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Hypercoagubility: An Updated Overview for Healthcare Providers

Abdullah Siddiq Ahmed Jaafari[1], Khaled Hadi Ali Alajmi[2], Ahmed Misfer Althabaity[3], Khalid Shayim Alsharari Salem[4], Mohammed Saleh Alhargan[5], Hissah Faihan Ayad Alotaibi[6], Najla Alhumaidi Almutairi[7], Samar Mnwer Alanazi[8], Fayez Nukhaylan Almutairi[9], Abdullah Hamdan Khidhr Alazmi[10], Mamdoh Abdullah Alotaibi[11]

Abstract

Hypercoagulability, or thrombophilia, is a pathological state characterized by an increased tendency for blood clot formation, leading to conditions such as venous thromboembolism (VTE), arterial thrombosis, and thromboembolism. This condition arises from a disruption in the balance between pro-coagulant and anticoagulant factors, influenced by both inherited and acquired risk factors. The understanding of hypercoagulability has evolved significantly since the early 20th century, with key discoveries such as antiphospholipid syndrome, factor V Leiden mutation, and deficiencies in proteins C and S contributing to improved diagnosis and management.This article aims to provide healthcare providers with an updated overview of hypercoagulability, including its etiology, epidemiology, pathophysiology, diagnostic approaches, and management strategies, to enhance the prevention and treatment of thrombotic disorders.The review synthesizes current literature on hypercoagulability, focusing on the interplay between genetic and environmental factors, the role of Virchow's triad in thrombosis, and the clinical significance of various thrombophilic disorders. Diagnostic tools, risk assessment models, and treatment options, including anticoagulation therapy, are discussed in detail.Hypercoagulability disorders are influenced by both inherited mutations (e.g., factor V Leiden, prothrombin G20210A) and acquired conditions (e.g., malignancy, inflammation, pregnancy). Thrombosis risk is further modulated by factors such as age, lifestyle, and comorbidities. Diagnostic approaches include thrombophilia screening and risk stratification tools, while management involves anticoagulation therapy tailored to individual patient risk profiles.Hypercoagulability is a multifactorial condition requiring a comprehensive understanding of its underlying causes and risk factors. Early diagnosis, risk stratification, and personalized treatment are essential to reduce morbidity and mortality associated with thrombotic disorders. Future research should focus on novel therapies and improved risk prediction models.

Keywords: *Hypercoagulability, Thrombophilia, Venous Thromboembolism (VTE), Factor V Leiden, Anticoagulation, Virchow's Triad, Thrombosis, Risk Stratification.*

Introduction

Hypercoagulability, also referred to as thrombophilia, denotes an increased propensity for blood clot formation. Hemostasis, a physiological mechanism that prevents excessive bleeding, involves the formation of stable clots through a process known as coagulation. However, hypercoagulability represents a pathological state characterized by excessive coagulation or clotting occurring in the absence of bleeding. The formation of thrombi results from complex interactions among various blood components. Arterial thrombosis, including myocardial infarction and stroke, differs in pathophysiology and management from venous thrombosis, such as deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolism (PE), although both conditions share certain risk factors [1][2]. Thromboembolism refers to the detachment and migration of

[1] Ksa, Ministry of Health, Makkah Healthcare Cluster
[2] Ksa, Ministry of Health, King Salman Hospital.
[3] Ksa, Ministry of Health, Diriyah Hospital.
[4] Ksa, Ministry of Health, Al-Jouf Health Pool.
[5] Ksa, Ministry of Health, Long Care Hospital in Riyadh
[6] Ksa, Ministry of Health, Shaqra General Hospital Ministry of Health
[7] Ksa, Ministry of Health, Shaqra Genral Hospital Ministry of Health
[8] Ksa, Ministry of Health, Al-Jouf Health Pool
[9] College of Medicine, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
[10] Ksa, Ministry of Health, Al-Jouf Health Pool
[11] Ksa, Ministry of Health, Salhiat Haleet Phc Rifaei Aljamsh

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a thrombus from its site of origin to a distant location, leading to vascular obstruction. Various hypercoagulable states and inherited or acquired Thrombophilic disorders contribute to this phenomenon. The recognition of hypercoagulability and its underlying causes has evolved over time. As early as 1906, Wasserman et al. identified antiphospholipid syndrome as a contributing factor to abnormal clot formation. Subsequent discoveries have expanded the understanding of thrombophilic conditions. In 1965, Egeberg et al. reported antithrombin III deficiency as a hereditary predisposition to thrombosis [3]. In the early 1980s, deficiencies in protein C (Griffin, 1981) and protein S (Comp, 1984) were identified as additional risk factors. Further advancements in the field occurred in 1993 when Dahlbäck described activated protein C resistance, a condition primarily associated with the factor V Leiden mutation [4][5][6]. These discoveries have significantly enhanced the understanding of hypercoagulability, facilitating improved diagnosis and management of thrombotic disorders.

Etiology

Hypercoagulability disorders are categorized as either inherited or acquired conditions [7]. However, the occurrence of thrombosis is not solely determined by genetic predisposition but rather results from the complex interaction between genetic and environmental factors, as described by the multiple-hit hypothesis [8][9][10]. This hypothesis explains why individuals with the same inherited mutations may present with varying thrombotic risks, highlighting the role of additional external influences [11]. Genetic factors contribute to approximately 30% of venous thromboembolism (VTE) cases, with factor V Leiden and the prothrombin G20210A mutation being the most frequently identified mutations in affected individuals. These thrombophilias confer a relatively low thrombotic risk. However, other inherited thrombophilias, such as deficiencies in antithrombin III, protein C, and protein S, are much rarer—affecting about 1% of the general population—but are associated with a considerably higher risk of thrombosis. The severity of thrombotic events in individuals with these deficiencies underscores their clinical significance in hypercoagulability disorders. In addition to genetic predisposition, acquired risk factors significantly influence the coagulation cascade and contribute to thrombotic events. Surgical procedures, pregnancy, hormone replacement therapy, and oral contraceptive use are well-established risk factors that elevate the likelihood of thrombosis. Moreover, malignancies, systemic inflammation, infections, and heparin-induced thrombocytopenia also play a crucial role in hypercoagulability by promoting excessive clot formation [12][11]. These acquired conditions can either trigger thrombosis independently or exacerbate an existing genetic predisposition. Understanding the interplay between genetic mutations and acquired risk factors is essential for accurately assessing thrombotic risk and implementing appropriate preventive and therapeutic strategies. Identifying individuals at high risk enables clinicians to develop targeted interventions, thereby reducing morbidity and mortality associated with hypercoagulability disorders.

Epidemiology

Venous thromboembolism (VTE) ranks as the second most prevalent cardiovascular disorder, following myocardial infarction, and occurs more frequently than stroke. Its incidence in the general population ranges from 1 to 5 cases per 1,000 individuals annually [13]. The likelihood of VTE development is strongly influenced by age. In pediatric populations, the incidence is approximately 1 per 100,000 per year, whereas in adults, it increases significantly to 1 per 1,000 per year. Among the elderly, the incidence is even higher, reaching 1% per year [14]. The prevalence of specific thrombophilic conditions has been extensively studied. According to Thomas, the frequency of thrombophilias varies, with antiphospholipid syndrome (APS), activated protein C (APC) resistance, and elevated factor VIII accounting for approximately 25–28% of cases. In contrast, deficiencies in protein C and protein S, hyperhomocysteinemia, and prothrombin mutation are observed in 5–10% of affected individuals [8]. These inherited and acquired conditions significantly contribute to the overall burden of thrombotic disorders. Hypercoagulability disorders are also implicated in cerebrovascular events, with up to 4% of strokes attributed to underlying coagulation abnormalities. Identifying these risk factors is crucial for developing preventive strategies and optimizing clinical management. Understanding the epidemiological patterns of VTE and related thrombotic disorders enables healthcare professionals to implement early interventions, thereby reducing morbidity and mortality associated with hypercoagulability.

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Pathophysiology

Coagulation is a fundamental function of the hematologic system that ensures hemostasis. Under normal conditions, a balance exists between pro-coagulant and anti-thrombotic factors, maintaining normal blood flow. A hypercoagulable state arises when this balance is disrupted, either due to excessive pro-coagulant activity or inadequate anticoagulant function. This imbalance increases the risk of thromboembolism. The complex interactions among coagulation activators, inhibitors, their synthesis, degradation (quantitative properties), and their functional attributes (qualitative properties) determine the likelihood of thrombosis. The pathogenesis of thrombosis is commonly explained by Virchow's triad, which consists of hypercoagulability, vascular stasis, and endothelial injury. This framework remains relevant in understanding the mechanisms leading to vascular thrombosis. In arterial thrombosis, atherosclerotic plaque rupture triggers platelet aggregation, resulting in a platelet-rich white thrombus. Venous thrombosis, in contrast, is often associated with blood stasis, particularly in regions such as venous valve pockets, leading to the formation of fibrin-rich red thrombi. Genetic mutations influence the coagulation cascade depending on whether they exist in a heterozygous or homozygous state, affecting thrombotic risk differently [15][16][17][18].

Coagulation Disorders and Their Role in Thrombosis

Antithrombin III (ATIII) Deficiency

Antithrombin III is a key anticoagulant that binds to heparin on endothelial cells, forming a thrombin-antithrombin (TAT) complex that inhibits clot formation. The prevalence of ATIII deficiency is estimated to be 1 in 500 in the general population. Its deficiency is a strong risk factor for early-onset thrombosis, typically before the age of 50, and poses the highest thrombotic risk among inherited thrombophilias. Antithrombin is synthesized in the liver but does not depend on vitamin K. ATIII deficiency can result from either reduced synthesis, often due to liver damage, or increased loss due to nephrotic syndrome, enteropathy, disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC), sepsis, burns, trauma, microangiopathy, or cardiopulmonary bypass surgery [19]. The condition has qualitative and quantitative subtypes. Type II deficiency results from mutations affecting the heparin-binding site (HBS), the reactive site (RS), or other pleiotropic effects (PE). Homozygous ATIII deficiency is incompatible with life unless it specifically affects the heparin-binding site. Patients with ATIII deficiency primarily present with venous thrombosis, with arterial thrombosis being less common [11][20].

Protein C and Protein S Deficiencies

Protein C and protein S deficiencies are associated with an increased risk of venous thromboembolism. Protein C deficiency often manifests as thrombosis during adolescence. These deficiencies can be inherited or acquired due to liver dysfunction, vitamin K antagonist use, renal failure, DIC, or active thrombosis. Protein S serves as a cofactor for activated protein C (APC), enhancing its anticoagulant effect.

Protein S deficiency is classified into three subtypes:

- Type I: Reduced overall protein S levels
- Type II: Decreased APC activity
- Type III: Low free protein S due to increased binding to complement factor C4b

The interaction between protein S and complement factor C4b highlights the link between coagulation, inflammation, and autoimmunity [19]. The half-life of protein C is shorter than that of other vitamin K-dependent coagulation factors. Consequently, initiating vitamin K antagonists, such as warfarin, without bridging therapy using parenteral anticoagulants can lead to a transient hypercoagulable state, increasing the risk of warfarin-induced skin necrosis [11][20].

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Activated Protein C Resistance and Factor V Leiden Mutation

Protein C interacts with thrombomodulin to form APC, which has anticoagulant, anti-inflammatory, and cytoprotective properties. APC inactivates coagulation factors V and VIII, thus preventing excessive thrombin generation. Activated protein C resistance can arise due to both inherited and acquired mechanisms, disrupting this regulation. The most common genetic cause of APC resistance is the factor V Leiden mutation, making it the most prevalent inherited thrombophilia. Factor V Leiden mutation results in a variant of factor V that is resistant to APC-mediated degradation, leading to excessive thrombin production and increased thrombotic risk. The mutation is associated primarily with venous thrombosis but may also contribute to arterial thrombosis. Other factor V mutations include factor V Cambridge and factor V Hong Kong [19][11][12][20].

Prothrombin G20210A Mutation

Prothrombin, also known as factor II, serves as the precursor to thrombin, which plays a central role in clot formation. The prothrombin G20210A mutation is the second most common inherited risk factor for thrombosis. This mutation results in elevated prothrombin levels, increasing the likelihood of both arterial and venous thrombotic events. The mutation is caused by a single nucleotide substitution (G to A) at position 20210 in the prothrombin gene. It is most commonly found in Caucasians and contributes to a hypercoagulable state by enhancing thrombin generation [12][11][20].

Hyperhomocysteinemia and Its Role in Thrombosis

Hyperhomocysteinemia is linked to an increased risk of both arterial and venous thrombosis, as well as premature atherosclerosis. It results from disruptions in the methionine metabolic pathway. Deficiencies of cofactors essential for homocysteine metabolism, such as vitamins B6, B12, and folate, can elevate homocysteine levels. Similarly, mutations in enzymes such as cystathionine beta-synthase (CBS) and methylenetetrahydrofolate reductase (MTHFR) reduce homocysteine clearance, promoting vascular injury and thrombosis. Acquired causes of hyperhomocysteinemia include renal failure, hypothyroidism, and the use of medications such as methotrexate, phenytoin, and carbamazepine. Despite the strong association between elevated homocysteine levels and thrombosis, clinical trials have not demonstrated a significant reduction in thrombotic risk with homocysteine-lowering interventions [19][12][8][11][20][21]. Hypercoagulability disorders arise from either inherited or acquired abnormalities that disrupt the balance of the coagulation system. Virchow's triad—hypercoagulability, vascular stasis, and endothelial damage—remains the cornerstone for understanding thrombotic pathophysiology. Genetic disorders such as factor V Leiden mutation and prothrombin G20210A mutation are among the most common inherited causes of thrombophilia, while conditions like ATIII deficiency, protein C and S deficiencies, and hyperhomocysteinemia further contribute to increased thrombotic risk. A thorough understanding of these disorders is crucial for identifying at-risk individuals and implementing appropriate prophylactic and therapeutic strategies. While genetic mutations significantly contribute to thrombosis, acquired conditions, including inflammation, malignancy, and medication use, further amplify the risk. Research into novel anticoagulant therapies and improved risk stratification models may enhance the prevention and management of thrombotic disorders, ultimately reducing morbidity and mortality associated with hypercoagulability.

Elevated Factor VIII (FVIII) and Thrombosis

Elevated factor VIII (FVIII) is a significant risk factor for thrombosis. Studies indicate that African-Americans tend to have higher FVIII levels, whereas individuals with blood group O exhibit lower levels [19]. Various conditions influence FVIII levels, including acute phase reactions, estrogen usage, pregnancy, and aerobic exercise [19]. Elevated FVIII may also lead to activated protein C (APC) resistance in the absence of FV mutation [11]. Conversely, low FVIII levels correlate with bleeding disorders, particularly in hemophilia A patients.

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Dysfibrinolysis and Its Clinical Impact

Dysfibrinolysis encompasses several conditions, including plasminogen deficiency, dysfibrinogenemia, tissue plasminogen activator (tPA) deficiency, plasminogen activator inhibitor (PAI) increase, and factor XII deficiency. Since factor XII contributes to plasmin generation, its deficiency leads to impaired fibrinolysis. Clinically, plasminogen deficiency presents similarly to protein C deficiency, with thrombosis manifesting during adolescence [22]. Elevated PAI and tPA deficiency have been associated with diabetes mellitus, inflammatory bowel disease, and coronary atherosclerosis [8]. Patients with structural or functional fibrinogen abnormalities (dysfibrinogenemia) may experience either thrombosis or bleeding complications [11].

Sticky Platelet Syndrome

Sticky platelet syndrome is an autosomal dominant disorder characterized by hypercoagulability due to platelet hypersensitivity to epinephrine or adenosine diphosphate (ADP) [8]. This condition leads to an increased risk of thrombotic events.

Antiphospholipid Syndrome (APS)

The most prevalent acquired thrombophilia is antiphospholipid syndrome (APS), which involves autoantibodies targeting phospholipids. Antiphospholipid antibodies (APLA) are detected in 3% to 5% of the general population and are linked to arterial and venous thrombosis as well as fetal loss. Key antibodies tested in APS include lupus anticoagulant, anticardiolipin, and anti-beta-2-glycoprotein. Lupus anticoagulant paradoxically prolongs activated partial thromboplastin time (aPTT) in vitro while promoting thrombosis in vivo [19]. APS may be secondary to conditions such as collagen vascular diseases, infections, or exposure to specific drugs like phenytoin and cocaine [8]. Deep vein thrombosis is the most common thrombotic event associated with APS. Patients presenting with stroke and underlying rheumatologic conditions should be screened for APS.

Malignancy and Hypercoagulability

Malignancy is the second most frequent cause of acquired hypercoagulability. Cancer promotes a prothrombotic state through the production of procoagulant factors such as tissue factor and cancer procoagulant, as well as interactions between tumor cells and the vasculature. Tumor-related stasis, paraproteinemia, and cytokine release further enhance thrombotic risk [23]. Approximately 85% of cancer patients exhibit elevated cancer procoagulant (CP), which activates factor X, thereby contributing to hypercoagulability [23]. Polycythemia vera increases thrombotic risk through hyperviscosity [20]. Migratory thrombophlebitis, or Trousseau syndrome, is a hallmark of visceral malignancy. The interplay between malignancy and coagulation is of particular interest since not only does cancer promote thrombosis, but coagulation factors also enhance angiogenesis, thereby fostering tumor growth and metastasis. Targeting the coagulation cascade may thus present new avenues for cancer therapy [24][25][26].

Extrinsic Coagulation Pathway and Tissue Factor (TF)

The extrinsic coagulation pathway is triggered by tissue factor (TF), which activates factor VII. Under physiological conditions, endothelial cells do not express TF; however, subendothelial cells and malignant cells produce it continuously, thereby linking malignancy to thrombotic events. TF activity is regulated by tissue factor pathway inhibitor (TFPI) [27].

Impact of Smoking on Coagulation and Thrombosis

Smoking accelerates vascular damage and enhances coagulation, leading to increased thrombosis risk. Arterial bypass grafts fail prematurely in smokers due to endothelial cell injury induced by nicotine. Smoking also reduces the release of tPA and TFPI, further predisposing individuals to clot formation. Additionally, carbon monoxide exposure increases endothelial permeability to lipids, facilitating atherogenesis [20].

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Exercise and Thrombosis Risk

Regular exercise generally improves cardiovascular health, but some individuals experience a temporary hypercoagulable state post-exercise, characterized by increased FVIII and platelet activation [28]. Older adults with preexisting cardiovascular risk factors are more vulnerable to exercise-induced thrombosis [31]. The Tromso study found that moderate-intensity exercise did not significantly alter thrombosis risk [32][33].

Circadian Rhythms and Thrombosis

Arterial thrombosis events, such as myocardial infarction and stroke, follow a circadian pattern, with peak incidence in the early morning hours [34]. This pattern is likely influenced by fluctuations in blood pressure and platelet activation [35][36]. Circadian variations in blood rheology and coagulation factor levels have also been noted and may be affected by dietary habits [37][38][39].

Hormonal Influence on Coagulation

Both endogenous and exogenous hormones affect coagulation. Oral contraceptives and hormone replacement therapy increase the risk of thrombosis and cardiovascular events [20]. Testosterone therapy has been linked to elevated thrombotic risk through mechanisms such as increased blood pressure, hemoglobin levels, LDL cholesterol, blood viscosity, and platelet aggregation [40][41].

Pregnancy and Hypercoagulability

Pregnancy induces a hypercoagulable state due to increased procoagulants (coagulation factors and platelets), reduced anticoagulants (PAI), and venous stasis caused by uterine compression. This heightened risk persists for up to two months postpartum [20]. The MEGA study examined pregnancy-related hypercoagulability, and the ALIFE study is currently investigating the role of low-molecular-weight heparin (LMWH) in preventing miscarriage in women with inherited thrombophilias [42][43]. Research continues on the association between pregnancy complications and thrombophilia [44].

Heparin-Induced Thrombocytopenia (HIT)

Heparin use can lead to thrombosis and thrombocytopenia, termed heparin-induced thrombocytopenia (HIT). Type-I HIT results in mild platelet reduction with minimal clinical impact, whereas type-II HIT involves severe thrombocytopenia and serious thrombotic complications. The binding of heparin to platelet factor 4 triggers an antibody response, activating monocytes and promoting endothelial damage [20].

Inflammation and Coagulation Interplay

Inflammation induces a hypercoagulable state [45]. Endotoxins activate the complement system, causing thrombocytopenia and increased coagulation [46]. Clinical manifestations of inflammation-related thrombosis include purpura, vasculitis, and septic thromboembolism [47][48]. Coagulation limits infection spread, but some bacteria utilize fibrinolytic mechanisms to counteract this defense. Autoimmune diseases such as systemic lupus erythematosus, immune thrombocytopenic purpura, polyarteritis nodosa, polymyositis, dermatomyositis, inflammatory bowel disease, and Behcet's syndrome are linked to an increased thrombotic risk [49][50][51]. Cytomegalovirus (CMV) infection may contribute to atherosclerosis through alterations in lipid metabolism and leukocyte adhesion [52].

Trauma and Hypercoagulability

Trauma induces a hypercoagulable state, with the most pronounced procoagulant imbalance occurring within the first 24 hours post-injury, particularly in women. Elevated tissue factor levels have been implicated in the development of respiratory distress syndrome and multiorgan failure following trauma [53].

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Additional Conditions Linked to Hypercoagulability

Other conditions associated with hypercoagulability include myeloproliferative disorders, multiple myeloma [54], paroxysmal nocturnal hemoglobinuria, and heart failure [55]. The left atrial appendage (LAA) demonstrates increased tissue factor and PAI expression compared to the right atrial appendage, contributing to thromboembolism in atrial fibrillation [56].

History and Physical

A thorough history is essential in distinguishing between provoked and unprovoked thromboembolism. The evaluation should cover demographics, family history, risk factors, and symptom descriptions, followed by a comprehensive physical examination. In approximately 70% of patients diagnosed with venous thromboembolism (VTE), a provoking factor is identifiable. Additionally, one in three patients has a family history of thrombotic events, highlighting the importance of genetic predisposition in VTE risk [11]. Thrombosis occurring at an early age is defined as thrombotic events in individuals younger than 40 or 50 years. Early-onset thrombosis raises concerns about underlying hereditary thrombophilia, such as Factor V Leiden mutation or prothrombin gene mutation. The history of thrombosis in unusual sites should prompt further investigation. Cerebral venous thrombosis, jugular vein thrombosis (including Lemierre syndrome), and splanchnic vein thrombosis are examples of uncommon thrombosis requiring specialized diagnostic approaches [57]. Portal vein thrombosis, seen in Budd-Chiari syndrome, can be associated with myeloproliferative disorders and other hypercoagulable conditions [58]. Thrombosis in the upper extremity veins, though less frequent, should also be assessed for catheter-related thrombosis, thoracic outlet syndrome, or malignancy [59][60][61]. Based on clinical history and physical examination, the Wells score is widely used to stratify the risk of VTE in patients presenting with their first thrombotic episode. This scoring system helps guide further diagnostic evaluation, including D-dimer testing and imaging studies, to confirm or exclude VTE. Proper history-taking and risk assessment are crucial for determining appropriate management and long-term prevention strategies.

Evaluation

Diagnosing hypercoagulability syndromes requires a combination of screening tests, confirmation tests, and risk factor assessment [19]. The standard thrombophilia screen includes functional assays for antithrombin III, protein C and S deficiencies, polymerase chain reaction (PCR) for Factor V Leiden and prothrombin G20210A mutations, and tests for antiphospholipid antibodies and homocysteine levels [12]. Additional laboratory tests include a routine coagulation panel, D-dimer, and a complete blood count (CBC) [62].

Diagnostic Approach

Moll *et al.* proposed the "4P" approach, which involves patient selection, pretest counseling, laboratory test interpretation, and patient education. Their risk of recurrence triangle helps determine the appropriate duration of anticoagulation. Thrombophilia testing is not recommended for every patient and should be selectively performed. Testing is not advised during an acute thrombotic event, while a patient is on anticoagulation, or in cases of provoked thromboembolism [63][64]. For unprovoked thromboembolism, guidelines vary. Some suggest initiating anticoagulation without specific thrombophilia testing, while others recommend testing to rule out hereditary thrombophilia and determine the need for prolonged anticoagulation. Testing is not beneficial for guiding primary prevention in asymptomatic relatives of patients with venous thromboembolism (VTE). However, primary prevention with anticoagulation during exposure to provoking factors should be considered. Thrombophilia testing should follow a two-stage approach or be conducted three months after discontinuing anticoagulation [65][66]. Different medical societies provide varying recommendations on when to perform testing [67][68].

Indications for Thrombophilia Testing

Thrombophilia testing is generally reserved for patients with:

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- Unprovoked or recurrent VTE
- VTE occurring in individuals younger than 40 years
- Strong family history of thrombosis
- Thrombosis in unusual sites (e.g., cerebral, mesenteric, hepatic, renal veins)
- Neonatal purpura fulminans
- Warfarin-induced skin necrosis
- Unexplained fetal loss [19][11][20]

For patients suspected of having antiphospholipid syndrome (APS), particularly young women with recurrent VTE or pregnancy loss, an unexplained prolonged partial thromboplastin time (PTT) should prompt further evaluation. APS testing includes enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) for antiphospholipid antibodies, the diluted Russell viper venom test (dRVVT), and PTT-LA. The Sapporo criteria incorporate both clinical and laboratory findings to confirm APS [12].

Screening for Malignancy in Unexplained VTE

In up to 20% of cases, deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolism (PE) may be the first sign of an underlying malignancy. Unexplained VTE in older patients should prompt a malignancy workup. Basic cancer screening includes:

- Detailed history and physical examination
- Erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR)
- CBC
- Liver and kidney function tests
- Urinalysis
- Chest X-ray (CXR) [8][23]

For patients at higher risk or with additional concerning features, extended investigations may be warranted, including tumor markers, computed tomography (CT) of the chest, abdomen, and pelvis, mammography for women over 40, prostate ultrasound for men over 50, lower endoscopy, Papanicolaou smear, and fecal occult blood testing.

Stroke and Hypercoagulability

Coagulation disorders contribute to approximately 4% of strokes. The incidence of stroke in young adults has been rising. Patients with hypercoagulability syndromes are more prone to venous thrombosis than arterial ischemic stroke. However, in some cases, venous thrombosis may lead to arterial stroke through paradoxical embolism, typically via a patent foramen ovale. Young adults with stroke and a suspected right-to-left shunt should undergo screening for venous thrombosis, including lower extremity ultrasound to detect deep vein thrombosis. Homocystinuria and APS are particularly associated with arterial strokes. Among patients with APS, stroke is the most common arterial event. Any patient younger than 45 who experiences a stroke should be screened for APS to identify potential hypercoagulable states and guide treatment strategies.

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Treatment / Management

Coagulation factor substitution remains the cornerstone of causal treatment for coagulation deficiencies. The administration of antithrombin III (ATIII) is recommended in both inherited and acquired deficiencies. Inherited deficiencies require prophylaxis and treatment of ongoing thrombosis, while acquired deficiencies, typically seen in disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC) and sepsis, involve increased consumption of coagulation factors. Fresh frozen plasma (FFP) is another option, providing a balanced mixture of both procoagulant and anticoagulant factors. This helps in restoring the body's natural coagulation balance, which can be crucial in managing bleeding and clotting disorders. The decision to initiate antithrombotic treatment hinges on a comprehensive risk-benefit analysis. Tools like HERDOO, VIENNA, and DASH scores are utilized to assess individual thrombotic risk, factoring in conditions such as thrombophilia. These scores help determine the likelihood of thrombosis based on the type and strength of thrombophilia present [69][70]. On the other hand, bleeding risks are evaluated using models such as HAS-BLED, RIETE, OBRI, KUIJER, ACCP, HEMORR2HAGES, and ORBIT scores. Of these, the HAS-BLED score has been found most effective in predicting bleeding risk, particularly in patients with atrial fibrillation, and is recommended in clinical guidelines [71].

The treatment course for venous thromboembolism (VTE) is divided into three phases: acute, intermediate, and chronic. Acute treatment occurs shortly after the thrombotic event, followed by intermediate treatment with short-term anticoagulation for up to three months. Chronic treatment involves long-term anticoagulation for periods extending beyond three months [72]. Factors such as male gender, age, the extent of thrombosis, and increased d-dimer levels correlate with a higher risk of recurrence, influencing decisions on the duration of anticoagulation therapy. The recurrence of VTE in cancer patients is particularly high, and tools like the COMPASS-CAT, Ottawa (Louzada), and Khorana scores are utilized to guide risk stratification in this group [74][75][76][77]. Various anticoagulants and antiplatelet drugs are available for preventing recurrent VTE. These include vitamin K antagonists (VKA), aspirin (evaluated in the WARFASA and ASPIRE trials), rivaroxaban (EINSTEIN trial), dabigatran (RE-MEDY and RE-SONATE trials), and apixaban (AMPLIFY trial). The CLOT trial demonstrated the efficacy of low molecular weight heparin in cancer patients compared to warfarin [20][79]. Special populations, such as pregnant women, require additional considerations. Heparin, which does not exhibit teratogenic effects, is FDA-approved during pregnancy and postpartum. Furthermore, preventive measures like compression stockings and maintaining mobility, as well as medications such as rosuvastatin, have shown promise in reducing the occurrence of thrombotic events, including VTE [80].

Differential Diagnosis

When investigating thrombosis, differentiating between provoked and unprovoked thrombosis is crucial, as it provides insight into the underlying cause and helps guide treatment. The distinction can often be made through a detailed history and physical examination. Thrombotic events can arise under a variety of conditions, making a broad differential diagnosis essential. Common triggers include immobilization and travel, but less frequent causes must also be considered, such as cardiac conditions (e.g., atrial fibrillation, cardiomyopathy, mitral valve prolapse, and prosthetic valves), non-bacterial thrombotic endocarditis (NBTE), and hematologic disorders like disseminated intravascular coagulopathy (DIC) and heparin-induced thrombocytopenia (HIT) [81][82]. Clinical decision tools like the HIT score can assist in assessing pretest probability and guiding diagnostic workups. Thrombophilia is another important differential diagnosis in cases of vaso-occlusive events. Conditions such as arterial thrombosis, osteonecrosis, ischemic stroke, and myocardial infarction can sometimes be linked to thrombophilic disorders [83][84][85][86][87]. For instance, Celik et al. conducted a study focusing on young patients with myocardial infarction and found that while established cardiovascular risk factors were relevant, thrombophilia did not appear to contribute significantly to myocardial infarction in this age group [88]. However, other studies suggest that thrombophilia should be considered in the differential diagnosis of myocardial infarction with non-occlusive coronary arteries (MINOCA), especially in younger patients who present with atypical coronary findings [89][90]. Thrombophilic conditions might also be associated with stroke in younger individuals, particularly when venous thromboembolism leads to complications such as a patent foramen ovale (PFO), allowing clot migration to the cerebral circulation [91]. In these cases, identifying the underlying

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thrombophilia is vital for appropriate management and prevention of further thrombotic events. The role of thrombophilia in these conditions warrants careful consideration in the broader diagnostic approach.

Complications

Deep venous thrombosis (DVT) can lead to two major complications: pulmonary embolism (PE) and post thrombotic syndrome (PTS). PE is an acute, life-threatening condition that occurs when a clot from the deep veins of the legs breaks loose and travels to the lungs, blocking blood flow. PTS, on the other hand, is a chronic condition that can develop after DVT, leading to long-term complications such as chronic venous ulceration (CVU) and significant functional impairment [92]. In one study, over 40% of patients with CVU had at least one thrombophilic disorder, although the precise relationship between thrombophilia and both microvascular and macrovascular thrombosis, leading to PTS and CVU, remains uncertain [93]. The two primary complications arising from thrombosis treatment are recurrent thrombosis and bleeding. These complications emphasize the importance of individualized risk assessments and tailored therapy. Recurrent thrombosis increases the burden of thrombotic disease, while bleeding can occur as a side effect of anticoagulation therapy, posing further risks to patient health. Therefore, balancing the benefits and risks of anticoagulant therapy is critical. Pregnancy poses an additional layer of complexity, as micro- and macro-thrombotic events can result in severe outcomes. These events not only threaten the life of the mother but can also negatively impact fetal health, leading to complications such as fetal growth restriction, pregnancy loss, preeclampsia, and placental abruption. Thrombosis-related complications in pregnancy significantly increase maternal and fetal morbidity and mortality, highlighting the need for careful management and monitoring of at-risk pregnancies [79].

Other Issues

Thomas proposed the mnemonic CALMSHAPES to aid in the identification of causes of a hypercoagulable state, encompassing both genetic and acquired conditions. These include Protein C deficiency, Antiphospholipid syndrome, Factor V Leiden mutation, malignancy, Protein S deficiency, Hyperhomocysteinemia, Antithrombin III deficiency, Prothrombin G2021A mutation, Factor Eight excess, and Sticky Platelet syndrome [8]. Each of these factors contributes to an increased propensity for thrombosis by either impairing the natural anticoagulant mechanisms or promoting clot formation. Recognizing these conditions is essential for proper diagnosis and management of patients at risk of thrombotic events, particularly in individuals who present with recurrent thrombosis or unexplained vascular events.

Enhancing Healthcare Team Outcomes

The decision to test for thrombophilia should be approached with caution. Testing may provide valuable insights into the underlying causes of thrombotic events or recurrent miscarriages; however, it is important to consider the potential negative consequences of a positive result. These include psychological distress, such as anxiety due to an increased perceived risk of future thrombotic events, and the potential for unnecessary interventions that may lead to bleeding complications. Additionally, the cost implications of testing should be factored into the decision-making process. While the benefits of diagnosing a thrombophilic disorder may include the prevention of future thrombotic events, miscarriage, or other complications through anticoagulation, these must be weighed against the potential harm and the overall benefit to the patient. Prognostication in patients with thrombosis involves assessing the risks of recurrent thrombotic events or bleeding, particularly as a result of anticoagulation therapy. Patients who have experienced a single venous thromboembolism (VTE) face a 30% risk of recurrence within 10 years. This recurrence risk necessitates careful monitoring and personalized treatment strategies. Various scoring systems are available to predict the likelihood of recurrence, aiding clinicians in tailoring treatment plans. Thrombosis remains a significant cause of mortality, particularly in hospitalized patients with cancer, where it is the second most common cause of death. Consequently, the integration of predictive models and timely interventions is critical to reducing mortality and morbidity associated with thrombosis. An interprofessional approach is crucial in optimizing patient outcomes in thrombosis management. Collaboration between healthcare professionals, particularly nurses and physicians, plays a pivotal role in

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the comprehensive evaluation and treatment of patients with thrombotic disorders. This approach ensures that both the clinical and emotional needs of the patient are addressed, leading to better overall management and improved health outcomes [94].

Conclusion

Hypercoagulability, a condition marked by an increased propensity for blood clot formation, remains a significant clinical challenge due to its multifactorial nature and the potential for severe complications such as venous thromboembolism (VTE), arterial thrombosis, and thromboembolism. This article has provided a comprehensive overview of the etiology, epidemiology, pathophysiology, and management of hypercoagulability, emphasizing the interplay between genetic predispositions and acquired risk factors. Inherited thrombophilias, such as factor V Leiden mutation and prothrombin G20210A mutation, are well-established contributors to hypercoagulability, while acquired conditions like malignancy, inflammation, and pregnancy further exacerbate thrombotic risk. The role of Virchow's triad—hypercoagulability, vascular stasis, and endothelial injury—remains central to understanding the mechanisms underlying thrombosis. Diagnostic approaches to hypercoagulability have advanced significantly, with thrombophilia screening and risk stratification tools enabling clinicians to identify high-risk individuals and tailor interventions accordingly. Tools such as the Wells score, HERDOO, and HAS-BLED scores are invaluable in assessing thrombotic and bleeding risks, guiding decisions on anticoagulation therapy. Treatment strategies, including the use of vitamin K antagonists, direct oral anticoagulants, and low molecular weight heparin, have proven effective in managing thrombotic disorders, particularly in special populations such as cancer patients and pregnant women. Despite these advancements, challenges remain in balancing the benefits of anticoagulation with the risks of bleeding, particularly in patients with complex medical histories. The integration of predictive models and interprofessional collaboration is crucial in optimizing patient outcomes. Nurses, physicians, and other healthcare providers must work together to ensure comprehensive care, addressing both the clinical and emotional needs of patients with thrombotic disorders. Looking ahead, future research should focus on developing novel anticoagulant therapies, refining risk prediction models, and exploring the role of emerging biomarkers in hypercoagulability. By advancing our understanding of thrombotic disorders and improving diagnostic and therapeutic strategies, healthcare providers can reduce the morbidity and mortality associated with hypercoagulability, ultimately enhancing patient care and outcomes.

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فرط التجلط: لمحة محدثة لمقدمي الرعاية الصحية

الملخص:

الخلفية: فرط التجلط، أو الميل التخثر، هو حالة مرضية تتميز بزيادة الميل لتكوين جلطات الدم، مما يؤدي إلى حالات مثل الانصمام الخثاري الوريدي(VTE) ، thrombosisالشرياني، والانصمام الخثاري. تنشأ هذه الحالة نتيجة لخلل في التوازن بين العوامل المؤيدة للتخثر والمضادة للتخثر، التي تتأثر بالعوامل الوراثية والمكتسبة. لقد تطور فهم فرط التجلط بشكل كبير منذ أوائل القرن العشرين، مع الاكتشافات الرئيسية مثل متلازمة الأجسام المضادة للفوسفوليبيد، طفرة العامل الخامس لايدن، ونقص البروتينات C و S ، مما ساهم في تحسين التشخيص والعلاج.

الهدف: يهدف هذا المقال إلى تقديم لمحة محدثة لمقدمي الرعاية الصحية حول فرط التجلط، بما في ذلك أسبابه، علم الوبائيات، الفيزيولوجيا المرضية، أساليب التشخيص، واستراتيجيات العلاج، بهدف تعزيز الوقاية وعلاج الاضطرابات التخثرية.

الطرق: يتضمن المراجعة تلخيص الأدبيات الحالية حول فرط التجلط، مع التركيز على التفاعل بين العوامل الوراثية والبيئية، ودور مثلث فيرشو في التجلط، والأهمية السريرية للاضطرابات التخثرية المختلفة. يتم مناقشة أدوات التشخيص، نماذج تقييم المخاطر، وخيارات العلاج، بما في ذلك العلاج بمضادات التخثر.

النتائج: تتأثر اضطرابات فرط التجلط بالتحورات الوراثية) مثل طفرة العامل الخامس لايدن، وطفرة البروثرومبين (G20210A والحالات المكتسبة (مثل السرطان، الالتهاب، الحمل). كما يتم تعديل خطر التجلط بواسطة عوامل مثل العمر، نمط الحياة، والأمراض المصاحبة. تشمل أساليب التشخيص فحص الميل للتخثر وأدوات تصنيف المخاطر، بينما يشمل العلاج بمضادات التخثر الذي يتم تخصيصه وفقًا للملف الفردي للمريض.

الخلاصة: فرط التجلط هو حالة متعددة العوامل تتطلب فهمًا شاملاً لأسبابه وعوامل خطره. يعد التشخيص المبكر، تصنيف المخاطر، والعلاج الشخصي أمرًا أساسيًا للحد من الأمراض والوفيات المرتبطة بالاضطرابات التخثرية. يجب أن تركز الأبحاث المستقبلية على العلاجات الجديدة ونماذج التنبؤ بالمخاطر المحسنة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: فرط التجلط، الميل للتخثر، الانصمام الخثاري الوريدي(VTE) ، طفرة العامل الخامس لايدن، العلاج بمضادات التخثر، مثلث فيرشو، التجلط، تصنيف المخاطر.