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Estimation of left ventricular pressure in patients with a continuous flow LVAD

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Aim
Long-term ventricular support with a Left Ventricular Assist Devices (LVAD) requires intensive and frequent monitoring of the patient.

Left ventricular pressure (pLV) is a good measure for LV function. In this study, we aim to assess dynamic left ventricular pressure, using the LVAD as a sensor.

Ex vivo model
The method was validated with a porcine ex-vivo beating heart model (figure 1)1. Measurements were done on four hearts supported with a Micromed DeBakey VAD and three hearts supported with a Heartmate II VAD.

Estimation left ventricular pressure
Pressure head over the LVAD (dpvad) is estimated from pump flow with a static2 and dynamic3 pump model. From pressure head and aortic pressure, left ventricular pressure is estimated:

\[ p_{LV}^{estimated} = p_{ao} + dp_{outflow\; graft} - dpvad^{estimated} \]

The pressure drop in the outflow graft, \( dp_{outflow\; graft} \), is calculated as follows:

\[ dp_{outflow\; graft} = R \cdot Q + L \cdot \frac{dQ}{dt} \]

Results
Mean left ventricular pressure was estimated using static pump characteristics (figure 2).

Left ventricular pressure was also estimated as a function of time using dynamic pump characteristics (figure 3).

Conclusions
In our beating heart experiments, a reliable estimation of left ventricular pressure was possible using static or dynamic pump characteristics.

Once combined with a focused clinical study we infer that left ventricular pressure in LVAD supported patients can be monitored sufficiently reliably in case pump flow and aortic pressure are measured. This will give a good indication for unloading of the ventricle and native heart function, in case of recovery of the heart or destination therapy during long-term support.

References