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Effect of tributyltin on mammalian endothelial cell integrity

This is the final peer-reviewed author's accepted manuscript (postprint) of the following publication:

*Published Version:*

Effect of tributyltin on mammalian endothelial cell integrity / Botelho, G; Bernardini, C.; Zannoni, A.; Ventrella, V.; Bacci, M.L.; Forni, M.. - In: COMPARATIVE BIOCHEMISTRY AND PHYSIOLOGY. C. TOXICOLOGY & PHARMACOLOGY. - ISSN 1532-0456. - STAMPA. - 176-177:(2015), pp. 79-86.  
[10.1016/j.cbpc.2015.07.012]

*Availability:*

This version is available at: <https://hdl.handle.net/11585/525483> since: 2015-12-18

*Published:*

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.cbpc.2015.07.012>

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This is the final peer-reviewed accepted manuscript of:

G. Botelho, C. Bernardini, A. Zannoni, V. Ventrella, M.L. Bacci, M. Forni, *Effect of tributyltin on mammalian endothelial cell integrity*, Comparative Biochemistry and Physiology Part C: Toxicology & Pharmacology, Volumes 176–177, 2015, Pages 79-86, ISSN 1532-0456

The final published version is available online at:

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cbpc.2015.07.012>

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1 REVIEW

2 EFFECT OF TRIBUTYL TIN ON MAMMALIAN ENDOTHELIAL CELL INTEGRITY

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25

26 **Abstract**

27

28 Tributyltin (TBT), is a man-made pollutants, known to accumulate along the food chain, acting as  
29 an endocrine disruptor in marine organisms, with toxic and adverse effects in many tissues  
30 including vascular system. Based on the absence of specific studies of TBT effects on endothelial  
31 cells, we aimed to evaluate the toxicity of TBT on primary culture of porcine aortic endothelial cells  
32 (pAECs), being pig an excellent model to study human cardiovascular disease. pAECs were  
33 exposed for 24h to TBT (100, 250, 500, 750 and 1000nM) showing a dose dependent decrease in  
34 cell viability through both apoptosis and necrosis. Moreover the ability of TBT (100 and 500nM) to  
35 influence endothelial gene expression was investigated at 1, 7 and 15h of treatment. Gene  
36 expression of tight junction molecules, occludin (OCLN) and tight junction protein-1 (ZO-1) was  
37 reduced while monocyte adhesion and adhesion molecules ICAM-1 and VCAM-1 (intercellular  
38 adhesion molecule-1 and vascular cell adhesion molecule-1) levels increased significantly.at 1  
39 hour. IL-6 and estrogen receptors 1 and 2 (ESR-1 and ESR-2) mRNAs, after a transient decrease,  
40 reached the maximum levels after 15h of exposure. These findings indicate that TBT deeply alter  
41 endothelial profile, disrupting their structure and interfering with their ability to interact with  
42 molecules and other cells.

43

44 **Keywords:** adhesion molecules, endothelial cells, estrogen receptors, inflammation, tight  
45 junctions, Tributyltin

46

47 **Abbreviations:** porcine Aortic endothelial Cells (pAECs), tributyltin (TBT), occludin (OCLN), tight  
48 junction protein-1 (ZO-1) intercellular adhesion molecule-1 (ICAM-1) vascular cell adhesion  
49 molecule-1 (VCAM-1), interleukin-6 (IL-6) , estrogen receptors 1 and 2 (ESR-1 and ESR-2)

50

51

52

## 53 **1 Introduction**

54

55 Among man-made pollutants, known to accumulate along the food chain, organotins, and  
56 mainly trisubstituted tin compounds, are especially dangerous, due to their wide industrial  
57 exploitation as polyvinyl chloride stabilizers, catalysts, pesticides and biocides in antifouling paints.

58 Tributyltin (TBT) interact by both covalent and non-covalent bonds with biomolecules and  
59 membrane structures and is considered among the most toxic substances ever deliberately  
60 introduced into environment (Pagliarani et al. 2013).

61 In spite of bans of TBT use (IMO 2001), the residue in marine environment is still an  
62 important concern (Horiguchi, 2012) due to its environmental persistence (Hoch, 2001; Fent et al,  
63 2004). The contamination of aquatic environments is especially harmful. Bioaccumulation in  
64 tissues of exposed species (Frouin et al., 2010) leads to contamination of seafoods (Ma et al.  
65 2011) and in turn, mainly through the food chain, of terrestrial species including human (Kannan et  
66 al., 1999; Takahashi et al., 1999).

67 TBT exerts a toxic effect acting as a classical endocrine disruptor for marine organisms  
68 causing imposex in gastropod mollusks (Gallo and Tosti, 2013). TBT shows also toxic and adverse  
69 effects in many kinds of cells and tissues of a variety of species, including mammalian (Ohshima et  
70 al., 2005) in which affects endocrine system through different pathway. Organotins are potent  
71 inhibitors of  $11\beta$ -hydroxysteroid dehydrogenase type-2 ( $11\beta$ -HSD2) (Atanasov et al., 2005) and  
72 shows proadipogenic activity in some cell lineages like human and mouse multipotent stromal stem  
73 cells (Kirchner et al. 2010; Li et al., 2011; Penza et al., 2011).

74 Different cell types have depicted dissimilar levels of tolerance to TBT, resulting in a  
75 diversity of effects and in specific toxic concentrations for every cell lineage. In a cultured human  
76 granulosa-like tumor cell line, Saitoh et al. (2001) found a toxic TBT concentration of 1000 ng/mL,  
77 causing cell death within 24h, while 200 ng/mL induced apoptosis of the cells. In neurons  
78 continuously exposed to TBT for 3 days, Yamada et al. (2010) observed a TBT-induced death at  
79 30 nM in 4-6 days cultures and at 50 nM in 14-16 days cultures, which means that older neurons

80 are more resistant to TBT toxicity. Significant loss of viability was observed in neuroblastoma cells  
81 incubated for 24h with doses of TBT ranging from 250 nM onward, with a linearity found between  
82 250 nM and 2  $\mu$ M (Ferreira et al., 2013) and in a Sertoli-germ cell co-culture incubated for 6h with  
83 a minimum dose of 300 nM (Mitra et al., 2013a).

84 The information on human exposure to butyltin compounds is limited; some studies found  
85 TBT, DBT(Dibutyltin), and MBT (Monobutyltin) levels in human tissues in the range of 3-100 nM  
86 (Kannan et al., 1999; Takahashi et al., 1999). Butyltin compounds were already found in human  
87 blood in concentrations ranging between 64 and 155 ng/mL (Whalen et al., 1999), in particular TBT  
88 have been found up to 261 nM. This variability could be related to human diet, food habits, gender  
89 and physiological stage which should be taken into account; controlled trial in animal models could  
90 overcome this problem.

91 Recently, very interesting studies, using rodent model, correlated TBT to cardiovascular  
92 disorders impairing the coronary vascular reactivity response to estradiol and producing endothelial  
93 denudation in isolated rat heart (Dos Santos et al., 2012) and demonstrated TBT ability to reduce  
94 vasoconstrictor response in isolated aortic rings of female rats (Rodrigues et al., 2014).

95 Among cellular components of vasculature, the endothelium is especially susceptible to  
96 plasma toxicants because it is structurally arranged in a single layer of cells that first come into  
97 contact with blood vessel contents. Further, injuries to endothelial cells are implicated in the  
98 pathophysiology of several diseases (Yamada et al., 2011) and in particular in the cardiovascular  
99 ones (Mordi and Tzemos, 2014).

100 Based on the recent demonstration that TBT can influence vascular system and on the  
101 absence of specific studies of TBT effects on endothelial cells, we aimed to evaluate the toxicity of  
102 TBT on mammalian endothelial cells, using primary cultures of porcine Aortic Endothelial Cells  
103 (pAECs), being swine an excellent animal model in the field of cardiovascular research (Forni et  
104 al., 2005; Vilahur et al., 2011; Zaragoza et al., 2011; Zannoni et al., 2012; Gessaroli et al., 2012).  
105 In addition, we aimed to investigate the ability of TBT to influence gene expression of markers  
106 involved in structure and function maintenance and in response to injuries of endothelial cells., in

107 and in estrogen sensitivity. Finally we evaluate the alteration of endothelial function induced by  
108 TBT through monocytes adhesion assay.

109

110

## 111 **2 Materials and methods**

112

### 113 2.1 Chemicals and reagents

114 Human endothelial SFM medium, Heat inactivated FBS (fetal bovine serum) and Fungizone were  
115 purchased from Gibco-Life technologies. Trypsin-EDTA solution 1X, Dimethyl sulphoxide (DMSO)  
116 and tributyltin chloride (TBT) were from Sigma-Aldrich and Dulbecco's phosphate buffered saline  
117 (DPBS) from EuroClone. AlexaFluor 488 annexin/dead cell apoptosis kit (Molecular Probes,  
118 Eugene, USA Invitrogen) and CytoTox 96 Non-radioactive Cytotoxicity Assay (Promega. Promega  
119 Corporation 2800 Woods Hollow Road Madison, WI 53711 USA) were used. NucleoSpin RNA kit  
120 (Macherey-Nagel GmbH & Co. KG Postfach 10 13 52 D-52313 Düren Germany) was used for  
121 RNA isolation and IScript cDNA synthesis kit, IQ Supermix and IQ SyBR Green Supermix.(Bio-Rad  
122 Laboratories Inc., Hercules, CA, USA) were used for cDNA synthesis and RT-PCR analysis.

123

### 124 2.2 Cell culture

125 pAECs were isolated and maintained as previously described by Bernardini and colleagues (2005)  
126 and used from the third to the sixth passage. The first seeding after thawing was always performed  
127 in T-25 tissue culture flasks ( $3 \times 10^5$  cells/flask) (T25-Falcon, Beckton-Dickinson, Franklin Lakes, NJ,  
128 USA) and successive experiments were conducted in 24-well (qPCR analysis and monocyte  
129 adhesion assay) or 96-well assay plates (cell viability) (Falcon Beckton-Dickinson) with confluent  
130 cultures. Cells were cultured in Human endothelial SFM medium, added with FBS (5%) and  
131 antimicrobial/antimycotic solution (1x Gibco-Life technologies code 15240-062) at 38.5°C. The  
132 tributyltin chloride was diluted in DMSO until a 5mM solution and therefore in culture medium to  
133 obtain desired concentrations for cell exposure.

134

### 135 2.3 Cell Viability

136 The ability of TBT to induce cytotoxicity was evaluated by the CytoTox 96 Non-Radioactive  
137 Cytotoxicity Assay (Promega BioSciences LLC San Luis Obispo, CA, USA) that quantitatively  
138 measures lactate dehydrogenase (LDH), a stable cytosolic enzyme that is released upon cell lysis.

139 Confluent pAECs were incubated for 24h in a 96 well plate with TBT (0, 100, 250, 500, 750,  
140 1000 nM) and the supernatant was collected to be analysed. The maximum LDH activity was  
141 assessed by lysing cells, collecting the resulting medium and processing it as other samples.  
142 Briefly, supernatant was incubated with a reconstructed substrate mix for 30 min at room  
143 temperature, protected from light. Then, a stop solution was added and the absorbance was  
144 recorded at 490 nm. Cytotoxicity of TBT was calculated according to the equation:

145  $\% \text{ Cytotoxicity} = \text{Experimental LDH release (OD 490)} / \text{Maximum LDH release (OD 490)}$ .

146 To determine the ability of TBT to induce apoptosis or necrosis the Annexin V binding  
147 assay was employed. This assay detect phosphatidilserine (PS) externalization on the plasma  
148 membrane.

149 In viable cells PS is located on the cytoplasmic surface of the cell membrane. However during the  
150 early stage of apoptosis, PS is translocated from the inner to the outer leaflet of the plasma  
151 membrane.

152 Confluent pAECs cultures were incubated in a 24 well plate with increasing doses TBT and  
153 the Annexin V / PI binding assay (Alexa Fluor® 488, Life Technologies) was used.

154 Cells were harvested, placed in eppendorf tubes, centrifuged at 500 x g for 10 min and  
155 resuspended in 100 µL of Annexin binding buffer. Annexin V-FITC (5µL) and Propidium Iodide (1  
156 µL) were added to cell suspension. After incubation, the cells were analyzed with a flow cytometer  
157 (FACSAria; BD Biosciences) by collecting at least 10<sup>4</sup> events.

158

### 159 2.4 RNA isolation and quantitative real time PCR (qPCR)



160 To determine the ability of TBT to influence endothelial gene expression, confluent pAECs were  
161 incubated for different time (1, 7, 15 hours) with different doses of TBT (0, 100 or 500nM).  
162 Total RNA was isolated using the NucleoSpin®RNA Kit (Macherey-Nagel GmbH & Co. KG,  
163 Germany), and one µg of total high quality RNA ( $A_{260}/A_{280}$  ratio above 2.0) was reverse-transcribed  
164 to cDNA using the iScript cDNA Synthesis Kit (Bio-RAD Laboratories Inc., California, USA) in a  
165 final volume of 20 µL. Swine primers were designed using Beacon Designer 2.07 (Premier Biosoft  
166 International, Palo Alto, CA, USA) for each studied gene: estrogen receptor 1 and 2 (ER-1; ER-2);  
167 tight junction proteins: occludin (OCLN) and tight junction protein-1 (ZO-1); adhesion molecules:  
168 vascular cell adhesion molecule-1 (VCAM-1) and intercellular adhesion molecule-1 (ICAM-1);  
169 cytokine: interleukine-6 (IL-6). Moreover, primers for the following reference genes glyceraldehyde-  
170 3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH),  $\beta$ -actin and Hypoxanthine-guanine  
171 phosphoribosyltransferase (HPRT-), were designed in order to evaluate the most suitable using  
172 BestKeeper Software (Pfaffl et al., 2004) for qPCR normalization. Primer sequences, expected  
173 PCR product lengths and accession numbers in the NCBI database are shown in Table 1.  
174 Quantitative real-time PCR was performed to evaluate gene expression profiles in iCycler (Bio-  
175 RAD) using SYBR green I detection system. The amplification reaction (25 µL) contained 12.5 µL  
176 of IQ SYBER Green Bio-RAD Supermix (Bio-RAD), 1 µL of each forward and reverse primer (5  
177 µM), 2.5 µL cDNA and 8 µL of water. All samples were performed in duplicate and controls lacking  
178 cDNA template were included to determine the specificity of target amplification. The real-time  
179 program included an initial denaturation for 1min 30s at 95°C, 40 cycles of 95°C for 15s, and 60°C  
180 for 30s, followed by a melting step with ramping from 55°C to 95°C at a rate of 0.5°C/10s.  
181 Specificity of the amplified PCR products was confirmed by melting curve analyses and agarose  
182 gel electrophoresis. The expression level of interest genes was calculated as fold of increase using  
183  $2^{-\Delta\Delta CT}$  method (Livak and Schmittgen, 2001) in relation to pAECs cultured under standard  
184 conditions (control).

185 2.5 Monocytes adhesion assay

186 Separation of peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMC) was performed by Lympholyte-H  
187 (Cedarlane, Burlington, NC, USA) following the instruction. PBMC were washed twice with PBS,  
188 suspended in DMEM supplemented with 10% FBS and placed on a Petri dish for 1h at 38.5°C in a  
189 humidified 5% CO<sub>2</sub> atmosphere to allow cells adhesion. Then, the culture medium containing non-  
190 adherent cells was removed and medium was replaced. After 48h of culture, cells were detached  
191 using a scraper and suspended in DMEM supplemented with 10% FBS (Cutini et al., 2012).

192 Monocytes adhesion assay was performed according to Lim et al. (2011). pAECs were treated with  
193 TBT 0, 100 or 500 nM for 1h. Fresh culture medium containing 1.5x10<sup>4</sup> PBMC was added in each  
194 well and incubated for 2h at 38.5°C in a humidified 5% CO<sub>2</sub>. Unbound cells were removed by  
195 washing with PBS. PBMC adhering to pAEC layer were counted in 5 randomly selected fields for  
196 each well.

197

## 198 2.6 Statistical analysis

199 All the data were analysed with the Shapiro-Wilk test, to assess whether they are modelled by a  
200 normal distribution, and with the Levene test, to assess whether the variances are comparable.

201 Normal distribution of data and homoscedasticity were assumed, with *p* value > 0.05. Data  
202 were analyzed through Students *t*-test comparing treatments in relation to the control. Statistical  
203 analysis was carried out by using R software (<http://www.R-project.org> )

204

205

## 206 3 Results

207

### 208 3.1 Effect of TBT on cell viability

209 pAECs exposed to TBT lost gradually their typical morphology of continuous monolayer and an  
210 increasing number of detached cells appeared related to the increase of TBT dose (Fig. 1A). The  
211 loss of cells viability is demonstrated by LDH release: TBT induced significant decrease of cell  
212 viability from the dose of 250nM (Fig 1B). The flow cytometric data showed that TBT is capable to

213 induce both apoptosis and necrosis (Fig 1C), even if apoptosis was prevalent at lower doses (data  
214 not shown).

215

### 216 3.2 Effect of TBT on gene expression

217 The mRNA expression stability of the commonly used reference gene (GAPDH, HPRT,  $\beta$ -Actin)  
218 revealed that  $\beta$ -actin expression was reduced after TBT exposure (data not shown). Therefore,  
219 GAPDH and HPRT geometric mean value of Ct was used for normalization of qPCR data.

220 Both tight junction molecules OCLN and ZO-1 were lower in pAECs treated respect to  
221 pAECs under standard culture conditions starting from 7h of exposure at 500 nM TBT (Figure 2 B;  
222 D); moreover ZO-1 expression showed significant decrease also at low dose (Fig. 2 C). The  
223 adhesion molecules, VCAM-1 and ICAM-1 showed a significant transient increase at 1 hour at both  
224 doses, followed by a decrease (Fig. 3).

225 IL-6 mRNA was transiently reduced at early times for both TBT doses. After 15h of exposure at  
226 TBT 500 nM the IL-6 expression was significantly increased (Figure 4).

227 The transcript of both estrogen receptors was significantly decreased at both doses after 1  
228 and 7 hours, then, at 15 hours, both receptors increased even if only ER-1 was significantly  
229 increased with TBT 500 nM (Fig. 5).

230

### 231 3.3 Effect of TBT on monocyte adhesion

232 Increased monocyte adhesion was observed after TBT treatment the monocyte adhesion  
233 assay (Fig 6), As shown in Fig 6C the TBT treatment significantly increased monocyte adhesion

234

235

## 236 **4 Discussion**

237 Among different cellular types, the endothelium, uniquely positioned at the interface  
238 between the vessel wall and flowing blood, can be a relevant target for TBT toxic action. The  
239 endothelial layer, in fact, regulates multiple functions such as maintenance of normal vascular

240 tone, modulation of coagulation, and immune responses (Maney et al., 2011) and may contribute  
241 to vascular disorders (Aki et al., 2008). Therefore, being endothelial cells directly exposed to the  
242 TBT accumulated in the bloodstream as a result of biomagnification, it is important to investigate in  
243 which extent they are affected in relation to its principal features.

244 Our study demonstrated that TBT significantly reduced the viability of pAECs, displaying a  
245 consistent dose-response relation. Accordingly, the cell death mechanism, namely apoptosis or  
246 necrosis, is known to depend on the TBT dose and exposure time (Pagliarani et al.,2013). The  
247 cytotoxic effect of TBT on pAECs was observed at 250nM dose, comparable to that one exhibited  
248 in neuroblastoma cell (Ferreira et al., 2013). A great variability in cell susceptibility to TBT is  
249 reported in the literature: mouse neurons exhibit signs of toxicity and death from concentrations of  
250 30 nM (Yamada et al., 2010) while rat or trout hepatocytes begin to die from 2  $\mu$ M (Reader et al.  
251 1999, Jurkiewicz et al., 2004).

252 The lowest dose utilized had no significant effects on cell viability, however, it had an  
253 relevant effect on gene expression, this result is to be considered taking into account that in human  
254 blood TBT was found till 155 ng/mL (Whalen et al., 1999).

255 Expression of genes related to tight junctions (OCLN and ZO-1) was reduced by TBT  
256 exposure confirming the morphological alterations observed and consistently with an increased  
257 number of round and detached cells. Therefore, from a functional point of view, TBT alters the  
258 typical architecture of endothelial cell-cell junctions, consistently with previous reports in various  
259 mammalian cell types such as epithelial cell *in vitro* (Tsukazaki et al., 2004) prostate cells *in vivo*  
260 (Barthelemy et al., 2007) and isolated heart cells *ex vivo*(Dos Santos et al. 2012)

261 Adhesion molecules, responsible for mediating the aggregation of cells to endothelium, are  
262 considered markers of endothelial dysfunction and are used to predict potential vascular risk  
263 (Wiseman et al., 2014). VCAM-1 is constitutively expressed on endothelial cells and mediates  
264 tethering and rolling of lymphocytes and monocytes (Tu et al., 2013). ICAM-1 is constitutively  
265 expressed on the cell surface of endothelial cells and leukocytes and functionally activates  
266 leukocyte-endothelial adhesion and migration. The effect of TBT on ICAM-1 and VCAM-1 gene

267 expression, in our model, followed the same trend with an initial increase and a subsequent  
268 decrease, in accordance with the modification that occurs at the beginning of an endothelium  
269 dysfunction. (Burger et al., 2012). Consistently, as adhesion molecules mediate the adherence of  
270 circulating leukocytes to the vascular endothelium, TBT treatment strongly increased monocytes  
271 adhesion to pAECs.

272 The response of endothelial cells to a toxic injury often involves several changes in  
273 inflammatory mediators. IL-6 is a pleiotropic cytokine, it regulate B cell differentiation,  
274 immunoglobulin production, T cell proliferation and participate to the regulation of inflammatory  
275 responses driving adhesion molecules synthesis in endothelial cells (Fogam 2011). IL-6 is also a  
276 potent proangiogenic cytokine regulating vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) secretion  
277 (Nilsson et al., 2005; Pober et al., 2009); different cell types produce IL-6 among these endothelial  
278 cells are one of the major sources of plasma IL-6 (Tanaka et al., 2011).

279 In our model, TBT was able to reduce IL-6 mRNA expression at early times for both doses.  
280 However TBT 500nM strongly increased the IL-6 mRNA expression after 15h of treatment, in  
281 accordance with data observed by Mitra et al. (2013) in neural dissociated cortical cells and likely  
282 in an effort to induce cell survival through VEGF.

283 The interaction of organotin with nuclear receptors is well known, they augment  
284 adipogenesis via the interaction with PPAR $\gamma$ /RXR $\alpha$  (Grün and Blumberg, 2006) and inhibit  
285 estrogen with a systemic action and/or through repression of ER synthesis (McAllister and Kime,  
286 2003, Delfosse et al., 2014). The expression of the two estrogen genes receptors was altered by  
287 TBT: the expression decreased till 7h at both doses, whilst a strong increase was observed after  
288 15h only with the highest dose. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2013) shown that TBT affected the ERs  
289 gene expression in males rockfish (*Sebastes marmoratus*) leading to an increase or a decrease  
290 depending on the applied concentrations.

291 Further investigations will be necessary to clarify the functional impact of this estrogen  
292 receptor alteration. The multiple effect of estrogens mediated by ERs includes endothelial  
293 proliferation, endothelial apoptosis inhibition, modulation of adhesion molecules with an overall

294 protective effect against cardiovascular diseases (Mendelsohn and Karas 1999; Mosca et al.,  
295 2011). In fact it is well know that the incidence of cardiovascular disease differs significantly  
296 between man and woman being lower in man and in post-menopausal women.

297 Overall the exposure of endothelial cells to TBT induced a wide range of effects all  
298 consistent with endothelial dysfunction that represents the first stage of many vascular diseases. in  
299 In our model TBT induced a shifts from an anti- to a pro-adhesive endothelial phenotype that is the  
300 first step of inflammatory process and an important risk factor for cardiovascular diseases (Aird,  
301 2008). Moreover we demonstrate the alteration of cell-cell junctions that is known to be responsible  
302 in vivo of alteration of permeability exiting in edema and vascular fragility (Dejana et al., 2009).

303 The role of ER in triggering the TBT effects on endothelial cells and, on turn, on  
304 cardiovascular diseases, must be deeply investigated due to the clear protective effect that  
305 estrogens exert on cardiovascular system and the power of TBT to alter steroidogenesis.

306 Therefore, further *in vivo* investigation using pig model will be necessary to understand the  
307 pathological implication of TBT contamination in the development of cardiovascular alterations.

308

309

310

311 **Acknowledgments**

312

313 This work was supported by the essential contribution of “Fondazione del Monte di Bologna e

314 Ravenna”

315

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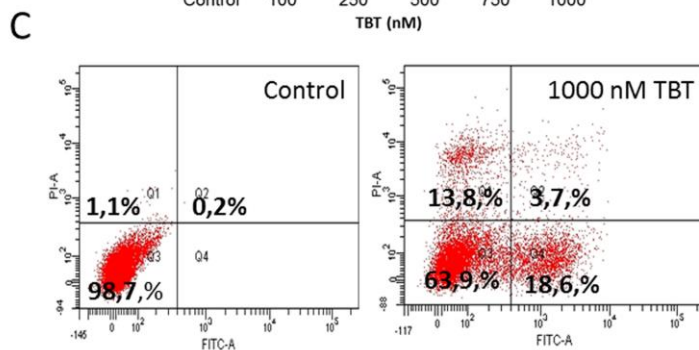
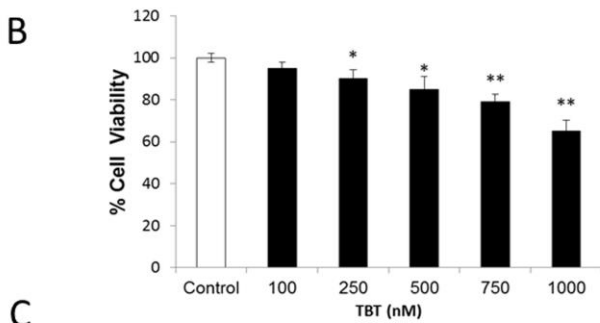
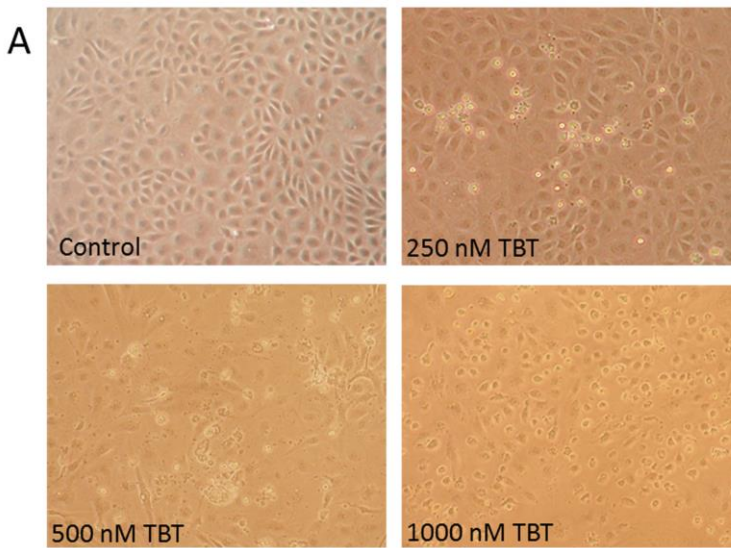
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538 Figure 1. A) Representative images of pAECs morphology under standard culture conditions or in  
 539 the presence of increasing TBT doses; cultures exposed to TBT demonstrated a higher number of  
 540 detached cells. Effect of TBT on cell viability. B) Cytotoxicity assessed by LDH release assay on  
 541 pAECs exposed to increasing TBT concentrations. Data represents mean  $\pm$  S.E. of four  
 542 independent experiments \*\*P < 0.01. C) Annexin V / PI binding assay, representative cytograms  
 543 showing control (left) and pAECs exposed to TBT 1000 nM (right). TBT treatment induced both  
 544 apoptotic and necrotic cells.

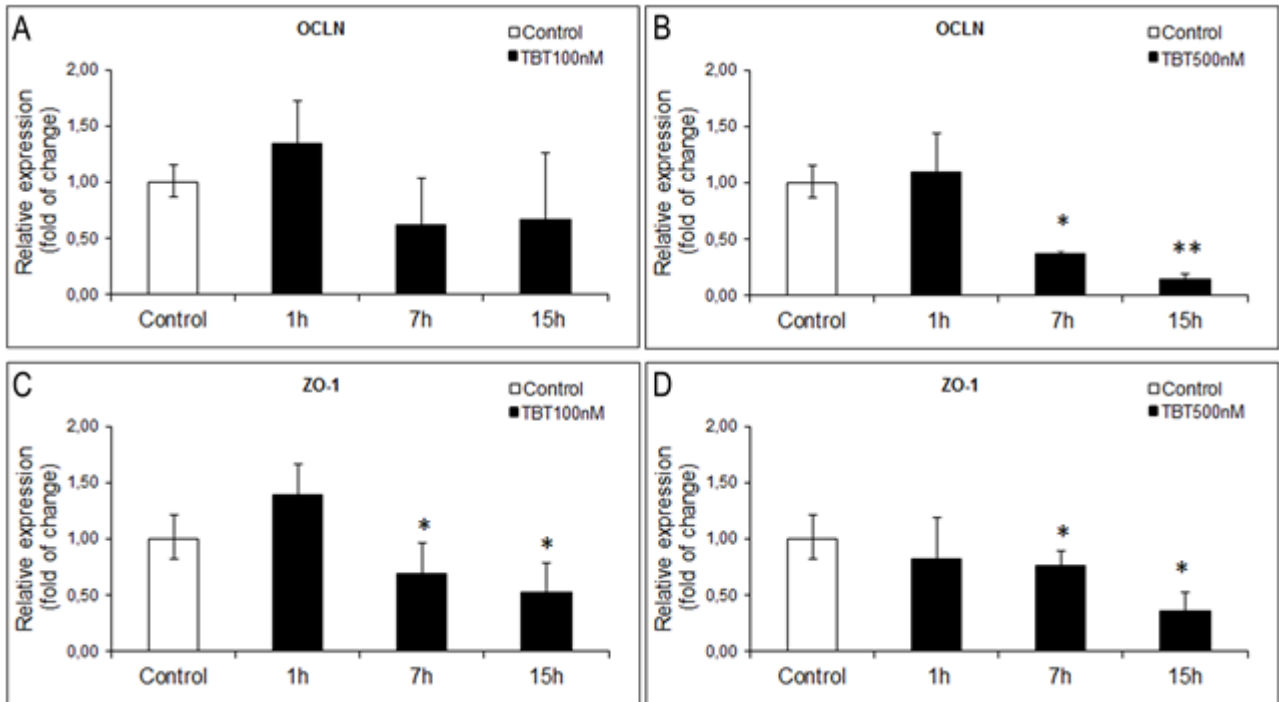


545

546 Figure 2. Relative gene expression of tight junction: OCLN (A,B) and ZO-1(C,D) in pAECs treated  
547 with TBT (100 and 500 nM) at different period (1, 7 and 15 hours). Relative expression was  
548 calculated as fold of change in respect to the control cells ( $2^{-\Delta\Delta Ct}$  method). Error bar represents the  
549 range of relative expression.

550 \*\*P < 0.01 and \*P < 0.05 when compared to control.

551 Occludin (OCLN); Zonula Occludens-1 (ZO-1)

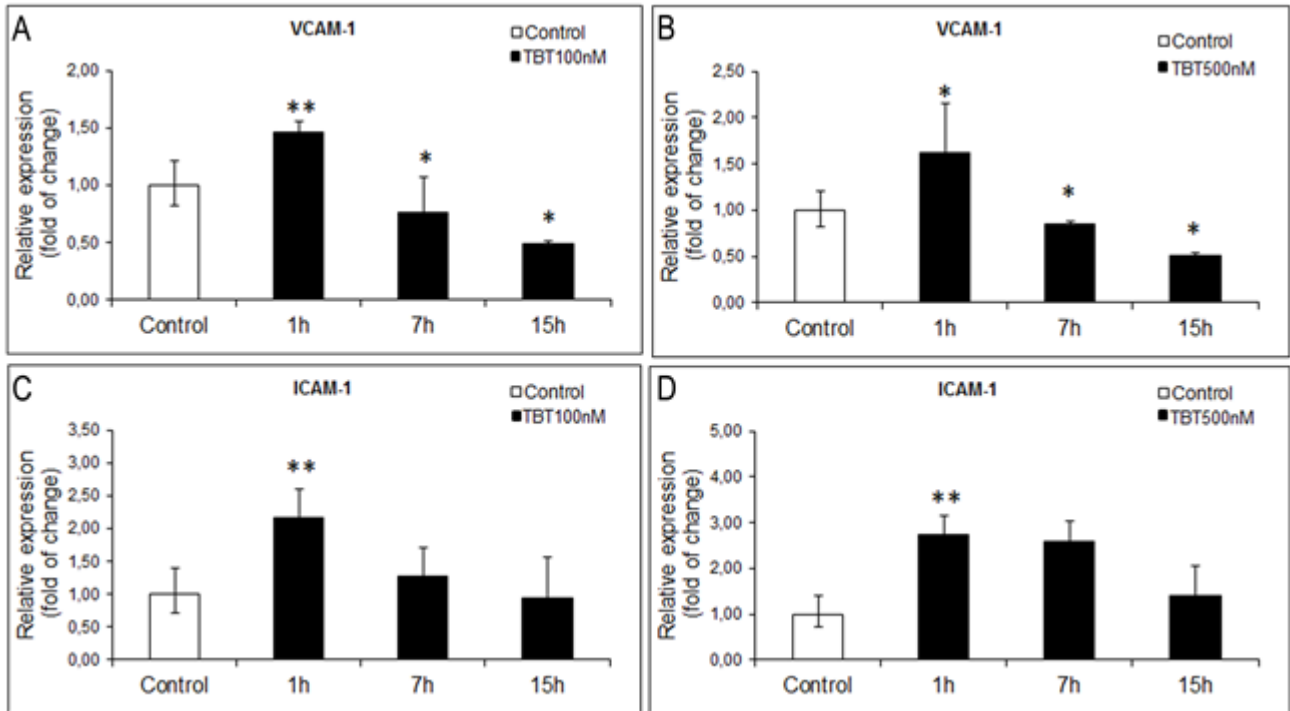


552

553 Figure 3. Effect of TBT exposure on expression levels of genes related to adhesion  
554 molecules:VCAM-1 (A,B), ICAM-1 (C,D) in pAECs treated with TBT (100 and 500 nM) at different  
555 period (1, 7 and 15 hours). Relative expression was calculated as fold of change in respect to the  
556 control cells ( $2^{-\Delta\Delta Ct}$  method). Error bar represents the range of relative expression.

557 \*\*P < 0.01 and \*P < 0.05

558 Intercellular Adhesion Molecule-1 (ICAM-1); Vascular Cell Adhesion Molecule-1 (VCAM-1)

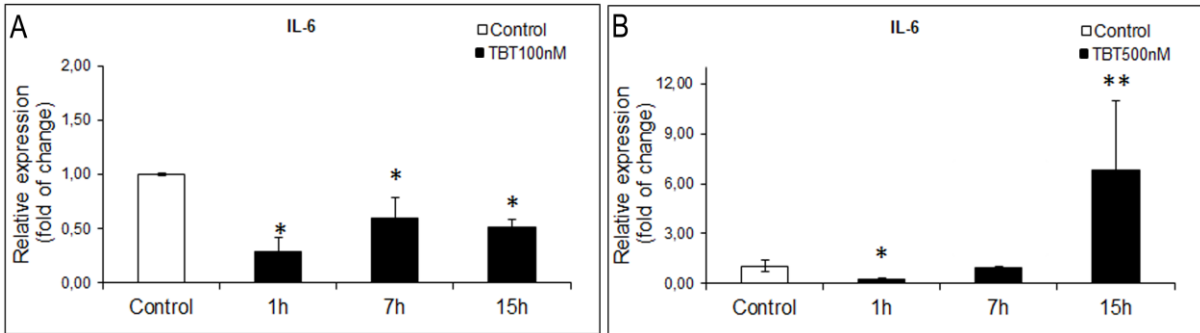


559

560 Figure 4. Effect of TBT exposure on expression levels of IL-6 gene in pAECs. treated with TBT 100  
561 nM (A) and 500 nM (B) at different period (1, 7 and 15 hours). Relative expression was calculated  
562 as fold of change in respect to the control cells ( $2^{-\Delta\Delta Ct}$  method). Error bar represents the range of  
563 relative expression.

564 \*\*P < 0.01 and \*P < 0.05

565 Interleukin 6 (IL-6)

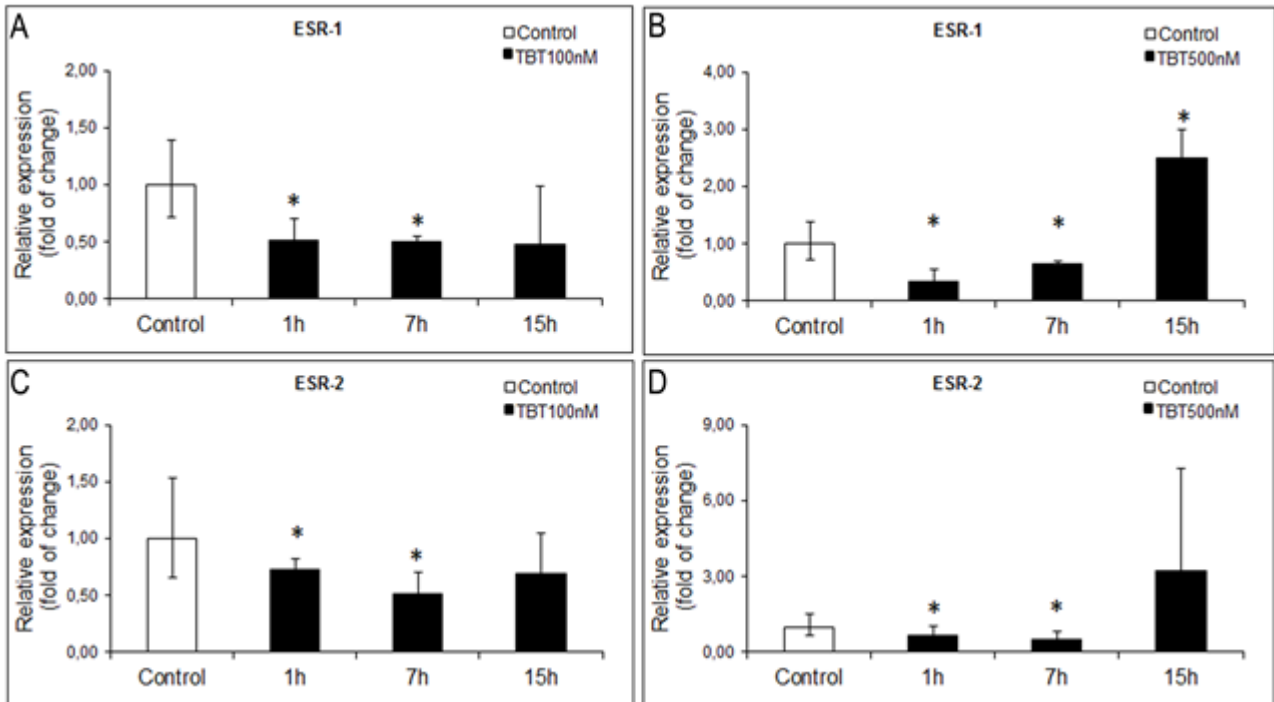


566

567 Figure 5 Effect of TBT exposure on expression levels of ESR-1 and ESR-2 genes in pAECs  
568 treated with TBT (100 and 500 nM) at different period (1, 7 and 15 hours). Relative expression was  
569 calculated as fold of change in respect to the control cells ( $2^{-\Delta\Delta Ct}$  method). Error bar represents the  
570 range of relative expression.

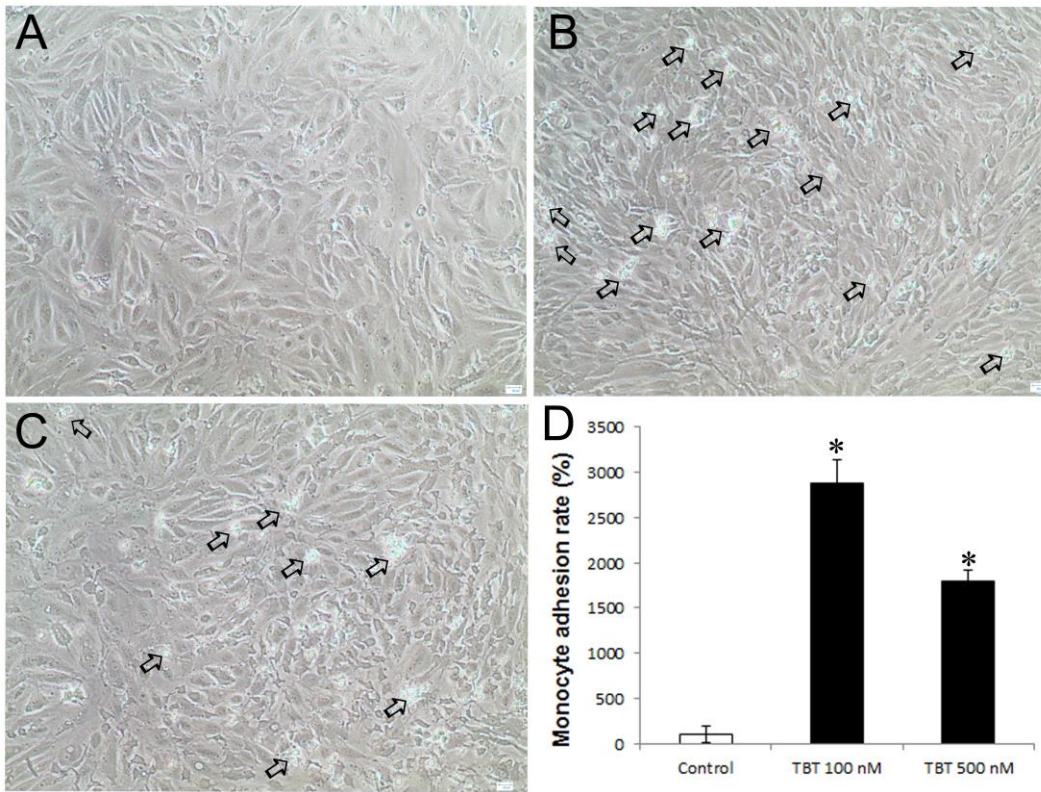
571 \*P< 0.05

572 estrogen receptor 1 (ESR-1); estrogen receptor (ESR-2)



573

574 Figure 6 Effect of TBT on monocyte adhesion. A) pAECs in standard culture condition (control); B,  
575 C) pAECs treated with TBT 100nM or 500 respectively (10X). The arrows indicated adhered  
576 monocytes. D) Bars represent the mean Monocyte adhesion rate represented as the percentage  
577 compared with control group. \*P< 0,01



578

579 Table 1: Sequences, expected PCR product lengths, and accession numbers in the NCBI  
 580 database of the swine primers for indicated genes.

Gene	Sequence (5'-3')	Length (bp)	Acc. No.
Estrogen receptor 1 (ESR-1)	For: CGGAGAGGAGGGAGAATGTTG	142 bp	NM214220
	Rev: GGCTGTTCTTCTTAGTGTTTAAAT		
Estrogen receptor 2 (ESR-2)	For: AACCTTAACTCTCCTGTCTCCTAC	250 bp	NM001001533
	Rev: GCTGGCAATGGATGGCTAAAG		
Occludin (OCLN)	For: ATCAACAAAGGCAACTCT	157 bp	NM001163647.2
	Rev: GCAGCAGCCATGTACTCT		
Zonula Occludens-1 (ZO-1)	For: AGTGCCGCCTCCTGAGTTTG	147 bp	AJ318101
	Rev: CCATCCTCATCTTCATCATCTTCTACAG		
Vascular cell adhesion molecule (VCAM-1)	For: GAGGATGGAAGATTCTGGAATTTACG	172 bp	NM213891
	Rev: ATCACTAGAGCAGGTCATGTTTAC		
Intercellular adhesion molecule (ICAM-1)	For: GCCACTAACAATCACGCATAATG	212 bp	NM213816
	Rev: TGCTCACTGTAGTCCCTTCTG		
Interleukin-6 (IL-6)	For: CTGGCAGAAAACAACCTGAACC	94 bp	NM214399.1
	Rev: TGATTCTCATCAAGCAGGTCTCC		
$\beta$ -Actina (Act)	For: ATCGTGCGGACATCAAGGA	169 bp	AJ312193
	Rev: AGGAAGGAGGGCTGGAAGAG		
GAPDH	For: TGGTGAAGGTCGGAGTGAAC	120 bp	AF017079
	Rev: TGTAGTGGAGGTCAATGAAGGG		
HPRT	For: GGACAGGACTGAACGGCTTG	115 bp	AF143818
	Rev: GTAATCCAGCAGGTCAGCAAAG		

581