# **Chapter 17 Myocardial Metabolic Abnormalities and Cardiac Dysfunction**

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 **Abstract** To sustain contractile function, the myocardium has a very high and continuous demand for ATP, which it generates from a variety of carbon sources, including fatty acids, glucose, ketone bodies, pyruvate, and lactate. In the healthy adult heart, most of the ATP is generated via mitochondrial oxidation of fatty acids (50– 70 %), and the balance between fatty acid oxidation and other forms of ATP production, such as glucose oxidation and glycolysis, is tightly regulated. In fact, dysregulation or infl exibility of myocardial energy metabolism has been linked to a number of major cardiac diseases including myocardial hypertrophy, heart failure, ischemic heart disease, and obesity and diabetes mellitus-associated cardiomyopathy. Deranged cardiac energy metabolism and impaired cardiac energetics have been suggested to contribute to these pathophysiological states, rendering metabolic modulators an attractive option for the management of various forms of heart disease. This chapter summarizes our current understanding of the role of cardiac energy metabolism in the development and progression of heart failure, pressure overload-induced hypertrophy, and obesity-related cardiomyopathy. In addition, potential therapies to restore metabolic balance and efficiency in the heart and ameliorate cardiac dysfunction are outlined.

 **Keywords** Cardiac metabolism • Cardiac energetics • Heart failure • Cardiomyopathy • Hypertrophy • Obesity • Lipotoxicity

# **17.1 Introduction**

To generate sufficient ATP for contractile function, cardiomyocytes transport energy substrates, mainly fatty acids and glucose, from the circulation across the sarcolemmal membrane. Fatty acids are presented to the cardiomyocytes in the form of "free" fatty acids conjugated to serum albumin or triacylglycerol (TAG)-rich

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very-low-density lipoproteins and chylomicrons  $[1, 2]$  $[1, 2]$  $[1, 2]$ . TAGs in lipoproteins are hydrolyzed to fatty acids by lipoprotein lipase in the coronary lumen  $[3, 4]$  $[3, 4]$  $[3, 4]$ . Fatty acids then enter cardiomyocytes mainly via transport proteins or carriers including fatty acid translocase (FAT/CD36), plasma membrane fatty acid-binding protein  $(FABPpm)$ , and fatty acid transport protein  $1/6$   $(FATP1/6)$   $[5–9]$ . Fatty acid carriers can translocate to the sarcolemma to increase fatty acid uptake into cardiomyocytes [\[ 5](#page-10-0) ]. For example, FAT/CD36, which is believed to facilitate approximately 50 % of fatty acid uptake into cardiomyocytes and controls 40–60 % of myocardial fatty acid oxidation in the working mouse heart  $[9-12]$ , can translocate to the sarcolemma following insulin stimulation, activation of AMP-activated protein kinase  $(AMPK)$ , and contraction  $[5]$ . Upon transport across the sarcolemma, fatty acids are subsequently converted to fatty acyl-coenzyme A esters (fatty acyl-CoA) by longchain acyl-CoA synthetases (ACSL) in an ATP-dependent manner  $[1, 13]$ . This metabolic step traps fatty acids within cardiomyocytes and activates them so that

 In order to be transported across the mitochondrial membrane, fatty acyl-CoAs need to be converted to acylcarnitines by carnitine palmitoyltransferase 1 (CPT1) and are then transferred across the inner mitochondrial membrane via carnitine: acylcarnitine translocase, which exchanges carnitine for acylcarnitine [2]. Upon conversion of acylcarnitine back to long-chain acyl-CoA by CPT2 in the mitochondrial matrix, fatty acids enter β-oxidation, which is catalyzed by the sequential enzymatic action of acyl-CoA dehydrogenase, enoyl-CoA hydratase, hydroxyacyl-CoA dehydrogenase, and 3-ketoacyl-CoA thiolase. This shortens the fatty acyl moiety by two carbons in each cycle and produces reducing equivalents in the form of flavin adenine dinucleotide (FADH<sub>2</sub>) and nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide (NADH) [14]. The β-oxidation of unsaturated fatty acids, which represent the majority of fatty acids in circulation that enter the cardiomyocyte, involves additional enzymes, 2,4-dienoyl-CoA reductase and enoyl-CoA isomerase, to convert *cis* double bonds to *trans* double bonds [\[ 15](#page-10-0) ]. It should be noted that saturated and unsaturated fatty acids are oxidized at comparable rates in the rodent and human heart [16, [17](#page-10-0)]. Enzymes involved in β-oxidation are under a high degree of transcriptional control by peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor (PPAR)  $\alpha$  and  $\beta/\delta$ , as well as PPARγ coactivator (PGC) 1α and 1β [18, 19]. The reducing equivalents (NADH and FADH<sub>2</sub>) generated via β-oxidation and subsequent delivery of acetyl-CoA to the tricarboxylic acid cycle are then converted to ATP through oxidative phosphorylation at the inner mitochondrial membrane. Since ATP cannot cross the mitochondrial membrane, creatine kinase transfers the high-energy phosphate bond in ATP to creatine, which is taken up from the circulation via a creatine transporter [20]. This leads to the formation of phosphocreatine and adenosine diphosphate (ADP) [ [21 \]](#page-11-0). Phosphocreatine, which is smaller than ATP, can diffuse from the mitochondria to myofibrils, the contractile apparatus of cardiomyocytes  $[21]$ . The myofibrillar creatine kinase converts phosphocreatine back to ATP to power contractions and the free creatine diffuses back to the mitochondria  $[21]$ . The creatine kinase system functions as an important energy buffer in the myocardium  $[21]$ . When energy demand is higher than energy supply, the phosphocreatine pool decreases to

they can be metabolized  $[13]$ .

maintain ATP levels  $[21]$ . This is an early adaptation to myocardial energy deficiency. Also, under these conditions, ADP levels rise, which can impair a variety of intracellular processes and lead to defective contractile function [21].

 Similar to fatty acids, glucose is transported into the cardiomyocyte via proteins embedded in the sarcolemma. Glucose uptake is mediated mainly by two glucose transporters, Glut1 and Glut4 [22]. Glucose transport via Glut1 is insulin independent and accounts for basal glucose uptake. Glut1 expression is reduced following birth but can increase again in pathophysiological states including cardiac hypertrophy  $[22]$  (Chap. [16](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-15961-4_16)). In contrast to Glut1, the insulin-sensitive glucose transporter Glut4 is abundantly expressed in the adult heart  $[23]$ . Glut4 translocation from storage vesicles to the sarcolemma is stimulated by insulin and by contractions  $[23]$ . Upon uptake into the cell, glucose is phosphorylated by hexokinase, which commits glucose to further metabolism  $[24]$ . Glucose-6-phosphate is then catabolized through glycolysis, and the resulting pyruvate is shuttled into mitochondria, converted to acetyl-CoA, and subjected to oxidation for ATP production. Glucose that is not immediately directed towards glycolysis and mitochondrial oxidation can be converted to glycogen for temporary storage [24]. The following sections outline how energy metabolism is altered in cardiac pathophysiology and highlight potential therapeutic avenues which could be pursued to restore energetic balance in the diseased heart.

### **17.2 Myocardial Energy Starvation in Heart Failure**

 Heart failure is a multifactorial disorder that is fairly common – it affects more than 2 % of people in the United States, and 30–40 % of heart failure patients die within 1 year from the diagnosis [\[ 21](#page-11-0) ]. Between 1979 and 2004, the United States was confronted with a threefold increase in heart failure hospitalizations, with more than 80 % of patients being at least 65 years old [25]. It is projected that the incidence of heart failure will increase in the future as the population continues to age. Despite the various causes of heart failure, which include hypertension, coronary artery disease, cardiomyopathy, and cardiac arrhythmias, impaired energy metabolism appears to be a fundamental characteristic that contributes to the progression of heart failure  $[21, 21]$  $25$  (Fig. 17.1) (Chaps. [1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-15961-4_1) and [3](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-15961-4_3)). This concept is not new as it was first described in 1939 by Herrmann and Decherd that the failing heart is essentially energy-starved [26], meaning that there are not enough energy equivalents (ATP and phosphocreatine) to sustain contractile function in end-stage heart failure. Interestingly, the efficacy of beta-blockers, angiotensin II blockers, or angiotensin- converting enzyme inhibitors in ameliorating heart failure is in part attributed to their effect in reducing cardiac energy demand and improving the metabolic balance  $[21]$  (Chaps. [8](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-15961-4_8) and [18\)](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-15961-4_18).

 The derangement of cardiac energy metabolism in heart failure occurs at three stages – energy substrate utilization (uptake and oxidation), oxidative phosphorylation in mitochondria, and high-energy phosphate (ATP, phosphocreatine) metabolism, as was evidenced in the rodent and human heart [21]. Previous studies have

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 **Fig. 17.1** Metabolic changes in advanced heart failure. Cardiovascular diseases such as hypertension, coronary artery disease, cardiomyopathy, and cardiac arrhythmia can lead to heart failure. In end-stage heart failure, typical metabolic changes are decreased fatty acid utilization, glucose utilization, and overall oxidative metabolism, resulting in impaired energetics. Effects of heart failure on systemic metabolism include insulin resistance, increased catabolism, and altered adipokine secretion, which contribute to the progression of heart failure and further impair myocardial energy metabolism. PCr:ATP is phosphocreatine:adenosine triphosphate

generally shown that while fatty acid utilization is not substantially altered in early stages of heart failure  $[27, 28]$ , it drops substantially in advanced heart failure  $[29]$ (Fig. 17.1 ). Glucose utilization has been reported to increase in early stages of heart failure [30] and decrease along with the development of insulin resistance in advanced heart failure  $[21, 31-33]$  $[21, 31-33]$  $[21, 31-33]$  (Fig. 17.1). Since the systemic metabolic milieu is drastically altered in heart failure with commonly increased circulating fatty acids, glucose, and insulin, and catabolic over activity, these results need to be viewed with caution as it is difficult to distinguish between the inherent impairment of substrate metabolism in the myocardium and metabolic adaptations due to altered substrate availability  $[21, 25]$ . Impaired structure and function of mitochondria are also commonly observed in failing hearts [34, 35], leading to reduced oxidative phosphorylation, oxygen consumption, and ATP/phosphocreatine production.

In addition, the creatine kinase system is substantially altered in heart failure  $[21, 1]$ [36 ,](#page-11-0) [37 \]](#page-11-0), which causes a drastic decline in ATP transfer and ATP starvation of myofibrils. Interestingly, ATP concentrations are sustained in a normal range in earlier stages of heart failure and only decline by approximately 30–40 % in advanced heart failure  $[21, 38-40]$  $[21, 38-40]$  $[21, 38-40]$ . However, the decline in intracellular creatine and phosphocreatine due to impaired creatine transporter function precedes and is greater than the decline in ATP concentrations (30–70 %), representing an early sign of deranged cardiac energetics in heart failure [36, 39, [41](#page-12-0), [42](#page-12-0)]. Hence, phosphocreatineto- ATP ratios are reduced in heart failure and correlate with heart failure classes according to the New York Heart Association  $[43]$  (Fig. 17.1). These changes in high-energy phosphate metabolism drastically limit the energetic reserve of the myocardium. For example, when failing hearts are challenged with high workload (e.g., by stimulation with catecholamines), free ADP increases to concentrations that are double compared to those in the healthy heart  $[44]$ , thereby reducing the contractile reserve [\[ 21](#page-11-0) ]. Given that impaired energy metabolism critically contributes

to heart failure development and/or progression, modulators that improve the energetic reserve of the heart may become attractive options for the treatment of heart failure.

At present, there is no approved therapy available that specifically targets energy metabolism in heart failure [\[ 25](#page-11-0) ]. Experimental metabolic therapies that are aimed at improving metabolic balance and efficiency in the myocardium generally decrease fatty acid utilization and increase glucose oxidation  $[25]$ . For example, the piperazine derivative, trimetazidine, is an experimental drug that selectively inhibits mitochondrial long-chain 3-ketoacyl-CoA thiolase, thereby decreasing fatty acid oxidation and increasing glucose utilization via secondary activation of pyruvate dehydrogenase [45]. Trimetazidine restores coupling between glycolysis and glucose oxidation and leads to ATP production with less demand for oxygen [45]. While the results from clinical trials are promising  $[45-47]$ , more clinical studies are required to demonstrate the efficacy of this drug in ameliorating heart failure and angina (Chap. [22](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-15961-4_22)).

 Heart failure not only affects myocardial energy metabolism but whole body metabolism via endocrine communication of the heart with other organs [25, [48](#page-12-0), [49 \]](#page-12-0). For example, systemic insulin resistance is a characteristic feature of heart failure [48]. It develops in response to neurohormonal stimuli (catecholamines), inflammatory cytokine release, oxidative stress, and tissue hypoperfusion as a consequence of heart failure  $[25, 50]$ . Moreover, insulin resistance appears to predict severity of heart failure and reduced survival  $[25]$ . In addition, resistance to the anabolic hormone insulin, among other factors, leads to an overall catabolic environment that contributes to muscle cachexia in heart failure patients [25, 49]. Overstimulation of adipose tissue lipolysis via increased cate cholamines, inflammatory cytokines, natriuretic peptides, and pressure overload also leads to a rise in circulating fatty acids and changes in adipokine secretion and thereby contributes to the systemic and cardiac metabolic imbalance in heart failure [ [25 ,](#page-11-0) [50 , 51](#page-12-0) ]. Therefore, therapies that target not only cardiac metabolism but whole body metabolism, for those individuals in heart failure, could hold promise in treating this debilitating disease (Chaps. [3](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-15961-4_3) and [18](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-15961-4_18)).

# **17.3 Metabolic Remodeling in Myocardial Hypertrophy**

 Cardiac hypertrophy is an initially adaptive response to cellular stress leading to cardiomyocyte enlargement, increased protein synthesis, re-induction of the socalled fetal gene program, and heightened sarcomeric organization [52, 53]. Chronically, cardiac hypertrophy can become maladaptive and trigger heart failure and malignant arrhythmia due to perturbations of cellular calcium homeostasis and ionic currents [52, 53]. Significant morphological changes following long-term cardiac hypertrophy include increased rates of programmed cell death, fibrosis, and cardiac chamber dilatation [52, [53](#page-12-0)]. Common stressors that lead to hypertrophic remodeling in cardiomyocytes are pressure or volume overload, mutations of

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 **Fig. 17.2** Metabolic changes in pressure overload-induced cardiac hypertrophy. Pressure overload- induced hypertrophy, triggered by hypertension or aortic stenosis, is associated with a decrease in fatty acid oxidation and overall oxidative metabolism and energetics, while anaerobic glucose metabolism (glycolysis) is increased. Glycolysis is uncoupled from glucose oxidation, and excess pyruvate is shuttled towards alternative pathways, such as anaplerosis. The decrease in fatty acid utilization is mostly due to the reactivation of the fetal gene program and downregulation of transcriptional regulators of fatty acid oxidation and mitochondrial biogenesis and function. AMPK activation has been suggested to underlie the increase in glucose uptake and glycolysis in cardiac hypertrophy

sarcomeric or other proteins, and loss of contractile mass from prior infarction [52, [53](#page-12-0)]. The following section describes metabolic changes following pressure overload hypertrophy as this type of hypertrophy is increasingly common due to the increasing prevalence of hypertension (Chap. [16](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-15961-4_16)).

 One of the metabolic hallmarks of pressure overload-induced cardiac hypertrophy is that cardiac energy metabolism reverts to a fetal-like profile, which is due to a decrease in fatty acid oxidation and increased reliance on carbohydrates for ATP production with an overall decrease in oxidative metabolism  $[54, 55]$  $[54, 55]$  $[54, 55]$  (Fig. 17.2). This substrate shift has been suggested to contribute to the progression of cardiac hypertrophy to overt heart failure  $[56]$ , although it still remains elusive to what extent metabolic remodeling influences the development and progression of pressure overload-induced cardiac hypertrophy. The reduction in fatty acid oxidation is attributed to a decrease in the expression of genes involved in  $\beta$ -oxidation and oxidative phosphorylation [\[ 55](#page-12-0) ]. A number of studies using animal models have shown that this is due to the downregulation of the transcriptional master regulators PPAR $\alpha$  and PGC1 [55, 57–60] (Fig. 17.2). In addition, a reduction in membranebound fatty acid transporters and carnitine has also been observed in the hypertrophic heart  $[61–64]$ . The resulting energy insufficiency leads to the activation of the energy- sensing kinase, AMPK, which contributes to an increase in glucose uptake and glycolysis by promoting translocation of glucose transporters to the sarcolemma and stimulating the glycolytic enzyme, phosphofructokinase  $2 \left[ 55, 65 - 67 \right]$  $2 \left[ 55, 65 - 67 \right]$  $2 \left[ 55, 65 - 67 \right]$ (Fig. 17.2 ). Interestingly, the increase in glucose uptake is insulin-independent, and changes in glucose metabolism in the hypertrophic heart are not accompanied by marked changes in proteins involved in glucose transport or glycolysis [33, 55, 68]. In contrast to the increased glycolysis, many studies have reported that glucose

oxidation is either unchanged or decreased in the hypertrophied heart, suggesting that glucose oxidation and glycolysis are uncoupled in cardiac hypertrophy  $[55]$ ,  $69-71$ ] (Fig. 17.2). As a result of this uncoupling in glucose metabolism, lactate dehydrogenase, which converts pyruvate into lactate, is activated to process the excess pyruvate. Consequently, increased secretion of lactate from the hypertrophied myocardium has been reported [55, 72, 73].

 The excess pyruvate can also be shuttled towards anaplerosis, which refers to metabolic processes that replenish tricarboxylic acid (TCA) cycle intermediates that are removed from the TCA cycle for biosynthetic pathways to produce glucose, fatty acids, and amino acids [\[ 74 \]](#page-13-0). In this process, pyruvate is converted to oxaloacetate and malate through its carboxylation via pyruvate carboxylase and malic enzyme, respectively  $[74]$ . Consistent with this notion, an 80–90 % increase in anaplerotic flux has been reported in the hypertrophied heart  $[75, 76]$  (Fig. [17.2](#page-5-0)). Although pyruvate can replenish TCA cycle substrates via anaplerosis, it is an energetically costly process as it reduces the efficiency of ATP production from pyruvate [55]. Changes in other glucose metabolism pathways were also observed in the hypertrophied heart, including pentose-phosphate pathway [77-79] and hexosamine pathway [80, 81]. To date, it remains unclear whether and to what extent these "alternative" glucose metabolism pathways contribute to the pathophysiology of cardiac hypertrophy.

 The increase in the reliance on glucose utilization in the hypertrophic heart appears to be an adaptive process, at least in earlier stages of hypertrophic remodeling. This notion is inferred from studies with mutant mice where the expression of glucose transporters has been altered. For example, mice overexpressing the insulin- independent glucose transporter Glut1, specifically in the heart, exhibit increased glucose uptake and glycolysis that is partially uncoupled from glucose oxidation, as well as decreased fatty acid oxidation  $[82]$ . Importantly, these mice were protected from pressure overloadinduced cardiac dysfunction  $[82]$ . In contrast, mice with cardiac deficiency of the insulin-sensitive glucose transporter Glut4 exhibit reduced contractile function and cardiomyocyte hypertrophy [\[ 83 \]](#page-14-0). Prevention of metabolic remodeling in pressure overload hypertrophy via cardiac-specific deletion of acetyl-CoA carboxylase 2, which produces the fatty acid oxidation inhibitor malonyl-CoA, attenuated cardiac hypertrophy, protected against fibrosis, and improved cardiac function [84]. These findings suggest that metabolic remodeling contributes to the pathophysiology of cardiac hypertrophy.

Interestingly, cardiac-specific overexpression of  $PGC1\alpha$  and the associated increase in mitochondrial size did not protect from cardiac remodeling induced by transverse aortic constriction [\[ 85](#page-14-0) ]. Instead, it led to a greater impairment in contractile function and increase in left ventricular chamber dimension  $[85]$ . These data suggest that attempts to stimulate master regulators of mitochondrial biogenesis and size in cardiac hypertrophy to improve oxidative metabolism may in fact worsen outcomes following pressure overload-induced hypertrophy. Dietary and pharmacological strategies have also been pursued to ameliorate outcomes in pressure overload-induced hypertrophy [ [54 ,](#page-12-0) [86 ,](#page-14-0) [87 \]](#page-14-0). Interestingly, feeding rats with a diet low in carbohydrates and high in fat attenuated cardiac hypertrophy and remodeling [86]. In contrast, activation of fatty acid metabolism via PPAR $\alpha$  agonist (WY-14643) treatment augmented pressure overload-induced contractile dysfunction,

<span id="page-7-0"></span>despite the prevention of substrate switching [87]. Since these interventions drastically influence whole body metabolism in addition to cardiac metabolism, their direct effects on metabolism and function in the hypertrophic heart remain unclear.

## **17.4 Metabolic (Mal)adaptation of the Heart in Obesity**

Obesity, defined as excess accumulation of body fat, and associated type 2 diabetes mellitus, is a significant risk factor for the development of heart failure [88, 89]. Although the onset of heart failure in obesity is likely multifactorial, obesityassociated cardiomyopathy appears to be a major initiating factor and contributes to the increased morbidity and mortality among obese individuals [88]. This is exemplified by the finding that even after correcting for hypertension and other common obesity-related risk factors, the presence of obesity still approximately doubles the risk of developing heart failure [90]. Chronic obesity commonly leads to systemic metabolic perturbances including insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes with concomitant hyperglycemia and hyperlipidemia. It has been hypothesized that this oversupply of energy substrates to the heart initially leads to adaptive changes and ultimately precipitates contractile dysfunction  $[90]$ . Specifically, the increased availability of fatty acids resulting in augmented fatty acid uptake, in conjunction with inadequate activation of fatty acid oxidation, gives rise to excess accumulation of toxic lipid metabolites in the myocardium and a general increase in cardiac fat content [88, 90]. High fatty acid oxidation rates in obesity, as have been observed in both animal models and humans, inhibit cardiac glucose utilization via substrate competition, hence contributing to decreases in glycolysis and glucose oxidation as well as insulin resistance  $[19, 91]$  $[19, 91]$  $[19, 91]$  (Fig. 17.3). These metabolic changes also lead to a decrease in mechanical efficiency  $[19, 91]$  $[19, 91]$  $[19, 91]$ . It has been suggested that the metabolic



 **Fig. 17.3** Metabolic changes in obesity-associated cardiomyopathy. Obesity and obesityassociated systemic changes in energy metabolism (hyperlipidemia, insulin resistance, type 2 diabetes) and adipokine secretion lead to increased cardiac fatty acid oxidation, lipid accumulation, and lipotoxicity, which are paralleled by reduced glucose oxidation and mechanical efficiency. Myocardial insulin resistance further promotes metabolic dysregulation in the heart

remodeling of the myocardium observed in obesity not only precedes but contributes to overt functional and structural changes of the heart in obesity  $[90, 92]$  $[90, 92]$  $[90, 92]$ .

 Increased accumulation of toxic lipid metabolites, a process that is also termed as "lipotoxicity," has also been suggested to contribute to cardiac dysfunction during obesity [ [93 – 95](#page-15-0) ] (Fig. [17.3 \)](#page-7-0). Examples for toxic lipid metabolites are long-chain acyl-CoAs, ceramides, diacylglycerols, and acylcarnitines [96]. Lipotoxicity may lead to cardiac dysfunction by means of activating apoptosis, impairing insulin signaling, promoting endoplasmic reticulum stress, activating protein kinase C and mitogenactivated protein kinase, as well as modulating PPAR signaling [96]. Studies using nonobese transgenic mice and obese-diabetic rat models show that accumulation of lipids in cardiomyocytes corresponds with a decrease in systolic and diastolic function and cardiac hypertrophy  $[4, 19, 93, 97-101]$ . However, the individual contribution of lipid subspecies to cardiac pathophysiology is unclear. Mechanisms for the lipotoxicity-induced insulin resistance in the heart have been suggested to involve diacylglycerol-mediated activation of protein kinase C, resulting in increased serine phosphorylation of insulin receptor substrate 1 and decreased activation of downstream insulin signaling mediators, such as phosphatidylinositol 3-kinase and Akt [19]. The implication of increased TAG accumulation in the obese heart is less understood, but it may impair cardiac function by fueling the production of "toxic" lipid species [1]. Myocardial TAG content positively correlates with body mass index, suggesting that cardiac TAG deposition increases gradually with increased adiposity [102]. Elevated myocardial TAG content was also observed in individuals with impaired glucose tolerance and type 2 diabetes  $[1, 103, 104]$  $[1, 103, 104]$  $[1, 103, 104]$ . Moreover, the increase in cardiac TAG accumulation preceded the development of overt cardiac dysfunction, suggesting a causal relationship between elevated TAG levels in the heart and obesity/type 2 diabetes-associated myocardial dysfunction [1, 103].

 To date, drugs used to treat metabolic disturbances in obesity are mainly aimed at lowering circulating lipid levels and ameliorating insulin resistance. For example, there are two classes of PPAR agonists used to achieve this effect. These are ligands for PPARα and PPARγ, respectively. Both PPARα and PPARγ agonists lower circulating lipid levels either by increasing fat storage in adipocytes or increasing fatty acid oxidation in the muscle and liver  $[19]$ . Despite the beneficial systemic effect of PPAR $\alpha$  and PPAR $\gamma$  agonists, their direct effect on the heart may not always be desirable. For example, cardiac-specific overexpression of  $PPAR\alpha$  induced a cardiac phenotype similar to diabetic cardiomyopathy [ [105 \]](#page-15-0). Myocardial fatty acid oxidation rates were increased in these transgenic mice, while glucose uptake and oxidation were decreased, concomitant with the development of pathological cardiac hypertrophy, increased lipid accumulation, and cardiac dysfunction [105]. Similarly, cardiomyocyte-specific overexpression of PPARγ led to cardiac dysfunction in mice that was associated with increased myocardial lipid accumulation and expression of enzymes involved in fatty acid utilization [106]. In humans, PPAR $\gamma$ agonist treatment is also associated with peripheral edema and heart failure [106, 107]. These findings suggest that PPAR agonist treatment in obesity may have adverse effects on the heart by increasing cardiac lipid deposition. Interestingly, recent studies showed that inhibition of mitochondrial β-oxidation with trimetazidine,

<span id="page-9-0"></span>which is widely used for the treatment of angina, can improve obesity-related cardiac dysfunction  $[108]$ . Trimetazidine not only improves contractile efficiency in obese humans but protects against obesity-induced systolic and diastolic dysfunction in mice without altering insulin sensitivity or exacerbating obesity-induced insulin resistance  $[108]$ . This suggests that trimetazidine, by improving the metabolic balance in the heart, may be a viable therapy for the treatment of obesityrelated cardiomyopathy.

 Metabolic disturbances in adipose tissue initiate obesity-associated morbidity and cardiovascular disease  $[109, 110]$  $[109, 110]$  $[109, 110]$ . Besides fueling the systemic and cardiac lipid oversupply in obesity, the hypertrophic obese adipose tissue also changes its secretory profile of hormones and cytokines, so-called adipokines, which promotes not only insulin resistance and inflammation but likely has a direct effect on cardiac energy metabolism  $[19, 90, 111]$  (Fig. [17.3](#page-7-0)). However, more studies are required to better understand the direct effects of changes in circulating adipokines such as adiponectin, leptin, resistin, and retinol-binding protein 4 on cardiac metabolism and function during obesity in both animal models and humans.

# **17.5 Concluding Remarks**

 Cardiac energy metabolism is tightly regulated to meet the high energy demands of myocardial contraction and to adapt to short-term fluctuations in energy substrate supply and workload. When challenged by chronic stressors, including pressure overload and obesity, myocardial energy metabolism can initially adapt to counter- regulate but is eventually locked into a dysregulated and inflexible state with a major shift in substrate utilization and/or cardiac energetics and efficiency. Many studies have shown that this impairment in cardiac energy metabolism can promote the development of heart failure with a significant drop in the heart's energetics and premature death. Since there is evidence that maladaptive changes in cardiac energy metabolism contribute at least in part to multiple forms of heart disease, drugs that aim to restore a balanced substrate utilization in the heart have the potential to become attractive options to treat these diseases and prevent their progression to overt heart failure.

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