New Concepts of Intramural Myocardial Conduction in Hypertrophic Obstructive Cardiomyopathy

JAMES J. COYNE*

From the Department of Medicine (Clinical Cardiology), Royal Postgraduate Medical School and Hammersmith Hospital, London

The electrocardiographic findings in hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy are often similar to myocardial infarction, occasionally resemble anomalous atrioventricular excitation, seem to mimic right ventricular hypertrophy, and usually indicate left ventricular hypertrophy (Goodwin et al., 1960; Braunwald et al., 1960; Hollister and Goodwin, 1963; Prescott, Quinn, and Litmann, 1963; Braudo, Wigle, and Keith, 1964; Marriott, 1964). Vectorcardiographic reports of small series, on the other hand (Wood et al., 1962; Estes et al., 1963), have been inconclusive except for the findings of Oberwittler et al. (1965) of peripheral loop deformities. Septal hypertrophy, the generally accepted crux of this disease, is also thought to be the origin of the pathological q waves which mimic myocardial infarction. Interestingly, septal hypertrophy is found in every instance of hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy, whereas pathological q waves are probably observed in only 10 per cent of cases (Braudo et al., 1964). It seems that a more precise understanding of the transseptal activation process is required to explain this disparity.

Activation of the interventricular septum has been documented electrophysiologically (Scher and Young, 1957; Amer et al., 1960), and Sodi Pallares et al. (1957) state that septal vectors can be recognized in the sequence of ventricular activation by vectorcardiographic recordings.

With the knowledge that the interventricular septum is usually massive in hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy, a vectorcardiographic analysis was undertaken to study septal excitation within the sequence of ventricular activation. From this study attempts are made to classify and explain the vectorcardiographic findings on the basis of altered intramural activation processes from muscle conduction disturbances.

**Subjects and Methods**

Thirty-three patients, 18 male and 15 female, ranging in age from 4-59 years, were available for vectorcardiography. All patients were clinically evaluated at Hammersmith Hospital and the Royal Postgraduate Medical School, and except for Case 33 (see Table III) were diagnosed as having hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy on clinical and either left ventricular haemodynamic or angiocardiographic criteria (Cohen et al., 1964). None had been operated upon, though many were taking propranolol. The Grishman cube system of electrode placement was used as the vectorcardiographic system. Vectorcardiograms were recorded on photographic paper by an Electronics for Medicine Model DR8. The electron beam was interrupted every 4 msec. Three or more vectorcardiograms were recorded of each plane, for detailed clarity of initial vectors. Septal activation was thought to be nearly complete at 24 msec ± 4 msec. (Scher and Young, 1957). The main septal vector when present and the R vector were analysed by the method of Estes et al. (1963). The vector angles were measured from a conventional 360° reference system, as was the QRS-T angle. Duration of inscription was measured by counting the blips, and the speed of inscription was determined by analysis of the blips in relation to the whole loop. Slow inscription was indicated when at least 5 blips were small and close together, as recorded in at least 2 planes. The T wave was thought to be discordant when the main QRS to main T vector angle exceeded 90°.

Standard 12-lead electrocardiograms (1.0 mV=10 mm.) were recorded by an Elema-Schönander Mingo- graph, Model 42B. The criteria of Sokolow and Lyon (1949) for left ventricular hypertrophy were included in analysing the electrocardiogram.
Intramural Myocardial Conduction in Hypertrophic Obstructive Cardiomyopathy

Initial septal vectors anteriorly and to the right (+90° +180°). Type II. Initial septal vectors anteriorly and to the left (0° +90°). Type III. Initial septal vectors posteriorly and to the left (0° -90°).

Type I vectorcardiograms, revealing the normal direction of septal activation, were seen in 19 (13 male and 6 female) out of 33 patients, whose ages ranged from 4–59 years (Table I). Six patients with Type I had QRS loops of a figure-of-eight pattern, with the distal loop inscribed in a clockwise fashion. In 2 of the latter types (Cases 1 and 12) the distal segment of the figure-of-eight loop was greater than 1 mV in width (Fig. 2 and 3A). Two (Cases 1 and 11) had a “pigtail curl” on either the efferent or afferent limb of the QRS loop (Fig. 3).

Slow inscription of the septal vectors (Fig. 2) was observed in 13 of 19 cases and the scalar electrocardiogram of one of these (Case 15, Fig. 4) is suggestive of anomalous atrioventricular excitation. The vectorcardiogram of the latter revealed slow septal inscription in the QRS loop and the QRS loops. Two cases (8 and 6) had a large main septal vector, anteriorly and to the right, measuring 1·0 mV and 1·5 mV, respectively (Fig. 5). The main septal vector was also superior in these youths. The scalar electrocardiograms in both cases were strongly suggestive of right ventricular hypertrophy and inferior and lateral wall infarction.

There were two examples of right bundle-branch block in Type I. The main P wave vector was greater than 0·25 mV in only 4 of the 19 cases. The

![Fig. 1.—Types of vectorcardiograms seen in hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy based on the direction of the initial septal activation process in the horizontal plane.](image)

**RESULTS**

Analysis of the vectorcardiograms showed three types of loops which were distinguished by the direction of the initial septal activation in the horizontal plane (Fig. 1). The types are: Type I.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case No.</th>
<th>age (yr.)</th>
<th>Syncope</th>
<th>Angina</th>
<th>Left ventricular end-diastolic pressure (mm. Hg)</th>
<th>Resting LV-AO gradient</th>
<th>Electrocardiographic similarities*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 36 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0 65$</td>
<td>Lt. bundle-branch block with complexes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 2 F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Lt. axis deviation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 51 F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 16 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 17 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 11 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 43 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 4 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 27 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 31 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 53 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 16 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 36 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 46 F</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 47 F</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>120</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 28 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 52 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 59 F</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* QRS findings other than left ventricular hypertrophy.
+ present; 0, absent; —, not measured; $ induced gradient.

**TABLE I**

**COMPARISON OF CLINICAL, HAEMODYNAMIC, AND ELECTROCARDIOGRAPHIC FINDINGS IN TYPE I HYPERTROPHIC OBSTRUCTIVE CARDIOMYOPATHY**
T wave was discordant in 12 out of 19 (horizontal plane), 8 out of 19 (frontal plane), and 15 out of 19 cases (R.Sag plane).

Type II vectorcardiograms were found in 5 female patients ranging in age from 9 to 48 years (Table II). Initial slowing was less apparent in Type II, and the loop was entirely counterclockwise except for one case with a figure-of-eight QRS loop. The scalar electrocardiogram in all cases may be interpreted as left ventricular hypertrophy with "septal fibrosis", or "incomplete left bundle-branch block". In addition to these findings, Case 21 (Fig. 6) resembled anomalous atrioventricular excitation. A small "pigtail curl" was noted early on the efferent limb of the QRS loop in Case 23. The T wave was discordant in the horizontal plane in 3 out of 5, in the frontal plane in 3 out of 5, and in the R.Sag plane in 2 out of 5 cases. The main P wave vector was greater than 0.25 mV in only one instance. ST vector was superiorly and to the right in 1 case.

Type III vectorcardiograms occurred in 9 patients, 5 male and 4 female, ranging in age from 14 to 45 years (Table III). In Cases 29 and 30, the QRS loop was inscribed entirely in a clockwise fashion (Fig. 7 and 8A). In one of these (Case 30, Fig. 7) all three planes were inscribed abnormally and there was a conduction delay throughout the

**TABLE II**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case No., age (yr.), and sex</th>
<th>Syncope</th>
<th>Angina</th>
<th>Left ventricular end diastolic pressure (mm. Hg)</th>
<th>Resting LV-AO gradient</th>
<th>Electrocardiographic similarities*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 48 F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Incomplete lt. bundle-branch block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 21 F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Anomalous AV excitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 19 F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0 40‡</td>
<td>Septal fibrosis; incomplete lt. bundle-branch block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 9 F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Incomplete lt. bundle-branch block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 30 F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Incomplete lt. bundle-branch block</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* QRS findings other than left ventricular hypertrophy. 0, absent; +, present; ‡, induced gradient.
Intramural Myocardial Conduction in Hypertrophic Obstructive Cardiomyopathy

whole loop (duration 114 msec.). In the other (Case 29) the QRS loop duration was 84 msec. One Type III QRS loop (Case 29, Fig. 9) showed an initial activation posteriorly and to the left and then inscribed a small clockwise “pigtail curl” within the first 24 msec. The remainder of the QRS loop was inscribed counterclockwise, posteriorly (−80°), and with a large (2.5 mV) main vector. The “pigtail curl” was also seen in the frontal plane. The remaining 6 cases demonstrated counterclockwise inscription of the QRS loop.

The T wave was discordant in all planes except for two QRS loops. The main P wave vector was greater than 0.25 mV in 2 cases, reaching 0.64 mV in one instance (Fig. 7).

Although the direction of the initial septal vectors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case No., age (yr.), and sex</th>
<th>Syncope</th>
<th>Angina</th>
<th>Left ventricular end diastolic pressure (mm. Hg)</th>
<th>Resting LV-AO gradient</th>
<th>Electrocardiographic similarities*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 38 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>Incomplete lt. bundle-branch block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 25 F</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Anterior wall infarction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 30 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>Septal fibrosis; incomplete lt. bundle-branch block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 14 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0 40‡</td>
<td>Septal fibrosis; incomplete lt. bundle-branch block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 45 F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Anterior wall infarction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 16 M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0 50‡</td>
<td>L. bundle-branch block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 30 M</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Lt. axis deviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32 36 F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0 60‡</td>
<td>Anterior wall infarction; lt. axis deviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 42 F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Anterior wall infarction; lt. axis deviation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* QRS findings other than left ventricular hypertrophy.
+ , present; 0, absent; —, not measured; ‡, induced gradient.

Fig. 3.—Two Type I vectorcardiograms (A, Case 1; B, Case 2) with (hatched arrows) “pigtail curl” deformities. In Fig. A, the abrupt changes in direction, peripheral loop deformities, duration of inscription, and excessive width (approximately 1-5 mV) of the distal figure-of-eight loop are suggestive vectorcardiographically of hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy. (Original QRSH loops have been retouched.)

Fig. 4.—Slow septal inscription following an anteriorly oriented zig-zag course in the QRSH Type I loop of Case 15. The standard electrocardiogram resembles anomalous atrioventricular excitation in the praeordial leads. Early rightward horizontal forces lost in retouching and reproduction.

TABLE III

COMPARISON OF CLINICAL, HAEMODYNAMIC, AND ELECTROCARDIOGRAPHIC FINDINGS IN TYPE III HYPERTROPHIC OBSTRUCTIVE CARDIOMYOPATHY
and R.Sag planes. There was no apparent correlation between the clinical findings or the left ventricular haemodynamic findings and the type of QRS loop (Table I, II, and III). The familial cases (Cases 18 and 33) of the series were Type I and III QRS loops.

There were 5 instances of left axis deviation (−30° AQRSv), one associated with right bundle-branch block (Table I). The main P loop axis was noted to be greater than 0.25 mV in only 24 per cent of the cases (Table IV).

**DISCUSSION**

An interesting paradox in cardiology concerns the inverse relation between the hypertrophied interventricular septum and its electrocardiographic manifestation. Left ventricular free wall hypertrophy is usually manifest electrocardiographically as an increase in voltage of the depolarizing waves of the left ventricular free wall, whereas the depolarizing waves of the hypertrophied septum are usually smaller in magnitude than normal and are frequently absent (Bryant, 1953; Cabrera and Gaxiola, 1960; Wallace, McCall, and Estes, 1962; Burch and DePasquale, 1960). Cabrera et al. (1958) postulate coronary insufficiency as the explanation of this situation, and Bryant explains the phenomenon as a result of incomplete left bundle-branch block. Wallace et al. (1962) state that spatial reorientation of the initial vectors is an adequate explanation for this finding. Burch and DePasquale (1960) suggest that fibrous replacement of...
Intramural Myocardial Conduction in Hypertrophic Obstructive Cardiomyopathy

Fig. 7.—Type III vectorcardiogram of Case 30, similar to complete left bundle-branch block in the horizontal plane, demonstrates totally reversed inscription in all three planes. The P loop is exceedingly large (0·64mV P_{R.Sag}) and open. The latter is PT displacement and not artefactual.

the septal myocardium will reduce the magnitude of the septal vectors by reducing myocardial muscle mass. All investigators agree that septal activation is abnormal but the precise explanation remains elusive.

From this vectorcardiographic analysis in hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy the electrocardiographic paradox of septal hypertrophy is approached by considering altered intramural activation processes resulting from the muscle conduction disturbances produced by myocardial hyper-

Fig. 8.—Two Type III QRS\textsubscript{H} loops, one of normal time duration, (A) with clockwise inscription, Case 29, and (B) Case 26 with counterclockwise inscription. Electrocardiogram in both suggests anterior wall myocardial infarction.

Fig. 9.—A pathognomonic vectorcardiogram in Case 27. The septal "pigtail curl" (initial 24 msec.) associated with the QRS\textsubscript{H} loop of left ventricular hypertrophy is thought probably to occur only in hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy.
trophy. Most conduction abnormalities in electrcardiology have been primarily concerned with His Purkinje system disturbances. However, multipolar transmurual plunge electrode studies have enabled the intramural activation process to be studied remotely from the Purkinje penetrations. Two observations from these studies are (1) the frequent reversals of the intramural activation process, that is, finding intramural areas of myocardium activated before subadjacent endocardial areas (Scher and Young, 1957; Crocker and Smith, 1965), and (2) the amount of tangential or perpendicular spread of the activation process in reference to the endocardial and epicardial plane (Pruitt, Watt, and Murdo, 1964). The tangential spread is also supported by the rS QRS complexes recorded epicardially in primates and man (Pruitt et al., 1964; Barbato, 1957). Durrer, Roos, and van Dam's (1966) findings in a patient with an ostium primum defect are interpreted as tangential spread of the intramural activation process one centimetre from the endocardium in the postero-basal left ventricular free wall. Lepeschkin (1957) believes that the activation process of the muscle fibres proceeds along the long axis of the muscle fibre. It should follow that the transseptal activation process is directly related to the arrangement of the muscle bundles which comprise the septum. The basal and middle thirds of the interventricular septum are comprised of the deep bulbo-spiral and deep sino-spiral muscles. The superficial bulbo-spiral and superficial sino-spiral muscles make up the apical third of the septum (Robb and Robb, 1942; Wartman and Souders, 1950). The muscle bundles of the different groups lace the septum in various planes, and this may account for much of the electromotive force cancellation in the septum. Septal activation begins on the lower left septum and is followed very shortly by envelopment from the right lower septum (Scher and Young, 1957; Amer et al., 1960). The anteriorly rightward and superiorly directed electromotive forces of the double envelopment predominate.

What are the factors in hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy that alter transseptal activation?

Histologically the muscle fibres are larger than those seen in hypertrophy from other causes (Teare, 1958; Goodwin et al., 1960; Hollman et al., 1960), and the bizarrely arranged muscle bundles are interspersed with fibrous tissue and endothelial lined clefts. The septum may measure up to 4–6 cm. in width. Electrophysiologically increasing the size of the fibre requires a longer time for depolarization and an increase in muscle mass will increase conduction time through the mass. Conduction across myocardial fibres may take place along a zig-zag path (Lepeschkin, 1957) and will take a much longer time (Pruitt, Essex, and Burchell, 1951). Conduction across fibrous tissue is presumed to be delayed.

From this study in hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy, the above factors are presumed to modify the intramural activation process in such a manner that certain vectorcardiographic peculiarities and three types of vectorcardiograms may be recognized. Of the Type I QRS loop there are two cases (6 and 8) of rapid transseptal activation, where the main septal vectors are of such magnitude as to suggest right ventricular hypertrophy. It appears that delay due to transseptal muscle conduction disturbances is negligible, and in these instances septal hypertrophy masquerades as right ventricular hypertrophy. Wigle and Baron (1966) noted considerable diminution of the main septal vector of two young patients with this Type I QRS loop after operation. Their observations of reduced magnitude of septal vectors after ventriculomyotomy corroborate the finding that under certain circumstances of septal activation and transseptal muscle conduction septal hypertrophy may mimic right ventricular hypertrophy. The main septal vectors in these youths, of this magnitude and orientation, are recorded as large "pathological" q waves in the left praecordial scalar leads, and when the same vector is superiorly orientated abnormal inferior q waves are recorded.

In the remaining cases of Type I QRS loops the septal vector is small and usually slowly inscribed. Muscle fibre hypertrophy, muscle bundle disarrangement, fibrous interspersement, increased

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vectorcardiogram</th>
<th>Septal vector</th>
<th>Limb vector</th>
<th>Distal figure-of-eight &gt; 1.0 mV width</th>
<th>Main anterior and right septal vector &gt; 1.0 mV</th>
<th>Slow septal inscrption</th>
<th>Main P loop axis &gt; 0.25 mV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type I (19 patients)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type II (5 patients)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type III (9 patients)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (33)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>48</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
muscle
spread
to
with
associated
atrioventricular excitation (Tables I and II). The slow septal
inscription, however, was
shorter in duration than 75 per cent of the delta waves reported by Chung,
Walsh, and Massie (1965) in the Wolff-Parkinson-White syndrome.

In two Type I QRSH loops curious small “pigtail
curls” were noted on
the afferent or efferent
limb of
a figure-of-eight QRSH loop (Fig. 3). These
deformities are frequently seen in the efferent limb of
the QRSH sag loop in right bundle-branch block. “Pigtail
curls” are infrequently seen in the
horizontal plane (excluding the tip of the QRSH loop)
and when noted in this plane, without major
associated His bundle conduction disturbances, they are
interpreted as altered intramural activation processes
from muscle conduction disturbances. These curious
curls are thought to be instantaneous resultant
vectorial imbalances caused by aberrations of the
tangential intramural activation process secondary
to the muscle conduction disturbances produced by
this disease (see above). Changes in direction,
magnitude, or speed of conduction from myocardial
infarction or myocardial hypertrophy from other
cases will often deform the QRSH loop but rarely
produce the “pigtail curls” on the afferent or
efferent limb QRSH loop. The “pigtail curls” are
especially important when they are large,
critically situated, and free of major His bundle
conduction disturbances.

In addition to the slow initial inscription and
“pigtail curls” of intramural muscle conduction
disturbances, two cases of Type I QRSH loops (Fig.
2 and 3) demonstrated figure-of-eight horizontal
loops that had an abnormally wide distal segment
which was thought to be indicative of the massive
left ventricular hypertrophy of obstructive cardio-
mypathy. Figure-of-eight loops in left ventricular
hypertrophy usually are narrow; however, in
both of these cases the width of the distal segment
was at least 1 mV.

The transseptal activation in Type II QRSH loops
is altered by the same muscle conduction
disturbances in such a manner that the instantaneous
vectors of initial septal activation are directed anteriorly
and to the left.

Type II QRSH loops (Fig. 6), like the scalar
electrocardiogram in these cases, resemble incomplete
left bundle-branch block or septal fibrosis (Table I).

The theory of muscle conduction disturbances
secondary to hypertrophy is preferred to the
controversial concept of incomplete left bundle-branch
block (Leighton et al., 1967) as the explanation for
the vector and electrocardiographic abnormalities
of septal depolarization. Septal fibrosis is thought
to contribute to this type of QRSH loop by altering
muscle conduction rather than by the proposed
theory of fibrous replacement of the myocardium.

The most striking example of aberrant transseptal
activation is noted in a Type III loop (Fig. 9). The
slowly inscribed “pigtail curl” of septal origin
associated with a large (main QRSH vector 2.5 mV)
posteriorly displaced loop (−80°) is considered
pathognomonic for the massive interventricular
septal hypertrophy, as seen in hypertrophic obstructive
cardiomyopathy. The septal hypertrophy in
this disorder is thought to be the only condition able
to produce this degree of distorted transseptal
activation. One of the vectorcardiographic series
(Estes et al., 1963) contained two instances of septal
“pigtail curls”; however, the authors did not
emphasize this finding.

The afferent and efferent limb “pigtail curls” are
thought to be suggestive of hypertrophic obstructive
cardiomyopathy, though probably not diagnostic.
It is to be anticipated that these QRSH loops “pig-
tail curls” may be found in any condition that
produces intramural muscle conduction disturbances;
however, they are most likely to be found with
massive left ventricular hypertrophy when not
associated with major His Purkinje conduction
disturbances.

The Type III QRSH loop when associated with
a clockwise inscription of the horizontal loop is to be
distinguished from left bundle-branch block. This
difference is apparent (Case 29) (Fig. 8A) where the
loop duration is 84 msec. With Case 30 (Fig. 7)
the situation is more complex, since the QRSH duration
is 116 msec. The QRSH loop morphology
cannot be attributed entirely to left bundle-branch
block, since all loops are inscribed entirely in reverse
order. Reversed inscription of all three loops has
been found by Bell, Pugh, and Dunn (1968) in left
ventricular hypertrophy from aortic valvular steno-
sis. It is difficult to exclude entirely a left bundle-
branch conduction delay in this case, but altered
intramural activation processes from the muscle
conduction disturbances of hypertrophy most prob-
bly contribute to the abnormal inscription in all
three loops.

Type III vectorcardiographic loops contain those
cases where the scalar electrocardiogram and the
vectorcardiogram resemble anterior wall infarction,
a not uncommon finding in hypertrophic obstructive
cardiomyopathy (Fig. 8). None of the patients,
however, had a clinical history of myocardial infarction.

The vectorcardiogram is considered diagnostic of this condition when a large septal "pigtails curl" is inscribed in a QRSh loop that is otherwise normal or resembles left ventricular hypertrophy. The vectorcardiographic diagnosis may be implied when there are critically situated "pigtails curl" on the afferent and efferent limbs of the QRSh loop, or the efferent limbs of the QRSh, when the main anterior and rightward septal vector is greater than 1 mV, and when the width of the distal segment of a QRSh figure-of-eight loop exceeds 1 mV. Should the combination of slow septal inscriptions, a large main P vector, the peripheral loop deformities reported by Oberwittler et al. (1965), and left ventricular hypertrophy be noted, then the diagnosis of hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy is to be considered. The types of vectorcardiographic loops seen in this condition aid in classifying the abnormalities, imply transseptal muscle conduction disturbances secondary to myocardial hypertrophy, and simplify the understanding of the unusual electrocardiographic findings.

In conclusion, though there is no definite correlation between the haemodynamic, clinical, and vectorcardiographic findings, it does appear that angina is more prevalent in Types II and III than in Type I (Tables I, II, and III). The obstructive haemodynamic findings seem to follow this same trend, being slightly more severe in Types II and III than in Type I (Tables I, II, and III). The left ventricular compliance as measured by the left ventricular end-diastolic pressure, however, appears to be equally affected in all types (Tables I, II, and III). At this time one can only speculate upon the vectorcardiographic, clinical, and haemodynamic relationship.

SUMMARY

Three types of QRSh loops are classified by the direction of the initial vectors of septal activation; Type I, anteriorly and to the right; Type II, anteriorly and to the left; and Type III, posteriorly and to the left. The unusual electrocardiographic findings in hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy are discussed in relation to the QRSh loop type.

Vectorcardiographic QRSh loop characteristics include pathognomonic "pigtails curl" inscribed within the time of septal activation in a QRSh loop free of major His Purkinje conduction disturbances. Similar "pigtails loops", critically placed on the efferent or the afferent limb of the QRSh loop or the efferent limb of the QRSh, are suggestive of the massive left ventricular hypertrophy found in obstructive cardiomyopathy. When the distal segment of a figure-of-eight QRSh loop exceeds 1-0 mV in width, left ventricular hypertrophy from obstructive cardiomyopathy is suggested. Slow inscription of the septal vectors is a common finding in this disorder and when associated with a short P–R interval, 0-12 sec. (scalar electrocardiogram), often resembles anomalous atrioventricular excitation.

Alterations in the transseptal activation process by muscle conduction disturbances secondary to myocardial hypertrophy in hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy are thought to explain better some of the vectorcardiographic and electrocardiographic findings known as septal fibrosis or incomplete left bundle-branch block.

I would like to thank Professor J. F. Goodwin for the opportunity to perform this study and to acknowledge the interest and assistance of Dr. Celia Oakley.

REFERENCES


Intramural Myocardial Conduction in Hypertrophic Obstructive Cardiomyopathy


