

Glycogen Content in Neonatal Diaphragmatic Fibers in Response to Inspiratory Flow Resistive Loads¹

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ABSTRACT. To study intramuscular glycogen use with increased work loads in the neonatal diaphragm, unanesthetized lambs were subjected to severe inspiratory flow resistive loads. With these loads, transdiaphragmatic pressure and arterial CO₂ tension increased several fold above baseline and then remained stable for a period of 10–30 min. This was followed by a decrease in transdiaphragmatic pressure and a marked increase in arterial CO₂ tension with severe acidosis. Intramuscular glycogen content was determined histochemically by the periodic acid-Schiff reaction and was quantified microphotometrically by the fiber types (type I, IIa, or IIc) present in the lamb costal diaphragm. Glycogen content in the control diaphragm was greatest in type IIa fibers and lowest in type I fibers. With severe inspiratory flow resistive loads, the greatest decrease in glycogen content was in type IIa fibers, followed by type IIc and type I fibers. Therefore, our data suggest that in the neonatal lamb subjected to inspiratory flow resistive loads the diaphragm uses intramuscular glycogen during increased work loads. These data do not indicate that the marked depletion of glycogen in the diaphragm is the cause of the decrease in diaphragmatic force. (*Pediatr Res* 31: 354–358, 1992)

Abbreviations

IFR, inspiratory flow resistive
Pdi, transdiaphragmatic pressure
ROD, relative optical density
PaCO₂, arterial CO₂ tension
PaO₂, arterial O₂ tension
PAS, periodic acid-Schiff

It has been shown that the adult diaphragm uses intramuscular glycogen as an energy substrate during increased work of breathing (1–10) and that the magnitude of glycogen use depends on the severity of the work load (1, 3, 5, 8–10). It also depends on fiber type: glycogen depletion is greatest in type II fibers with severe work loads (1, 6, 10). Whereas glycogen use in the adult diaphragm has been relatively well explored, little is known about glycogen use in the newborn diaphragm. Because the proportion

of type II fibers in the neonatal diaphragm is higher than in the adult diaphragm (11–14), dependency of the diaphragm on intramuscular glycogen may be greater in neonates than in adults. However, glycolytic enzyme activity in neonatal skeletal muscles (15–19) and diaphragm (20), as well as enzymes for glycogenolysis in neonatal skeletal muscles (17, 19, 21–25), has been shown to be low, whereas glycogen content in neonatal diaphragm and skeletal muscles has been demonstrated to be higher than (19, 26–29) or similar to that in adult muscles (16). These findings suggest that glycogen use in the neonatal diaphragm may be limited under conditions of increased energy demands. Therefore, the aim of our study was to examine whether intramuscular glycogen in the neonatal diaphragm is used during high energy requirements, focusing on the glycogen use pattern in individual diaphragmatic muscle fiber types.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Six neonatal lambs, 4–14 d of age, were studied. All lambs were housed with their ewes in a facility maintained at 23–25°C on a 12:12-h light-dark cycle. Two d before each experiment, a tracheostomy was performed and a catheter was placed in the descending aorta through a femoral artery with the lamb under general anesthesia (halothane, N₂O, O₂). The tracheostomy was maintained with a No. 9 silicone rubber tracheal T-tube (E. Benson Hood Laboratories, Inc., Pembroke, MA), and the femoral artery catheter was flushed with saline and heparinized daily until the day of the experiment. Arterial blood gas tensions of tracheostomized lambs were measured daily to evaluate whether the tracheostomy affected ventilation. Arterial blood gas tensions of tracheostomized lambs were not different from those of non-tracheostomized lambs. Also, there was no difference between respiratory rate before and after the tracheostomy. Body weight was closely monitored to ensure that the lambs were gaining postoperatively.

Physiologic measurement. On the day of the experiment, a cuffed endotracheal tube (Shiley No. 4, Shiley, Inc., Irvine, CA) was inserted via the tracheostomy site and connected to a non-rebreathing Hans Rudolph valve (Hans Rudolph, Inc., Kansas City, MO). Two thin-walled, 5 cm-long latex balloons were also placed in the stomach and in the middle third of the esophagus to measure gastric pressure (Pga) and esophageal pressure (Pes), respectively. These acute procedures were performed gently and quickly to reduce the stress induced by the intervention. About 30 min of recovery time was given after instrumentation, and recovery was confirmed by return of respiratory pattern and arterial blood gas tensions to preinstrumentation levels. Inspiratory flow rate was measured with a Fleisch No. 1 pneumotachograph (OEM Medical, Inc., Richmond, VA) and a differential air pressure transducer (PM15E; Statham, Cambridge, MA). A biased flow of 5 L/min of oxygen was manually set to zero because all lambs were supplemented with oxygen during exper-

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iments to prevent severe hypoxia and agitation. Pdi (Pdi = Pga - Pes) was measured by connecting the gastric and esophageal catheters to a differential air pressure transducer (Statham PM131TC). Pressure and airflow signals were continuously recorded on a polygraph (Gould TA 2000). Arterial blood gas tensions were also analyzed every 3 to 5 min during the course of the experiment from blood samples obtained from the indwelling aortic catheter. After obtaining baseline measurements, the lamb was exposed to an IFR load. The load, consisting of a narrow-bore plastic tube, was connected to the inspiratory limb of the valve, keeping the expiratory limb free. Each lamb underwent one study with one load. The resistance of the IFR load was calculated at the peak flow rate during the inspiratory cycle. The choice of the load was based on pilot experiments in which a resistance greater than 250 cm H₂O/L/s led to very little increase in Pdi from baseline, and a resistance greater than 500 cm H₂O/L/s was not tolerated. With resistances between 250 and 500 cm H₂O/L/s, after the initial increase in Pdi, a decrease in Pdi from the highest level reached of 20% or more was observed with loads greater than 350 cm H₂O/L/s. No decrease in Pdi was found with the lesser loads. Therefore, only loads greater than 350 cm H₂O/L/s were used in our studies. The experiments were terminated when Pdi decreased by more than 20% from the highest Pdi reached during loaded breathing. Although blood glucose levels were not monitored, an attempt to minimize the effect of blood glucose level on intramuscular glycogen content was made by allowing all lambs to feed *ad libitum* up to the time of the experiment and by conducting all studies at the same time of day (between 0900 and 1200 h) in a room maintained at 23–25°C.

Preparation for histochemical analysis. All experimental lambs were killed with Euthanasia T61 solution (Hoechst-Roussel Pharmaceuticals, Inc., Somerville, NJ) immediately after terminating the experiment to prevent postexercise glycogen repletion (3, 4, 7). Six additional lambs, aged 2–14 d, served as controls. Tissue samples were obtained from the right or left midcostal area of the diaphragm in the experimental and control lambs. Muscle specimens were frozen in isopentane cooled to its freezing point with liquid nitrogen. Muscle sampling and the freezing processes were completed within 5 min after euthanasia to prevent post-mortem changes in intramuscular glycogen content. Although the degree of muscle contraction during biopsy and freezing procedures was not standardized, the effect of muscle contraction on the histochemical analysis of glycogen content has been shown to be minor (30). Samples were stored in liquid nitrogen until they were sectioned. Serial cross sections, 8 µm thick, were cut in a cryostat (Bright/Hacker Instruments, Inc., Fairfield, NJ) at -20°C and were stained for muscle fiber typing and analysis of intramuscular glycogen content. The variability of section thickness with the cryostat is less than 5%. For the analysis of fiber type proportions, more than 700 fibers from each diaphragm specimen were counted, and the percentage for each fiber type was calculated. Histochemically determined glycogen content was quantified in at least 100 fibers for type I and IIa fibers and in at least 50 fibers from type IIc fibers in every lamb.

Myosin ATPase reaction. Muscle fiber typing was performed using the histochemical myosin ATPase reaction at pH 9.4 after alkaline (pH 9.4) or acid (pH 4.5, pH 4.3) preincubation (31, 32). The preincubation pH values were chosen based on work with sheep muscles (32) and were confirmed in our own laboratory after examining a large range of pH (pH 3.9–10.9). This allowed differentiation of fibers into type I, IIa, IIb, and IIc. With the myosin ATPase reaction after alkaline preincubation, type I and type II fibers showed low and high staining density, respectively. With acid preincubation at pH 4.3, staining density of all type I fibers and the majority of the type II fibers was reversed. Some type II fibers maintained moderate or high staining density after acid preincubation, and these were classified as type IIc. When preincubation pH was increased to 4.5, staining density

of type II fibers with acid reversal at pH 4.3 remained light and, therefore, these fibers were classified as type IIa (32).

PAS. Intramuscular glycogen content was determined with the PAS reaction (31, 33). The optimal staining conditions for sheep muscle have been studied in our laboratory (1). Based on this study, the stain was performed by fixing in Carnoy's solution for 15 min and incubating in periodic acid for 10 min and in fresh Schiff's reagent (Sigma Chemical Co., St. Louis, MO) for 15 min at room temperature (21–23°C). To eliminate the variability in staining technique, sections from control and experimental muscles were stained together. In addition, a section from the same control animal was included with each staining procedure as a standard and the same glycogen content in these standard sections was confirmed. The PAS staining density was quantified as ROD using an image processing system.

Image processing system. The image processing system consisted of a high-resolution charged coupled diode video camera (VSP SC-505, VSP Labs Inc., Ann Arbor, MI) attached to a light microscope (Leitz Dialux 20, Leitz Wetzlar, Germany) and a video monitor (Sony PVM 1271Q, Sony Corporation, Japan). The video camera processes 512-line images at 1 MHz with 100% geometric accuracy. The camera was interfaced with an image processing system that was incorporated into a unix-based multiprocessor super-microcomputer (Masscomp 533; Masscomp, Westford, MA) for digitizing, storing, and analyzing the images. The system was routinely calibrated at 0 and 100% transmitted light. OD measurements with this system are linear over the range of 0.04 to 1.27 as determined with a photographic density step wedge. Because the camera has very low dark currents and excellent signal-to-noise ratio specifications, measurements with our system were highly reproducible (coefficient of variation 1.2% for five measurements taken at 1-min intervals). Shading correction for the system was not necessary because the coefficient of variation of the OD in a uniformly illuminated image divided into 64 equal areas was less than 3%. The video image was composed of 520 × 480 pixels with eight-bit resolution: at a magnification of ×100, one pixel was equal to a diameter of 0.89 µm. In each image taken, the light transmitted through each pixel within an area delineated by a 13 × 13 pixel (12 × 12 µm) square cursor was measured and averaged by the computer. The square cursor was placed in the center of a muscle fiber and covered most of the cross-sectional area of that muscle fiber. The ROD in the square cursor was then calculated from the transmitted light as $ROD = \log_{10} (\text{background value/light transmitted value})$, with background value = 100% (34). Therefore, a higher ROD indicated greater intramuscular glycogen content. Images were taken at ×100 magnification from randomly selected areas of sections, using a light source of 510 nm wavelength. All images were stored within 24 h after cutting and staining to avoid any variability secondary to fading of staining.

Statistical analysis. Values are expressed as mean ± SD. Comparisons of physiologic measurements (Pdi and arterial blood gas tensions) were made using an unpaired *t* test. Physiologic measurements between baseline and after IFR loads within a group were tested with a paired *t* test. Statistical analysis of ROD among fiber types or among groups was performed using a one-way analysis of variance with repeated measures and post hoc testing (Duncan multiple-range). Results were considered significant if *p* < 0.05.

RESULTS

Time course of Pdi and PaCO₂ during loaded breathing. Figure 1 shows the time course of Pdi and PaCO₂ in one lamb subjected to a severe IFR load. With this load, Pdi increased rapidly and reached its peak level within 10 min. This high level of Pdi was sustained for a limited period of time, after which it began to decrease continuously until the study was terminated. The increase in PaCO₂ was also rapid. In addition, PaCO₂ began to

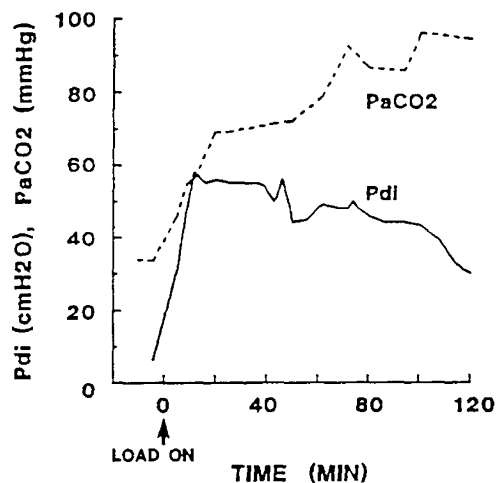


Fig. 1. Time course of Pdi and PaCO₂ in a lamb subjected to a severe IFR load. Note that Pdi and PaCO₂ increased after the load was applied and that PaCO₂ increased further at about the time when Pdi began to decrease.

Table 1. Changes in Pdi and arterial blood gas tensions in lambs exposed to severe IFR loads*

Duration of loaded breathing (min)	82.0 ± 30.7 (50–121)
Resistance of IFR load (cm H ₂ O/L/s)	416.7 ± 54.3 (350–480)
Baseline Pdi (cm H ₂ O)	6.0 ± 2.4 (3.4–10.5)
Highest Pdi at plateau (cm H ₂ O)	55.0 ± 6.0 (47.5–61.0)†
Baseline PaCO ₂ (kPa)	4.8 ± 0.4 (3.1–4.0)
mm Hg	36.3 ± 3.2 (31.8–41.1)
Highest PaCO ₂ during loading (kPa)	12.1 ± 2.8 (5.6–11.4)†
mm Hg	91.1 ± 20.9 (56.8–116.3)†
Baseline arterial pH	7.38 ± 0.04 (7.34–7.43)
Lowest arterial pH during loading	7.00 ± 0.12 (6.83–7.19)†
Baseline PaO ₂ (kPa)	60.2 ± 9.7 (33.9–53.2)
mm Hg	452.5 ± 73.3 (346.0–542.4)
Lowest PaO ₂ during loading (kPa)	21.7 ± 16.7 (5.1–37.7)†
mm Hg	163.2 ± 125.3 (52.0–385.0)†

* Values are expressed as mean ± SD with the range in parentheses.

† $p < 0.005$, loaded breathing compared to baseline value.

increase further at around the time when Pdi began to decrease, reaching about 12.0 kPa (90 mm Hg). This indicated that ventilatory failure occurred. All six lambs studied with severe IFR loads showed the same pattern of Pdi and PaCO₂ (Table 1). The highest Pdi generated with severe IFR loads was nine to 18 times higher than baseline Pdi. At the end of the experiment, Pdi decreased by $28.1 \pm 13.1\%$ from peak Pdi. In two lambs, slow and irregular respiration with large fluctuations in Pdi was observed during the last 10 min of the experiment instead of a continuous decrease in Pdi. Although the mean PaO₂ at the end of a study was lower than baseline PaO₂, in all but one lamb PaO₂ still remained over 11.3 kPa (85 mm Hg), even when a decrease in Pdi and hypercapnea developed. The lamb in whom hypoxia (PaO₂ = 6.9 kPa or 52 mm Hg) was observed at the end of study in spite of oxygen supplementation was a 4-d-old lamb.

Muscle fiber composition in lamb diaphragm. The proportion of each fiber type did not show a correlation with age over the narrow age range examined in our study (2–14 d of age) ($r = 0.17$ for type I, $r = 0.3$ for type IIa, and $r = 0.39$ for type IIc; $p > 0.1$). Thus, fiber type proportions from each lamb were grouped together, and the mean fiber type proportion was cal-

culated. Type I fibers composed $33.4 \pm 2.9\%$, type IIa fibers $61.3 \pm 2.6\%$, and type IIc fibers $5.3 \pm 1.1\%$ of the total fibers. There was no difference in fiber type composition between the abdominal side (type I = $34.0 \pm 2.4\%$, type IIa = $61.1 \pm 2.7\%$, and type IIc = $4.9 \pm 1.1\%$) and the thoracic side (type I = $33.9 \pm 2.4\%$, type IIa = $61.1 \pm 2.3\%$, and type IIc = $5.0 \pm 1.3\%$) of the costal diaphragm ($p > 0.1$).

Pattern of glycogen depletion in each fiber type in diaphragm. Figure 2 shows the results for glycogen content in each diaphragmatic fiber type of control and loaded lambs. The glycogen content in the control diaphragm was highest in type IIa (ROD = 0.94 ± 0.06) followed by type IIc (ROD = 0.72 ± 0.10) and type I (ROD = 0.53 ± 0.07). These ROD values were significantly different among the three fiber types ($p < 0.01$). With severe IFR loads, there was a decrease in ROD in all fiber types (type I = 0.12 ± 0.04 , type IIa = 0.17 ± 0.08 , and type IIc = 0.14 ± 0.09) compared with controls ($p < 0.005$). In addition, the amount of decrease was greatest in type II fibers and least in type I fibers ($p < 0.001$), resulting in similar intramuscular glycogen content among fiber types ($p > 0.1$). To eliminate the possibility that glycogen depletion was related to the surgical procedures performed on the lambs, intramuscular glycogen content in the diaphragm of three instrumented nonloaded lambs was compared with that of noninstrumented lambs. There was no difference in the glycogen content in each of the diaphragmatic fiber types between instrumented (type I = 0.54 ± 0.07 , type IIa = 0.91 ± 0.03 , and type IIc = 0.76 ± 0.15) and noninstrumented (type I = 0.53 ± 0.09 , type IIa = 0.96 ± 0.09 , and type IIc = 0.67 ± 0.06) lambs.

DISCUSSION

Although there have been previous studies that have explored the relation of glycogen use in the diaphragm to increased work loads, our study differs from earlier experiments in several significant ways. This study is, to our knowledge, the first to report glycogen use by the diaphragm of the awake, loaded neonatal animal without the confounding effects of surgery and anesthesia. Most previous studies have examined this issue in the adult (1–10, 35). Recently, Mayock *et al.* (36) investigated glycogen use in 1-mo-old piglets subjected to moderate IFR loads, but their animals were anesthetized. Unlike many studies in which the work of breathing was increased by swimming or treadmill exercise (3–6, 9, 10, 35), the work load in our experiments was directly targeted to the diaphragm by use of IFR loads. Also,

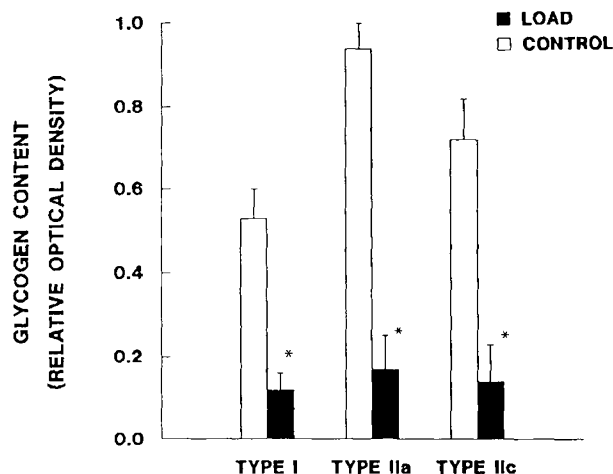


Fig. 2. Mean glycogen content expressed as ROD in the costal diaphragm from control lambs and experimental lambs subjected to severe IFR loads. With these loads, glycogen content decreased in all fiber types, with the decrease being greatest in type IIa fibers, followed by type IIc and type I fibers. *, $p < 0.005$, loaded compared with control for each fiber type.

glycogen content was objectively analyzed in individual fibers by use of a computerized densitometric technique (30). This method has several advantages over previously used methods in which glycogen was measured either biochemically in muscle homogenates (2, 3, 5, 7-9, 35, 36) or by use of a qualitative, subjective rating of the intensity of the staining reaction (1, 6). The first advantage is that glycogen content can be measured in single muscle fibers, thereby allowing the evaluation of the selectivity of glycogen use by metabolically different fiber types. This method also allows the assessment of regional differences in content within a given fiber. Because the distribution of glycogen was homogeneous within the diaphragmatic fibers, we used a cursor size that encompassed the whole fiber (except for a few peripheral regions caused by the square shape of the cursor *versus* the circular or ellipsoid shape of the muscle fiber) and obtained an average content within a fiber. A second advantage is that the measurements are made by a computer using a standardized optical calibration procedure. This eliminates the variability that might be introduced by using a subjective rating system. A third advantage is that the optical measurements of a properly performed PAS reaction correlate well with biochemically determined levels of glycogen (30). Therefore, the data represent a quantitative rather than a qualitative assessment of glycogen content. Finally, because the measurements are made from images of the section rather than from the section itself, there is no variability introduced from potential fading of staining with time as the analysis of a section is being performed, a process that may extend over several hours depending on the number of fibers being analyzed.

One of the main findings in our study is that intramuscular glycogen is consumed in large quantities in the neonatal diaphragm during increased energy requirements. Our results, therefore, refute the hypothesis that there is a major limitation of glycogen use in the neonatal diaphragm. This finding was not expected, inasmuch as previous studies have shown that glycogenolytic and glycolytic enzymes such as glycogen phosphorylase, phosphorylase kinase, lactate dehydrogenase, and phosphofructokinase are low in neonatal skeletal muscles and young rat diaphragm (15-25). This apparent discrepancy could be explained by differences in maturation between species. Developmental changes in glycogenolytic and glycolytic enzyme activities have been studied mainly in rodents, such as the rat, whose muscles are poorly differentiated at birth (37) and are probably less mature than newborn lamb muscles.

The depletion of glycogen in the neonatal lamb diaphragm was found to occur at the time when the diaphragm was unable to maintain force generation with high loads. Because oxidative metabolism and use of other energy substrates were not measured in this study, we cannot conclude that the depletion of intramuscular glycogen induced the decrease in diaphragmatic force. Also, the role of glycogen depletion as a cause for loss of force generating capacity has been questioned (38, 39). Therefore, our results show that intramuscular glycogen is one important energy source for diaphragmatic function, but we do not suggest an association between force loss and glycogen depletion. Interestingly, our finding contrasts with the recent results of Mayock *et al.* (36), who used anesthetized young piglets. Despite a relatively large load that induced about six times the baseline Pdi, no glycogen depletion was observed in Mayock's study. At present, we have no direct explanation for the lack of glycogen use in their study, although it might be related to species difference and anesthesia.

Another important finding in our study is that the pattern of glycogen depletion in the neonatal diaphragm with IFR loads depends on fiber type. Although all fiber types used intramuscular glycogen during loaded breathing, glycogen depletion with severe loads was greater in type IIa than in type I and IIc fibers. This finding suggests that either 1) type IIa fibers in the lamb diaphragm have a greater glycolytic capacity than other fiber types or 2) glycogen in type I fibers was spared because substrates

other than intramuscular glycogen are primarily used for energy. Furthermore, large amounts of glycogen were depleted from type IIa fibers, which in the neonatal diaphragm compose a proportion of total fibers higher than that in the adult diaphragm in several species (11-14) including the sheep (unpublished data from our laboratory). Based on this finding, we speculate that the newborn lamb may be more dependent on intramuscular glycogen as an important energy substrate than the adult, especially when subjected to severe loads.

In summary, we have shown that, in unanesthetized neonatal lambs breathing through IFR loads, glycogen content in the costal diaphragm decreased with loaded breathing. In addition, marked depletion in glycogen content was seen at the time when there was a decrease in diaphragmatic force. The reduction in glycogen content occurred in all fiber types, and the depletion of glycogen with severe IFR loads was greater in type IIa fibers than in other fiber types.

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