TECHNIQUE¹

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RESUMEN

El objetivo principal de la presente investigación fue evaluar el impacto de la técnica de altura simulada con cámara hipobárica en rehabilitación de pacientes con revascularización coronaria con y sin infarto de miocardio.

Las siguientes variables, pre y post rehabilitación luego de programa cuatro meses después, mostraron recuperación hasta el final del tiempo de observación (4 meses) siguiendo el protocolo previamente establecido.

Dado que no hubo participación de actividad física/aeróbica programada los resultados se consideran vinculados preferentemente al efecto de la hipoxia y consecuencia de cambios centrales más que periféricos.

Palabras Clave: Rehabilitación Coronaria, Hipoxia, Arritmia, Isquemia, Potenciales Tardíos, Perfusión, Bioquímica.

SUMMARY

Main objective of the present investigation were evaluate the impact of the simulated hypoxia technique – hypobaric chamber – to rehabilitate coronary bypassed with of without myocardial infarction.

The following variable, pre and post rehabilitation four months program were explored: myocardial ischemia, arrhythmia, late potentials, myocardium perfusion and molecular biochemistry. The last two were observed in follow up of four months. Results, shows general improvement. The follow up items, remained improved until protocol finish. Exercise was not utilized. Findings are consider principally related to hypoxia. Mainly due to central rather than periphery recoveries.

Keywords: Coronary Rehabilitation, Hypoxia, Arrhythmia, Ischemia, Late Potentials, Perfusion, Biochemistry.

INTRODUCTION

Previous observations utilizing high altitude hypoxia (HAH) to rehabilitate coronary bypassed patients with or without myocardial infarction, shows a quickly recovery (Marticorena, 1984-85; Marticorena and Marticorena, 1990; Marticorena et al 1993). Because in this procedure, patient does exercise while are mountaineering, an hypobaric chamber hypoxia (HCHH) was utilized to test such type of environment. Results showed similar and consistent improvement on peripheral central and metabolic parameters (Marticorena et al 1993; Marticorena et al 1994; Marticorena et al 1995; Marticorena et al 1995). There after, we did search for additional variables focusing on: 1) Effect of hypobaric hypoxia (HH) on myocardium ischemia and conduction system, 2) Four months follow up of: a) myocardium perfusion and b) molecular biochemistry.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

HYPOXIA HYPOBARIC CHAMBER TECHNIQUE

Simulated hypoxia technique utilizing hypobaric chamber, follows procedures based in a natural high altitude technique, developed by (Marticorena, 1984-85; Marticorena and Marticorena, 1990; Marticorena et al 1993; Marticorena 1993). It consist in intermittent and progressive hypoxia exposure beginning at sea level and finishing at 5000 m. Session, were scheduled in a weekly basses, for four hours each time, during four consecutive months (Marticorena et al 1993; Marticorena et al 1994; Marticorena et al 1995; Marticorena et al 1995).

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SERIAL OF PATIENTS. PROCEDURES

Series A
Patients

Five patients, all men, age range 44 to 67 years, mean 57. All hypertensive; three with old myocardial infarct; one with angina. Elapsed surgery time, between 10 years and 2 months and 1 year and 3 months, mean 3 and 5 m. Number of coronary grafts between one and four.

Procedures
Myocardial Ischemia and Arrythmias

Centra Multifunction Cardiology Workstation Marquette Electronics, USA, Centra Holter System – Software Enhancements – version 002 D, were utilized. Twenty four hours regular procedure were used to investigate myocardial ischemia and arrythmias (Deedwania 1992). This includes four hours of patient under simulated hypoxia.

Myocardial Perfusion

Myocardial perfussion were obtained on rest and exercise by standar plannar procedure utilizing Elscint 415 – W Unit. MIBI – TC 99 m (metil butil isonitrilo – tecnecio m) in uniform doses were used. The observation were not quantified. Three controls were taking. First, previous HCHH program, second after programs finish, and third four months later.

Molecular Biochemistry

Hewlett Packard Spectrophotometer 89532A UV – Visible Unit, USA were utilized to evaluate molecular biochemistry, according Adams method (Adams 1963). Controls did follow myocardial perfusion schedule.

Serie B
Patients

Eight patients, seven man, one female. Five hypertensive. Four with old myocardial infarct, two with arrythmia, one with angina. Elapsed surgery time, between 12 years and 5 months, mean 3 and 5 m. Number of coronary grafts between four and two.

Procedure

Late potenciales

Multifunction Cardiology Workstation – Marquette Electronics, USA. Centra 306 DB Software were utilized to register late potenciales signals.

STATISTIC ANALYSIS

The paired t test was applied to compare the variables between pre and post, 2 and 4 months after simulated hypoxia program.

RESULTS

Serie A

Myocardial Ischemia

No myocardial ischemia appeared in any patients at the time were exposed up to 5000m, highest limit for the protocol. A tendency to diminish ST depression were observed in one, became isoelectric in other, and remained normal in other three. Table 1.

24 HOLTER MONITORING: S-T CHANGES			
SUBJECT No. (Age)	INITIAL SL. CONTROL (18 h) ST ↓ mm	HYPOB. CHAMBER (4h) 5000m ST ↓ mm	SL FINAL CONTROL (2h) ST ↓ mm
1 (44)	—	—	—
2 (52)	—	—	—
3 (60)	—	—	—
4 (62)	12-0.4	0.6	0.6-0.5
5 (67)	0.2	—	—

ST = S-T segment changes. SL = sea level.

No single patient became abnormal on S-T. On contrary, under hypoxia S-T depression diminish in patient 4 and became isoelectric in patient 5.

Arrythmias

Consistent diminution of supraventricular and ventricular extrasistolia during hypoxia (H) were appreciated in all patients. Table 2.

24 HOLTER MONITORING: P. VENT. CT						
SUBJECT No. (Age)	INITIAL SL. CONTROL (18 h)		HYPOB. CHAMBER (4h) 5000m		SL FINAL CONTROL (2h)	
	SUPCT	P. VENT. CT	SUPCT	P. VENT. CT	SUPCT	P. VENT. CT
1 (44)	1 - 0	2 - 0	—	1 - 0	—	—
2 (52)	1 - 0	7 - 0	—	1 - 0	—	—
3 (60)	3 - 0	266 - 2	1 - 0	1 - 0	5 - 0	16 - 0
4 (62)	2 - 0	3 - 0	1 - 0	1 - 0	—	—
5 (67)	5 - 0	18 - 1	—	2 - 0	—	—

SL = sea level. SUPCT = supraventricular contraction. P. VENT. CT = premature ventricular contraction.

During hypoxia all patients diminish both, supraventricular and ventricle contractions.

Myocardial Perfusion

In all patients showing myocardial ischemia, increased myocardial perfussion were found after four months HCHH program. This myocardium improvement did remain stable in the following four months control. Table 3.

TABLE 3. Coronary Rehabilitation with high altitude simulated Hypoxia

MYOCARDIAL PERFUSION - FOLLOW UP OBSERVATIONS				
SUBJECT No. (Age)	COMPROMISE	BASELINE	END OF 4 MOS. PROG.	4 MOS. AFTER END OF PROG.
1 (44)	Inf. Post.	Isch. +	Isch.-	Isch.-
2 (52)	Ant. Apic.	Isch. +	Isch.-	Isch.-
3 (60)	Ant. Sept.	Isch. ++	Isch.+	Isch.+
	Diaphr.	Isch. +	Isch.-	Isch.+
4 (62)	Diaphr.	Nec. +	Nec.+	Nec.+
	Inf. Apic.	Isch. +	Isch.-	Isch.-
5 (67)	Inf. Apic.	Nec. +	Nec.+	Nec.+
	Post. Lat.	Isch.-	Isch.-	Isch.-
5 (67)	Post. Lat.	Nec. ++	Nec.++	Nec.++
Isch = ischemia. nec. necrosis				

All Patients who had myocardial ischemia improved. All benefits remained improved up to last control.

Molecular Biochemistry

Improvement of metabolic performance at the end of four months regular program were found. Those values remained improved statistically significant up to end of the protocol, four months later. Table 4 and 5.

TABLE 4. Coronary Rehabilitation with high altitude simulated Hypoxia

MOLECULAR BIOCHEMISTRY - FOLLOW UP OBSERVATION							
2- 3 DPG (4.5 - 5.5 u mol/ml)				ATP (38 - 62 u mol/dl)			
B	F	2M	4M	B	F	2M	4M
5	21	19	16	36	67	56	52
p <0.001 <0.001 <0.001				<0.01 <0.01 <0.01			
2 - 3 DGP = 2 - 3 Diphosphoglyceric acid. ATP = adenosine 5' triphosphate. B = basal. F = final. 2M = two months control. 4M = four months control.							

Both variables became early stimulated by hypoxia and remained similar until the last control.

TABLE 5. Coronary Rehabilitation with high altitude simulated Hypoxia

MOLECULAR BIOCHEMISTRY - FOLLOW UP OBSERVATION											
ICDH 40-360 (U/ml)				HBDH 56-126 (U/L)				LDH 125-236 (U/L 25°C)			
B	F	2M	4M	B	F	4M	B	F	2M	4M	
93	239	171	168	56	93	70	65	105	89	85	
p <0.01 <0.01 <0.01				<0.01 <0.01				<0.001 <0.01 <0.01			
ICDH = Isocitrate dehydrogenase. HBDH = alfa hydroxybutyrate. LDH = lactate dehydrogenase. B = basal. F= final. 2M = two months control. 4M = four months control.											

Stimulation of aerobic and anaerobic paths are observed until last control.

Serie B

Late Potencials

In one patient late potencials were present before the program. At the end of four months, such abnormalities

dissappeared. In other one, who was borderline, late potencials became clearly normal. Table 6.

TABLE 6. Coronary Rehabilitation with high altitude simulated Hypoxia

LATE POTENCIALS ON SIGNAL - AVERAGED ECG						
SUBJECT No. (Age)	TOTAL QRS DURATION-FILTERED (>114 m.s.)		DURATION OF HFLA SIGNALS (>38 m.s.)		RMS VOLTAGE TERM 40 m.s. (<20 m.s.)	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
1 (39)	126	107	38	17	18	43
2 (44)	113	104	36	29	25	31
3 (45)	120	119	48	31	20	26
4 (54)	98	99	21	23	78	53
5 (56)	94	97	19	22	59	56
6 (61)	100	100	15	18	67	56
7 (63)	104	103	38	39	34	26
8 (67)	113	114	32	32	37	35
MEAN 54	108	105	31	26	42	41
P	NS		NS		NS	
HFLA = Low amplitud signal duration. RMS = root = mean square voltage in terminal 40 miliseconds. NS = no significant.						

Tendency to show better performance in all three parameters. Although, no satistically differences were found.

Discussion

Myocardial Ischemia. Atrial and Ventricular Premature Contractions

Lessening myocardial ischemia and atrial and ventricle premature contractions were found. This are probably due to adenosine effect (Lerman 1990; Muñoz et al 1984; Di Marco et al 1985). This metabolit, is controlled by Pa O₂ (Amsterdam and Mason 1977; Fox et al 1974; Berne 1974). High adenosine could increase coronary flow, and might controls heart arrhythmia too.

During extreme altitude (6,500 – 8,2000 m), myocardial ischemia and arrythmia was mentioned (Westphal et al 1994), although myocardial contractility is well maintained at 8,000 m (West 1993). Our patients, goes no further than 5,000 m therefore, were not exposed to critical altitude 7,000 – 8,000 m (Hulleman 1978; Horbein 1996; Kayser et al 1992).

Late Potencials Signal – averaged electrocardiographic (SAECG)

Late potencials (LP), exits (Breithardt, et al 1991), in any specific case if 2 of the 3 following parameters are present: total QRS duration-filtered (> 114 ms) low amplitude signal duration (> 38 ms) and root-mean square voltage in terminal 40 ms (< 20 uV).

In two of five patients with abnormal SACG, this became normal. In the remaining cases, tendency to show better SAECG were found. Outcome of LP could be related to improvement of retard ventricular activation (Gomez et al 1989) and successful coronary perfussion Boehlerer et al 1992; Ragosta et al 1993). In both cases, could be

associated to adenosine increment due to hypoxia (Amsterdam and Mason 1977; Fox et al 1974; Berne 1974).

Hypoxia. Coronary Flow. Myocardial Perfusion. Molecular Biochemistry

Coronary flow/myocardial perfusion, are each another close associated to metabolic myocardium requirements (Amsterdam and Masson 1977). This mechanism works under several stimulus such hypoxia, (Amsterdam and Masson 1977; Fox et al 1974; Berne 1974; Kaijser, Grubbstrom and Berglund 1996). Acute low PO₂ at myocardium it will increase coronary flow (Amsterdam and Masson 1977; Fox et al 1974, Berne 1974; Grover 1993). This should occurs, by adenosine production (Amsterdam and Masson 1977; Fox et al 1974; Berne 1974). Other events precipitated by H might also take place. Relaxation of smooth muscle and endothelium cells should be achieved by cellular increasing of guanosin 3', 5' - cyclic monophosphate (cGMP) (Star 1993; Furchgott and Zawadki 1980; Kukreja and Hess 1992) or adenosine 3'5' cyclic monophosphate (cAMP) concentration (Westendorp et al 1992; Sun et al 1996). This two second messengers are related to nitric oxide (NO), endothelium derived relaxing factor (Star 1993; Furchgott and Zawadki 1980; Kukreja and Hess 1992) and to adenosine triphosphate (ATP). (Villavicencio 1993) respectively. Thus, the NO results from adenine nucleotides (ATP) (Star 1993), and ATP increases by hypoxia. In relation with NO, nitric oxide synthase (ONS), also goes up under hypoxia (Arregui 1996).

Plasma atrial natriuretic peptide (ANP), can also be associated with cGMP level (Westendorp et al 1993). Widespread results exists respect to ANP, and hypoxia (Richalet et al 1991; Antezana et al 1994). Report resembling H protocol – for other purposes – shows increment of ANP (Westendorp et al 1993) as well as on rest at high altitude (Milledge 1994).

Peripheral or Central Improvement

To establish frontiers between periphery and central improvements by biochemistry findings in the present study is not easy.

Recovery of heart function by left ventricle shortening, ejection fraction, and myocardial perfusion utilizing HCHH to rehabilitate coronary patients should indicate that central rather than peripheral improvements could be most important. (Marticorena and Marticorena 1994; Marticorena et al 1995; Marticorena et al 1995).

Follow up Recovery Findings: Myocardial Perfusion. Biochemistry

Endothelial cells and smooth muscle vessels, when are stimulated by H, could remain in such a new condition

for some time. This responses resembles, what is seen in fragile respiratory changes due to exposure to high altitude. (Muza et al 1994) found for example, that augmentation of hypoxic ventilatory chemosensitivity persist at least for one week following descent.

Group Controls

According investigation nature, the observed patients, can be their own control (Niebauer et al 1994). This should be the present case. Two circumstances could be discussed around this point:

a) Hypoxia: Specific Stimulus

Changes from basal control and those in between, are both significantly different compared with basal stage. All controls did move to only one pattern. Therefore, it can not be circumstantial or unrelated findings either. On contrary, looks, as a consisting responses, probable due to hypoxia.

Hypoxia can improve physical training (Gippenreiter and Suslow 1996; Hoppler 1996). Intracellular signals can be initiated by hypoxia. (Webster and Nanette 1996). Physiological and biochemical H changes are inclusive, sensitive to selection in different lineage (Hochachka 1996) Intermittent H exposures shows changes in between central and chronic H exposure (Jalil et al 1996).

All this mechanisms, are matter of interpretation when is applied to any H research line, like the present investigation. Is telling us also, that the importance of H is similar to hyperoxia. Hypoxia and hyperoxia can be good or bad. It can give us health or disease. Even can kill us. It will depends only, how we use them.

b) Rehabilitation: Stage Patients

Patients in both series were over three years average after coronary bypass. Spontaneous recovery after such period of time is unlikely. It occurs usually within the first three to four months after surgery (Oldenburg et al 1995).

Possibilities to use simulated hypoxia technique

The simulated H technique can be applied as an alternative procedure of the natural H system. Both procedures, however are under specific modalities. This is in relation with degree, limit of time and frequency of H exposure, etc. therefore, this technique can not be generalized to other altitudes, over 5,000 m for example.

Current Indications

Limitations to practice physical exercise due to muscular-skeletal diseases.

Exercise training can not be desirable in various circumstances: in patients with myocardial ischemia, O₂ demand is not reduced with exercise training (Digenio, Avril-Slaving and Daly 1996). Training in patients with angina at 100% of ischemia level is not beneficial and the functional capacity may even get worse (Sainz et al 1996).

Possible Future Indications

Unestable angina
Severe arrhythmia
Critical low ejection fraction

Reperfusion syndrome due to angioplasty, coronary bypass, trombolysis, or any conditions increasing free radicals or antioxidants depletion. Inclusive, hypoxia can increase antioxidants level (Sandoval et al 1996; Krasyuk, Beloshitsky and Povstynan 1996).

Possible Limitations

High sensitivity to hypoxia at the brain (Horbein 1996; Garrido et al 1995) or lungs level.

Severe Cor pulmonale.
Brain severe circulatory impairment.
Sickle cell.

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