INTRODUCTION

Normal levels of nitric oxide (NO) in the body are essential to maintain homeostasis in the cells, tissues and organs. In vivo administration of lipopolysaccharide (LPS) causes systemic inflammatory response with subsequent respiratory distress syndrome and septic shock. Endotoxemia has two distinct phases. The first one occurs almost immediately after LPS injection and involves transient pulmonary hypertension and systemic hypotension with concomitant cardiac dysfunction and a decrease in cardiac output. A number of studies have indicated that these acute effects are caused by the sudden release of lipid mediators (platelet-activating factor, thromboxanes, leukotrienes, and others) and cytokines (tumor necrosis factor-α, interleukin [IL]-2, IL-6, IL-8), which markedly affect the respiratory and cardiovascular systems. The delayed phase, which occurs a few hours after LPS injection, involves a gradual decrease in blood pressure with accompanying vasoplegia, tissue hypoperfusion, microvascular damage, and multiple organ injury. It is generally accepted that the majority of these alterations are mediated by NO, produced by inducible nitric oxide synthase (iNOS), which is up-regulated by endotoxin. On the other hand, NO generated by constitutive endothelial nitric oxide synthase (eNOS) seems to play a cytoprotective role, especially in the early phase of endotoxemia.

OBJECTIVES

We examined the hypothesis that supplementation of nitric oxide (NO) with the novel NO donor, S-nitroso-human-serum-albumin (S-NO-HSA), may reduce iNOS expression, lung inflammation and acute lung injury in a rat model of septic shock.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Rats were divided into 4 groups: sham-operated (no treatment), LPS (lipopolysaccharide), LPS + HSA, and LPS + S-NO-HSA. Endotoxin-induced (20 mg kg⁻¹, iv) lung injury was characterized by measurement of wet/dry weight ratio (pulmonary edema), myeloperoxidase activity (pulmonary neutrophil infiltration), expression of intercellular adhesion molecule-1, iNOS, and cyclooxygenase-2.

RESULTS

LPS-induced acute lung injury involved pulmonary edema, neutrophil infiltration and a strong inflammatory response, resulting in high mortality within 6 h. S-NO-HSA prolonged survival of endotoxemic rats, reduced hypotensive response to LPS, and minimized LPS-induced lung edema by modulation of systemic inflammatory response.

CONCLUSIONS

NO supplementation with S-NO-HSA after LPS administration prevents induction of iNOS, protects against endotoxin-induced acute lung injury, and reduces early mortality in endotoxic rats. The results of the study support a therapeutic role of S-NO-HSA in the treatment of endotoxemia.
Serum albumin (S-NO-HSA) in the treatment of sepsis. Excessive vasoconstriction, caused by L-NAME treatment, leads to abnormal perfusion, depression of the cardiovascular system, enhanced liver and lung injury, thus increasing mortality rate in septic shock.

Despite several studies, the protective effect of NO produced by eNOS in host response to LPS is still unclear. It may result from vasodilation or antithrombosis activities of endothelial NO. Additionally, constitutively produced or supplemented NO can actively prevent endothelial dysfunction by maintaining local L-arginine concentration around the enzyme, which is sufficient to minimize NO degradation and reactive oxygen species production. Interestingly, increased resistance to LPS-induced mortality in transgenic mice with overexpression of eNOS, was shown to result from cytoprotective activity of NO in the lungs. These data are supported by the finding that NO supplementation with S-nitroso-N-acetylpenicillamine in the early phase of endotoxemia effectively protected against LPS-induced lung injury. There have been attempts to use exogenous NO to reduce endotoxin-induced lung injury. However, clinically used NO donors show high variability with regard to the NO synthesis pathway and, most importantly, significantly decrease blood pressure, which limits their use in septic shock. Tolerance, especially to organic nitrates, also restrict their therapeutic use. Therefore, a new approach using novel, stable S-nitroso-human-serum-albumin (S-NO-HSA) in the treatment of septic shock in an endotoxemic rat model has been proposed.

S-NO-HSA undergoes degradation following application to NO and albumin, and hence serves as a carrier of NO to the endothelium. It is a high molecular weight S-nitrosothiol, which has an exact equimolar S-nitrosation, and a high S-nitrosograde (S-NO in position Cys-34 of HSA: ~0.8 mol mol⁻¹ protein) due to defined pre-processing. Compared to the low molecular weight S-nitrosothiols, S-NO-HSA has a prolonged half-life of approximately 15 min. It has been shown that NO supplemented by S-NO-HSA, at concentrations causing no hypotension, reduces ischemia/reperfusion injury of the skeletal and cardiac muscle tissue by preserving endothelial functions in the microcirculation. S-NO-HSA also inhibited platelet aggregation and leukocyte-endothelial cell adhesion.

**Material and methods** Anesthetized and intubated male Wistar rats were instrumented and endotoxic shock was induced by intravenous infusion of LPS (20 mg kg⁻¹). Rats were divided into 4 groups: sham operated, LPS, LPS + human serum albumin (HSA) and LPS + S-NO-HSA.

Infusion of S-NO-HSA or HSA was started 2 h after LPS and continued for 4 h (total dose: 72 mg kg⁻¹). In all experimental groups hemodynamic parameters were monitored. Six hours after LPS administration animals were sacrificed and the following parameters were analyzed:

1. **lung injury assessed by microscopy (hematoxylin-eosin staining)**
2. **lung edema assessed by a ratio of wet/dry (W/D) weight**
3. **pulmonary neutrophil infiltration assessed based on the myeloperoxidase (MPO) activity (spectrophotometric assay)**
4. **lung inflammatory response assessed by intercellular adhesion molecule-1 (ICAM-1) protein expression, iNOS protein and mRNA expression (Western Blot).** Additionally, the level of cyclooxygenase-2 (COX-2) mRNA was measured (reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction).

In another set of experiments, survival rates were studied. Rats were randomly divided into four groups as described above. Data were expressed as mean ±SEM. Statistical differences between means were determined by ANOVA followed by a post hoc comparison. Survival data were analyzed using the Kaplan-Maier test. A p <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

**RESULTS** Infusion of S-NO-HSA and HSA did not cause significant changes in mean arterial pressure (MAP). All rats from the LPS and LPS + HSA groups died 6 h after LPS challenge. Treatment with S-NO-HSA prevented LPS-induced mortality. No death was noted in the LPS + S-NO-HSA group 6 h after LPS challenge. After LPS injection a progressive and severe decrease in MAP occurred. S-NO-HSA-treated rats were more resistant to LPS-induced hypotension compared to the LPS and LPS + HSA groups. In sham-operated animals MAP remained constant throughout the experiment.

Histological examination of the lung was performed in specimens obtained 6 h after LPS infusion. In contrast to the sham operated animals, LPS and LPS + HSA caused interalveolar membrane thickening (interstitial edema), alveolar damage and leukocyte infiltration. These effects of LPS were substantially reduced by S-NO-HSA treatment.

There was approximately a threefold increase in W/D lung weight ratio 6 h after LPS injection. In the LPS + S-NO-HSA group W/D ratio was significantly lower and in the LPS + HSA group slightly lower compared to LPS group.

Six hours after LPS injection MPO activity, reflecting pulmonary granulocyte infiltration, increased dramatically. MPO response in the LPS + HSA and LPS groups was similar. An increase in MPO activity was significantly attenuated in the LPS + S-NO-HSA group.

While in sham operated animals iNOS and ICAM-1 were barely detectable, LPS markedly increased expression of both proteins. Treatment with S-NO-HSA prevented LPS-induced induction of pulmonary iNOS and ICAM-1. HSA alone did not lower and even slightly increased...
LPS-induced expression of iNOS and ICAM-1. LPS also caused a significant increase in mRNA expression of iNOS and COX-2 compared to sham-operated animals. HSA treatment did not alter the effect of LPS. Again, similarly to anti-inflammatory effects on protein level and in contrast to HSA alone, S-NO-HSA significantly decreased the expression of mRNA iNOS and COX-2.

**DISCUSSION**

The study demonstrated that S-NO-HSA administered after LPS challenge prevented early mortality, reduced hemodynamic disturbances and acute lung injury in endotoxic rats. S-NO-HSA prevented excessive damage of pulmonary tissue by modulation of pulmonary inflammation. Accordingly, use of a novel NO donor enabled to combat endothelial NO deficiency in endotoxic shock. Despite iNOS induction and markedly increased total NO production in endotoxic shock, there exists a relative, local deficiency of eNOS-derived NO at the level of microcirculation. This may be particularly important for the integrity of pulmonary microcirculation. Our results are in line with these observations, and therefore we propose a novel approach to treat lung injury associated with endotoxemia by using adequate NO supplementation with S-NO-HSA.

The results of this and other experimental studies on the use of S-NO-HSA in the prevention of ischemic damage on cellular level demonstrate the need for further investigation and clinical trials.

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S-nitrozo-albumina ludzka

Nowe podejście terapeutyczne do leczenia wstrząsu endotoksycznego

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SŁOWA KLUCZOWE
S-nitrozo-albumina ludzka, tlenek azotu, wstrząs septyczny

STRESZCZENIE

WPROWADZENIE Endotoksemia powoduje indukcję indukowanej syntazy tlenku azotu (inducible nitric oxide synthase – iNOS) oraz zwiększa ekspresję licznych mediatorów zapalnych, prowadząc do ostrego uszkodzenia płuc.

CELE Sprawdzana była hipoteza, że uzupełnianie puli tlenku azotu (nitric oxide – NO) przy pomocy nowego donora NO, S-nitrozo-albuminy ludzkiej (S-nitroso-human-serum-albumin – S-NO-HSA), może zredukować ekspresję iNOS, zmiany zapalne i uszkodzenie tkanki płucnej w szczurzym modelu wstrząsu septycznego.

MATERIAŁ I METODY Szczury zostały podzielone na 4 grupy: kontrolną (bez leczenia), LPS (lipopolisacharyd), LPS + HSA i LPS + S-NO-HSA. Uszkodzenie płuc wywołane endotoksyną (20 mg kg⁻¹, iv) scharakteryzowano poprzez oznaczenie stosunku mokrej do suchej masy tkanki płucnej (obrzęk płuc), aktywności mieloperoksydazy (neutrofilowe nacieki zapalne), ekspresji międzykomórkowej cząsteczki adhezyjnej typu 1, iNOS i cyklooxygenazy-2.

WYNIKI Spowodowane przez LPS ostrze uszkodzenie płuc obejmowało obrzęk płuc, nacieki neutrofilowe wraz z siłą odpowiedzią zapalną skutkującą dużą śmiertelnością zwierząt w ciągu 6 h. S-NO-HSA wydłużyła czas przeżycia szczurów, zmniejszyła spowodowaną przez LPS odpowiedź hipotensyjną oraz obrzęk płuc poprzez modulację ogólnoustrojowej reakcji zapalnej.

WNIOSKI Uzupełnianie NO za pomocą S-NO-HSA po podaniu LPS-u hamuje indukcję iNOS, prowadzi do znaczącej ochrony przed ostrym uszkodzeniem płuc oraz zmniejsza wczesną śmiertelność we wstrząsie septycznym u szczurów. Wyniki badania potwierdzają skuteczność terapeutyczną S-NO-HSA w leczeniu endotoksemii.

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Praca wpłynęła: 30.04.2009.
Przyjęta do druku: 13.05.2009.
Nie zgłoszono sprzeczności interesów.
Pol Arch Med Wewn. 2009; 119 (7-8): 501-504
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