PM Health Effects: Biological Plausibility and Mechanisms

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PM Center Directors’ Meeting
Washington DC
Sept. 27-28
State of the Science in 1998

• More than 30 epidemiology studies from around the world report associations between ambient PM and cardiac mortality and morbidity.

• PM levels are very low compared with other particle exposures.
  One cigarette = 10x more than a typical 24 hr exposure to PM

• No widely accepted pathophysiological process or mechanism that could explain how a person could die following an acute exposure to such low levels of air pollution particles.
What are the underlying mechanisms (pulmonary, vascular, cardiac) that can explain the epidemiological findings of mortality and morbidity associated with exposure to ambient particulate matter?
PM Presented A New Challenge to Air Pollution Toxicologists

- Traditionally, toxicologists have focused on respiratory tract responses to air pollutants
  - ozone, NO$_2$, SO$_2$

- The association between PM and cardiovascular effects required a new approach to the study of air pollution
  - cardiac effects (e.g. arrhythmias)
  - vascular effects (e.g. blood clot formation)
Potential Effects of PM on the Pulmonary System

- Lung Injury
- Altered Lung Function
- Exacerbation of Pulmonary Disease
- Altered Pulmonary Immune Defense
Potential Effects of PM on the Pulmonary System

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Humans exposed to ultrafine particles have decreased diffusing capacity.

Diffusing capacity is a measure of oxygen transfer from the lungs to the blood.

Pietropaoli, et al., 2004
Potential Effects of PM on the Pulmonary System

- Lung Injury
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- Altered Pulmonary Immune Defense
Healthy young volunteers exposed to concentrated ambient air particles (CAPs) experience mild pulmonary inflammation

Ghio et al., 2001
Potential Effects of PM on the Pulmonary System

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PM Depresses Clearance and Inactivation of Bacteria

Epidemiology studies report associations between PM and increased incidence of hospitalization for respiratory infections.

Inactivation

Host Resistance Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Mortality (Streptococcus)</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Woodstove</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
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Gilmour et al., 2002
Potential Effects of PM on the Pulmonary System

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PM Exposure Exacerbates Asthma

Change in exhaled nitric oxide per 10 μg/m³ increase in PM$_{2.5}$ in children with asthma

NO is an indication of pulmonary inflammation

Koenig et al., 2003
Potential Effects of PM on the Cardiovascular System

Ambient PM

- Autonomic Nervous System
  - Heart Rate
  - Cardiac Rhythm
- Pulmonary or Systemic Inflammation
- Plaque Progression
- Clotting Factors
- Thrombosis

Sudden Cardiac Death
Potential Effects of PM on the Cardiovascular System

- Ambient PM
  - Autonomic Nervous System
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    - Sudden Cardiac Death
  - Pulmonary or Systemic Inflammation
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    - Clotting Factors
    - Thrombosis
PM Affects Autonomic Nervous System
Control of the Heart

Elderly humans exposed to fine CAPS experience decreases in heart rate variability (HRV).

People with cardiovascular disease who have decreased HRV have a higher risk of getting a heart attack.

Devlin et al, 2003
Potential Effects of PM on the Cardiovascular System

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PM Triggers Cardiac Arrhythmias in Humans

The number of times that implanted defibrillators discharged were related to prior days levels of PM and PM components

- PM$_{2.5}$ 1.22 (0.7, 2.0)
- BC 2.16 (1.0, 4.9)

Peters et al, 2000
Potential Effects of PM on the Cardiovascular System

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  - Sudden Cardiac Death
    - Thrombosis
PM Causes Injury to Cardiac Cells

Rats exposed to ambient PM one day per week for 16 weeks

Kodavanti et al., 2003
Potential Effects of PM on the Cardiovascular System

Ambient PM

Autonomic Nervous System
- Heart Rate
- Cardiac Rhythm

Pulmonary or Systemic Inflammation

Plaque Progression

Clotting Factors

Sudden Cardiac Death

Thrombosis
PM Increases Vascular Inflammation

Increase in blood C Reactive Protein in Humans

OR (95% CI) per increase in IQR PM$_{2.5}$

Exposure to ambient air pollution prior to the blood withdrawal

Rueckerl et al., 2004

Increase in blood PMNs in Rats Exposed to CAPS

% PMNs

Air  CAPS

Gordon et al., 2000
Potential Effects of PM on the Cardiovascular System

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- Sudden Cardiac Death
PM Increases Levels of Clotting and Coagulation Factors

Humans exposed to CAPS have changes in several blood factors which could potentially lead to a more pro-thrombogenic environment.

The net changes in these factors could potentially lead to an environment conducive to the formation of blood clots.

Devlin et al, 2004
Potential Effects of PM on the Cardiovascular System

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PM Increases Arterial Plaque Thickness

Subchronic exposure of ApoE-/-LDLr-/- double knockout mice to CAPS for 6h/day, 5d/week, for 6 months (average of 110 \( \mu g/m^3 \)) increases plaque cellularity.

![Graph showing mean cellularity percentage for Air and PM conditions](image)

* Chan et al., 2004
Potential Effects of PM on the Cardiovascular System

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PM Causes Fatal Arrhythmias in Animals

Rats were treated with PM from various sources and arrhythmias measured for 3 days after exposure.

Watkinson et al., 2000
“Despite these impressive associations, very little is known about the mechanisms by which PM exerts its adverse effects...”
Mechanistic Studies Have:

- Defined several biologically plausible pathophysiological pathways by which PM can increase mortality and morbidity.
- Provided coherence to the epidemiology studies and extended their observations, thus strengthening the science in support of the PM standard.
What Else Remains to Be Done?

My goal is simple. It is complete understanding of the universe, why it is as it is and why it exists at all."  —  

*Stephen Hawking.*
Key Areas of Uncertainty

- Many of these studies have only recently been published and need to be replicated in other labs and species.

- It is not clear whether different PM components (or PM derived from different sources) exert their effects by the same or a series of different mechanisms. 
  additivity versus synergism

- It is not clear whether different mechanisms operate in different susceptible populations or in different organs.

- Most current mechanistic PM research has been at the organ or physiological level 
  very little known about how PM causes effects at the cellular or molecular level
Rats exposed to fine CAPS show chemiluminescence in the lung, heart, and liver.

This is an indication that PM can induce oxidative stress in critical organs.

Implications for:
- protecting people from PM
- Identifying potentially susceptible people

Gurgueira et al 2002