REVIEW

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Diagnostic and Therapeutic Implications of Type 2 Myocardial Infarction: Review and Commentary

Joseph S. Alpert, MD,[a] Kristian A. Thygesen, MD, DSc,[b] Harvey D. White, DSc,[c] Allan S. Jaffe, MD[d]

[a]Sarver Heart Center, University of Arizona College of Medicine, Tucson; [b]Department of Cardiology, Aarhus University Hospital, Aarhus, Denmark; [c]Green Lane Cardiovascular Service, Auckland City Hospital, Auckland, New Zealand; [d]Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minn.

ABSTRACT

The Task Force for the Universal Definition of Myocardial Infarction recently published updated guidelines for the clinical and research diagnosis of myocardial infarction under a variety of circumstances and in a variety of categories. A type 1 myocardial infarction (MI) is usually the result of atherosclerotic coronary artery disease with thrombotic coronary arterial obstruction secondary to atherosclerotic plaque rupture, ulceration, fissuring, or dissection, causing coronary arterial obstruction with resultant myocardial ischemia and necrosis. Patients with a type 2 MI do not have atherosclerotic plaque rupture. In this latter group of patients, myocardial necrosis occurs because of an increase in myocardial oxygen demand or a decrease in myocardial blood flow. Type 2 MI has been the subject of considerable clinical discussion and confusion. This review by knowledgeable members of the Task Force seeks to help clinicians resolve the confusion surrounding type 2 MI.

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In 2007, the Task Force for the Universal Definition of Myocardial Infarction simultaneously published an international consensus document in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*, the *European Heart Journal*, and *Circulation*.[1-3] The 2007 document was an updated revision of the original document from this group that had first been published in 2000.[4] In this second communication, the task force defined 5 subtypes of myocardial infarction (MI), which were retained in the 2012 revision.[5]

Type 1 MI is usually the result of atherosclerotic coronary artery disease with thrombotic coronary arterial obstruction secondary to atherosclerotic plaque rupture, ulceration, fissuring, erosion, or dissection. However, an occasional patient may demonstrate normal luminal coronary anatomy at catheterization despite the clinical syndrome of a type 1 MI. In contrast, patients with type 2 MI do not usually have atherosclerotic plaque rupture, but rather, myocardial necrosis secondary to an increase in myocardial oxygen demand or a decrease in myocardial blood flow. Type 3 MI is the result of coronary arterial thrombosis with early demise, and types 4 and 5 MI are related to complications of percutaneous coronary intervention and coronary bypass surgery.

Type 2 MI has been the subject of considerable clinical discussion and confusion. All of the co-authors of the present report have been questioned repeatedly by colleagues concerning the criteria for diagnosing this latter entity and distinguishing it from type 1 MI and from myocardial injury with necrosis secondary to a variety of entities other than myocardial ischemia. This review and commentary will seek to clarify some of the confusion surrounding the distinction between type 1 and type 2 MI and nonischemic myocardial injury with necrosis. Clarification in this area is needed badly because multiple efforts are now ongoing to define the frequency and prognosis of type 2 MI despite the absence of clear operational criteria. Such efforts have the potential to distort the information that will guide clinical care.

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Requests for reprints should be addressed to Joseph S. Alpert, MD, University of Arizona College of Medicine, Sarver Heart Center Room #5133, 1501 N. Campbell Avenue, PO Box 245037, Tucson, AZ 85724-5037.

E-mail address: jalpert@shc.arizona.edu

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TYPE 1 VS TYPE 2 MI

Distinguishing patients with type 2 MI from those with type 1 MI often is not difficult. This distinction can be straightforward in many patients but challenging at other times. Patients with type 1 MI usually present with spontaneous symptoms with or without associated ischemic electrocardiographic (ECG) changes and in the *absence* of a cause for increased myocardial oxygen demand, for example, tachycardia with heart rates in excess of 120 beats per minute or decreased myocardial blood flow, for example, hypotension secondary to marked bradycardia. Patients with type 1 MI often demonstrate ECG changes such as ST elevation or depression.

CLINICAL SIGNIFICANCE

- Considerable clinical confusion continues to exist concerning the diagnosis of type 2 myocardial infarction (MI) as well as a nonischemic myocardial injury.
- Daily requests for cardiology consultation occur involving patients with these 2 entities, which must be distinguished from type 1 MI so that appropriate therapy can be administered to the latter group of patients.
- Criteria are given enabling clinicians to distinguish type 1 from type 2 MI and from a myocardial injury not involving myocardial ischemia.

Blood troponin levels rise and fall in a manner diagnostic of acute MI.[1-5] Troponin blood levels tend to be higher in patients with type 1 MI compared with individuals with type 2 MI. During coronary angiography, type 1 MIs often are found to have new or presumptive new coronary arterial occlusion or the angiographic criteria for plaque rupture, fissure, or thrombus within a coronary artery (**Table**). However, angiographic criteria are not specific for acute events and occur in patients with chronic coronary artery disease as well.[6] More invasive techniques, such as intravascular ultrasound and optical coherence tomography, all have the potential to refine the invasive criteria that might be helpful in further clarifying diagnoses in this important area.

The perioperative setting provides a good opportunity to consider a common clinical situation where it is important to distinguish type 1 from type 2 MI. It appears, from clinical studies on the pathophysiology of MI following noncardiac surgery, that the vast majority of these patients have a non-ST-elevation MI, which is almost always a type 2 MI.[7-9] Some autopsy studies suggest a higher prevalence of type 1 MI in this setting than is suspected from the clinical findings. Recent data suggest that nearly 50% of these patients have coronary abnormalities consistent with acute lesions.[10] However, we know that such lesions also can be seen in individuals with stable coronary artery disease, although these latter patients are apparently at higher risk if elevated high-sensitivity troponin levels are found.[6] Nevertheless, it would appear that most perioperative MIs are indeed type 2 MIs, although those with more morbid events may have had a type 1 MI.

Distinguishing type 1 perioperative MI from a type 2 MI is often challenging. When the MI occurs spontaneously during the postoperative period, particularly if there is ST elevation on the electrocardiogram, a type 1 MI is likely. On the other hand, if the patient has had an alteration in hemodynamic status, for example, intraoperative hypotension, then a type 2 MI has probably occurred. A potentially confusing situation can arise when a type 1 perioperative MI results in hypotension or tachycardia, thereby demonstrating some of the characteristics of a type 2 MI. On occasion, both type 1 and type 2 perioperative MIs can be associated with a hypertensive response, particularly if heart failure or severe postoperative discomfort is present.

THE ESSENCE OF A TYPE 2 MI

In the most recent publications from the task force, type 2 MI was categorized as a myocardial infarction secondary to an ischemic imbalance between blood supply and myocardial oxygen demand.[4,5] Patients may or may not have atherosclerotic coronary artery disease. Instances of ischemic myocardial injury with necrosis where an imbalance between myocardial oxygen supply or demand occur include coronary endothelial dysfunction, coronary artery spasm, coronary embolism, tachy-/bradyarrhythmias, anemia, respiratory failure, hypotension, and hypertension with or without left ventricular hypertrophy. Recently, Saaby et al[11] in Denmark studied more than 500 patients with an acute MI. They categorized these patients into the 5 subsets described in the task force documents from 2007 and 2012.[1-3,5] These investigators identified patients with an acute MI admitted to the hospital during a 1-year period (2010-2011). Seventy-two percent of the patients had type 1 MI and 26% had type 2. Type 2 patients were older, more likely to be female, had lower blood troponin values, and had more comorbidities. Nearly 50% of the patients with a type 2 MI had a normal coronary angiographic study.[11] Only 12% of type 1 MI patients had normal coronary angiography. However, peak cardiac troponin (cTn) was lower in individuals with type 2 MI, thereby suggesting that as more sensitive cTn assays come into use, the proportion of patients with type 2 AMI will increase.[11]

An example of a typical patient with a type 2 MI would be an individual with known coronary atherosclerosis presenting with ischemic symptoms during an episode of rapid atrial fibrillation, for example, a heart rate >150 beats per minute for a substantial period of time, for example, 30-60 minutes. In such individuals with rapid atrial fibrillation, one frequently observes ischemic ST-segment depression or nonspecific ST-segment or T-wave abnormalities on the electrocardiogram, accompanied by subsequent modest