Cardiovascular Genetics: A News Round-Up

Glucagon-Like Peptide-1 Receptor–Atrial Natriuretic Peptide Axis
A Novel Mechanism for Blood Pressure Regulation

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Study Hypothesis
Population genetic studies have established the role of natriuretic peptide system in blood pressure (BP) regulation. The primary function of atrial natriuretic peptide (ANP) is to induce natriuresis through kidneys and promote vasodilatation in blood vessels. Clinical trials have shown that glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor (GLP-1R) agonists reduce BP and decrease cardiovascular risk. In the current study, Kim et al uncover a novel link between GLP-1R and ANP, possibly elucidating the mechanism behind the reduction of BP that is observed with the use of GLP-1R agonists in clinical trials.

How Was the Hypothesis Tested?
The authors used Glp1r−/− mice, Nppa−/− mice, and Rapgef4−/− mice (all on the C57BL/6 background) with the corresponding wild-type controls. Angiotensin II infusion and pressure overload secondary to transaortic constriction were used to induce hypertension in the mice. The authors tested whether liraglutide (GLP-1R agonist) infusion in the normotensive and hypertensive mice reduced BP, induced ANP secretion, and promoted aortic vasodilatation. Next, they determined the importance of ANP for the liraglutide-induced ANP secretion from cardiomyocytes and promoted aortic vasodilatation. Finally, they used Rapgef4−/− mice, which are deficient of the gene encoding the downstream effector, Rap guanine nucleotide exchange factor Epac2 (also known as Rapgef4), because plasma ANP levels failed to increase in Rapgef4−/− mice.

Implications
This study uncovers a novel gut-heart axis by which a gut hormone, GLP-1, regulates ANP secretion from cardiomyocytes and lowers BP. One could speculate that these findings can be translated to treating hypertension in humans especially in patients with coexisting diabetes mellitus. Further research directed at pharmacologically augmenting the activation of natriuretic peptide system through GLP-1R pathway is warranted.

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Disclosures
None.

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