

Congestive Heart Failure: Overview

The pathophysiology of congestive heart failure involves a situation in which the heart cannot pump blood fast enough to meet the body's requirements, and when this happens a number of changes take place as the body tries to compensate for the deficiency (Dumitru & Baker, 2016). These adaptations contribute to the physiological dysfunction associated with the disease. One compensatory mechanism is the Frank-Starling mechanism, which is the name for increased preload in order to maintain cardiac function. Another consists of changes in myocyte regeneration. A third is myocardial hypertrophy, sometimes involving the dilation of cardiac chambers. A fourth compensatory mechanism is the activation of neurohumoral systems.

These compensatory mechanisms make heart failure a particularly complex condition, and it has recently been suggested that discharge practices be made more sophisticated in order to accommodate that complexity instead of using a 'one size fits all' approach which is not consistent with the ideal of patient-centered care (Leone, Walker, Curry, & Agee, 2012). Older patients with heart disease often suffer from severe fatigue and dyspnea which makes it necessary for them to rely on other people (Falk, Ekman, Anderson, Fu, & Granger, 2013).

[to be continued...]

References

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