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Impact of proximal and distal cuff inflation on brachial artery endothelial function in healthy individuals

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38 **ABSTRACT**

39 **Purpose.** In this study, we examined whether the decrease in endothelial function
40 associated with short-term exposure to elevated retrograde shear rate (SR), could be
41 prevented when combined with a concurrent drop in transmural pressure in humans.

42 **Methods.** Twenty-five healthy individuals reported to our laboratory on 3 occasions to
43 complete 30-min experimental conditions, preceded and followed by assessment of
44 endothelial function using flow-mediated dilation (FMD). We used cuff inflation for 30-
45 min to manipulate retrograde SR and transmural pressure in the brachial artery. Subjects
46 underwent, in randomised order: 1. forearm cuff inflation to 60 mmHg (Distal cuff; causing
47 increase in retrograde SR), 2. Upper arm cuff inflation to 60 mmHg (Proximal cuff; causing
48 increase in retrograde SR + decrease in transmural pressure), and 3. No cuff inflation
49 (Control).

50 **Results.** The Distal and Proximal cuff conditions both increased brachial artery retrograde
51 SR ($p<0.001$) and oscillatory shear index ($p<0.001$). The Control intervention did not alter
52 SR patterns or FMD ($p>0.05$). A significant interaction-effect was found for FMD
53 ($p<0.05$), with the decrease during Distal cuff (from $6.9\pm2.3\%$ to $6.1\pm2.5\%$), being
54 reversed to an increase with Proximal cuff (from $6.3\pm2.0\%$ to $6.9\pm2.0\%$). The proximal
55 cuff related increase in FMD could not be explained by the decrease in antegrade or
56 increase in retrograde shear.

57 **Conclusion.** This study suggests that a decrease in transmural pressure may ameliorate the
58 decline in endothelial function that occurs following exposure to elevated retrograde shear
59 in healthy individuals.

60

61 **Key words:** Atherosclerosis, vascular function, shear stress, hemodynamics

62 Cardiovascular diseases, in particular those associated with atherosclerosis, remain the
63 world's leading causes of morbidity and mortality (Townsend et al. 2016). Impaired
64 function of the endothelium is an early and integral atherosclerotic event (Behrendt and
65 Ganz 2002; Widlansky et al. 2003). In fact, impaired endothelial function precedes
66 thickening of the arterial wall and plaque formation, both characteristics of atherosclerosis
67 (Glowinska-Olszewska et al. 2007; Halcox et al. 2009; Juonala et al. 2004; Kobayashi et
68 al. 2004). Hemodynamic factors, including shear stress and (transmural) pressure,
69 represent key stimuli for adaptation in endothelial function and vascular structure (Green
70 et al. 2017; Laughlin et al. 2008), and understanding the interplay between such
71 hemodynamic factors can improve our knowledge of their role in the development of
72 atherosclerosis and cardiovascular disease.

73

74 In a series of previous studies, we altered shear stress patterns utilising cuff inflation, which
75 induced an increase in retrograde shear stress and increase in oscillatory shear index.
76 Exposure to these altered shear stress patterns caused a dose-dependent decrease in
77 endothelial function (Schreuder et al. 2014; Thijssen et al. 2009), possibly through
78 inhibition of NO bioavailability (Johnson et al. 2011; Laughlin et al. 2008; Newcomer et
79 al. 2008; Thijssen et al. 2009; Widlansky et al. 2003). Interestingly, inflation of a cuff may
80 cause similar hemodynamic effects as an arterial stenosis. Altered shear stress patterns have
81 been observed both proximal and distal to a stenosis (Koskinas et al. 2009; Laughlin et al.
82 2008; Lee et al. 1978) and from cuff inflation (Betik et al. 2004; Schreuder et al. 2014;
83 Thijssen et al. 2009; Tinken et al. 2009). In keeping with the stenosis analogy (Ku 1997;
84 Lee et al. 1978), a drop in transmural pressure may be present distal, but not proximal,

85 from a partially inflated cuff (Anderson et al. 1979; Bache and Schwartz 1982; de Leeuw
86 et al. 2018). Accordingly, cuff manipulation may represent a non-invasive model to assess
87 the impact of hemodynamics on endothelial function.

88

89 The aim of this study was to examine the impact of sub-systolic cuff inflation (to 60 mmHg)
90 on shear rate patterns and endothelial function (examined using the flow-mediated dilation
91 technique) in young healthy individuals. We hypothesised that the decrease in endothelial
92 function as a result of exposure to elevated levels of retrograde SR might be offset when
93 these SR patterns are combined with a drop in transmural pressure in healthy individuals.

94

95

96 **Methods**

97 **Study design and participants' recruitment**

98 Twenty-five men (27 ± 4 yrs) were recruited at the Liverpool John Moores University from
99 2013 to 2015. The study procedures were approved by the ethics committee of Liverpool
100 John Moores University and adhered to the declaration of Helsinki. All participants gave
101 written consent before experimental testing. Participants diagnosed with cardiovascular
102 diseases, who reported cardiovascular risk factors (e.g. hypertension or
103 hypercholesterolemia) or were using any medication that could influence the
104 cardiovascular system, were excluded.

105

106 **Experimental design**

107 In random order, all participants reported to our laboratory on 3 occasions to undergo
108 testing, separated by at least 24 hours between visits. Endothelial function of the mid-
109 brachial artery was assessed at each visit (using the flow-mediated dilation [FMD]
110 technique), before and immediately after the 30-minute intervention. The 3 interventions
111 consisted of: 1. a cuff inflation around the forearm to alter SR patterns, elevating the
112 oscillatory shear index with minimal impact on transmural wall pressure (Distal cuff
113 condition), 2. a cuff inflation around the upper arm to alter SR patterns, elevating the
114 oscillatory shear index (Proximal cuff) and decreasing transmural wall pressure (Anderson
115 et al. 1979; Bache and Schwartz 1982; de Leeuw et al. 2018), and 3. no cuff inflation (i.e.
116 Control) (Figure 1). All measurements were performed at the same time of the day to help
117 correct for circadian rhythm, under standardized conditions, in the same respective
118 condition, and on the right arm (Jones et al. 2010).

119

120 Assessment of brachial artery function, and blood flow and shear rate pattern were
121 conducted in accordance with recent guidelines (Thijssen et al. 2011; Thijssen et al. 2019).
122 Participants were requested to fast for six hours, abstain from alcohol and caffeine for 18
123 hours and avoid physical activity for 24 hours prior to the measurements (Thijssen et al.
124 2019). Although fitness and physical activity levels were not formally assessed, different
125 conditions under which subjects were studied, were conducted within, weeks and subjects
126 did not change their usual levels of activity in that time period.

127

128 Participants rested in a supine posture for at least 15 minutes, to ensure steady state
129 conditions and to facilitate baseline examination of heart rate, blood pressure and brachial
130 artery function. Heart rate and blood pressure (i.e. systolic blood pressure [SBP], diastolic
131 blood pressure [DBP] and mean arterial pressure [MAP]) were measured before each
132 brachial artery function measurement, using an automated sphygmomanometer (Dinamap,
133 GE Pro 300V2), placed around the left upper arm.

134

135 *Brachial artery endothelial function.* FMD measurement was performed in all participants
136 to assess NO mediated endothelium-dependent vasodilation (Green et al. 2011). To
137 measure brachial artery FMD, the right arm was extended and positioned at an angle of
138 ~80° from the torso. Immediately distal to the olecranon process of the right arm, a rapid
139 inflated and deflated pneumatic cuff of 5 cm (D.E. Hokanson, Bellevue, WA) was placed,
140 to provide a stimulus for local ischemia in the forearm (Corretti et al. 2002; Thijssen et al.
141 2019). A 10-MHz multifrequency linear probe attached to a high-resolution ultrasound
142 machine (T3000; Terason, Burlington, MA) was used to image the brachial artery. The
143 probe was positioned on the distal one-third of the upper arm during the measurements.
144 Once an optimal image was found, the probe was held stable, whilst ultrasound parameters
145 were set to optimize the longitudinal, B-mode images of lumen-arterial wall interface.
146 Continuous Doppler velocity assessment was simultaneously obtained, and was collected
147 using the same insonation angle (always <60°). After a 1-minute baseline, the cuff placed
148 round the forearm was inflated at ~220 mmHg for 5 minutes, and then deflated for 3
149 minutes. Brachial artery diameter and blood flow were continuously recorded (Camtasia,
150 TechSmith, MI, USA) during the first minute baseline, the last 30-second of cuff inflation,

151 and the 3-minute of cuff deflation. FMD was calculated as the maximum percent increase
152 in brachial arterial diameter after cuff deflation as compared with resting diameter.
153 Measurements also included baseline (mm) and peak (mm) brachial diameters, adjusted
154 FMD (%), shear rate area under the curve (SR_{auc} , s), and time to peak (TTP, s) (Thijssen et
155 al. 2019).

156

157 *Interventions.* Immediately after the initial FMD measurement, participants remained
158 supine for 15 minutes to restore diameter and blood flow to normal level. Subsequently,
159 individuals underwent one of the 3 interventions. Each intervention lasted 30 minutes and
160 consisted of the manipulation of the brachial artery by inflation of a blood pressure cuff to
161 60 mmHg, as reported by previous studies (Schreuder et al. 2014; Thijssen et al. 2009).
162 Participants underwent one of the following interventions: 1) cuff placed on the forearm
163 inflated to 60 mmHg (Distal cuff); 2) cuff placed on the upper arm inflated to 60 mmHg
164 (Proximal cuff); and 3): cuff placed on the forearm + not inflated (Control). Since all
165 measurements were performed in the mid-brachial artery, cuff position on the forearm
166 meant that we insonated the artery proximal to the cuff location (Distal cuff), while cuff
167 position of the upper arm means that we insonated distal to the cuff location (Proximal
168 cuff). Brachial artery mean shear rate, pattern of shear rate (antegrade *versus* retrograde,
169 and oscillatory shear index [OSI]) (Black et al. 2008; Newcomer et al. 2008; Wu et al.
170 2004), diameter, mean blood flow and pattern of blood flow (antegrade *versus* retrograde)
171 were recorded for 1 minute at every 5-minute interval for each intervention. After 25
172 minutes of intervention heart rate and blood pressure were again measured.

173

174 **Data analysis**

175 Analysis of brachial artery diameter and shear rate during both FMD measurements and
176 also during the interventions was performed using custom-designed-edge-detection and
177 wall-tracking software, with an intra-observer coefficient of variation of 6.7% (Woodman
178 et al. 2001). After calibration, regions of interest (ROI) were selected for analysis of
179 diameter (from B-mode image) and blood flow (from blood flow velocity envelope) at 30
180 Hz (Black et al. 2008). All data were written to a file and used for further analysis in a
181 custom designed analysis package. Correction for within subject changes for baseline
182 diameter and SR_{auc} were made by using these parameters as covariates (Atkinson et al.
183 2013). After computing the logged values of baseline and peak diameter, the difference
184 between the logged baseline and logged peak diameter were used in a general linear model
185 as the outcome and logged baseline diameter was used as a covariate. The same procedure
186 was used for SR_{auc} analysis.

187

188 **Statistical analysis**

189 Data are presented as mean \pm standard deviation unless stated otherwise. The statistical
190 analyses were performed with GraphPad Prism 7.02 (GraphPad Software, Inc., La Jolla,
191 California, USA). Differences were defined as statistically significant when $p < 0.05$. After
192 ensuring a normal distribution, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to
193 compare baseline over the three conditions. A two-way repeated measures ANOVA
194 (condition x time) was used to compare all time points (every 5 minutes for 30 minutes)
195 between conditions for OSI. A similar two-way ANOVA with repeated measures for time
196 was used to examine whether the impact of cuff placement (“time”: pre *versus* post) on

197 endothelial function (FMD), blood pressure and heart rate differs between conditions
198 (“condition”). Tukey’s post hoc analyses on the Δ were used to identify differences. Post-
199 hoc paired *t*-test analyses (pre-post) were used for each variable. The analysis was repeated
200 with the correction for within-subject changes for baseline diameter and SR_{auc}.

201

202

203 **Results**

204 Mean (\pm SD) weight and body mass index were 75.9 ± 11.1 kg and 23.8 ± 2.6 kg.m⁻²
205 respectively. No cardiovascular risk factors or disease were reported. We found no
206 significant differences between the three conditions at baseline or during the interventions
207 for systolic blood pressure, diastolic blood pressure, or mean arterial pressure. We found a
208 significant time effect for heart rate after the intervention (Table 1), possibly influenced by
209 a longer resting period.

210

211 **Effect of cuff position on blood flow and shear pattern**

212 Two-way ANOVAs revealed an interaction for all SR variables. One-way ANOVAs post
213 hoc analyses on the Δ showed a significant decrease in mean SR during Proximal ($p=0.003$)
214 and Distal ($p=0.03$) cuff compared to Control with no differences between both cuff
215 interventions ($p=0.13$) (Figure 2). The same analysis showed a significant decrease in
216 antegrade SR in the Proximal cuff compared to the Distal cuff ($p=0.003$) and a trend
217 compared to Control ($p=0.08$). Retrograde SR were significantly increased in both cuff
218 interventions compared to Control ($p<0.001$ for both), with a greater effect on retrograde
219 SR for the Distal cuff condition ($p=0.02$ for Δ retrograde SR between both experimental

220 conditions, Figure 2). We also observed an increase in OSI during Distal cuff and Proximal
221 cuff compared to control, with no difference between cuff conditions (Figure 3). Blood
222 flow demonstrated similar results to SR (Table 2).

223

224 **Effect of cuff position on vessel diameter and FMD**

225 There were no differences for baseline or peak diameter, SR_{auc}, and TTP between
226 interventions at baseline (Table 3). A two-way ANOVA performed on pre and post data
227 across the 3 conditions revealed an interaction for FMD ($p=0.03$). Post-hoc paired *t*-tests
228 for time effect (pre-post) within conditions showed trends for both Distal ($p=0.07$) and
229 Proximal cuff ($p=0.06$) (Figure 4). Post-hoc analysis on the Δ FMD showed a significantly
230 different between the 2 experimental conditions ($p=0.04$, Table 3, Figure 4). Repeating the
231 analysis when correcting for within-subject changes for baseline diameter and SR_{auc}
232 confirmed our initial analysis.

233

234

235 **Discussion**

236 Our study compared the impact of different cuff placements on brachial artery endothelial
237 function. Our data suggest that an increase in retrograde SR impairs FMD, and that the
238 magnitude of this impairment can be mitigated by a contemporaneous decrease in
239 transmural pressure (Anderson et al. 1979; Bache and Schwartz 1982; de Leeuw et al.
240 2018).

241

242 In the present study, we used cuff inflation to manipulate blood flow and SR patterns. Both
243 cuff placements altered SR pattern by reducing the mean and retrograde blood flow and
244 SR, whereas antegrade blood flow and transmural pressure were only affected by the
245 proximal cuff placement. Elevated retrograde blood flow and SR have been shown to
246 increase endothelin 1 expression (Ziegler et al. 1998), expression of adhesion molecules
247 (Chappell et al. 1998; Himburg et al. 2007) and ROS-producing enzymes (De Keulenaer
248 et al. 1998; Hwang et al. 2003), the release of superoxide anions (McNally et al. 2003), and
249 decrease endothelial NO synthase expression (De Keulenaer et al. 1998; Hwang et al.
250 2003). Such changes result in impaired vasodilation and a pro-atherogenic phenotype in
251 the vascular wall (Green et al. 2017; Laughlin et al. 2008). In a previous study we observed
252 that forearm cuff inflation at 50 and 75 mmHg, during which antegrade SR remained
253 relatively stable and retrograde SR increased (Thijssen et al. 2009), resulted in decreased
254 FMD. In similar studies, our team have demonstrated that elevation in retrograde SR
255 attenuates brachial and superficial femoral artery FMD (Schreuder et al. 2014; Thijssen et
256 al. 2009; Tinken et al. 2009). In fact, a dose-dependent relationship is apparent between
257 the drop in FMD and increase in retrograde SR ($r=0.51$; $p=0.006$) (Thijssen et al. 2009).
258 These findings are consistent with our observations in the present study, in that the distal
259 cuff condition involving a large increase in retrograde SR and was also associated with a
260 decrease in FMD. While we cannot exclude possible impacts on coagulation and platelet
261 function, our within-subject design, and previous studies, suggest that retrograde shear rate
262 plays a key role in modulating FMD (Padilla et al. 2008).

263

264 We observed a significant interaction between cuff position on FMD responses ($p=0.03$).
265 In contrast to our findings with forearm cuff placement, placement of a cuff around the
266 upper arm resulted in an increase in FMD. Similar findings in 8 healthy males after a 5-
267 minute suprasystolic occlusion were observed in another study (Betik et al. 2004).
268 However, that study did not report blood flow and SR pattern. Both cuff conditions in our
269 study showed an increase of retrograde SR. Such an increase in retrograde shear could
270 explain the reduced FMD we observed in the Distal cuff condition. However, we also found
271 an increase in retrograde shear in the Proximal cuff condition, which was associated with
272 an *increase* in FMD. Such an increase in FMD cannot be explained on the basis of an
273 increase in retrograde shear, as such change is typically linked to a decrease in FMD
274 (Anderson et al. 1979; Bache and Schwartz 1982; de Leeuw et al. 2018; Stegehuis et al.
275 2018; Thijssen et al. 2009; van de Hoef et al. 2013). The increase in FMD is also unlikely
276 to be related to the decrease in antegrade shear, given that previous *in vitro* (Lie et al. 1970)
277 and *in vivo* (Doshi et al. 2001; Holder et al. 2019; Simmons et al. 2011; Tinken et al. 2009)
278 studies have related *enhanced* anterograde flow with improvement in endothelial function.

279
280 An alternative explanation for the increase in FMD after proximal cuff placement relates
281 to reduced transmural pressure. A previous study from our team assessed the impact of
282 acute exposure to elevations in transmural pressure on brachial artery diameter (Atkinson
283 et al. 2015). We observed a decrease in brachial artery function as a result of increased
284 transmural pressure which was independent of SR. This accords with our current study
285 where, despite decreases in antegrade and increases in retrograde flow and shear in the
286 proximal cuff condition, FMD did not decrease. A drop in transmural pressure seems the

287 most likely explanation for the enhanced FMD we observed after proximal cuff placement.
288 Previous *in vitro* and animal studies have reported a decrease in transmural pressure as a
289 result of stenosis or cuff inflation (Anderson et al. 1979; Bache and Schwartz 1982; de
290 Leeuw et al. 2018). Altering transmural pressure modifies vascular smooth muscle function
291 and tone in a manner that is not dependent of the endothelium-derived NO (Ekelund et al.
292 1992). Based on previous studies (Anderson et al. 1979; Bache and Schwartz 1982; de
293 Leeuw et al. 2018; Stegehuis et al. 2018; van de Hoef et al. 2013) we therefore suggest
294 that, whilst increases in retrograde SR impair FMD, the magnitude of this impairment can
295 be mitigated by a contemporaneous decrease in transmural pressure.

296

297 In coronary artery disease patients, invasive techniques have demonstrated that pressure
298 drop distal to a stenosis can improve the selection of patients who benefit from coronary
299 revascularization, versus the use of the coronary angiogram alone (van Nunen et al. 2015).
300 Such an approach may reduce exposure to mechanical revascularization and improve the
301 benefit of coronary interventions. Our study used cuff inflation to emulate shear patterns
302 that may also be observed in coronary arteries, providing insight into the impact of partial
303 occlusion on artery function using a non-invasive technique.

304

305 There are several limitations and caveats associated with our study. It is possible that the
306 increase FMD after the proximal cuff condition that we observed may have resulted from
307 a direct effect of proximal cuff placement on distal arterial smooth muscle (Agewall et al.
308 1999). However, our 30 min cuff inflation was not constrictive or ischemic and did not
309 induce muscle pain or any symptoms, suggesting that that direct downstream effects on the

310 artery wall were unlikely. Stenosis has an impact on blood flow, shear rate, and at extreme
311 levels, tissue oxygenation and perfusion. We did not assess the impact of 60 mmHg cuff
312 inflation on artery wall oxygenation and perfusion in our study. Considering that
313 oxygenation and perfusion in tissues were affected with a cuff above 80 mmHg (Abay and
314 Kyriacou 2016), it could be interesting to repeat our experimental design using a higher
315 cuff inflation. An omission of our study was that we did not directly measure transmural
316 pressure in the brachial artery. However, several previous studies have demonstrated the
317 presence of a drop in pressure distal from a stenosis, either present as a result of a
318 pathophysiologic process or induced mechanically under experimental conditions (Bache
319 and Schwartz 1982; Chatzizisis et al. 2007; Dirksen et al. 1998; Koskinas et al. 2009;
320 Laughlin et al. 2008; Stegehuis et al. 2018). Although shear stress could be different
321 depending on the placement of the probe in relation to the cuff, we standardised the location
322 of the cuff in both experimental conditions. Finally, our study was undertaken in healthy
323 young male volunteers and we did not have measures of fitness or physical activity levels.
324 Future studies could investigate the impacts of cuff inflation in women, with a range of
325 fitness levels and in clinical populations, such as those of advanced age, with obesity, and
326 hypertension which are characterized by elevated peripheral vascular tone and elevated
327 retrograde shear rate in conduit arteries.

328

329 In conclusion, the positioning of a cuff above or below the brachial artery alters blood flow,
330 SR, transmural pressure and endothelial function. Impaired endothelial function observed
331 after distal cuff inflation can be explained by the greater retrograde SR, in keeping with
332 previous evidence. We conclude that the increase in FMD we observed after proximal cuff

333 placement may be explained by a countervailing decrease in transmural pressure. Future
334 studies might utilize our dual cuff location approach to determine whether the balance
335 between shear and transmural pressure effects is protective, or detrimental, in distinct
336 clinical populations.

|337

338 **Compliance with ethical standards**

339 **Conflict of interest**

340 All authors declare no conflict of interests.

341

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347

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Tables and figures

Table 1. Blood pressure and heart rate responses to the interventions.

Control (n=25)		Distal cuff (n=25)		Proximal cuff (n=25)		ANOVA			
Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	P-value	Group effect	Time effect	Interaction
SBP, mmHg	118±7	118±8	117±9	116±9	119±9	119±9	0.41	0.47	0.97
DBP, mmHg	66±5	68±5	66±6	65±5	66±5	67±6	0.65	0.78	0.08
MAP, mmHg	86±4	87±4	87±5	86±3	87±5	87±6	0.71	0.95	0.53
HR, bpm	56±13	54±10	56±11	53±9	56±12	54±10	0.95	<0.001	0.95

Variables are expressed as mean ± SD.

SBP: Systolic blood pressure; DBP: Diastolic blood pressure; MAP: Mean arterial pressure; HR: Heart rate.

Table 2. Blood flow pattern at baseline and during each intervention

Control (n=25)		Distal cuff (n=25)		Proximal cuff (n=25)		ANOVA			
Baseline	Intervention	Baseline	Intervention	Baseline	Intervention	p-value	Group effect	Time effect	Interaction
Blood flow pattern									
Mean blood flow, mL.min ⁻¹	60.6±36.1	56.6±29.7	47.3±31.0	28.1±22.7	59.2±41.1	26.0±19.3**	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
Antegrade blood flow, mL.min ⁻¹	68.8±32.8	62.9±28.6	57.1±28.2	55.5±19.1	67.3±38.3	44.9±17*,¶	0.03	<0.01	0.001
Retrograde blood flow, mL.min ⁻¹	-8.3±11.3	-6.4±6.1	-9.8±9.6	-27.5±19.4\$\$	-8.2±9.2	-18.9±12.3**,¶	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
Blood flow velocity, cm.s ⁻¹	8.8±5.5	8.1±4.6	6.9±4.3	4.2±3.3§	8.1±5.0	3.7±2.8**	<0.001	<0.001	0.001

Variables are expressed as mean ± SD. Intervention value were averaged over the six time points (i.e. at 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30 minutes).

Tukey's multiple comparisons on the Δ: Proximal cuff vs. control, *p<0.05, **p<0.001; Distal cuff vs. control §p<0.05, §§p<0.001; Distal cuff vs. Proximal cuff ¶p<0.05, ¶¶p<0.001.

Table 3. Brachial artery function before and after the interventions

	Control (n=25)		Distal cuff (n=25)		Proximal cuff (n=25)		ANOVA			
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	p-value	Group effect	Time effect	Interaction
Baseline diameter, mm	3.86±0.44	3.88±0.43	3.90±0.41	3.87±0.39	3.88±0.38	3.89±0.37	0.98	0.91	0.48	
Peak diameter, mm	4.10±0.44	4.14±0.44	4.16±0.44	4.10±0.40	4.13±0.40	4.16±0.40	0.97	0.81	0.11	
FMD, %	6.3±2.8	6.7±3.3	6.9±2.3	6.1±2.5	6.3±2.0	6.9±2.0 [¶]	0.97	0.69	0.03	
SR _{auc} , s ⁻¹ 10 ³	23.0±10.9	19.3±9.6	18.8±8.9	17.8±6.5	19.8±8.3	18.1±7.6	0.42	0.005	0.28	
Time to peak, s	52±20	48±20	45±17	44±13	48±15	40±9	0.19	0.03	0.56	

Variables are expressed as mean ± SD.

FMD: Flow-mediated dilation; SR_{auc}: Shear rate area under the curve.

Distal cuff vs. Proximal cuff, [¶]p<0.05.

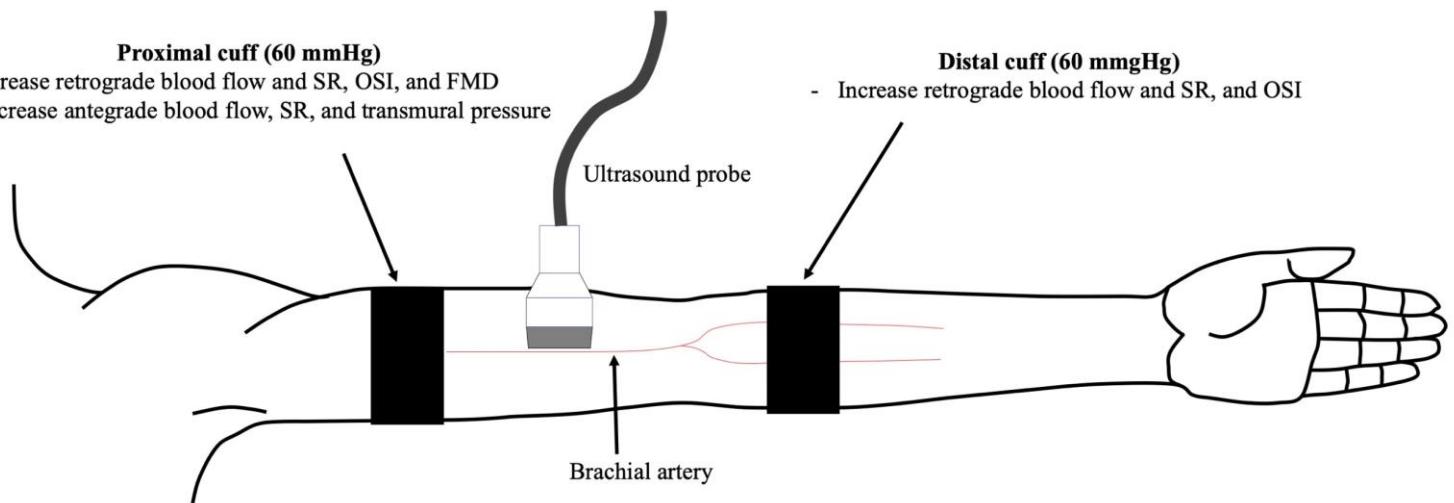


Figure 1: Schematic diagram of the both cuff interventions and placement of the ultrasound probe during the cuff intervention. The position for cuff used for the FMD assessment (cuff pressure >200 mmHg) was the same as that used for the Distal cuff condition (60 mmHg).

SR: Shear rate; OSI: Oscillatory shear index; FMD: Flow-mediated dilation.

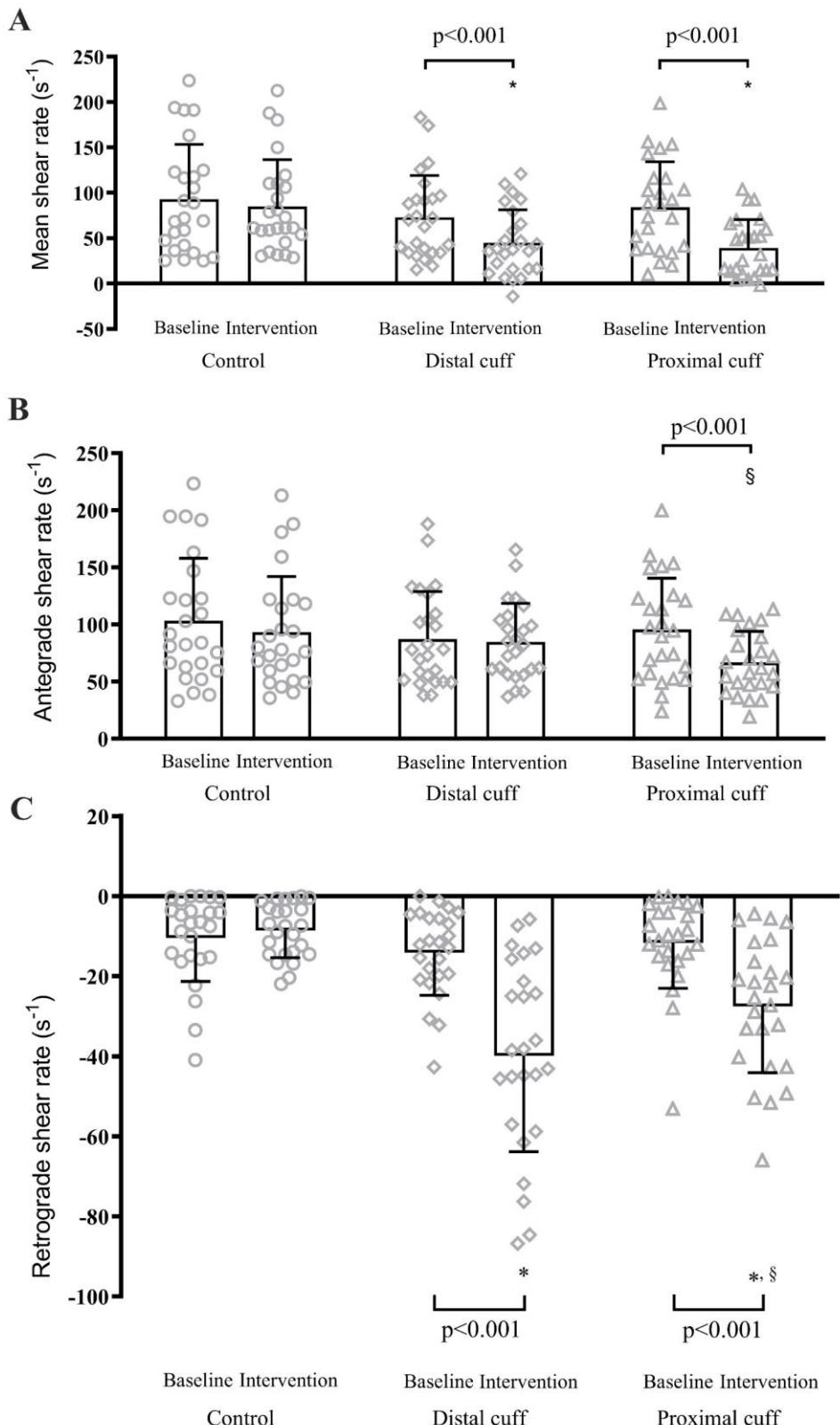


Figure 2: Group and individual mean shear rate (panel A) and shear rate pattern (antegrade shear rate (panel B), and retrograde shear rate (panel C)) at baseline and during intervention for each condition (Control, Distal cuff, and Proximal cuff) in healthy young men (n=25).

*: Compared to Control, $p < 0.05$; §: Distal cuff vs. Proximal cuff, $p < 0.05$, using a two-way ANOVA with repeated measures. P-values represent the paired t -test analysis (pre-post) in each condition. Error bars represent SD.

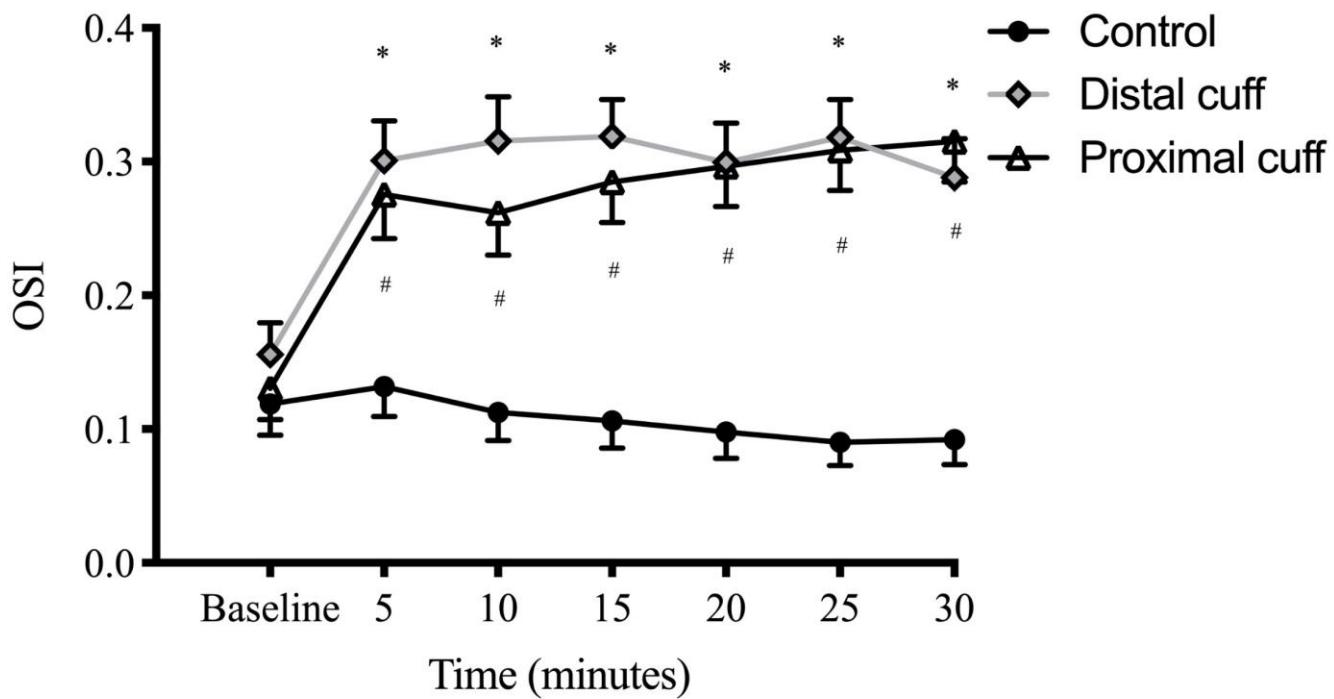


Figure 3: Oscillatory shear index (OSI) during the 30-minute intervention between the three conditions (Control condition ● ; Proximal cuff condition □ ; Distal cuff condition Δ) in healthy young men (n=25). *: Distal cuff vs. Control, p<0.001; #: Proximal cuff vs. Control, p<0.001 at the same time point. Error bars represent SD.

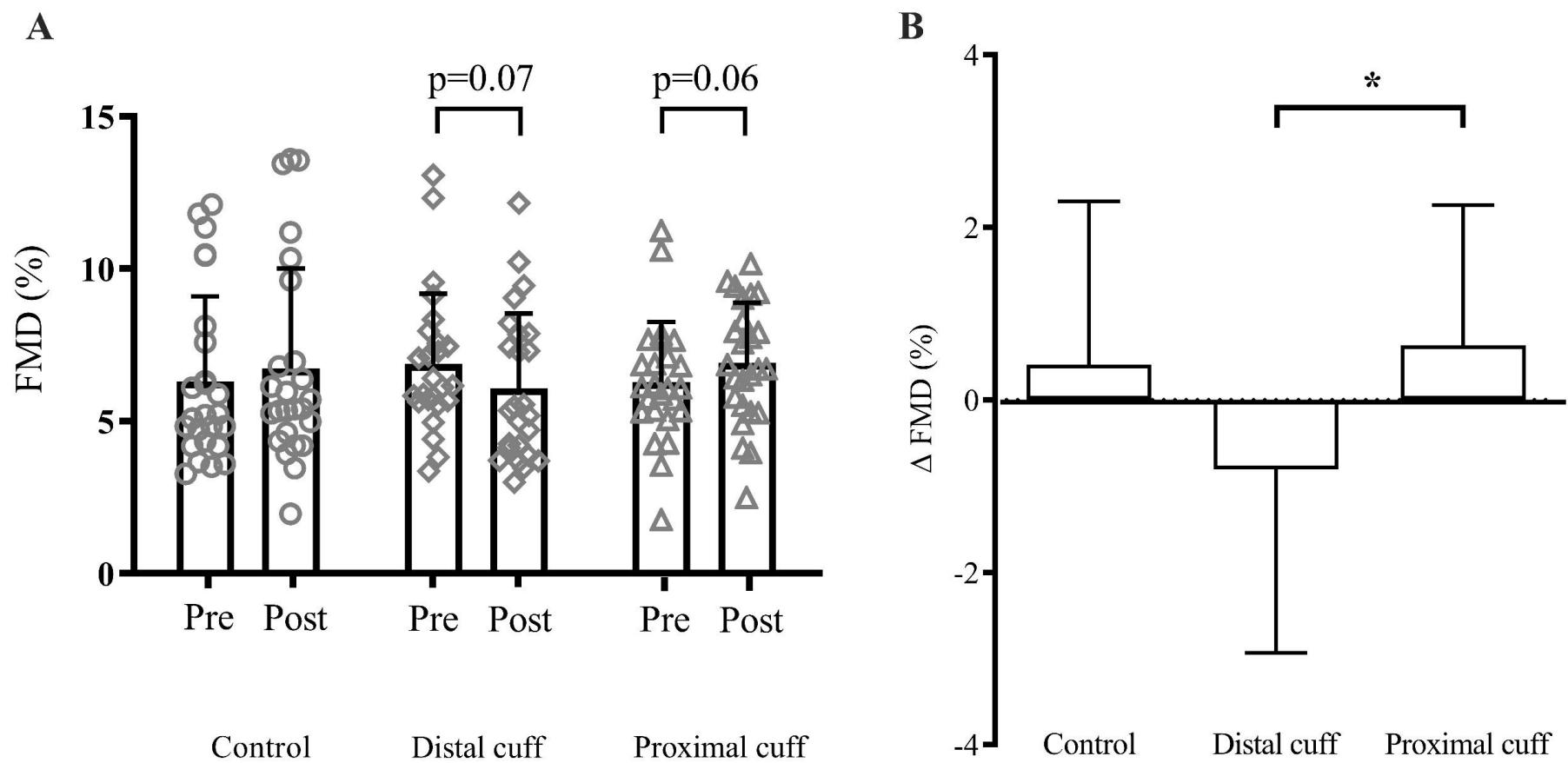


Figure 4: Group and individual flow-mediated dilation (FMD) responses (panel A) and changes in FMD (post-pre: Δ FMD, panel B,) to the Control, Distal cuff and Proximal cuff interventions in healthy young men ($n=25$). * $p<0.05$. Error bars represent SD.