

fragile. Conclusions that are based on nonrandomized, open-label drug assignment, partial blinding, and loss to follow-up of the majority should be viewed cautiously, especially when alternative explanations may be valid (2,3).

*Colin Berry, PhD
David Carrick, PhD
Caroline Haig, PhD
Keith G. Oldroyd, MD(Hons)

*BHF Glasgow Cardiovascular Research Centre
Institute of Cardiovascular and Medical Sciences
University of Glasgow
126 University Place
Glasgow, G12 8TA
United Kingdom
E-mail: colin.berry@glasgow.ac.uk
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REPLY: “Waves of Edema” Seem Implausible



We read the comments of Dr. Berry and colleagues on our recent study with great interest (1). On the basis of an imaging substudy of 30 patients with myocardial infarctions, they propose that the bimodal post-infarction T₂ cardiac magnetic resonance imaging (CMR) pattern can be explained entirely by the effects of myocardial hemorrhage rather than by the existence of 2 distinct waves of edema. Interestingly, they state that patients with hemorrhages displayed a “bimodal” pattern for T₂ but not for edema, an intriguing finding given that the identification of edema by CMR is based on T₂.

We admire the important imaging work done by Berry’s group. However, clinical studies by themselves are limited when it comes to mechanistic interpretation; despite the obvious differences from humans, pre-clinical animal models are the basis of progress in the understanding of pathophysiological mechanisms. It is also the case that desiccation remains a reference technique for water content quantification, although it is true that it does not differentiate between intra- and extracellular water components, as we have acknowledged (1,2). Using this technique, we were able to clearly demonstrate a bimodal post-infarction edematous reaction (1,3), and the dynamics of edema correlated with the observed CMR changes. We agree with Berry et al. that qualitative T₂ CMR sequences have suboptimal accuracy for imaging edema, and for this reason, we included in all cases 2 quantitative T₂-mapping methods, in addition to T₂ short-tau inversion recovery (4). The evidence from these independent approaches, conducted in a human-like animal model, provide robust evidence that myocardial ischemia and reperfusion is followed by a genuinely bimodal edematous reaction.

We were challenged by the suggestion that “baking will also desiccate gelatinous blood clot,” and we have performed new experiments to address this. Subjecting of pig blood clots to the same desiccation protocol resulted in a mean water content of about 75%. If Berry et al. were correct and the edema at reperfusion (measured water content ~84% to 85%) were stable throughout reperfusion, hemorrhage could account for the measured water content values (~81% at 24 h) (1,3) only if it affects more than 40% of the infarcted region. However, hemorrhage affected “only” ~10% of the injury area at 24 h (unpublished data). In addition, if hemorrhage were the sole explanation for the bimodal T₂ pattern, it would be difficult to understand why T₂ and water content increased to day 4, coinciding with the peak of hemorrhage (1). These 2 lines of evidence (the extent of hemorrhage in the model and the coincidence of increased water content and T₂ with peak hemorrhage) refute the interesting hypothesis proposed by Berry and colleagues.

Complex biological events seldom have single explanations, and we have consistently acknowledged (1-4) that T₂ can be affected by other factors, including hemorrhage, in addition to myocardial water content. It is plausible that the observed bimodal post-infarction T₂ pattern is due to at least 2 components: mainly the dynamic changes in myocardial water content and a lesser contribution from the classically described paramagnetic effect of hemoglobin denaturation (1,3).

Rodrigo Fernández-Jiménez, MD
Valentin Fuster, MD PhD
*Borja Ibanez, MD PhD
*Myocardial Pathophysiology Program
Centro Nacional de Investigaciones
Cardiovasculares Carlos III
Melchor Fernández Almagro, 3
28029 Madrid
Spain
E-mail: bibanez@cnic.es

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