L-ARGININE AND PHYSOSTIGMINE IN HEMORRHAGIC SHOCK: LACK OF EVIDENCE FOR SYNERGISM

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We have previously shown the protective effects of both L-arginine and physostigmine in an experimental model of severe hemorrhagic shock, when these substances were used as monotherapy. It was of interest to investigate whether the combination of L-arginine (300 mg/kg, i.v. bolus) and physostigmine (0.07 mg/kg, i.v. bolus) could produce further beneficial cardiovascular and/or metabolic effects in anaesthetized hemorrhaged rabbits (intermittent bleeding; 40% of the estimated blood volume for 15 min). Selected cardiovascular and biochemical parameters were assessed before bleeding and at several points up to 60 min after the end of bleeding. Drugs were injected 1-2 min after the end of bleeding (Phy-group) or 10 min later (L-Arg+Phy-group). Control rabbits received the corresponding volumes of saline only (0.6-2.0 ml; S-group). Physostigmine (0.07 mg/kg) produced a rapid and sustained increase in mean arterial pressure, the effect being attenuated in L-arginine-pretreated rabbits (Phy- and L-Arg+Phy-group, respectively). The beneficial effects of L-arginine on heart rate and hemoglobin oxygen saturation in venous blood were not completely lost in rabbits of the L-Arg+Phy group, and such a combination partially improved acid-base status (decrease in PaCO₂ in arterial blood) and produced further hemodilution (decrease in hematocrit) 15-60 min after the end of bleeding. However, the combination of L-arginine and physostigmine does not offer any significant advantage over the monotherapy with these drugs in hemorrhagic shock.

Key words: L-arginine, physostigmine, hemorrhagic shock; rabbit

INTRODUCTION

Physostigmine has been extensively used in various models of hemorrhagic shock with remarkable success (Guarini et al., 1989; Savić et al., 1991, 1992; Žunić et al., 1995; Todorović et al., 1996, 1997). As a lipid-soluble anticholinesterase, it is distributed in the central nervous system and may increase blood pressure via central cholinergically mediated activation of the peripheral
adrenergic system (Varagić, 1955; Prostran et al., 1994, 1996, 1997). However, the beneficial effects of physostigmine (0.07 mg/kg, i.v. bolus) on arterial pressure and survival in hemorrhaged rats and rabbits could not be attributed only to the increased peripheral vasoconstriction, and several other hypothesis have arisen (Savić et al., 1991, 1992; Žunić et al., 1995). The presumed anti-shock effects of physostigmine have been explained by the stimulation of adrenaline release from the adrenal medulla since (a) nicotinic, but not muscarinic antagonists abolished the protective effects of physostigmine in hemorrhaged rabbits (Guarini et al., 1989), and (b) nicotinic agonist dimethylphenylpiperazinium (DMPP) (0.5 μg/kg) produced a rapid and sustained reversal of hemorrhagic shock in rats via stimulation of adrenaline release from the adrenal medulla (Bazzani et al., 1996).

Also, physostigmine caused a significant hemodilution in hemorrhaged rabbits (Savić et al., 1991, 1992). In addition, the same authors surmised that this anticholinesterase may antagonize the action of endogenous substances (e.g. opioids) known to aggravate hemorrhagic hypovolemia state.

Endogenous L-arginine, a semi-essential amino acid, is involved in L-arginine-nitric oxide (NO) pathway of blood pressure control, contributing to vasorelaxation of blood vessels and negative inotropic action in the cardiac muscle, and playing an important role in pathophysiological response to hemorrhagic hypovolemia and shock (Szabo and Thiemermann, 1994; Thiemermann, 1995; Cylwik et al., 2005). Nitric oxide is well known to contribute to organ damage in hemorrhagic shock (Szabo and Billiar, 1999). However, the protective effects of L-arginine in various models of hemorrhagic shock have also been observed (Daughters et al., 1996; Mellander et al., 1997; Sato, 1998; Angele et al., 1999; Todorović et al., 2001). It was assumed that the beneficial actions of L-arginine in such models could be attributed to the improvement of vascular endothelial function and tissue oxygenation (NO-related, stereoselective effects) (Todorović et al., 2001). In addition, certain non-specific effects of L-arginine have also been assumed (e.g. weak antioxidant and direct cardioprotective action; increase in tissue oxygen extraction). Also, it should be taken into account that higher doses of L-arginine were predominantly protective in models of hemorrhagic shock and a significant percentage of the injected L-arginine is metabolized via arginase, but not nitric oxide synthase. The role of such a metabolic pathway in this model remains to be assessed.

The interaction between L-arginine and physostigmine was extensively investigated in normotensive and spontaneously hypertensive non-hemorrhaged rats (Prostran et al., 1994, 1997). Such investigations may be of a great importance in the elucidation of the role of peripheral and central mechanisms of beneficial actions of both physostigmine and L-arginine in hemorrhagic shock. Accordingly, we have evaluated the effects of i.v. bolus injections of physostigmine in L-arginine pretreated and untreated anaesthetized hemorrhaged rabbits.
MATERIAL AND METHODS

Chemicals
The following substances were used: L-arginine hydrochloride (Sigma, St. Louis, USA), physostigmine salicylate (Serva, Heidelberg, Germany) and thiopentone-sodium (Trapanal®, Byk Gulden, Konstanz, Germany). All substances were dissolved in distilled water, and diluted in saline solution (0.9% NaCl) immediately before injection.

Animals
The experiments were performed on rabbits, bred and kept under standard laboratory conditions. The investigation conforms with the Guide for the care and use of laboratory animals published by the US National Institutes of Health (NIH publication No 85-23, revised 1985).

Experimental protocols
Rabbits were anaesthetized with thiopentone-sodium (5% solution in 0.9% NaCl, 0.4 ml/kg, i.v.). Both the right femoral artery and vein and the left femoral artery were cannulated and blood was heparinized (250 IU/kg b.w. in 0.05 mL volume). An intravenous cannula was placed in the right femoral vein to reach the middle part of the iliac vein, while an intraarterial cannula was placed in the right femoral artery. Intermittent bleeding (1 min of bleeding + 4 min of pause) through the cannulated right femoral blood vessels, lasting 15 min, was used to remove 40% of the estimated blood volume (approx. 5% of body mass). The obtained samples of arterial and venous blood were immediately analyzed. The 15th minute blood sample (5.5 ml) was immediately replaced with an identical volume of whole blood, taken from the same animal (Todorović et al., 1998; 2001).

Hemorrhaged rabbits were treated with physostigmine (0.07 mg/kg) or the combination of L-arginine (300 mg/kg) and physostigmine (0.07 mg/kg). The experimental groups of rabbits were as follows:

– Phy, treated with i.v. bolus of physostigmine in a dose of 0.07 mg/kg 1-2 min after the end of bleeding (N = 5; b.w.: 3262 ± 142 g);
– L-Arg+Phy, treated with i.v. bolus of L-arginine in a dose of 300 mg/kg 1-2 min after the end of bleeding followed by i.v. bolus of Phy in a dose of 0.07 mg/kg 10 min later (N = 6; b.w.: 2958 ± 40 g);
– S, the control group of rabbits, received a corresponding volume of saline (0.6 - 2.0 ml) 1-2 min after the bleeding was stopped (N = 6; b.w.: 2978 ± 110 g).

Both the systolic and diastolic arterial blood pressures were continuously recorded from the left femoral artery by means of a pressure transducer (Burdon type, Physiograph "SIX", Huston). The mean arterial pressure (MAP) was calculated according to the following formula: MAP = DP + (SP - DP):3. The heart rate was also monitored via precordial electrodes (Cardiac Preamplifier Physiograph MK IV) and expressed in beats per minute (b.p.m.). Cardiovascular parameters were measured: 1) before bleeding (PB values); 2) immediately after the end of bleeding and before the addition of a drug or saline (AB values); 3) 5,
10, 15, 30 and 60 min after the end of bleeding (5, 10, 15, 30 and 60 min values, respectively).

Selected biochemical parameters, including serum sodium, potassium, chloride and protein concentrations (Astra 8, Beckman) and hematocrit (micromethod) were measured before bleeding, immediately after bleeding and 15 and 60 minutes after bleeding was stopped. The acid–base balance parameters: arterial and venous pH, actual bicarbonate (ActB), excess base (EB), partial pressure of carbon dioxide (PaCO₂) and hemoglobin saturation with oxygen (sO₂) were determined according to Astrup and Siggaard-Andersen method at 37°C (Siggaard-Andersen, 1963), employing ABL-3 system (Radiometer, Copenhagen). Biochemical parameters were measured: 1) before bleeding (PB values); 2) immediately after the end of bleeding and before the addition of any drug or saline (AB values); 3) 15 and 60 min after the end of bleeding (15 and 60 min values, respectively).

Statistics
Statistical analysis was carried out using GraphPad Prism version 4.00 for Windows, GraphPad Software, San Diego California USA. Values are expressed as the mean ± standard error of the mean (S.E.M.) of N determinations. Mean values before and after bleeding, as well as differences between experimental and control groups, were compared. The statistical significance of drug effects and comparison of the different time-response curves was performed by analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Dunnet’s post hoc test. Linear regression model, the coefficient of the linear correlation and test for parallelism of the time-response curves were also used in analysis when appropriate. Values of P<0.05 were taken as statistically significant.

RESULTS
Cardiovascular responses
The mean arterial pressure (MAP) and heart rate (HR) of anaesthetized rabbits (S-, Phy, L-Arg+Phy-group, respectively) were statistically similar under basal conditions (i.e., before bleeding and injection of saline or any other drug). Severe blood loss (40% of the estimated blood volume) caused a profound fall in MAP and HR in all groups of rabbits. After-bleeding values of MAP and HR were significantly lower than the corresponding pre-bleeding values (PB vs. AB, 0 min: P<0.05) (Table 1).

In saline-treated rabbits, insignificant changes in MAP and HR were observed 0-60 min after the end of bleeding (Table 1). During the same 60 min experimental period, i.v. bolus of Phy (0.07 mg/kg) caused a rapid and sustained raise in MAP from approx. 40 to approx. 80 mm Hg, the effect being most pronounced 5 min after the injection of the drug (S vs. Phy, 5 min: P<0.05). Such an effect of Phy on the MAP was abolished with L-Arg (300 mg/kg) in L-Arg+Phy group, i.e. the MAP even decreased from approx. 68 to approx. 66 mm Hg 5 min after the i.v. bolus injection of Phy in rabbits pretreated with L-Arg (values recorded 10 and 15 min after the end of bleeding, respectively) (Table 1). (Please note that
Table 1. Mean arterial pressure and heart rate of anaesthetized rabbits before and 0-60 min after the cessation of bleeding (S-, Phy-, and Phy+L-Arg-group, respectively) (mean ± SEM)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>PB</th>
<th>AB</th>
<th>0 min</th>
<th>5 min</th>
<th>10 min</th>
<th>15 min</th>
<th>30 min</th>
<th>60 min</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>MAP</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>115 ± 9</td>
<td>30 ± 17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>39 ± 2</td>
<td>51 ± 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>HR</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>330 ± 17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>269 ± 14</td>
<td>56 ± 9</td>
<td>255 ± 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phy</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>MAP</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>122 ± 4</td>
<td>330 ± 6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>43 ± 5</td>
<td>82 ± 11*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phy</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>HR</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>330 ± 6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>270 ± 25</td>
<td>82 ± 11*</td>
<td>256 ± 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L-Arg+Phy</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>MAP</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>113 ± 6</td>
<td>299 ± 10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27 ± 2†</td>
<td>65 ± 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L-Arg+Phy</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>HR</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>299 ± 10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>244 ± 15</td>
<td>65 ± 5</td>
<td>264 ± 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

S – S-group; Phy – Phy-group; L-Arg + Phy - L-Arg + Phy-group; N – number of animals survived; MAP – mean arterial pressure (mm Hg); HR – heart rate (b.p.m.); PB – pre-bleeding values; AB – after-bleeding values (measurements were performed 0, 5, 10, 15, 30 and 60 min after the cessation of bleeding, respectively); * - P < 0.05 in comparison with the S group; † - P < 0.05 in comparison with the Phy-group.

Experimental design is shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PB</th>
<th>AB</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saline (S-group)</td>
<td>Phystigmine (L-Arg+Phy-group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physostigmine (Phy-group)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L-Arginine (L-Arg+Phy-group)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the MAP values were somewhat lower immediately after the end of bleeding in L-
Arg+Phy- than in Phy-group; 0 min: P<0.05.). Neither Phy itself nor the
combination of L-Arg and Phy significantly changed the HR 0-60 min after the end
of bleeding, although an insignificant raise of the heart rate was observed in both
groups (0 min vs. 60 min: ∆HR of 19 and 32 b.p.m., respectively).

**Acid-base balance parameters**

a) Partial pressure of carbon dioxide

Basal values of partial pressure of carbon dioxide in arterial and venous
blood (PaCO2a and PaCO2v, respectively) were similar in all rabbits. A sustained
decrease in PaCO2a values was observed in S-, Phy and L-Arg+Phy-group, 0-60
min after the end of bleeding (0 min vs. 60 min: P<0.01, P<0.05, and P<0.001,
respectively). The most profound fall in PaCO2a values was observed in rabbits
treated with the combination of L-Arg and Phy, 60 min after the end of bleeding (L-
Arg+Phy vs. Phy, 60 min: P<0.05) (Table 2).

Values of PaCO2v significantly increased in S- and Phy-treated rabbits 15
and 60 min after the end of bleeding, while such an increase was markedly
attenuated in L-Arg+Phy-group (L-Arg+Phy vs. S, 15 min: P<0.05) (L-Arg+Phy
vs. Phy, 15 min: P<0.01; 60 min: P<0.05).

b) Actual bicarbonate, excess base, pH and hemoglobin saturation

with oxygen

Basal values for actual bicarbonate, excess base, pH and hemoglobin
saturation with oxygen in arterial and venous blood (ActBa, ActBv, EBa, EBv, pHa,
pHv, sO2a and sO2v, respectively) displayed no difference between any of the
groups studied (Table 2).

**Hematocrit, serum protein and electrolyte levels**

Basal values of hematocrite (Ht) were similar in all groups studied. The only
exception was a small but significant difference between S- and L-Arg+Phy-group
before bleeding (PB) (P<0.05; Fig. 1, A). On the other hand, Ht values were
statistically similar in all groups studied immediately after the end of bleeding (0
min; Fig. 1, A).

Ht values decreased during 60 min after the bleeding period in all groups,
reaching the plateau 15-60 min after the end of bleeding. Such plateau was
significantly shifted to the right in L-Arg+Phy-group in comparison with the S-
group, 15 and 60 min after the end of bleeding (P<0.05, both; Fig. 1, A).

At the same time, total serum protein levels (TPr) decreased in a similar
manner in all groups 0-60 min after the end of bleeding (Fig. 1, B). However, a
significant correlation was found between the 60 min values of Ht and TPr in L-
Arg+Phy-group only (r = 0.9377; P<0.05) (Fig. 1, C).

There were no differences between basal serum electrolyte values in any of
the groups studied (not shown). Neither hemorrhage itself nor the bolus injections
of saline, Phy or the combination of L-Arg and Phy significantly changed these
parameters 0-60 min after the cessation of bleeding (data not shown). The only
exception was a small but significant increase in serum potassium levels in L-
Table 2. Acid-base balance parameters of anaesthetized rabbits before and 0-60 min after the cessation of bleeding (S-, Phy-, and Phy+L-Arg-group, respectively) (mean ± SEM)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>PB</th>
<th>AB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>ActB</td>
<td>21.87±1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EB</td>
<td>-2.33±1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pH</td>
<td>-1.13±1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sO2</td>
<td>7.34±0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PaCO2</td>
<td>98.70±0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.10±0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phy</td>
<td>ActB</td>
<td>23.64±1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EB</td>
<td>0.00±1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pH</td>
<td>7.40±0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sO2</td>
<td>81.34±4.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PaCO2</td>
<td>5.90±0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phy+L-Arg</td>
<td>ActB</td>
<td>21.82±0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EB</td>
<td>-2.43±0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pH</td>
<td>7.34±0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sO2</td>
<td>96.32±0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PaCO2</td>
<td>5.68±0.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

S – S-group; Phy – Phy-group; Phy+L-Arg – Phy+L-Arg-group; a, v – values in arterial and venous blood, respectively; ActB – actual bicarbonate (mM); EB – excess base (mM); pH – values of pH; sO2 – hemoglobin saturation with oxygen (%); PaCO2 – partial pressure of carbon dioxide (kPa); PB – pre-bleeding values; AB – after-bleeding values (measurements were performed 0, 15 and 60 min after the cessation of bleeding, respectively); * – P < 0.05 in comparison with the S group; †, †† – P < 0.05, P < 0.01, respectively, in comparison with the Phy-group.
Arg+Phy-group in comparison with Phy-group, 60 min after the end of bleeding (4.68±0.22 mM vs. 3.50±0.21 mM; P±0.05).

Mortality
The number of rabbits in each group, which survived during the course of the experiment, is shown in Table 1. In saline-treated animals, severe hemorrhage resulted in a mortality rate of 33% following 60 min of the after-bleeding period. In contrast, none of rabbits treated with i.v. bolus injection of Phy or the combination of L-Arg and Phy died during the course of the experiment.

DISCUSSION
The complex interplay between nitric oxide and cholinergic system in cardiovascular control is still a matter of debate (Sartori et al., 2005). Such interaction is even less elucidated in various models of shock (Todorović et al.,...
Since both physostigmine and nitric oxide system modulators have been successfully used as monotherapy of hemorrhaged animals, it is of great importance to assess the therapeutic potential of their combination. In the present experiments, physostigmine was administered in hemorrhaged rabbits pretreated with L-arginine but not with a nitric oxide synthase inhibitor because the latter drugs could aggravate ischemia and metabolic acidosis during early phases of hemorrhagic shock (Todorović et al., 1998; Szabo and Billiar, 1999). A preliminary series of experiments with an early i.v. bolus injection of physostigmine (0.07 mg/kg) in hemorrhaged rabbits pretreated with L-NAME (30 mg/kg) immediately after the end of bleeding, resulted in severe bradycardia, metabolic acidosis and high mortality during the first 15 min of the after-bleeding period (unpublished results from our laboratory). On the other hand, we have previously indicated that physostigmine and L-arginine might produce a synergistic action in this model of shock (Savić et al., 1991, 1992; Žunić et al., 1995).

Physostigmine-induced a raise of the mean arterial pressure (MAP) in rabbits subjected to severe hypovolemia (approx. 40% of the estimated blood volume for 15 min) (Table 1) could be explained by several mechanisms (Varagić et al., 1991; Savić et al., 1991, 1992; Žunić et al., 1995; Prostran et al., 1994, 1996, 1997). First, its central cholinergically-mediated stimulation of the peripheral sympathetic tonus and the release of vasopressin could contribute to defence mechanisms in shock. However, the central actions of physostigmine, at least in non-hemorrhaged rats, may involve both muscarinic M1 and M2 receptors (Prostran et al., 1997; Prostran and Varagić, 1990; Lazartigues et al., 1999), but muscarinic antagonists did not modulate the anti-shock effects of the same substance in hemorrhaged rats (Guarini et al., 1989). Nevertheless, the nicotinic antagonists abolished the protective effects of physostigmine in rats subjected to severe hemorrhage, and nicotinic agonists produced a reversal of hemorrhagic shock in rats via stimulation of adrenaline release from the adrenal medulla (Bazzani et al., 1996). It should be noted that the increase in MAP after injection of physostigmine in the present experiments (as already shown by Varagić and Prostran, 1991) was not accompanied by bradycardia, which may support the hypothesis of the increased release of adrenaline as mentioned above. On the other hand, additional peripheral vasoconstriction caused by postulated physostigmine-induced increase in both sympathetic tone and vasopressin release, does not seem to play a significant role in the present model: the acid-base balance parameters in the venous blood does not indicate the increased vasoconstriction (Table 2).

Several authors indicated that physostigmine may increase the volume of circulating blood in hemorrhaged animals, but they were in disagreement about the nature of the phenomenon: mobilization of peripheral pooling vs. increased tissue fluid extraction (Guarini et al., 1989; Savić et al., 1991). Our present results support the former hypothesis, since hematocrit values were not significantly different between physostigmine- and saline-treated animals 0-60 min after the end of bleeding (Fig. 1, A).
The physostigmine-induced increase in MAP seems to be blocked in rabbits pretreated with i.v. bolus injection of L-arginine when compared to L-Arg-untreated animals (Table 1). There are several possible explanations of this phenomenon.

First, we may assume that L-arginine antagonized the pressor effects of physostigmine. It was recently shown that i.p. injection of L-arginine (400 mg/kg) to anaesthetized rats did not significantly influence the central mechanisms of blood pressure control (Tassorelli et al., 2005), while physostigmine is well known to exert its central cardiovascular actions rapidly, any possible interaction between those substances could occur only at the level of peripheral circulation. Animal and human studies suggest that nitric oxide attenuates responses to endogenous vasoconstrictors (van der Linde et al., 2005). However, as mentioned above, physostigmine does not seem to induce significant additional peripheral vasoconstriction in the immediate after-bleeding period due to early vascular hyporeactivity to vasoconstrictors in the first period of hemorrhagic shock (Szabo and Thiemermann, 1994). Lack of difference in acid-base balance parameters between the physostigmine- and saline-treated animals in the present experiment supports this point of view (Table 2). In addition, the injected L-arginine could only partially restore the impaired endothelial function in such a condition, but could not induce a significant vasodilation, at least not before the activation of the inducible isoform of nitric oxide synthase in blood vessels. On the other hand, it has recently been shown that endogenous nitric oxide inhibits the evoked release of adrenaline and noradrenaline from the adrenal medulla in dogs (Barnes et al., 2001). Consequently, L-arginine could probably interfere with the postulated physostigmine-induced release of adrenaline from the adrenal medulla, but such a possibility remains to be tested in the appropriate experimental model.

The second hypothesis rejects the antagonism between L-arginine and physostigmine. In the current model of hemorrhagic shock (without replacement of the shedded blood), defence mechanisms of hemorrhaged rabbits, supported by the injection of L-arginine immediately after the end of bleeding, have probably induced a maximal possible increase in MAP during the first 10 min of the after-bleeding period. The observed increase in MAP 10 min after the injection of L-arginine or saline was more pronounced in L-Arg+Phy- than in S-group (0 min vs. 10 min: ΔMAP of 41 vs. 18 mm Hg, respectively), and even somewhat higher than the maximal pressor effect of physostigmine in Phy-group (0 min vs. 5 min: ΔMAP of 39 mm Hg) (Table 1). Thus, it would not be possible to produce a further increase in MAP with the i.v. bolus injection of physostigmine in L-Arg+Phy-group of rabbits previously treated with L-arginine (10 min vs. 15 min: ΔMAP of -2 mm Hg). Such an explanation is additionally supported by several observations: (a) heart rate increased 0-60 min after the end of bleeding in L-Arg+Phy-group and decreased in S-group (ΔHR of 32 and -14 b.p.m., respectively), i.e. physostigmine did not antagonize previously reported beneficial effects of the same dose of L-arginine on heart rate (Todorović et al., 2001); (b) mortality was 0% in L-Arg+Phy-group 60 min after the end of bleeding, which would not be possible if the drugs used have mutually antagonized their anti-shock effects (note that the number of animals was insufficient for a reliable analysis of the mortality rate); (c) additional beneficial effects of the combination of L-arginine and physostigmine on
Hematocrit and partial pressure of carbon dioxide in arterial blood (PaCO₂) were observed (Fig. 1, A and B, and Table 2, respectively). The possible hemodilution caused by the combination of L-arginine and physostigmine is in agreement with the previous results from our laboratory when those substances were used as monotherapy in the same model of shock (Savić et al., 1991, 1992; Todorović et al., 2001). Significant differences in hematocrit between S- and L-Arg+Phy-group 15 and 60 min after the end of bleeding was not accompanied with the corresponding difference in total serum protein level (Fig. 1, B), but Ht and TPr values significantly correlated 60 min after the end of bleeding in the L-Arg+Phy-group only. On the other hand, the effects of the drug combination on PaCO₂ could be related to the results of Fineman et al. (1991), who have shown that L-arginine produced pulmonary vasodilation in non-hemorrhaged lambs. However, the combination of L-arginine and physostigmine did not improve the oxygenation of the arterial blood (sO₂ values, Table 2). The observed decrease in PaCO₂a 60 min after the end of bleeding in L-Arg+Phy-group in comparison with S- and Phy-group could be explained by the improved respiratory compensation of metabolic acidosis in rabbits treated with L-arginine and physostigmine. (It should be noted that the corresponding pH values in both arterial and venous blood were somewhat higher in L-Arg+Phy group than in saline-treated animals). A possible explanation of the significantly lower values of PaCO₂ in venous blood (PaCO₂v) in L-Arg+Phy group than in Phy-group 15 and 60 min after the cessation of bleeding could be related to the decreased oxygen consumption in peripheral tissues (Žunić et al., 1995). Such differences in PaCO₂v were not accompanied with a similar change in pH in venous blood (Phy- vs L-Arg+Phy-group: NS; Table 2).

We have previously shown that L-arginine in the same doses used as in the present experiment (300 mg/kg, i.v. bolus, 1-2 min after the end of bleeding) increases tissue oxygen extraction and attenuates late bradycardia in hemorrhaged rabbits (Todorović et al., 2001). As shown in Table 2, hemoglobin saturation with oxygen in the venous blood of rabbits treated with a combination of L-arginine and physostigmine was still lower than in the other two groups 60 min after the end of bleeding, but there was no significant difference (AB, 60 min; Table 2). Accordingly, it seems that physostigmine does not completely block the beneficial effects of L-arginine on tissue oxygen extraction. Also, beneficial effects of L-arginine on the heart rate of hemorrhaged rabbits was not lost in the presence of physostigmine. High doses of L-arginine used in the present model do not seem to exert stereospecific effects because D-arginine produced similar changes (Todorović et al., 2001). Even if we assume that L-arginine exerts direct cardioprotective action and possesses free radical scavenging capacity in hemorrhaged rabbits, further investigation is needed to explain the mechanisms of the interaction between this arginine isomer and physostigmine.

In conclusion, physostigmine could not produce an increase in MAP in hemorrhaged rabbits pretreated with i.v. bolus injection of L-arginine immediately after the end of bleeding. On the other hand, beneficial effects of L-arginine on heart rate and tissue oxygen uptake (i.e. decrease in hemoglobin oxygen saturation in venous blood) in such a model were not completely lost in the presence of physostigmine. Despite certain beneficial effects on the mortality rate,
hematocrit and partial pressure of carbon dioxide in arterial blood of hemorrhaged rabbits, their combination does not seem to offer advantage over monotherapy with these drugs.

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**L-ARGININ I FIZOSTIGMIN U HEMORAGIJSKOM ŠOKU: NEMA DOKAZA ZA SINERGIZAM**

TODOROVIĆ Z, PROSTRAN MILICA, VUČKOVIĆ SONJA, STOJANOVIĆ R, NEŠIĆ ZORICA, LASICA R I MIRKOVIĆ LJILJANA

SADRŽAJ

U našoj laboratoriji, već je pokazano protektivno dejstvo monoterapije L-argininom i fiziostigminom u eksperimentalnom modelu teškog hemoragijskog šoka. Stoga, ispitali smo da li i kombinacija L-arginina (300 mg/kg, i.v. bolus) i fiziostigmina (0,07 mg/kg, i.v. bolus) može imati dodatne povoljne kardiovaskularne
i/ili metaboličke efekte kod anestetiziranih iskrvarenih kunića (intermitentno krvenje; 40% od procenjene zapremine cirkulišuće krvi za 15 min). Odabrani kardiovaskularni i biohemijski parametri praćeni su pre iskrvarenja i više puta u periodu do 60 min posle iskrvarenja. Lekovi su ubrizgavani 1-2 min posle iskrvarenja (Phy-grupa) ili 10 min kasnije (L-Arg+Phy-grupa). Kunići kontrolne grupe dobijali su samo odgovarajuću zapreminu fiziološkog rastvora NaCl (0,6-2,0 ml; S-grupa). Fizostigmin (0,07 mg/kg) doveo je do brzog i trajnog porasta srednjeg arterijskog pritiska (Phy-grupa), što se moglo poništiti pretretmanom L-argininom (L-Arg+Phy-grupa). Povoljni efekti L-arginina na srčanu frekvenciju i saturaciju hemoglobina kiseonikom u venskoj krvi nisu bili u potpunosti poništeni kod kunića L-Arg+Phy-grupe, a ta kombinacija delimično je poboljšala acido-bazni status (smanjila PaCO₂ u arterijskog krvi) i izazvala dodatnu hemodiluciju (smanjenje hematokrita) 15-60 min posle iskrvarenja. Međutim, kombinacija L-arginina i fizostigmina nije imala značajne prednosti u odnosu na monoterapiju istim lekovima u hemoragijskom šoku.