

THE HEART AND HYPERTENSION

Franz H. Messerli, MD
Editor



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Dedication



This book is dedicated to the late Robert C. Tarazi, M.D., who for many years led the way in this field.

Franz Messerli

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Preface

"The course of any case of cardiac hypertrophy may be divided into three stages: (a) the period of development which varies with the nature of the primary lesion, (b) the period of full compensation—the latent stage—during which the heart's vigor meets the requirement of the circulation, (c) the period of broken compensation." Little remains to be added to these sentences written by Sir William Osler in the first edition of his textbook, *Principles and Practice of Medicine*, almost a century ago. Osler's three stages of left ventricular adaptation to an increased afterload were substantiated in 1962 by the lucid observation of Meerson. An elegant experimental design allowed him to identify: (1) a stage of increased cardiac function that was followed by (2) a stage of adaptation (hypertrophy) of the myocardium, which represented a compensation for the increased afterload bringing the wall stress back to normal; and (3) a stage of the failing left ventricle that leads to venous congestion and pulmonary edema. A similar sequence of pathophysiological events was subsequently described in patients with essential hypertension.

However, although it is still fashionable to consider the heart as a hollow viscus that provides mechanical energy to propel blood through the vascular tree, it is not a muscular pump only. It can be considered a sophisticated biologic apparatus that contains a complex of control and effective mechanisms that are involved in electric excitation, contraction coupling, contraction, and possibly endocrine function. Like the kidney and the brain, the heart plays a threefold role in essential hypertension: first, it is directly involved in the pathogenesis of arterial hypertension. Its contractile force generates the energy needed to increase blood pressure. Recent evidence indicates that a natriuretic factor generated in the atrium of the heart may directly participate in the pathogenesis of essential hypertension. Second, the heart suffers as a target organ of long-standing hypertension. Long-standing blood pressure elevation leads to left ventricular hypertrophy and hypertensive heart disease with their grave outlook. Third, cardiac function and structure are directly and indirectly affected by a variety of antihypertensive agents.

This volume provides a critical review of recent research into these three areas that connect the heart to arterial hypertension. Our book is intended to provide a synoptic view of our present knowledge in this rapidly expanding area. The text is written for physicians, cardiologists, or investigators who would like to deepen their understanding of cardiac involvement in hypertension and of progression as well as regression of left ventricular hypertrophy, and the heart's structural and functional response to various blood pressure lowering agents.

I would like to express my gratitude to the authors of the chapters, all experts in their field, who have given willingly of their talents and efforts so that this needed critique could be compiled. In addition, my deep appreciation goes to Marion Stafford, Medical Editor of Alton Ochsner Medical Foundation, for her invaluable support, and her able and efficient handling of the manuscript material. To the staff of Yorke Medical Books, and in particular to Herb Paureiss, I owe many thanks for the personal care and attention I received.

Franz H. Messerli, M.D.

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Contents

DEDICATION	x
CONTRIBUTORS	xi
PREFACE	xix

PART I
EARLY CARDIAC CHANGES IN HYPERTENSION

1. Cardiogenic Hypertension: Experimental Findings J.F. Liard	3
2. Cardiac Reflexes and Blood Pressure Elevation Brent M. Egan and Stevo Julius	11
3. Sodium and the Heart Jay M. Sullivan	21
4. Cardiovascular Changes in Prehypertension Bonita Falkner	29
5. Cardiac Adaptation in Hypertensive Children Walter S. Culpepper III	35
6. Hyperdynamic Beta-Adrenergic Circulatory State Edward D. Frohlich	43

PART II
EPIDEMIOLOGY OF LEFT VENTRICULAR HYPERTROPHY

7. Prevalence and Natural History of Electrocardiographic Left Ventricular Hypertrophy William B. Kannel and Andrew L. Dannenberg	53
8. Prevalence and Evolution of Echo Left Ventricular Hypertrophy Daniel D. Savage	62

PART III
MORPHOLOGY AND BIOCHEMICAL CHANGES

9. Morphology of the Heart in Left Ventricular Hypertrophy Victor J. Ferrans and E. René Rodríguez	75
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PART IV
PATHOPHYSIOLOGY OF LEFT VENTRICULAR HYPERTROPHY

10. Physiologic Considerations in Left Ventricular Hypertrophy	87
Edward D. Frohlich	
11. Echo Assessment of Left Ventricular Structure and Function in Hypertension: Methodology	99
Nathaniel Reichek	
12. Determinants of Left Ventricular Hypertrophy and Function in Hypertensive Patients. An Echocardiographic Study	109
Freddy Abi-Samra, Fetnat M. Fouad and Robert C. Tarazi	
13. Systolic Function of the Hypertrophied Left Ventricle: Hypertension and Aortic Stenosis	123
Jeffrey S. Borer, Jeffrey Fisher, Richard B. Devereux, Michael Jason, Michael V. Green, Stephen L. Bacharach, Thomas Pickering and John H. Laragh	
14. Diastolic Function of the Hypertrophied Left Ventricle	131
John Wikstrand	
15. Left Ventricular Relaxation in Hypertension	143
Vivienne-Elizabeth Smith and Arnold M. Katz	
16. Left Ventricular Wall Stress and Hypertrophy	153
B.E. Strauer	
17. Disparate Hemodynamic Amplifying Capacities of the Heart and Arterial Resistance Vessels in Hypertension and Their Consequences	167
Paul I. Korner, Archer Broughton, Garry L. Jennings and Murray D. Esler	
18. The Frank-Starling Mechanism in the Hypertrophied Heart at Various Levels of Afterload	177
Margareta Nordlander and Peter Friberg	
19. Cardiac Hypertrophy Reflecting Structural Vascular Changes	187
Yukio Yamori	

PART V
CLINICAL ASPECTS

20. Left Ventricular Hypertrophy: Identification and Implications	197
Richard B. Devereux, Jeffrey S. Borer, Elizabeth M. Lutas and John H. Laragh	

21. Asymmetric Septal Hypertrophy and the Early Phase of Hypertension	209
M.E. Safar and V.M. Dimitriu	
22. Clinical Determinants and Manifestations of Left Ventricular Hypertrophy	219
Franz H. Messerli	
23. Abnormalities in the Coronary Circulation that Occur as a Consequence of Cardiac Hypertrophy	231
Melvin L. Marcus, Samon Koyanagi, David G. Harrison, Donald B. Doty, Loren F. Hiratzka and Charles L. Eastham	
24. Relationship Between the Rhythm and the Hemodynamic Load in the Hypertensive Heart	241
Maurizio D. Guazzi	
25. Myocardial Hypertrophy and Cardiac Failure: A Complex Interrelationship	249
Barry M. Massie	
26. Is Normotensive Aging of the Cardiovascular System a Muted Form of Hypertensive Cardiovascular Disease?	261
Edward G. Lakatta	

PART VI

ANTIHYPERTENSIVE THERAPY AND THE HEART

27. Hemodynamics of Antihypertensive Therapy	275
Per Lund-Johansen	
28. Regression of Left Ventricular Hypertrophy by Medical Treatment: Present Status and Possible Implications	287
Robert C. Tarazi	
29. Regression of Left Ventricular Hypertrophy: General Aspects	299
Jan I.M. Drayer, Michael A. Weber and Julius M. Gardin	
30. Cardiac Function after Reversal of Left Ventricular Hypertrophy	307
Joseph M. Capasso	
31. Regression of Cardiac Hypertrophy: Experimental Animal Model	325
Subha Sen	
32. Cardiovascular Adjustment to Antiadrenergic Agents	337
Barbara L. Pegram and Edward D. Frohlich	

33. Cardiovascular Effects of Autonomic Blockade	349
Edward D. Freis	
34. Antiadrenergic Drugs and the Heart: Hemodynamic and Cardiac Effects	357
Hector O. Ventura and Franz H. Messerli	
35. Beta Blockade and Cardiac Function	365
B. Silke and S.H. Taylor	
36. Cardiac Effects of Direct-Acting Vasodilators	375
Joseph A. Franciosa	
37. Calcium Channel Blockers in Hypertension: The Role of Their Cardiac Effects	383
Alan T. Hirsch, Barry M. Massie, Isao K. Inouye and Julio F. Tubau	
38. Calcium Antagonists and Pathophysiologic Mechanisms of Hypertension	395
Wolfgang Kiowski, Fritz R. Bühler, Peter Bolli, U. Lennart Hulthén and Paul Erne	
39. Angiotensin Converting Enzyme Inhibitors	407
Franz H. Messerli, Hector O. Ventura and Celso Amodeo	
40. Electrocardiographic Changes in the Course of Antihypertensive Treatment	419
Edward D. Freis	

PART VII

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

41. Cardiac Effects of Weight Reduction in Obesity Hypertension	427
James K. Alexander	
42. Exercise and the Heart in Hypertension	435
Saxon W. White	
43. Effects of Antihypertensive Therapy on Cardiac Function During Exercise	447
Clive Rosendorff, Carmel Goodman and Anne Coull	
44. How Does Antihypertensive Therapy Modify Other Risk Factors?	457
Norman M. Kaplan	