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# Role of Mesenchymal Stem Cells in Cardiovascular Disease

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### ABSTRACT

In recent years, globally there is an incredible boost in stem cell research has kindled the expectations of both patients and physicians. Mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs) seem to represent a future powerful tool in regenerative medicine, owing to their availability, ease of manipulation, and therapeutic potential, therefore they are particularly important in medical research. Mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs) are capable self-renewing, multipotent progenitor cells with multilineage potential to differentiate into cell types, such as adipocytes, cardiomyocytes, endothelial cells and vascular smooth muscle cells, although the relative contribution of trilineage differentiation and paracrine effectors on cardiac repair. MSCs shows to have the beneficial effects of MSC-based therapies offers most attractive options to treatment of wide range of diseases from cartilage defects to cardiac disorders. Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) are an important cause of death and disease worldwide. Because injured cardiac tissue cannot be repaired itself, it is urgent to develop other alternate therapies. Stem cells can be differentiated into cardiomyocytes, endothelial cells, and vascular smooth muscle cells for the treatment of CVDs. In addition to cardiac stem cells, mesenchymal stem cells represent another multipotent cell population in the heart; these cells are located in regions near pericytes and exhibit regenerative, angiogenic, antiapoptotic, and immunosuppressive properties.

**Keywords:** Adult stem cells(ASc), tissue-specific resident stem cells (TSCs), Mesenchymal stromal cells (MSCs), Induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs) Embryonic stem cells (ESCs) Heart Failure (HF)

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## **Background**

Adult stem cells are activated to proliferate and differentiate during normal tissue homeostasis as well as in disease states and injury, which will help in the restoration of function to damaged tissue via either complete or partial regeneration. Mesenchymal stromal cells (MSCs) and tissue-specific resident stem cells (TSCs) play an important role in tissue repair process and regeneration or the formation of scar tissue follows an injury respectively. TSCs and MSCs are crucial for complex cascade of signals regulating both cell populations, emerged as potential therapeutic targets to treat reparative disorders.

## **Introduction**

Tissue repairs post-injury or during disease culminates in either complete restoration of tissue integrity, defined here as regeneration, or in a process that leads to the generation of stromal structures that replace functional tissue. Regeneration of tissues is typically accompanied by acute or chronic inflammation caused by the disease or trauma, and involves the coordinated interaction among multiple cell types, including tissue specific stem/progenitor cells (TSCs), mesenchymal stromal cells (MSCs) and immune cells. It is due to aberrant environmental cues and alterations of the signaling networks between these cells are central to the establishment of reparative disorders. <sup>[1]</sup>

## **Mesenchymal Stem Cells (MSCs)**

Mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs), also referred to as mesenchymal stromal cells, are adult stem cells capable of self-renewal and multilineage differentiation <sup>[2]</sup>. Mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs) are nonhematopoietic cells, which reside in the bone marrow <sup>[3]</sup> populating cells. MSCs are the functional part of bone marrow-derived stem/progenitor cells that can promote cardiac muscle repair after injury. MSCs may exhibit different characteristics depending on their tissue of origin, they must meet the three minimal criteria based on International Society for Cellular Therapy (ISCT) <sup>[4]</sup>. Firstly, it shows plastic-adherence when grown in vitro, secondly must express the surface antigens and third, MSCs must differentiate into mesodermal cell

types (i.e., adipocytes, chondrocytes, and osteoblasts) when cultured under specific conditions. It possesses an extensive proliferative potential and ability to differentiate into mesodermal and nonmesodermal origin (ectodermal and endodermal lineages) various cell types, including osteocytes, adipocytes, chondrocytes, myocytes, cardiomyocytes and neurons <sup>[5, 6, 7, 8]</sup>.

Mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs), also referred to as mesenchymal stromal cells, are adult stem cells capable of self-renewal, multilineage differentiation <sup>[2]</sup> and immunomodulatory properties. Their two most attractive features are plasticity and tropism. MSCs are pluripotent T cells that have self-renewing, differentiation, and immunomodulatory properties. Their two most attractive features are plasticity and tropism. In the table 1 shows the advantages and disadvantages of MSCs.

It plays a central role in tissue repair in addition to their antitumorigenic, antifibrotic, antiapoptotic, anti-inflammatory, proangiogenic, neuroprotective, antibacterial, and chemoattractive effects <sup>[9, 10]</sup>. This unique set of characteristics makes MSCs attractive for their therapeutic potential in the fields of regenerative medicine <sup>[11]</sup>, inflammatory disorders <sup>[9]</sup>, and, increasingly, cancer therapy <sup>[12]</sup>.

In mammals, cardiac damage is not followed by the complete replacement of lost cellular components but is rather defined by a relatively minor capacity for regeneration and far more robust reparative response. Lacking an ability to regenerate, the formation of a scar in a timely manner following cardiac damage or during cardiac disease is critical in allowing continued organ functionality. The heart harbours its own population of TSCs, the cardiac stem cells <sup>[13, 14]</sup>, which account for the limited regenerative capacity of this organ, which is similar to other organs, its repair processes may be governed by a cardiac-resident population of MSCs.

## **Sources of MSCs**

The main source of MSCs is the bone marrow which constitutes, however, only a small percentage of the total number of bone marrow populating cells. About 0.01% to 0.001% <sup>[15]</sup> of

mononuclear cells isolated on density gradient (ficoll/percoll) give rise to plastic adherent fibroblast like colonies. MSCs may generate upon appropriate stimulation quite different mature cells including osteoblasts, chondrocytes, tenocytes, adipocytes, smooth muscle cells, and stromal cells of the bone marrow [16].

Mesenchymal stromal cells can be isolated from many different adult tissues, including bone marrow, adipose tissue [17] inner organs, and blood vessels described in Figure 1 and from rather “young sources” such as amniotic fluid, amniotic membrane, umbilical cord, or placenta [18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25].

The amount of MSCs decreases with age [26] and infirmity. The greatest number of MSCs is found in neonates, then it is reduced during the lifespan to about one-half at the age of 80.

MSCs have recently been gaining significant attention, owing to some of their unique properties and their feasibility of use as an “unlimited” off-the-shelf source of regenerative cells but they exhibit several differences [27, 28]. It displays differentiation capacities and therefore qualify as multipotent progenitor cell. It may reflect particular regional properties of the niches from which they originate the cell source [29, 30] and are susceptible to variations in cell culture conditions and isolation protocols [31, 32, 33].

### **Cardiovascular disease**

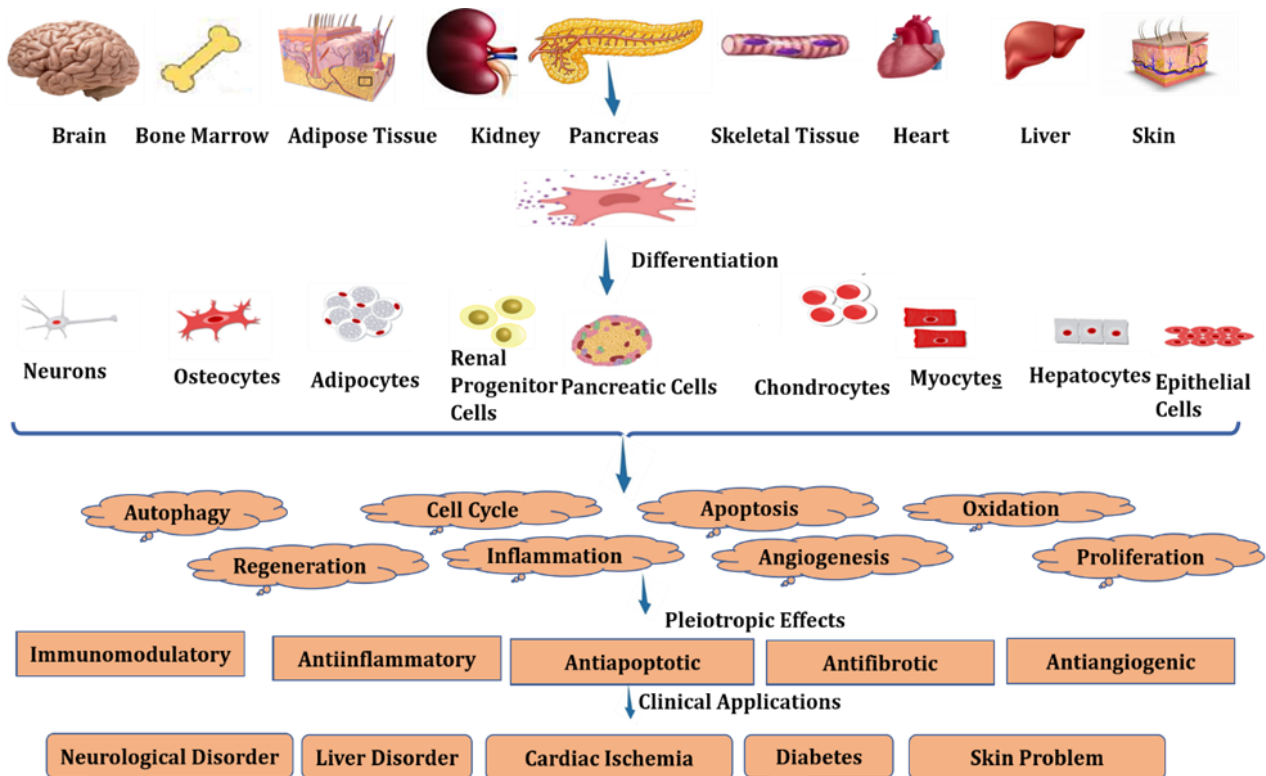
The increase in the average human lifespan has been accompanied by an increased incidence of

chronic diseases [34]. These chronic non-communicable diseases are the result of a number of risk factors and are characterized by a prolonged natural course and the potential for developmental disabilities. Globally there is a health concern regarding cardiovascular diseases (CVD) are the number one cause of high morbidity and mortality rates globally, than any other single disease [35]. It is estimated 17.9 million people died from CVDs in 2019, representing 32% of all global deaths. CVDs affect not only elderly people but also middle-aged people at the peak of their working and social capacities; hence, CVDs are an enormous medical and economic problem in society. Of these deaths, 85% were due to heart attack and stroke [36]. Common causes of heart failure is ischemia, hypertension, coronary artery disease and idiopathic dilated cardiomyopathy.

MSC-based therapies provide the treatment of cardiovascular disease represent a substantial proportion and exhibit extremely promising therapeutic significance. Stem cell-based therapy aimed at regenerating damaged myocardium is an emerging treatment modality. There is Growing evidence indicates that exosomes derived from ESCs, iPSCs, and MSCs have the effects of inducing cardiomyocyte proliferation, promoting angiogenesis, reducing apoptosis, and inhibiting fibrosis and may be used for myocardial protection and treatment [37, 38].

**Table 1** illustrates the Advantages and disadvantages of stem cell (SC) types used for cardiac regeneration

Cell type	Advantages	Disadvantages
MSCs	Easy access from several tissues	Limited cell quantity
	Low ethical concerns	Limited differentiation potential
	Transplantation of autologous and allogenic cells due to low immunogenicity	Undefined in situ phenotype
	Proof of safety in clinical trials	Heterogeneous cell population
	Rapid in vitro expansion	Inconsistent results regarding therapeutic effects
	Therapeutic secretome	
	Beneficial immunomodulative properties	
	Low risk of tumorigenicity	



**Figure 1.** Schematic Representation of Source of Mesenchymal Stem Cells-And their use in Clinical Application-Differentiation of MSCs from various tissues (bone marrow (BM), brain, heart,liver , skin , kidney , Pancreas and adipose tissue), skeletal have been applied to stimulate cardiac regeneration of the adult heart in pre-clinical and clinical studies. Their mechanistic actions, pleiotropic effects and usage in Clinical Applications.

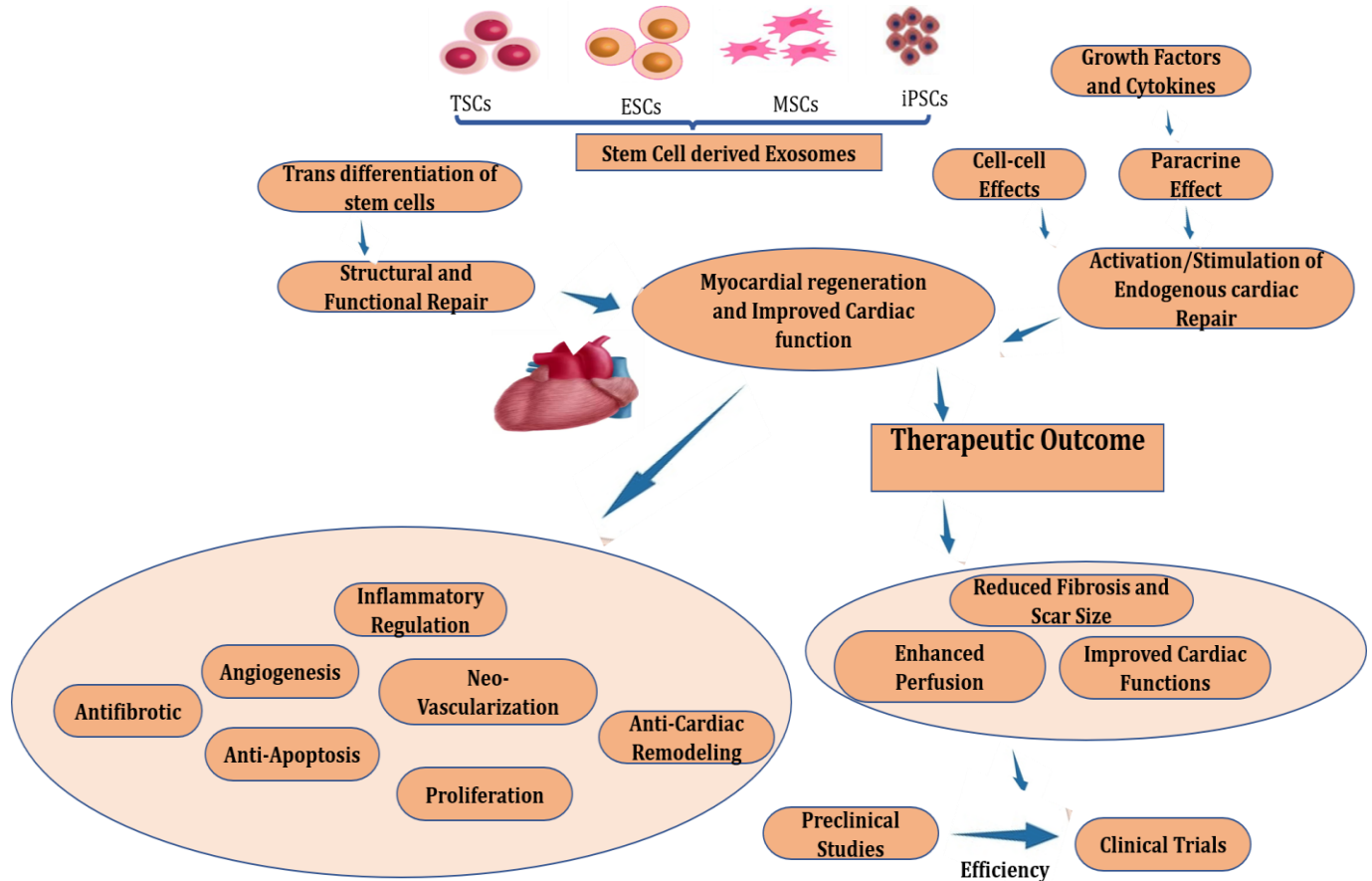
Myocardial infarction (MI) leads to a massive loss of functional cardiomyocytes which is a major cause of human death worldwide. Though pharmacotherapy, thrombolysis, coronary stent implantation, and coronary artery bypass grafting have been clinically used to treat MI and improve patients' survival, these methods cannot fundamentally repair the damaged heart and restore heart function. Stem cell transplantation is considered as a promising way to treat MI, which has made significant progress in preclinical and clinical studies recently. Stem cell candidates mainly include two categories: (1) pluripotent stem cells (embryonic stem cell and induced pluripotent stem cells) and their derivatives and (2) adult stem cells, including hematopoietic stem cells and mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs) [5]. MSCs are mesoderm-derived multipotent stromal cells that reside in embryonic and adult tissues, having the capacity for self-renewal, immune privilege, immunomodulation, and low tumorigenicity.

MSCs exerts cardiovascular diseases with immunoregulatory ability, antifibrotic effect, and

neovascularization features. It plays an important role in therapeutic function in cardiovascular diseases primarily through paracrine activities.

Myocardial infarction is an acute or chronic blockage of the coronary arteries that causes apoptosis and necrosis in cardiomyocytes. Myocardial infarction is an irreversible injury and the leading cause of death in patients with CVDs [39]. Cardiomyocytes are potentially injured in the disease and appear to be the most critical cell type that requires effective regeneration or recovery from severe dysfunction to result in a successful therapy [40]. The role of MSCs in myocardial regeneration is their synthesis and secretion of cytokines and other trophic growth factors to signal to the injured myocardial cells [41] which may also involve anti-aging effects [42, 43, 44].

Myocardial infarction was characterized by a reduction in apoptotic myocytes and an augmentation of vascularity [45, 46]. Scar tissue reduction and cardio protection after MSC transplantation have been well studied.



**Figure 2:** Mechanism of Stem Cell therapy for myocardial regeneration and improvement of cardiac function. Exosomes derived from stem cells promote cardiomyocyte survival, anti-apoptosis, proliferation and cardiovascular production, Antifibrotic, anti-inflammatory, neovascularization thereby repairing CVDs tissue. TSCs (Totipotent stem cells) ESCs (embryonic stem cells), iPSCs (induced pluripotent stem cells), MSCs, (mesenchymal stem cells). Cardiac healing and repair mediated by direct and indirect mechanisms in cardiac cell therapy

### Cardiac Mesenchymal Stem Cells

The class of multipotent cells present in the heart are cardiac mesenchymal stem cells (cMSCs), which have been referred to in the literature as cardiac mesenchymal stem-like cells<sup>[47]</sup> and cardiac mesenchymal-like stromal cells<sup>[48]</sup>. MSCs were initially derived from the plastic adherent fraction of components of mononuclear cells isolated by density-gradient centrifugation of bone marrow cells and culturing on an adherent surface MSCs have since been derived from many organs other than bone marrow<sup>[5]</sup> and were recently, identified in the cardiac stroma<sup>[49]</sup>. The phenotypic characterization of this cell type is complex, and there is not a specific marker or combination of markers to identify MSCs<sup>[50]</sup>. In culture, the phenotype of MSCs is altered; the surface markers of freshly isolated mesenchymal cells differ from those maintained in culture for a long period<sup>[51]</sup>. MSCs are usually defined

based on a combination of physical, morphological, phenotypic, and functional properties. The following minimal criteria have been established for the identification of MSCs: (i) adherence to plastic; (ii) adipogenic, chondrogenic, and osteogenic differentiation capacities; (iii) expression of CD73, CD90 and CD105 and the absence of surface markers such as CD45, CD34, CD11b and CD14, CD79 $\alpha$  or CD19 and HLADR.; and (iv) ability to generate colony-forming unit fibroblast.

In contrast to other stem cells present in the heart, MSCs lose their multipotentiality with passage in culture and enter senescence<sup>[50]</sup>, which means that the growth potential of these cells is limited.

In the heart, the CSCs are organized in niches that are preferentially allocated in the atrium and ventricular apex, areas that are protected because they are exposed to low levels of

hemodynamic stress. These niches are connected by supporting cells, such as fibroblasts and myocytes, highlighting the importance of connexins and cadherins, which play roles in the formation of gap junctions and adherens junctions at the interfaces of these different cell types [52,53]. In MI the niche is comprised of supporting cells and cell-cell interactions that have crucial regulatory roles. It triggers chemokine and cytokine cascades that initiate and boost an endogenous repair mechanism through the restoration of a cellular and molecular collective with the properties [54].

The cardiac progenitor/stem cells appear to represent an attractive option for use in clinical trials because they are intrinsically more likely to possess all of the characteristics required to repair the damaged heart [55] and improve cardiac function after myocardial injury [34].

#### **Therapeutic Potential of MSCS with MI**

Over the past decades, a large number of studies have emerged using MSC-based therapies in preclinical studies to treat many different pathologies, including neurological disorders, cardiac ischemia, diabetes and bone and cartilage diseases [56,57,58,59,60,61]. MSC therapy is an attractive candidate for cardiovascular repair due to its regenerative and immunomodulatory properties. It is mediated by their inherent ability to migrate toward damaged tissues. Then, engrafted cells secrete bioactive mediators, such as growth factors, cytokines and extracellular vesicles that exert immunosuppressive, anti-apoptotic, antifibrotic, angiogenic, and anti-inflammatory effects [62]. The therapeutic potential of these cells stems from several properties, including their ability to i) differentiate into various cell lineages, ii) secrete soluble factors crucial for cell survival and proliferation, iii) modulate immune response, and iv) migrate to the exact site of injury. The present therapeutic interventions, including traditional medicine, devices, and surgical therapies, have therapeutic effects on heart failure (HF); however, further revascularization and medical therapy may be useless because the ventricular remodelling process is usually irreversible in end stage HF patients

#### **Discussion**

Transplantation of bone-marrow derived stem/progenitor cells has an established therapeutic effect on cardiac muscle repair after injury. Neovascularization is critical for tissue repair, and thus examined the angiogenic factors in MSCs for promoting neovascularization.

The therapeutic benefits of MSCs could be partially stemmed from their modulation of inflammation response, since after MSCs treatment, the features and properties of macrophages in the injured heart was significantly changed, while the macrophage phenotypic changes are more likely appearing a M2-like alteration. Compared to M1, M2 macrophages have less proinflammatory potential, but produce and release many cytokines and growth factors to improve cell survival, proliferation, and to reduce cellular apoptosis [63]. stem and progenitor cells located in the myocardium [64] identified the human adult heart as an organ bearing potential for self-renewal. However, the limited endogenous degree of cardiac regeneration is insufficient to compensate for the massive loss of cardiomyocytes occurring after acute injury and the consecutive adverse remodelling.

#### **Conclusions**

MSCs have raised the substantial interest due to its potentiality and versatility to expand for extended periods of time without losing their original characteristics highlights them for use in cell and gene-based therapies. Stem cell therapy is a novel and promising therapeutic modality for patients with significant cardiac dysfunction. MSCs are ideal for the treatment for MI as they repair or induce the repair of damaged organs, their pleiotropic activity and the technical ease of manipulation. MSCs have emerged as a promising therapeutic strategy because of their tropism for other cell types as well as their immunomodulatory functions and migrate toward sites of inflammation. The transplantation of SCs emerged as a new approach to restore damaged myocardial tissue. They were identified as the cells that would change regenerative medicine via their ability to differentiate into end-cell lines, allowing the shortage of donor organs to become



a nonfactor in treatment of many end-stage disease state. MSCs have many clinical applications, with an important role in almost all medical and surgical specialties. MSCs will play an important role in managing many disorders that lack effective standard treatment. Novel delivery of MSCs as therapeutics in HF can overcome many of the current pitfalls such as hostile environment of HF for regenerative medicine and retention of cells

### **Author Contributions**

V.A.A., W.T., and R.R.: manuscript writing, final approval of the manuscript.

### **Conflict of interest:**

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article is reported

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