



Autophagy: Chapter 22. Role of Autophagy in Heart Disease

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Impaired autophagic machinery is implicated in heart disease, which still remains one of the leading causes of mortality and morbidity worldwide. Although basal levels of autophagy are required for cardiomyocyte survival, dysregulation of autophagy has been linked to a change in susceptibility to cell death. Autophagy is a catabolic process that degrades long-lived proteins by dynamic rearrangements of membrane structures, sequestering proteins and damaged organelles into autophagosomes. In the diseased myocardium, the majority of cell death that manifests in the infarction occurs during ischemia, where autophagy, apoptosis, and necrosis are inextricably and dynamically linked to one another. Recent evidence suggests that the control of autophagic flux during myocardial disease pathogenesis can be utilized for therapeutic gain. Although we have progressed in understanding the molecular machinery and regulation of the autophagic pathway, many unanswered questions remain with regard to the mechanisms that determine cellular fate in the diseased myocardium. Here we provide an overview addressing protective and detrimental functions of autophagy in the heart. By highlighting the role of autophagy, and its flux and metabolism in the context of energetic sensing in the myocardium, this chapter discusses possible applications of current understanding, challenges, and unanswered questions regarding the treatment of heart disease.

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