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Correlations Between Cardiac Magnetic Resonance and Myocardial Histologic Findings in Fabry Disease

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1 **Correlations between Cardiac Magnetic Resonance and Myocardial Histologic Findings in**
2 **Fabry disease.**

3 Raffaello Ditaranto MD, PhD^{1,2,3,4} †; Ornella Leone MD⁵ †; Luigi Lovato MD⁶; Fabio Niro MD⁶; Giovanna
4 Cenacchi⁷ MD; Valentina Papa⁷ BSc; Chiara Baldovini MD⁵; Manuela Ferracin³ PhD; Irene Salamon³ PhD;
5 Hibba Kurdi^{4,8} BSc, MBBS; Vanda Parisi MD^{1,3}; Irene Capelli MD^{3,9,10}; Andrea Pession MD^{11,12}; Rocco
6 Liguori MD^{13,14}; Luciano Potena MD^{1,2}; Marco Seri MD¹⁵; Sofia Martin Suarez MD¹⁶; Nazzareno Galie`
7 MD^{1,2,3}; James C. Moon MD^{4,8*}; Elena Biagini MD, PhD^{1,2*}.

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9 † Raffaello Ditaranto and Ornella Leone contributed equally to this work.

10 *** Corresponding Authors**

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12 Elena Biagini , MD, PhD
13 Cardiology Unit, Cardiac Thoracic and Vascular Department
14 IRCCS - Azienda Ospedaliero Universitaria - Policlinico di Sant' Orsola
15 Via G. Massarenti 9, 40138
16 Bologna, Italy
17 Tel: +39 051 214483;
18 Fax: 0516363411
19 Email: elena.biagini73@gmail.com
20

21 James C. Moon, MD
22 Barts Heart Centre, St Bartholomew's Hospital,
23 W Smithfield, London EC1A 7BE, United Kingdom.
24 Email: j.moon@ucl.ac.uk
25

26 **Affiliations**

- 27 1. Cardiology Unit, Cardiac Thoracic and Vascular Department, IRCCS Azienda Ospedaliero-Universitaria di Bologna, Italy.
28 2. European Reference Network for Rare, Low Prevalence and Complex Diseases of the Heart-ERN GUARD-Heart.
29 3. Department of Experimental, Diagnostic and Specialty Medicine, University of Bologna.
30 4. Department of Cardiovascular Imaging, Barts Heart Centre, Barts Health NHS Trust, London, UK
31 5. Department of Pathology, Cardiovascular and Cardiac Transplant Pathology Unit. St. Orsola Hospital, IRCCS Azienda
32 Ospedaliero-Universitaria di Bologna, Italy.
33 6. Cardio-thoracic Radiology, St. Orsola Hospital, IRCCS Azienda Ospedaliero-Universitaria di Bologna, Italy.
34 7. Department of Biomedical and Neuromotor Sciences, University of Bologna, Italy.
35 8. Institute of Cardiovascular Science, University College London, London, UK.
36 9. Nephrology, Dialysis and Renal Transplant Unit, St. Orsola Hospital, IRCCS Azienda Ospedaliero-Universitaria di Bologna,
37 Italy.
38 10. ERKNet - The European Rare Kidney Disease Reference Network
39 11. Department of Paediatrics, IRCCS Azienda Ospedaliero-Universitaria di Bologna, Italy
40 12. The European Reference Network on rare endocrine conditions (Endo-ERN).
41 13. Department of Biomedical and Neuromotor Sciences, University of Bologna, Italy.
42 14. IRCCS Istituto delle Scienze Neurologiche di Bologna, Italy.
43 15. Medical Genetics Unit, IRCCS Azienda Ospedaliero-Universitaria di Bologna, Italy
44 16. Division of Cardiac Surgery, IRCCS Azienda Ospedaliero-Universitaria di Bologna, Italy.
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2 Fabry disease (FD) causes myocardial native T1 lowering on cardiac magnetic resonance (CMR),
3 left ventricular hypertrophy (LVH), and late gadolinium enhancement (LGE). LVH is thought to be
4 due to a mix of myocyte lipid storage and compensatory sarcomeric increase and potentially fibrosis
5 – the explanation for why T1 lowering is related to LV mass until overt LVH after which the
6 relationship strength falls. However no histological correlations/validations have been provided.

7 We aimed to understand the histological basis of clinical FD - in particular 3 processes: storage,
8 hypertrophy and fibrosis, by comparing CMR with quantitative histological analysis. Written
9 informed consent was obtained with ethics committee approval. Fifteen FD patients (60% females;
10 49years [IQR39-63]) undergoing standard CMR (1.5T Philips Ingenia: cines-T1/T2 mapping-LGE)
11 and either right ventricular endomyocardial biopsy (n=11) or septal myectomy (n=4). T1/T2 was
12 measured in the basal/midseptum ROI. LVH was defined as maximum wall thickness (MWT)
13 ≥ 12 mm or increased indexed LV mass (LVMI) above sex-specific reference ranges.¹ Myocardial
14 samples were conventionally prepared² with quantitative analysis performed on Haematoxylin-
15 Eosin and Azan-Mallory trichrome (AMT) stained sections (AXIO-ImagerM2-microscope).
16 Myocyte diameter was measured on cross section with the nucleus centrally located (increased
17 when $>15\mu\text{m}$)³. Myocardial fibrosis was recorded on AMT-stained sections as scar-like or
18 interstitial. Storage quantification was semi-automated (ZEISS-ZENBlue software) and reported in
19 two ways: as percentage of vacuolated myocytes (%VM) and percentage vacuolated myocyte area
20 (%VMA: vacuolated area/total myocyte area $\times 100\%$). Electron microscopy (EM) storage
21 quantification and assessment of other features was performed (PhilipsCM100 at 13500 \times , using
22 ImageJ software - NIH Image; Bethesda, USA, for averaged area of autophagolysosomal lipid
23 accumulation). Data were expressed as counts/percentages, median[IQR]. Fisher's exact test used
24 for categorical data comparison. Correlations analyzed using Pearson(r) or Spearman's rho(r_s).
25 Statistical significance was considered for $p < 0.05$. Analyses performed with STATA-V.13.0
26 (Texas, USA).

1 Histologically, using EM, all patients showed autophagolysosomes filled with finger-print/zebra
2 bodies osmiophilic lamellar inclusions. In patients without LVH autophagolysosomes were mainly
3 scattered in the sarcoplasm, whereas in LVH patients extended progressively associating with
4 myofibrillar displacement/loss, mitochondrial hyperplasia/degeneration, and lipofuscin
5 accumulation. The three vacuolization measurement methods were correlated (light microscopy
6 %VMA and %VM $r=0.938$, $p<0.00001$; EM autophagolysosome area and %VMA: $r=0.622$,
7 $p=0.023$). Vacuolization extent varied (%VM: $\leq 30\%$ in 4, intermediate in 2, $\geq 80\%$ in 9; %VMA:
8 $<10\%$ in 4, intermediate in 2, $>20\%$ (max 38%) in 9). Myocyte hypertrophy was common for both
9 vacuolated and non-vacuolated myocytes, with vacuolated myocytes typically larger ($35\mu\text{m}[27-43]$
10 vs $18\mu\text{m}[17-20]$; $p<0.001$), and diameters correlated with vacuolation (vs %VM, $r=0.688$, $p=0.004$;
11 vs %VMA $r=0.618$, $p=0.014$). By histology, fibrosis was almost ubiquitous (14/15 patients – both
12 early and advanced disease): 12(80%) interstitial and 2(16%) scar-like.

13 By CMR, 2(13%) patients had LV dilatation, 3(20%) LVEF $<50\%$ and 10(67%) had LVH (5
14 increased MWT and 5 both increased MWT and LVMi). T1 lowering and LGE were more common
15 in LVH positive patients: 6 had low T1 (with 4 suspected pseudonormal T1) and 7 had infero-lateral
16 LGE (3 also apical-septal). In those without LVH, 1(20%) had low T1 and none had LGE. Septal
17 T2 was high in 1 (59ms), normal in the rest of the cohort (50ms[47-52]).

18 Histology/CMR correlations: in patients with normal LVMi ($n=10$, 5 with normal MWT and 5 with
19 increased MWT), T1 inversely correlated with MWT ($r=-0.680$, $p=0.03$) and LVMi ($r=-0.793$, $p=$
20 0.006), whereas in patients with increased LVMi there was no correlation (MWT $r=0.433$, $p=0.466$;
21 LVMi $r=0.142$, $p=0.820$). Myocytes' diameter, %VM and %VMA positively correlated with LVH
22 (MWT $r=0.645$, $r=0.780$ and $r=0.859$; LVMi $r=0.534$; $r_s=0.823$ and $r_s=0.847$; $p<0.05$ for all). All
23 patients with increased MWT or elevated LVMi had a minimum 45% and 80% of %VM, and 18%
24 and 22% %VMA respectively. The relationship between LVMi and vacuolization was exponential,
25 panel 1.

1 In patients with normal LVMI (n=10), T1 values fell as %VMA increased (r=-0.883, p<0.001),
2 panel 2. This trend was lost in those with increased LVMI, (r=-0.501, p=0.389). Low T1 always had
3 a %VM >45% and %VMA ≥10%. Histological fibrosis correlated with LVH (at least moderate
4 fibrosis more frequent in patient with LVH: 70% vs 0%; p=0.025), but histologic fibrosis was far
5 more common than CMR septal LGE (14/15 vs 3/15).

6 We summarize these data in 5 ways: 1)histological changes precede in-vivo imaging changes:
7 myocyte hypertrophy pre-detectable LVH, storage pre-detectable T1 lowering, and fibrosis pre-
8 detectable LGE; 2)myocyte size increases with storage and LVH; 3)significant storage is necessary
9 for LVH and low T1; 4)the relationships between storage and clinical LVH is non-linear, and 5)T1
10 falls with storage until detectable LVH, when the relationship is lost.

11 Our findings support the hypothesis that LVH in FD is storage related, but other factors are at play.
12 Myocyte hypertrophy precedes clinical hypertrophy. Whilst vacuolization correlates with and is
13 necessary for clinical LVH, apparently unaffected cells with no storage have also hypertrophy
14 suggesting additional mechanisms (pro-hypertrophic paracrine or systemic factors or perhaps
15 compensation for impaired function of regional myocytes with storage). The presence of histologic
16 fibrosis before LGE is common, but all patients had myocyte hypertrophy so the order in which
17 fibrosis and myocyte hypertrophy occur cannot be inferred. Other factors may also be at play:
18 myocyte loss (fewer but larger residual myocytes) remains possible, and there are other less well
19 defined processes histologically – intracellular optical free spaces may not just be storage
20 (autophagolysosomal glycosphingolipid accumulation) but also myofibrinolysis,
21 hyperplastic/degenerate mitochondria, lipofuscines etc. Study limitations are small sample size,
22 histologic sampling bias, single timepoint observations and lack of controls. Nevertheless, these
23 data do validate clinical CMR measurements of LVH, LGE and T1 in FD, highlighting however
24 that all changes occur and are detectable histologically before in-vivo imaging, with potential
25 implications for the timing of drug therapy.

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2 Fabry Disease. *JACC Cardiovascular imaging* 2019;12:1673-1683.

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