



## Cardiogenic shock

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Cardiogenic shock is a complex syndrome defined by systemic hypoperfusion and inadequate cardiac output arising from a wide array of underlying causes. Although the understanding of cardiogenic shock epidemiology, specific subphenotypes, haemodynamics, and cardiogenic shock severity staging has evolved, few therapeutic interventions have shown survival benefit. Results from seminal randomised controlled trials support early revascularisation of the culprit vessel in infarct-related cardiogenic shock and provide evidence of improved survival with the use of temporary circulatory support in selected patients. However, numerous questions remain unanswered, including optimal pharmacotherapy regimens, the role of mechanical circulatory support devices, management of secondary organ dysfunction, and best supportive care. This Review summarises current definitions, pathophysiological principles, and management approaches in cardiogenic shock, and highlights key knowledge gaps to advance individualised shock therapy and the evidence-based ethical use of modern technology and resources in cardiogenic shock.

### Introduction

Cardiogenic shock is a complex syndrome characterised by inadequate tissue perfusion due to reduced cardiac output resulting from a wide array of underlying causes.<sup>1</sup> The short-term mortality rate of cardiogenic shock has stagnated at around 40–50%<sup>2–7</sup> despite advances in cardiovascular critical care. Understanding of cardiogenic shock, a complex condition including diverse causes, haemodynamic subtypes, patient-specific variables, and clinical trajectories, has advanced through mechanistic studies and in-depth analyses of large datasets. Most randomised clinical trials evaluating pharmacological or device-based treatment options for the management of cardiogenic shock have not shown clinical benefit, which might partly be due to eligibility criteria that allowed for the inclusion of heterogeneous cardiogenic shock populations.<sup>2,5–9</sup> These insights have tempered expectations of treatment options to improve outcomes when broadly applied in unselected cardiogenic shock populations, and have shifted scientific efforts towards the identification of targeted therapeutic strategies. This Review provides an overview of cardiogenic shock definitions, pathophysiological concepts, current management approaches, and key research questions (panel).

### Definition and classification

Cardiogenic shock is broadly defined as insufficient organ perfusion resulting from cardiac dysfunction.<sup>1,10–12</sup>

#### Search strategy and selection criteria

We searched PubMed for literature published from May 1, 1999, to May 31, 2024, using the search term “cardiogenic shock” in combination with key terms related to pharmacotherapy, revascularisation, mechanical circulatory support, infarct-related mechanical complications, management of organ dysfunction, and supportive care (appendix p 31). We included relevant publications in English with an adult patient population, focusing on randomised controlled trials and large observational studies.

To standardise the definition, the Shock Academic Research Consortium (SHARC) expert panel established specific criteria to enhance consistency across cardiogenic shock clinical trials and registries.<sup>1</sup> Integral elements of the SHARC definition are: a systolic blood pressure below 90 mm Hg for more than 30 min or the need for inotropes, vasopressors, or mechanical circulatory support (MCS) to maintain adequate blood pressure, alongside evidence of systemic hypoperfusion. The SHARC definition also recognises the normotensive cardiogenic shock subtype defined by evidence of hypoperfusion despite systolic blood pressure equal to or greater than 90 mm Hg without the need for vasopressors, inotropes, or MCS, with other potential causes of markers of hypoperfusion excluded. A low cardiac index value of less than or equal to 2.2 L/(min·m<sup>2</sup>) and a high systemic vascular resistance index of more than 2200 dynes/(cm<sup>2</sup>·sec<sup>5</sup>) have been recognised as thresholds for cardiogenic shock, but objective data from advanced haemodynamic monitoring might not always be available.<sup>1</sup> Cardiogenic shock is often recognised on the basis of readily available signs of organ hypoperfusion, such as elevated arterial lactate, liver and kidney failure, cold or clammy extremities, or altered mental status in a patient with acute cardiac compromise.<sup>11</sup> Signs of volume overload and congestion can be present on physical examination, imaging, and haemodynamic monitoring.

In 2022, the Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions (SCAI) updated a widely used staging system to categorise cardiogenic shock severity on the basis of haemodynamic status, markers of hypoperfusion, and use of advanced circulatory support, ranging from A (at risk) to E (extremis).<sup>13</sup> Hypoperfusion is absent in lower SCAI stages (A and B) despite the presence of hypotension in stage B, but organ hypoperfusion requiring intervention defines shock in advanced SCAI stages (C to E). Higher SCAI stages have consistently been shown to correlate with higher short-term mortality, despite considerable differences in the populations analysed across validation studies.<sup>13–17</sup> The current SCAI

**Panel: Key gaps in evidence****Definition**

- Subtype criteria regarding haemodynamics, aetiology, predominantly affected system (left vs right vs biventricular failure) and severity of organ dysfunction
- Validity of proposed subphenotypes

**Prognostication**

- Prospective validation of existing models in large cohorts
- Risk prediction models focused on neurological and quality of life outcomes
- Prediction models for preclinical settings
- Integration of high-frequency data from laboratory and haemodynamic assessments
- Deep phenotyping using machine learning techniques
- Models to predict benefit from existing therapies
- Criteria for futility
- Identification of the need for durable ventricular assist device implantation or heart transplantation
- Multimodal subphenotyping

**Pharmacotherapy**

- Efficacy and safety of novel substances
- Optimal pharmacotherapeutic strategy for different cardiogenic shock subtypes
- Weaning protocols
- Haemodynamic targets
- Adjunctive therapies in mixed cardiogenic-vasodilatory shock
- Targeted therapies based on biomarker profile

**Revascularisation**

- Radial versus femoral access
- Efficacy and safety of intravenous platelet inhibition
- Role of coronary artery bypass grafting in emergency situations and in patients with mechanical complications related to myocardial infarction

**Mechanical circulatory support**

- Optimal patient selection
- Role in cardiogenic shock types other than ST-elevation myocardial infarction
- Timing of initiation, escalation, and weaning
- Combined mechanical circulatory support strategies
- Prevention and management of complications

**Management of organ dysfunction and supportive care**

- Optimal transfusion thresholds for patients with and without mechanical circulatory support
- Ventilation and sedation strategies
- Optimal renal replacement strategy in different forms of cardiogenic shock
- Early assessment of brain damage

**Long-term sequelae and associated costs**

- Prevention, early detection, and optimal management of physical and mental sequelae
- Long-term health-related quality of life
- Cost-effectiveness of novel device-based and medical treatment options
- Cost-effectiveness of different staffing models
- Costs associated with long-term follow-up and persisting organ dysfunction in survivors

**Clinical trial design**

- Evaluation of routine imaging parameters as inclusion criteria
- Consideration of neurological outcomes and quality of life measures as trial endpoints
- Further development of registry-based randomised controlled trials
- Separate investigation of patients after cardiac arrest
- Integration of durable ventricular assist device implantation and transplant into composite outcomes

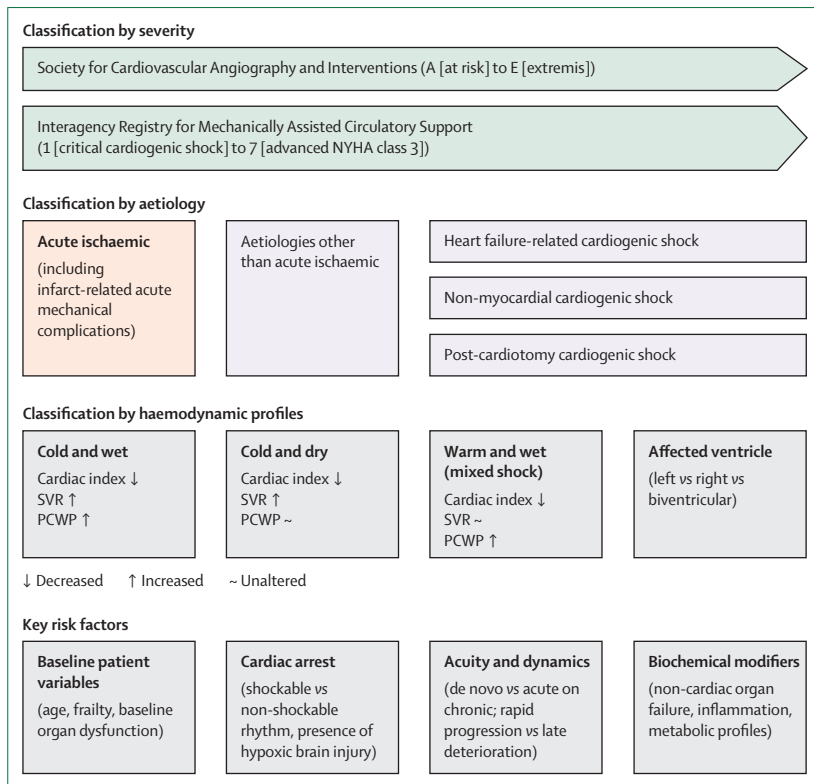
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classification can be further refined with the incorporation of the cause of the cardiogenic shock, affected ventricle (left, right, or biventricular failure), the dynamic state of haemodynamic compromise over time, non-modifiable risk factors, and biochemical profiles. The inclusion of additional variables, such as cardiac arrest with potential anoxic brain injury, the number of pharmacological agents and circulatory support devices (as proposed by the Cardiogenic Shock Working Group<sup>17</sup>), or organ function assessment (as recommended by the 2020 Critical Care Clinical Trialists Workshop<sup>18</sup>) could improve baseline risk estimation and the guidance of interventions.<sup>13,17,18</sup> Furthermore, the Interagency Registry for Mechanically Assisted Circulatory Support classification provides a less refined assessment of cardiogenic shock severity, but can be a useful communication and prognostic tool for patients being evaluated for heart transplantation or durable left ventricular assist device implantation.<sup>19,20</sup>

Criteria for the classification of cardiogenic shock (figure 1) will undoubtedly continue to evolve as machine learning-based clustering algorithms and other advanced statistical techniques, such as latent class analysis, are explored to identify subphenotypes and treatable traits of this condition.<sup>21</sup> The widespread acceptance of a universal definition that includes a standardised severity assessment strategy and incorporates clinically meaningful cardiogenic shock subtypes will be essential to harmonise scientific efforts and advance personalised management.<sup>21–23</sup>

**Aetiology**

As treatment strategies for acute myocardial infarction (AMI) advance with improved prevention and early revascularisation, the proportion of cardiogenic shock cases attributable to acute coronary syndromes appears to be declining—however, AMI remains a major cause of cardiogenic shock.<sup>24–27</sup> According to current European registry data, 5–15% of patients who have had an AMI also had



**Figure 1: Classification systems and key risk factors for cardiogenic shock**  
 NYHA=New York Heart Association. PCWP=pulmonary capillary wedge pressure. SVR=systemic vascular resistance.

cardiogenic shock.<sup>26,28</sup> Cardiogenic shock unrelated to AMI has outnumbered AMI-related cardiogenic shock in several studies, highlighting the changing epidemiology of cardiogenic shock to increasingly include de novo or acute on chronic heart failure-related cardiogenic shock, post-cardiotomy cardiogenic shock, and non-myocardial cardiogenic shock causes (appendix p 1).<sup>1,25,29–32</sup> Less common cardiogenic shock causes unrelated to AMI include pericardial diseases, valvular heart diseases, arrhythmias, inflammatory cardiomyopathies, peripartum cardiomyopathy, and cor pulmonale (eg, massive pulmonary embolism). Post-cardiotomy cardiogenic shock represents another distinct subtype, often related to postoperative right ventricular dysfunction, systemic inflammatory response syndrome, and an array of potential short-term complications.<sup>1,12</sup> Rapid identification of the underlying cause is essential for evaluating tailored treatment options and adapting circulatory support to pathophysiological mechanisms, such as severe valvular disease. The current imbalance between the clinical importance of and scarcity of quality evidence in cardiogenic shock unrelated to AMI limits development of cause-specific management algorithms and therapeutic interventions.<sup>32</sup>

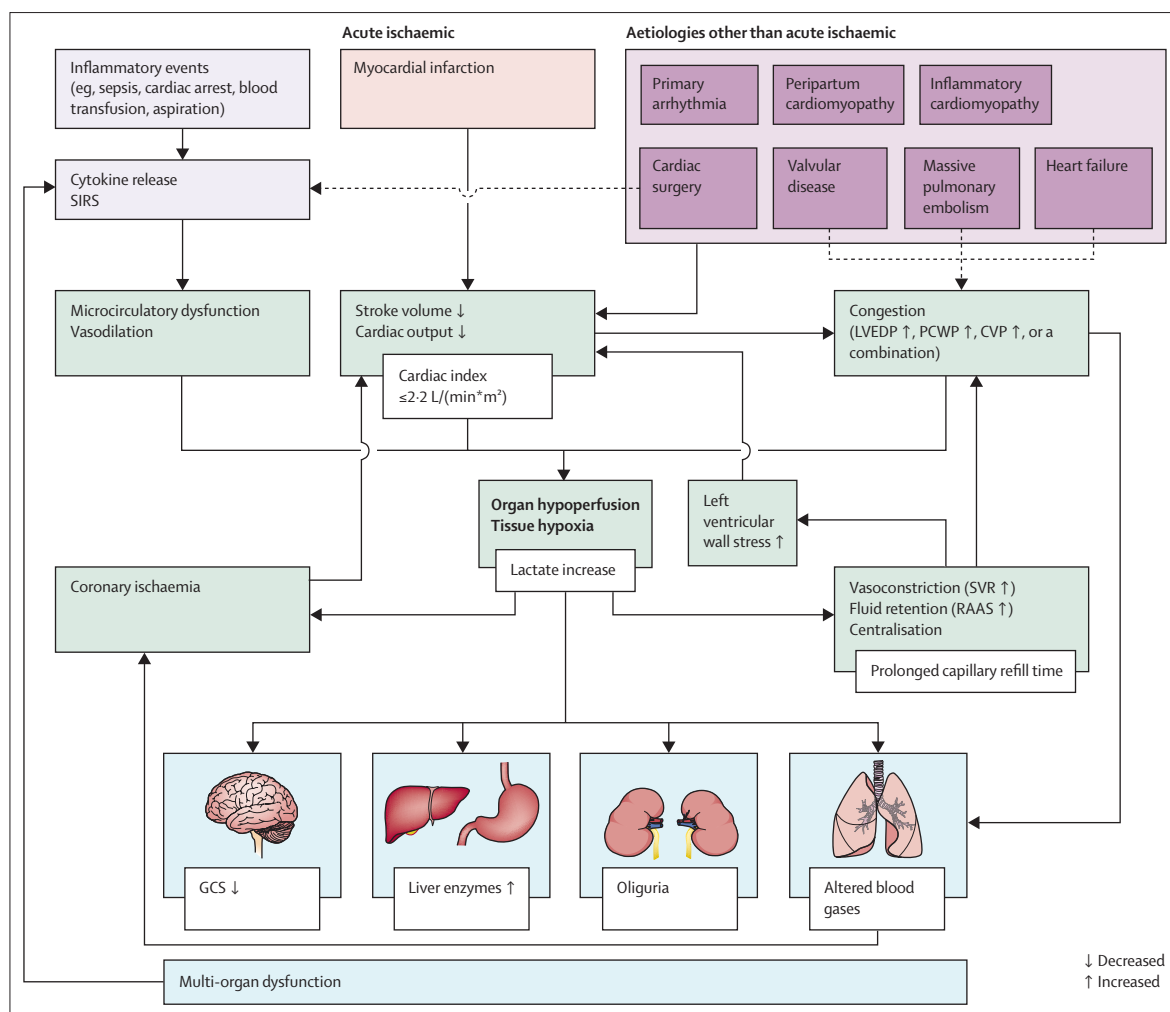
### Pathophysiology

The fundamental haemodynamic trigger of cardiogenic shock is an inability to maintain an adequate stroke

volume despite sufficient preload, leading to reduced cardiac output and tissue hypoperfusion (figure 2). Peripheral vasoconstriction and fluid retention in cardiogenic shock are early and important compensatory mechanisms that attempt to preserve organ perfusion, but ultimately worsen the haemodynamic state by aggravating preload and afterload mismatch, which results in worsening congestion aggravated by diastolic dysfunction. Together, the immediate macrocirculatory changes of decreased cardiac index, elevated pulmonary capillary wedge pressure and central venous pressure, and sympathetic and neurohormonal activation (endogenous catecholamine release, increased systemic vascular resistance, and activation of the renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system) constitute the pathophysiological foundation of the classic so-called cold (referring to peripheral perfusion) and wet (referring to filling pressures) cardiogenic shock phenotype.<sup>11,12</sup> Adrenergic vasoconstriction increases left ventricular afterload and wall stress, further diminishing cardiac output. Hypotension can be aggravated by paradoxical vasodilation and a reduction of systemic vascular resistance due to inflammatory activation, resulting in either a warm and wet or mixed cardiogenic shock phenotype.<sup>11</sup> The release of proinflammatory cytokines triggered by hypoxic tissue damage (including systemic ischaemia-reperfusion injury after cardiac arrest) might be compounded by immunological reactions related to intestinal microbial translocation, bacteraemia, blood transfusions, or aspiration.<sup>33,34</sup> Activated nitric oxide synthase, TNF- $\alpha$ , and interleukins are key effectors of peripheral vasodilation and microcirculatory dysfunction.<sup>11,35</sup> In addition to these global processes, pulmonary congestion and oedema might impair gas exchange, aggravate tissue hypoxia, increase work of breathing, increase right ventricular afterload from hypoxic pulmonary vasoconstriction, and exacerbate myocardial ischaemia, which results in deterioration of ventricular function. If therapeutic interventions do not restore cardiac output and organ perfusion in a timely manner, coronary and systemic hypoperfusion and multi-organ failure become progressively worse. Metabolic derangements from acute kidney injury and congestive hepatopathy can dominate the clinical picture, referred to as haemometabolic shock.

Biventricular failure in cardiogenic shock is common, with right ventricular dysfunction seen in 38% of patients with AMI-related cardiogenic shock in the SHOCK trial,<sup>36</sup> and even higher rates seen in cardiogenic shock unrelated to AMI.<sup>16</sup> The uncommon right ventricular-predominant cardiogenic shock subtype, characterised by normal pulmonary capillary wedge pressure with elevated central venous pressure and decreased right ventricular function (as reflected by reduced pulmonary artery pulsatility index and right ventricular stroke work index), leads to insufficient left ventricular filling.<sup>36</sup> The right ventricle possesses less contractile power and is particularly sensitive to

See Online for appendix



**Figure 2: Summary of main causes and pathophysiological mechanisms of cardiogenic shock**

Dotted lines indicate potential secondary mechanisms contributing to cardiogenic shock. CVP=central venous pressure. GCS=Glasgow Coma Scale. LVEDP=left ventricular end-diastolic pressure. PCWP=pulmonary capillary wedge pressure. RAAS=renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system. SIRS=systemic inflammatory response syndrome. SVR=systemic vascular resistance.

sudden increases in pulmonary vascular resistance and intraventricular pressures, as seen in acute cor pulmonale.<sup>37</sup>

### Prognostication

Development of prediction models with high accuracy for progression or death in patients with cardiogenic shock is challenging due to the high baseline risk and the fact that prognostic determinants are difficult to quantify. Such models would ideally enable rapid and reproducible risk assessment in acute settings and account for the dynamic clinical course inherent to cardiogenic shock. However, as of yet, no model has shown value for therapeutic selection. The proposed SCAI three axis model of cardiogenic shock includes shock severity, phenotype and aetiology, and risk factors (modifiable and non-modifiable)—although this framework has not been validated for clinical decision making, an application for temporary MCS selection has been suggested.<sup>13</sup>

Established severity of illness scores from the general intensive care setting have been superseded by scoring systems derived from randomised controlled trial (RCTs; appendix pp 2–3). The CardShock score<sup>24,38</sup> and Cardiogenic Shock Score<sup>39</sup> are externally validated risk predictors for mixed cardiogenic shock populations. The SHOCK trial and registry score,<sup>40</sup> IABP-SHOCK II score,<sup>38,41</sup> and the non-subjective biomarker-based cystatin C, lactate, interleukin-6, and N-terminal pro-B-type natriuretic peptide score<sup>42</sup> have shown usefulness for prognostication in AMI-related cardiogenic shock. Patients at risk of developing overt cardiogenic shock during hospitalisation for acute coronary syndromes could be identified using the Observatoire Régional Breton sur l'Infarctus risk score and circulating dipeptidyl peptidase 3 (DPP3), a novel biomarker reflecting haemodynamic derangement.<sup>43,44</sup> Furthermore, the survival after venoarterial extracorporeal membrane

oxygenation (VA-ECMO) and prediction of cardiogenic shock outcome for AMI patients salvaged by VA-ECMO (ENCOURAGE) scores have shown reasonably good performance in patients treated with VA-ECMO.<sup>45,46</sup> However, no consensus currently exists regarding incorporation of these scores into decision-making algorithms to initiate temporary MCS.<sup>10,11</sup> Generally, factors associated with increased mortality are older age, lower blood pressure, higher requirements for vasoactive medications, higher lactate, poorer kidney function, chronic heart failure, and high risk of or demonstrated hypoxic brain injury.<sup>13,47–50</sup>

The approach to the incorporation of biomarkers is changing rapidly with the advent of current so-called omics approaches, with artificial intelligence potentially leading to improved prediction models as seen by the combination of four circulating proteins with the CardShock score, and circulating DPP3.<sup>44,51–53</sup> Several studies using a multimodal approach detected few phenotypes that could lead to future predictive trials in cardiogenic shock.<sup>23,54,55</sup> A crucial unanswered question is how best to leverage prognostic information provided by these scores to improve patient care, as individuals at high risk might not necessarily respond better to more intensive therapies.

## Management of cardiogenic shock

### Systems of care

Standardising institutional cardiogenic shock care is a key challenge. Such standardisation involves multidisciplinary shock teams,<sup>56,57</sup> with input from cardiac interventionalists, intensivists, surgeons, and heart failure specialists needed to facilitate early diagnosis, repeated assessment, and rapid decision making. Standardisation also involves regional networks of care that follow a hub and spoke model, where patient needs are adapted to the respective capabilities of member institutions, for example the constant availability of percutaneous coronary intervention, advanced cardiac imaging, specialised cardiac intensive care units, and access to MCS or heart transplantation evaluation. Transfer of patients with acute respiratory failure to a specialist extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) centre has been shown to improve survival without severe disability,<sup>58</sup> which could theoretically apply to patients with cardiogenic shock under consideration for advanced circulatory support. Designing regional cardiogenic shock networks is a challenging public health endeavour, but these efforts could contribute to more equitable resource allocation and higher quality of care. An increasing number of centres have put these principles into practice, with data suggesting improved outcomes.<sup>31,57,59–61</sup> Communications between spoke and hub centres should be bilateral, not only during the acute management and transfer of the patients but also in the long term to establish common procedures and optimal continuity and management in the spoke centre, during

transport, and at arrival in the hub centre.<sup>62,63</sup> Despite these results, the benefits of cardiogenic shock teams, evidence-based protocols, and interinstitutional operating procedures require confirmation in larger, multicentre, and ideally international studies.

### Pharmacotherapy

First-line interventions to stabilise patients in cardiogenic shock typically include optimisation of volume status and administration of vasoactive and inotropic agents (appendix pp 4–6).<sup>11</sup> However, evidence regarding drug selection for circulatory support, complication rates, standardised assessment of drug failure, and treatment targets in cardiogenic shock is limited and partly extrapolated from studies focusing on other shock entities (appendix pp 7–9).<sup>11,64–67</sup>

Catecholamine titration to the lowest possible dose that maintains adequate organ perfusion is advisable to avoid undesired adrenergic effects.<sup>68</sup> One source of evidence informing current guideline recommendations is the randomised SOAP II trial, which showed a lower risk of tachyarrhythmias with norepinephrine as compared with dopamine in a general shock population, and a nominally lower 28-day mortality in patients in cardiogenic shock, although this subgroup analysis was not powered for mortality.<sup>10,11,69</sup> Similarly, the OPTIMA-CC trial investigating efficacy and safety of epinephrine compared with norepinephrine in AMI-related cardiogenic shock (n=57) was terminated early because of a significantly higher incidence of refractory shock in the epinephrine group (37% vs 7%; p=0.008), possibly related to the higher risk of catecholamine-induced myocardial injury.<sup>70</sup> Reflecting the limitations of these trials and observational data, the American Heart Association practice guidelines do not unanimously recommend one specific first-line vasopressor; however, the European Society of Cardiology guidelines do recommend norepinephrine as a first-line vasopressor (Class IIb, level of evidence B).<sup>10,11,71,72</sup>

In current practice, dobutamine is the most frequently used inodilator, despite being associated with dysfunctional remodelling, higher oxygen demand, and risk of arrhythmias.<sup>73–75</sup> The efficacy of milrinone was investigated in the randomised DOREMI trial (94% of participants in SCAI stages C–E), finding no significant difference compared with dobutamine regarding the composite of in-hospital death, resuscitated cardiac arrest, non-fatal myocardial infarction, stroke, transient ischaemic attack, rate of cardiac transplantation or MCS, or renal replacement therapy.<sup>76</sup> A post-hoc analysis of the DOREMI trial suggests that a higher average mean arterial pressure in the initial treatment phase might be associated with better outcomes; however, this result should be interpreted with caution considering potential reverse causation and confounding.<sup>77</sup> The placebo-controlled CAPITAL DOREMI 2 trial is currently investigating in-hospital mortality and haemodynamic deterioration in patients with SCAI C or D stage cardiogenic shock

receiving milrinone or dobutamine versus placebo (NCT05267886). Levosimendan, a calcium-sensitiser and phosphodiesterase III-inhibitor, which is available in Europe but not in the USA, was purported to have a more favourable risk profile compared with dobutamine in cardiogenic shock.<sup>75</sup> However, in 1327 patients randomly assigned to receive either levosimendan or dobutamine in the SURVIVE trial, no significant difference in 1-month and 6-month survival was observed.<sup>8</sup> Because its mechanism of action is independent of adrenergic receptors, levosimendan might theoretically have potential for patients treated with beta-blockers at the time of cardiogenic shock onset, but its long pharmacological half-life presents a challenge.<sup>78</sup> In a network meta-analysis including seven RCTs, levosimendan was associated with lower mortality compared with placebo, although this finding might not be applicable to patients in more advanced shock stages (given that a substantial proportion of included patients were in SCAI A or B stage shock).<sup>79</sup> Results from the upcoming LevoHeartShock trial (NCT04020263), assessing the influence of levosimendan compared with placebo on short-term outcomes (30-day mortality, VA-ECMO, or renal replacement therapy) in patients with cardiogenic shock could provide answers for this gap in evidence.

Novel pharmacological approaches are also emerging. Adrenomedullin regulates vascular tone and showed anti-apoptotic effects on cardiomyocytes in an AMI mouse model.<sup>80</sup> However, the randomised ACCOST-HH trial reported no significant difference in short-term need for cardiovascular organ support and mortality among 77 patients with cardiogenic shock receiving adrenergic antagonist, a non-neutralising antibody that increases circulating adrenomedullin levels.<sup>3</sup> In a randomised crossover trial including 12 patients with cardiogenic shock, an enteral bolus of ketone ester led to significantly improved cardiac power output, left ventricular ejection fraction, and mixed venous saturation, without relevant effects on mean arterial pressure.<sup>81</sup> Given its potential involvement in cardiogenic shock pathophysiology and cardio-depressive properties, inhibition of circulating DPP3 could restore cardiac function, as shown in a murine isoproterenol-induced heart failure model.<sup>82</sup> Exploration of promising novel substances, such as ketone ester, circulating DPP3 inhibitors, or istaroxime, together with additional data from late stage clinical trials, can inform future pharmacological management of cardiogenic shock (appendix p 10).<sup>81–83</sup>

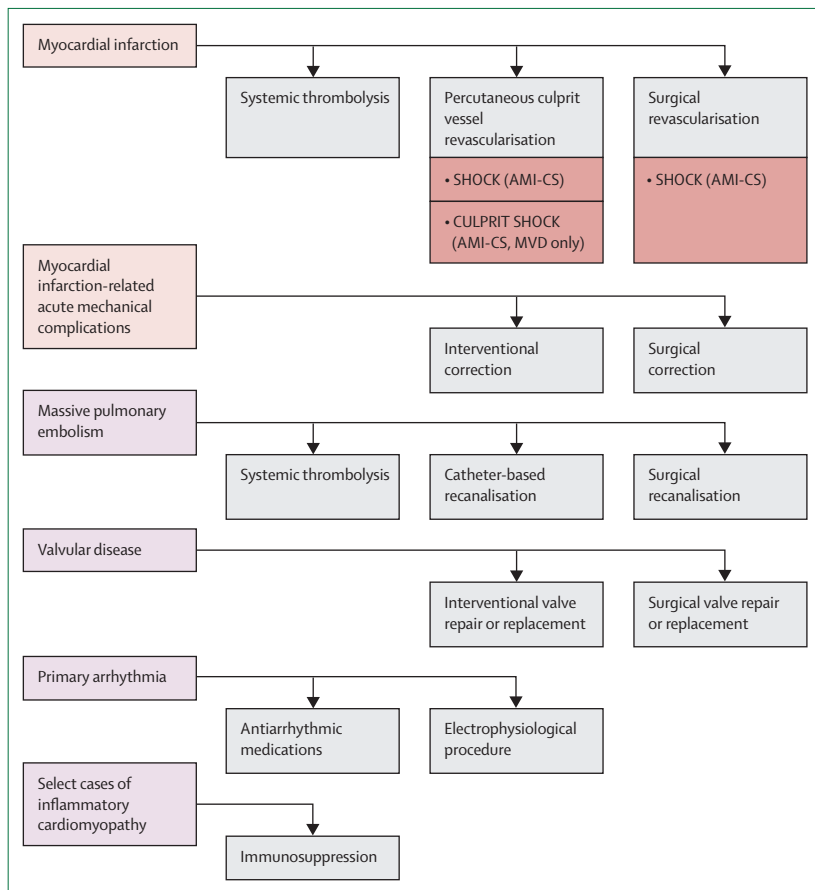
### Coronary revascularisation

RCT-based evidence published over the last 25 years has warranted a Class I recommendation (Level of Evidence B [European Society of Cardiology], B-Randomised [American Heart Association]) for early revascularisation of the culprit lesion in patients with AMI-related cardiogenic shock (figure 3; appendix pp 11–13).<sup>4,84–88</sup> Pioneering results from the

SHOCK trial showed long-term survival benefit in patients with AMI-related cardiogenic shock (n=302) who were randomly assigned to receive emergency interventional or surgical revascularisation within 12 h after cardiogenic shock onset versus initial medical therapy, irrespective of age, sex, or diabetes status.<sup>86,87,89</sup> Furthermore, multivessel coronary artery disease is prevalent in approximately 75% of patients with AMI-related cardiogenic shock and is associated with increased mortality.<sup>5,6,90</sup> Results from the randomised CULPRIT-SHOCK trial indicate that percutaneous coronary intervention of the infarct-related artery and delayed staged complete revascularisation, as opposed to immediate multivessel percutaneous coronary intervention, significantly reduces 30-day all-cause mortality and the need for renal replacement therapy (relative risk [RR] 0·83 [95% CI 0·71–0·96]).<sup>4</sup> Optimal strategies for combined anti-thrombotic therapy after percutaneous coronary intervention in patients with AMI-related cardiogenic shock is a matter of ongoing research.<sup>11</sup> Considering potential alterations in oral bioavailability of P2Y<sub>12</sub> inhibitors related to opioids, gastrointestinal hypoperfusion, and other factors, the efficacy of intravenous cangrelor in this context is currently being investigated in the randomised DAPT-SHOCK-AMI trial (NCT03551964; appendix p 14).

Despite observational data suggesting lower mortality in primary coronary artery bypass grafting compared with the current standard primary percutaneous coronary intervention strategies, the overall percentage of early coronary artery bypass grafting performed has decreased from 24·5% in the SHOCK trial to less than 5% in more recent trials and registries.<sup>5,6,86,91–93</sup> In the absence of additional data, surgical revascularisation remains an essential option in case of unsuccessful or infeasible percutaneous coronary intervention, mechanical complications, and staged hybrid coronary artery bypass grafting approaches after initial culprit lesion percutaneous coronary intervention.<sup>84,94</sup>

Since the publication of the SHOCK trial, revascularisation rates among patients with AMI-related cardiogenic shock have improved.<sup>6,26,92,95,96</sup> However, despite the association with long-term survival, a 2023 population-based study in Canada showed that percutaneous coronary intervention or coronary artery bypass grafting is performed in only 65% of cases.<sup>96</sup> Factors such as cardiogenic shock before admission, longer time interval between symptom onset and revascularisation, and resuscitation following cardiac arrest are associated with worse outcomes, highlighting the importance of regionalised systems of care and cardiogenic shock protocols to streamline decision making regarding reperfusion therapy for ST-elevation myocardial infarction and selection of suitable advanced management facilities.<sup>49,97–99</sup> On the basis of data from the National Inpatient Sample and other registries, current guidelines endorse the role of high-volume cardiogenic shock centres in coordinating patient logistics and



**Figure 3: Emergent treatment of specific underlying causes of cardiogenic shock**  
Key medical treatment strategies are summarised in the first column, interventional strategies in the second column, and surgical strategies in the third column. Boxes underneath management options indicate mortality-powered randomised controlled trials investigating specific treatment approaches (trial patient population is included in brackets). AMI-CS=acute myocardial infarction-related cardiogenic shock. MVD=multivessel disease.

establishing optimal revascularisation strategies within multidisciplinary heart teams.<sup>11,12,100,101</sup>

**Mechanical circulatory support**

Optimal pharmacotherapy and treatment of the underlying cardiogenic shock cause might not stabilise patients in advanced shock stages. Since the early 1960s, several temporary MCS devices—providing different degrees of haemodynamic and respiratory support—have been developed for patients with cardiogenic shock.<sup>102,103</sup> However, scarce clinical trial evidence exists to support MCS deployment as a bridge to recovery, bridge to decision, durable assist device implantation, or heart transplantation (figure 4; appendix pp 4–5, 15–16).<sup>10,71,102,103</sup>

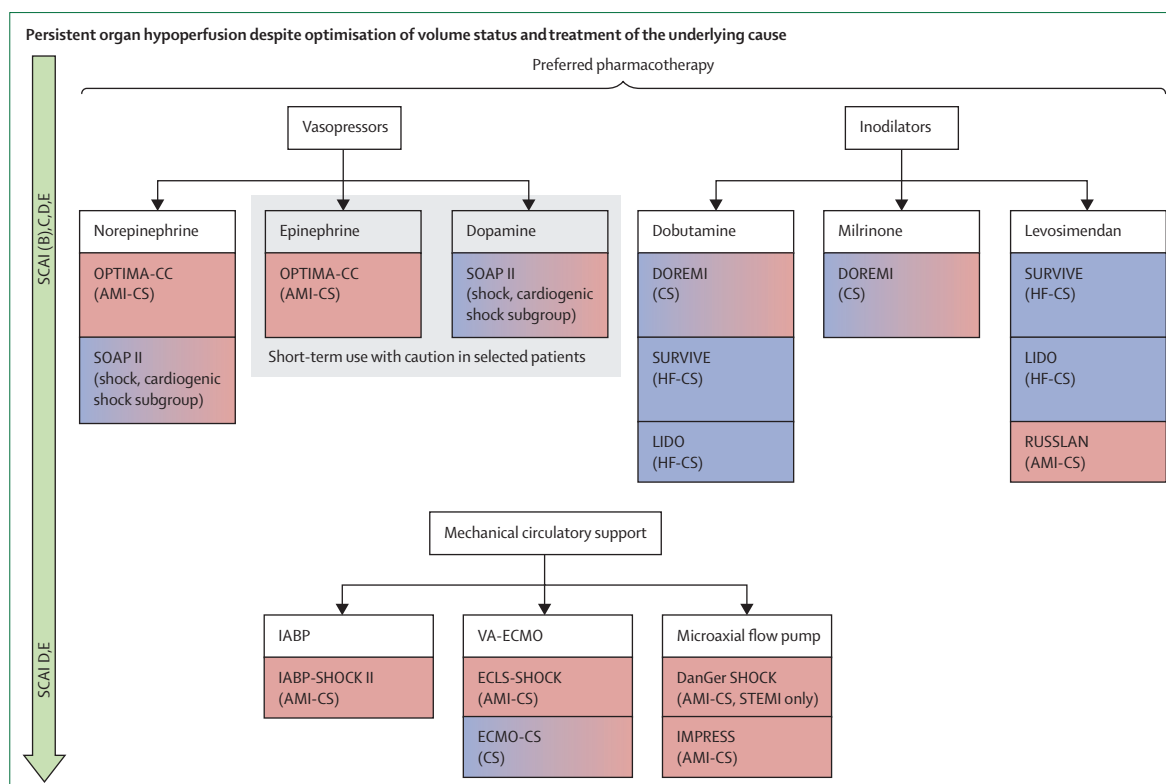
Despite being the most used temporary MCS device in many centres, scant data show either a clinical or haemodynamic benefit of the intra-aortic balloon pump (IABP) in cardiogenic shock. In the randomised IABP-SHOCK II trial, IABP implantation in patients with infarct-related cardiogenic shock (n=600) did not result in early or long-term survival benefit, recurrence

of myocardial infarction, or rehospitalisation for cardiac cause.<sup>5,104</sup> On the basis of this data, routine IABP use in AMI-related cardiogenic shock is not recommended and overall use has substantially decreased.<sup>10,84</sup> In non-ischaemic cardiogenic shock, mechanical complications after myocardial infarction, or in cases of unsuccessful percutaneous coronary intervention, placement of an IABP might be considered, despite the low level of supporting evidence.<sup>10,84,105,106</sup> Some observational evidence supports the concept that, in selected patients with chronic heart failure-related cardiogenic shock, use of an IABP is associated with a higher probability of clinical stabilisation and successful bridging to destination therapies, prompting an ongoing trial of IABP versus pharmacological support only in heart failure-related cardiogenic shock (NCT04369573).<sup>107</sup>

VA-ECMO is the most potent and versatile MCS device and is rapidly deployable in various clinical scenarios.<sup>103</sup> Despite being capable of partly or fully replacing cardiopulmonary function temporarily, a patient data meta-analysis (n=567) including data from four RCTs did not indicate a survival benefit following unselected use of VA-ECMO in patients experiencing AMI-related cardiogenic shock.<sup>6,7,108–110</sup> Beyond that, prespecified subgroup analyses found no significant difference in 30-day all-cause mortality in any subgroup with versus without VA-ECMO.<sup>6,108</sup> However, an increased risk of bleeding and vascular complications, as well as a large proportion of patients randomly assigned after resuscitation for cardiac arrest with high risk of acute hypoxic-ischaemic brain injury could have obscured any clinical benefit.

No adequately powered RCTs informing the efficacy of VA-ECMO in cardiogenic shock of non-ischaemic origin have been published. In a propensity score-weighted retrospective multicentre analysis including 212 patients with sepsis-induced cardiogenic shock, 60% of patients receiving VA-ECMO survived to 90 days, compared with 25% in the control group (RR 0.54 [95%CI 0.40–0.70]).<sup>111</sup> On the basis of the available evidence from retrospective studies, whether temporary circulatory support with VA-ECMO can improve survival in patients suffering fulminant myocarditis, acute decompensated chronic heart failure, post-cardiotomy cardiogenic shock, or massive pulmonary embolism remains unclear.<sup>103</sup> For these patients, VA-ECMO might be most useful as a bridging strategy to either myocardial recovery, transplantation, or implantation of a durable ventricular assist device.

In addition to neurological, bleeding, and ischaemic complications related to VA-ECMO, this device can even harm the heart itself owing to generation of retrograde blood flow towards the aortic valve, potentially leading to progressive left ventricular distension, impairment of function, and pulmonary congestion.<sup>6,103,108,112</sup> Early active unloading with Impella microaxial flow pumps (Abiomed, Danvers, MA, USA) or IABP aims to mitigate these adverse effects and has been associated with better



**Figure 4: Circulatory support**

Boxes underneath management options indicate selected randomised controlled trials investigating circulatory support options in specific cardiogenic shock scenarios (trial patient population in brackets). Colour change from purple to red indicates general cardiogenic shock trial population including both ischaemic and non-ischaemic cardiogenic shock causes. AMI-CS=acute myocardial infarction-related cardiogenic shock. CS=cardiogenic shock. HF-CS=heart failure-related cardiogenic shock. IABP=intra-aortic balloon pump. SCAI=Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions. STEMI=ST-elevation myocardial infarction. VA-ECMO=venoarterial extracorporeal membrane oxygenation.

outcomes in observational studies,<sup>113–115</sup> with investigation of combined temporary MCS approaches in the randomised UNLOAD ECMO (NCT05577195) and ANCHOR (NCT04184635) trials underway (appendix p 17). Routine transseptal left atrial cannulation—another form of active left ventricular unloading—did not result in higher VA-ECMO weaning (EVOLVE-ECMO) or 30-day survival rate (EARLY-UNLOAD) in randomised trials.<sup>116,117</sup>

Impella (Abiomed, Danvers, MA, USA) devices are peripherally inserted temporary ventricular assist devices providing up to 5.5 L/min of antegrade flow without capability of respiratory support.<sup>102</sup> Results from the randomised DanGer Shock trial showed a significantly lower 180-day mortality among patients with ST-elevation myocardial infarction-related cardiogenic shock without anoxic brain injury randomly assigned in selected experienced centres to receive an Impella CP compared with standard therapy alone (45.8% vs 58.5%; hazard ratio [HR] 0.74 [95% CI 0.55–0.99]).<sup>118</sup> Potential device-related complications, such as moderate or severe bleeding (RR 2.06 [1.15–3.66]) and limb ischaemia (5.15 [1.11–23.84]), occurred more frequently in the Impella group. Despite the lower risk of adverse events, the mortality rate in the control group was remarkably high, considering that the

number of patients randomised after cardiac arrest and median arterial lactate level at admission were lower than in the CULPRIT-SHOCK and ECLS-SHOCK trials.<sup>4,6,118</sup> The divergence of Kaplan–Meier curves beyond 30 days, explanation for higher renal replacement therapy requirement in the Impella group (RR 1.98 [1.27–3.09]), and differences between groups in short-term haemodynamic changes will have to be deciphered to identify treatment effects attributable to the Impella device from potential confounding variables or biases.<sup>119</sup> In addition, whether the benefit versus risk achieved in DanGer Shock is applicable to centres less experienced with microaxial flow pumps is uncertain.<sup>120</sup> Nonetheless, the DanGer Shock trial represents a milestone that reflects successful application of a temporary MCS device in a selected subgroup of patients with ST-elevation myocardial infarction-related cardiogenic shock.

Future trials should consider substantial differences in cardiogenic shock cause, phenotype, dynamics, and patient-specific prognostic factors. Furthermore, comparing the timing of MCS initiation before or after percutaneous coronary intervention should be considered when establishing eligibility criteria for future trials. Complications of all MCS remain high and can lead to



severe disability for survivors; they must be meticulously registered, and marked reductions of MCS complications should become a main objective of future trials and research. Lastly, evidence on the risks and benefits of combined MCS strategies, practices surrounding escalation and de-escalation, complication management, costs, and the role of novel therapeutic targets is still insufficient.<sup>121</sup>

### Management considerations for patients experiencing cardiac arrest

Initiation of VA-ECMO for haemodynamic stabilisation during refractory cardiac arrest is also known as extracorporeal cardiopulmonary resuscitation (ECPR). ECPR can improve outcomes in out-of-hospital cardiac arrest within carefully structured health-care networks (appendix p 18).<sup>103,122–124</sup> However, the multicentre pragmatic INCEPTION trial did not find a significant survival benefit with favourable neurological status in patients randomised to ECPR or conventional cardiopulmonary resuscitation after out-of-hospital cardiac arrest.<sup>9</sup> This result was supported by a recent meta-analysis suggesting no significant difference in in-hospital mortality among out-of-hospital cardiac arrest patients undergoing ECPR.<sup>125</sup> In patients suffering in-hospital cardiac arrest, retrospective analyses have shown more consistent clinical benefit with ECPR, underscoring structural and organisational requirements for successful implementation in such complex clinical environments.<sup>103,125–127</sup>

After return of spontaneous circulation, myocardial dysfunction is a common occurrence resulting from ischaemia-reperfusion injury, catecholamine-induced myocardial injury, and various other factors.<sup>128,129</sup> RCTs informing management of post-resuscitation cardiogenic shock are absent and post-hoc analyses suggesting a lack of efficacy of IABP or VA-ECMO after cardiac arrest are subject to potential interaction effects and confounders.<sup>5,6,108</sup> Reliable early neurological prognostication after cardiac arrest, including anoxic brain injury reversibility for patients in coma, is challenging yet essential for individualised management according to the goals and preferences of the patient. Considering differences in acuity, extent and mechanism of organ damage, and the role of neuroprotective treatment strategies in survivors of cardiac arrest and patients with cardiogenic shock who were not resuscitated, separate investigation of these subgroups is key to refine post-resuscitation care.<sup>130,131</sup>

### Management of infarct-related acute mechanical complications

Rates of acute mechanical complications, such as papillary muscle rupture with subsequent mitral regurgitation or ventricular septal and free wall defects, have decreased to less than 1% in patients with AMI.<sup>132</sup> These events are commonly associated with haemodynamic compromise and require correction (appendix pp 19–20).<sup>132–135</sup> Surgical repair is the therapeutic gold standard; however, even in

operable patients, 1-year mortality rates of up to 46% have been reported.<sup>136</sup> Especially in patients with prohibitive surgical risk and haemodynamic instability, catheter-based treatment options have emerged as an alternative approach.<sup>137–140</sup> Evidence on optimal timing, efficacy of temporary MCS as a bridge to treatment, and the role of concomitant coronary artery bypass grafting is scarce, and management of these patients relies on expert consensus within local heart teams.

### Management of organ dysfunction

Elevated left ventricular end-diastolic pressure and subsequent pulmonary oedema are important hallmarks of cardiogenic shock due to left ventricular failure. The rationale behind positive-pressure ventilation in the context of cardiogenic shock is to reduce work of breathing, decrease pulmonary vascular congestion, and improve alveolar recruitment. In patients with isolated left ventricular failure, positive-pressure ventilation could reduce both left ventricular preload and afterload, which can result in an increase in cardiac output. However, positive-pressure ventilation might have the opposite effect on the right ventricle and could reduce cardiac output in settings of left ventricular preload dependence or concomitant right ventricular failure.<sup>141</sup> Although sound evidence supporting optimal ventilation strategies in cardiogenic shock is scarce (appendix pp 21–22), endotracheal intubation and invasive mechanical ventilation is often necessary in the presence of severe compromise in gas exchange, despite the potential harmful haemodynamic effects (including those attributable to concomitant sedative medications). Invasive mechanical ventilation, which has been associated with worse outcomes after adjustment for potential confounders, was required by more than 70% of patients in the DanGer Shock trial<sup>138</sup> and more than 85% of patients in the ECLS-SHOCK trial.<sup>6,142</sup> One prospective analysis of data from 219 patients with cardiogenic shock found that non-invasive ventilation was used more often than invasive mechanical ventilation in less severe shock stages, although no association with worse outcomes after propensity matching was observed.<sup>143</sup> Clinical decision making regarding respiratory support options in cardiogenic shock is also limited by the absence of evidence for specific tidal volume, airway pressure, gas exchange and pH targets. In patients undergoing VA-ECMO, pulmonary congestion resulting from device-related increase in left ventricular afterload might necessitate left ventricular unloading.<sup>112</sup> An ongoing randomised trial comparing ultraprotective (tidal volume of 4 mL/kg of predicted body weight) versus protective (6 mL/kg) ventilation settings could shed light on optimal respiratory support during VA-ECMO (ChiCTR2200067118).

Acute kidney injury has been shown to complicate up to 35% of all AMI-related cardiogenic shock admissions (appendix p 23).<sup>144</sup> The classically accepted mechanism of acute kidney injury occurring in cardiogenic shock is prerenal via a low cardiac output state progressing to acute

tubular necrosis. Further mechanisms, including renal venous congestion in right ventricular failure, inflammation, and intrinsic acute kidney injury have additionally been proposed as factors aggravating renal dysfunction in cardiogenic shock.<sup>145–147</sup> Renal replacement therapy is commonly required and this need has been associated with increased mortality.<sup>147,148</sup> Although randomised studies have assessed the role of renal replacement therapy in the setting of acute decompensated heart failure, patients meeting cardiogenic shock criteria have often been excluded from analysis.<sup>149</sup> Thus, the indication for renal replacement therapy proposed by the 2017 American Heart Association scientific statement might not be optimal for all forms of cardiogenic shock and should be investigated further.<sup>11,147</sup> Hypoxic hepatitis has been reported in 18% of patients with AMI-related cardiogenic shock, with increases in aminotransferase of over 20 times the upper limit of normal within 24 h after admission being associated with higher mortality.<sup>150</sup> To date, the effect of different volume and central venous pressure targets as well as strategies for nutrition on outcomes remains unclear.

Although targeted temperature management with active fever prevention is recommended for neuroprotection in patients in coma after cardiac arrest,<sup>151</sup> optimal target temperature in patients with cardiogenic shock remains unknown. Given potential adverse haemodynamic effects and the uncertainty regarding the neurological and survival benefits of hypothermia, fevers should be avoided but lowering body temperature in patients with cardiogenic shock in coma following cardiac arrest might not be necessary. Targeted mild hypothermia (compared with targeted normothermia) did not provide a mortality benefit in an unselected cohort of patients treated with VA-ECMO and did not result in improvement in cardiac power index in patients with AMI-related cardiogenic shock who were not resuscitated following percutaneous coronary intervention.<sup>30,152</sup> Nonetheless, patients receiving VA-ECMO for cardiogenic shock after resuscitation following cardiac arrest could benefit from moderate hypothermia, as suggested by a post-hoc analysis of the randomised HYPO-ECMO trial.<sup>153</sup>

Bleeding and thromboembolic events occur frequently in patients with cardiogenic shock, especially in those requiring MCS and those receiving aggressive antithrombotic therapy for AMI.<sup>102,103</sup> Early detection of platelet dysfunction and coagulopathies, such as acquired von Willebrand syndrome or heparin-induced thrombocytopenia, can help to prevent life-threatening complications.<sup>154,155</sup>

### Intensive supportive care

Invasive measurement of central venous pressure, pulmonary capillary wedge pressure, pulmonary arterial pressures, pulmonary artery pulsatility index, cardiac output, and oxygen saturation obtained from pulmonary artery catheterisation (in conjunction with information obtained by non-invasive measures, such as serial

echocardiographic assessment), allows for differentiation of left ventricular-predominant, right ventricular-predominant, or biventricular forms of cardiogenic shock. Identification can permit early detection of haemodynamic changes and responses to treatment algorithms and help to guide targeted shock therapy. Given the absence of data from randomised trials, routine placement of a pulmonary artery catheter at shock onset is currently not recommended. However, placement of a pulmonary artery catheter could potentially be useful in cases of diagnostic uncertainty, mixed shock and right ventricular involvement, unresponsiveness to treatment, weaning from temporary MCS, and candidacy assessment for durable MCS or heart transplantation (appendix pp 24–25).<sup>11</sup> However, the restrictive use of pulmonary artery catheterisation has been challenged by retrospective evidence suggesting that pulmonary artery catheter-based haemodynamic profiling within the first hours of admission might be beneficial.<sup>29,156–158</sup> This hypothesis is under investigation in the randomised PACCS trial assessing early pulmonary artery catheter use in 400 patients with acute decompensated heart failure-related cardiogenic shock (NCT05485376; appendix p 26).

Evidence-based recommendations regarding fluid management in cardiogenic shock are not available and estimation of preload responsiveness can be challenging. In the few patients with cardiogenic shock who do not have volume overload, a small, controlled fluid bolus can be attempted with close monitoring. More often, diuresis is indicated to relieve congestion, and this can improve pulmonary, cardiac, and in some cases renal function. In a single-centre retrospective analysis, positive fluid balance 96 h after admission was independently associated with increased 30-day mortality in patients with AMI-related cardiogenic shock.<sup>159</sup> Invasive haemodynamic monitoring might offer guidance for fluid management in selected cases.<sup>160</sup> Lastly, optimal red blood cell transfusion thresholds and indication for other blood products in cardiogenic shock are unknown. Retrospective data suggested lower in-hospital mortality in patients with a haemoglobin transfusion threshold of less than 8 g/dL and no added benefit at a higher threshold of less than 10 g/dL.<sup>161</sup>

Sedatives can potentially have adverse haemodynamic effects in cardiogenic shock, including decrease of cardiac output, systemic vascular resistance, and mean arterial pressure related to reduction of sympathetic tone. These effects can be aggravated by direct vasodilatory or myocardial depressant effects, yet uncertainty exists regarding the clinical relevance and influence on outcomes in cardiogenic shock. A retrospective comparison of propofol with midazolam as a sedative in patients with cardiogenic shock was associated with a higher 30-day survival and lower catecholamine dose with the use of propofol.<sup>162</sup>

Few clinical trials inform cardiogenic shock management in individuals over the age of 75 years, although the incidence of cardiogenic shock in this age group is

expected to increase.<sup>163</sup> Cognitive status before shock onset, frailty, multimorbidity, and advanced directives must be considered in patient-centred clinical decision making.<sup>163–165</sup> Development of prediction scores for futility and routine integration of palliative care into clinical practice is warranted.<sup>166</sup>

### Long-term sequelae and associated costs

Although long-term outcomes and quality of life after cardiogenic shock compared with those after other acute life-threatening diseases are still being investigated, survivors of cardiogenic shock are frequently affected by physical and mental health sequelae. A multicentre analysis found that the incidence of a composite endpoint of anxiety and other psychiatric disorders in survivors of AMI-related cardiogenic shock was 110 per 1000 person-years.<sup>167</sup> Diagnosis and treatment for such comorbidities and health-related quality of life has not been well researched, but must be addressed as part of a comprehensive long-term cardiogenic shock care bundle. The risk of rehospitalisation and subsequent death can be high even among survivors of cardiogenic shock, requiring a diligent approach to medical optimisation and follow-up care that is ideally coordinated by specialised multidisciplinary clinics.

A European single-centre analysis reported a cardiogenic shock hospital stay-related expenditure of €9632 per life-year gained.<sup>168</sup> Larger-scale estimation of the economic burden associated with cardiogenic shock requires further analyses of reimbursement and staffing models, readmission rates, and relative cost efficacy of novel (device-based) treatment options.<sup>169,170</sup>

### Conclusion and future directions

Many notable preclinical and clinical studies examining cardiogenic shock subtypes, prognostication, and different facets of care have prepared the foundations towards evidence-based precision medicine for patients with cardiogenic shock, although important evidence gaps remain. Novel analytical methods are likely to shape the ongoing endeavour of deciphering the complexity of cardiogenic shock through deep phenotyping, development of prognostic models, and identification of promising treatment targets. With the public health burden of cardiogenic shock expected to increase over time, further development of emergency and intensive care algorithms combined with the exploration of long-term management options is crucial to improve survival and quality of life after cardiogenic shock.

#### Contributors

EL, AC, and HT were responsible for conceptualisation, methodology, project administration, resources, software, supervision, validation, visualisation, and writing and revision of the original draft. LB, MA, RL, AM, DAM, SP, JCJ, and DB contributed to data validation and to the revision of the manuscript.

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