

Hypothermia and the Evaluation of Combination Therapies for Neonatal Hypoxic-Ischemic
Brain Damage

by

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Abstract

Hypoxic-ischemic brain damage (HIBD) is still of major concern in the neonatal period, resulting in chronic neurological sequelae stemming from damage to the term newborn brain. Full-body and focal-head cooling within 6 hours of birth have proven neuroprotective in human newborns and various animal models of HIBD while independent pharmacotherapies have failed. Hence, post-ischemic cooling is the current standard of care for neonatal HIBD. However, hypothermia offers incomplete protection against the HIBD neurotoxic cascade, meaning that cooled newborns may still exhibit brain injury and neurological deficiencies. To offset this transient neuroprotection, and possibly extend the therapeutic window of opportunity, combining hypothermic cooling with pharmacotherapy has been explored. Using an established neonatal rat model of HIBD, my two studies respectively examined (1) if sulforaphane (SFN), a potent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory agent, could enhance hypothermic neuroprotection, and also (2) analysed the effect of hypothermia within the HIBD core and penumbra across time. Our results indicate that SFN did not further reduce gross pathological brain injury when provided with hypothermia, and that high concentrations of the compound (10 mg/kg) may have been deleterious. Our mechanistic results suggest that hypothermia differentially affects the core and penumbra. However, further studies will need to be undertaken to clarify the role played by hypothermia on cell survival/death, in this paradigm. The results of these two studies provide a stepping stone with which researchers can test promising neuroprotective therapies with post-ischemic hypothermia for newborn HIBD. Further studies are required to determine the optimal timing where additional therapy can be administered to the HIBD core and/or penumbra, as well as what type of adjunct therapy to achieve enhanced hypothermic neuroprotection. From this,

treatment paradigms that effectively enhance short and long-term pathological and behavioural outcomes could be developed.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Ann-Marie Przyslupski. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics

Board: Animal Care and Use Committee Health Sciences 2; ‘Neuroprotective Role of Combining Mild Hypothermia and Chemotherapy in Perinatal Hypoxias-Ischemia and Breeding Colony’, AUP00000363.

For R.Z.

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List of Abbreviations

Ab - Antibody

AIF – Apoptosis Inducing Factor

AMPK – Adenosine Monophosphate Kinase

AMP – Adenosine Monophosphate

ANOVA – Analysis of Variance

ARE – Antioxidant Response Element

ATP – Adenosine Triphosphate

BCA - Bicinchoninic Acid

BAF - Boc-aspartyl—(OMe)-fluoromethyl-ketone

BME - β -mercaptoethanol

CaMKK- β – Calcium/Calmodulin-dependent Protein Kinase Kinase β

CBF – Cerebral Blood Flow

CCA – Common Carotid Artery

CP – Cerebral Palsy

ECL - Enhanced chemiluminescent

EDTA - Ethylenediaminetetraacetic Acid

EPO – Erythropoietin

EUK-134 - Manganese 3-methoxy N,N'-bis(salicylidene)ethylenediamine chloride

GLUT3 – Glucose Transporter 3

H&E – Hematoxylin & Eosin

HIBD – Hypoxic-Ischemic Brain Damage

HIF-1 α – Hypoxia-inducible factor-1 α

HYPO – Hypothermia

IGF-1 - Insulin-like grown factor-1

Keap1 - Kelch-like ech-associated protein 1

LC3-II – Light-Chain 3-II

LKB1 – Liver Kinase B1

MCAO - Middle Cerebral Artery Occlusion

MK-801 - Dizocilpine

MMP-9 – Matrix Metalloproteinase-9

mTOR – Mammalian Target of Rapamycin

NAD⁺ - Nicotinamide Adenine Dinucleotide

NADPH - Nicotinamide Adenine Dinucleotide Phosphate Hydrogen

NMDA - N-methyl D-aspartate

NORMO - Normothermia

NOS – Nitric Oxide Synthetase

Nrf2 - Nuclear Related Factor 2

NS – Normal Saline

p-AMPK – Phosphorylated (Activated) Adenosine Monophosphate Kinase

PARP – Poly (ADP ribose) Polymerase

PD – Postnatal-day

PE – Polyethylene

PTEN - Phosphatase and Tensin Homolog

PVDF - Polyvinylidene difluoride

RCT - Randomized-Controlled Trial

ROS – Reactive Oxygen Species

SDS - Sodium dodecyl sulfate

SFN - Sulforaphane

S-PBN - N-tert-butyl-(2-sulfophenyl)-nitron

SD – Standard Deviation

TAK1 – Transforming Growth Factor- β -Activated Kinase 1

TBS - Tris-buffered saline

TBST – Tris-buffered saline - 0.1% Tween

TRAIL - Tumor necrosis factor-related apoptosis inducing ligand

TTC - 2,3,5,-triphenyl-2H-tetrazolium chloride

Xe - Xenon

XIAP - X-linked Inhibitor of Apoptosis

Chapter 1: Introduction

Perinatal Asphyxia and Cerebral Palsy

Asphyxiation in the perinatal period is a prominent cause of brain injury in neonates, as oxygen deprivation from impaired blood flow will cause neuronal degradation, prominent behavioural deficits, and/or death.¹⁻³ Asphyxia affects approximately 3-5/1000 term births,⁴ but not all asphyxiated births will result in perinatal brain injury. Those that do are largely as a result of hypoxic-ischemic brain damage (HIBD) which accounts for 1-3/1000 of asphyxiated term births⁴⁻⁶ with a 15-20% mortality rate.⁷ Cortical damage and neuronal death sustained from HIBD may also impair proper cognitive and physiological development depending on the severity and location of injury.³ Delaying treatment for HIBD may potentially damage deep gray matter brain structures, such as the basal ganglia, which are implicated in movement disorders. The primary outcome parameter is generally referred to as cerebral palsy (CP).^{8,9}

CP is a chronic, non-progressive developmental disorder of the brain most predominately characterized by motor afflictions, but also encompassing cognitive and mental health disorders.¹⁰⁻¹² Current management for CP involves physiotherapy and other rehabilitation services.¹³⁻¹⁵ Maternal infection has been strongly correlated with CP in the neonate^{16,17}, with general brain lesions serving a highly predictive role in diagnosis.^{18,19} Unfortunately, the epidemiology of CP remains at 1-3/1000 of term births, and has not changed over the past 40 years, despite obstetric and neonatal innovations.^{18,20} Developmental disabilities stemming from CP and HIBD are chronic and lifelong with tremendous emotional and financial complications for those affected, their families, and society.²¹⁻²³ CP has an expected lifetime cost of nearly \$1.2

million per affected individual, and families tending to dependent CP individuals can be burdened in regards to time commitment and emotional frustration.^{24,25}

Hypoxic-Ischemic Brain Damage (HIBD)

Brain damage due to hypoxia-ischemia emerges from oxygen deprivation coupled with a loss of blood flow to the brain in the neonatal period.^{26,27} HIBD is unique in that it is characterized by both immediate and delayed phases of energy failure within the brain, as well as acute and delayed cell death, making it especially difficult to treat completely and effectively.^{28,29} Risk factors such as maternal pyrexia, maternal inflammation, and emergency vaginal and caesarian section deliveries have been reported to increase the chance of HIBD.^{5,30} Additionally, pre-eclampsia, maternal thyroid disease, fetal growth restriction, and birth after more than 42 weeks gestation have been noted as potential HIBD risk factors.³⁰⁻³³ Unfortunately, despite advances in perinatal care, approximately 1-3/1000 term births in developed countries are still affected by HIBD.^{5,6} Neonates affected by moderate and severe HIBD have respective mortality rates of relatively 10% and 60%^{34,35} with a primary outcome of death and chronic disability by 18 months.^{21,22,36} Approximately 25% of affected survivors also suffer lifelong consequences (e.g. permanent brain damage, neurodevelopmental disabilities)^{4,34,37,38}, also extending to future academic performance.^{26,39,40} A more favourable neurodevelopmental outcome is associated with normal brain imaging and/or cortical, watershed, and white matter injury⁴¹, while selective and diffuse gray matter injury, and deep basal ganglia injury are closely indicative of poor prognosis.⁴² Selective regional susceptibility of the hippocampus, its dentate gyrus, cerebral cortex, basal ganglia, thalamus, and the striatum (caudate nucleus and putamen) to HIBD has also been characterized.⁴³⁻⁴⁸ A definite correlation between risk factors and the distribution of neonatal brain damage has not yet been concluded due to heterogeneity, but perhaps this will

come to light with a better understanding of the neurobiology of the HIBD cascade and where injury is taking place.⁴⁹

Pathophysiology of HIBD

The Hypoxic-Ischemic Core and Penumbra

HIBD brain injury is an evolving process. From the initial cytotoxic cascade, necrotic and apoptotic damage develops in specific regions of the brain depending on the duration and severity of HIBD, both of which have been shown to be positively correlated.⁴⁴ HIBD severity is associated with adverse neurodevelopmental outcome in young children.^{50,51} Discerning the phase of injury or recovery being experienced by an individual, as well as where the injury is occurring, are crucial to providing the most optimal treatment.

HIBD injuries are composed of two parts: the Core and its surrounding Penumbra; these areas are central to understanding the evolution of HIBD.⁵² The core is the area of the brain where cessation of blood flow and oxygen deprivation first occur, and this depletion of ATP and nutrients is believed to result in necrotic cell death. The penumbra is the hypo-perfused area of brain surrounding the core that contains both living and dying neurons; these characteristics make the penumbra a desirable therapeutic target for HIBD.⁵² Theoretically the availability of survival substrates, oxygen, and living cells could be harnessed to prevent neuronal death, prevent expansion of the necrotic core, and strengthen the capacity of penumbral cells to overcome HIBD injury. Hence, penumbral targeting is especially important for functional recovery post-stroke due to this remaining perfusion capacity.⁵³

While studies examining the HIBD core and penumbra are limited, the core has been found to contain both necrotic and apoptotic cells after HIBD, with the penumbra mainly composed of

apoptotic cells.^{54,55} Apoptosis was also maximally-increased at 24h post-HIBD, with a decline in numbers at 48 and 72 hours post-injury, and 7 days after HIBD, with Cleaved Caspase-3 staining higher in the core as opposed to the penumbra for all time points.⁵⁵ Even in adult ischemia-reperfusion injuries, caspase-3 activation has been observed in the penumbra as early as 3h into recovery, with a more pronounced activation occurring in the core at 24h post-ischemia.⁵⁶ Moreover, it has been suggested that caspase-independent mechanisms of cell death may be favoured in areas of substantially-reduced perfusion (e.g. the core).⁵⁶ These data suggest that apoptotic and non-apoptotic damage occurs differentially between the core and penumbra not long after HIBD/ischemic stroke and may persist for hours, days, or months if left untreated. The full picture of how the different phases of HIBD and related therapeutic agents differentially affect the core requires further investigation. The notion of the ‘expanding core’ (i.e. the infarct growing in size due to penumbral neurons becoming necrotic) is detrimental to HIBD and contributes to increased HIBD severity if left untreated.⁵² The extent at which each area of the lesion is affected by the multiple phases of immediate and delayed energy failure that characterize HIBD likely depends on the severity of the insult itself.

Primary Energy Failure

When the HIBD insult first occurs, after the loss of blood flow, oxygen, and substrates to the brain, there is an immediate loss of adenosine triphosphate (ATP), phosphocreatine⁵⁷⁻⁵⁹, and glucose⁶⁰ in the areas affected by the loss of oxygen and blood flow.⁶¹ This combination of events results in the production of a neurotoxic cascade of drops in neuronal, glial, and mitochondrial membrane potentials, thus promoting their depolarization and consequently potentiating a burst of mitochondrial reactive oxygen species (ROS) production [i.e. superoxide anions (O_2^-), hydroxyl radicals ($*OH$), nitric oxide (NO), peroxynitrite ($ONOO^-$), hydrogen

peroxide (H_2O_2)]^{22,28}, thus promoting the Fenton reaction that results in H_2O_2 , one of the major players in the destruction of brain tissue post-HIBD, as well as the activity of nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate hydrogen (NADPH) and xanthine oxidase that have been shown to exacerbate HIBD; this phenomenon however later recedes with the reduction and loss of mitochondrial membrane potentials.⁶² HIBD injury is a highly paradoxical phenomenon, in that ROS and other effectors are only produced in the availability of oxygen, however the immature brain does not have a fully-developed antioxidant system, thus limiting inactivation of ROS.⁶² Additionally, the HIBD injury is not a contained event, but rather spreads outwards in a wave of depolarization. Hence, some oxygen presence in areas close to more damaged areas may be more vulnerable and more susceptible to producing ROS.

These events also result in the uncontrolled secretion of potassium (K^+) ions and intracellular influx of calcium (Ca^{2+}) ions.^{28,63-65} Excess K^+ and Ca^{2+} have been demonstrated to contribute to enhanced and sustained glutamate excitotoxicity^{59,66-68}; this excitotoxic state also occurs due to overall brain vulnerability^{69,70}, glutamate reuptake prevention⁷¹, and reduced cerebral blood flow (CBF)^{7,68} that may last for days or weeks if the injury is severe.^{28,72,73} Neurotoxicity in this regard stems from its glutamate's involvement in the activation of lytic enzymes such as cyclooxygenase, lipoxygenase, proteases, and nitric oxide synthetase (NOS)^{28,74,75}, which have the potential to cause considerable damage to the neonatal brain as it is extremely concentrated in fatty acids and immature cells, thus being highly susceptible to oxidative deterioration.⁷⁰ Riikonen et al.⁵¹ and Hagberg et al.⁷⁶ found the severity of injury to also be correlated with excitatory glutamate and aspartate levels, shown by Pu et al.⁷⁷ to be elevated in the basal ganglia and thalamus in moderate-severe HIBD neonates.

These have been demonstrated to contribute to the primarily necrotic⁷⁸, but also apoptotic^{46,54,78–81}, atrophy of human and animal neonatal brains post-HIBD due to their deleterious effect on neurons, astrocytes, and endothelial tissue^{82–84}, ultimately resulting in immediate energy failure and cell death at the primary lesion site. Necrosis is accidental cell death characterized by the rupture of cell membranes and the disintegration of nuclei, and is prominent in this immediate neurotoxic period.⁷² Apoptosis is a type of programmed cell death evident by the presence of nuclear fragmentation and condensation (karyorrhexis) and intact cellular membranes.⁸¹

Latent/Reperfusion Phase

When researchers refer to a “window of opportunity,” this is in reference to the latent phase of HIBD neuropathology within 2-6h post-HIBD, clinically characterized by seizure absence, reduced cytotoxic edema, and a superficial return to homeostasis.⁸⁵ The longer that hypoperfusion post-HIBD occurs without treatment during this time, the more likely it is that secondary energy failure will occur.^{86,62} Unfortunately, reperfusion exerts more stress on the cells that have already been damaged⁸⁶, leading to further oxidative stress via further free radical, NOS, and ROS generation.^{83,87} This leads to outright energy depletion via poly (ADP ribose) polymerase (PARP) enzyme stimulation,⁸⁸ consequently inducing a perpetually depreciating cycle of nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide (NAD⁺) consumption and production to generate more ATP.^{89–91} Stimulation of the PARP-1 enzyme has also been discovered to be necessary for translocating apoptosis inducing factor (AIF) in caspase-independent apoptotic cell death.^{92,93} Additional biomarkers of reperfusion injury include nitric oxide and matrix metalloproteinase-9 (MMP-9).^{94–98}

Post-ischemic inflammation largely characterizes this latent phase of injury.⁹⁹ Here, tumor necrosis factor- α , interleukin-6, and interleukin 1 β pro-inflammatory cytokines^{100,101}, and other

pro-inflammatory cytokines, are produced by neurons, microglia, and astrocytes when perfusion is re-introduced.¹⁰²⁻¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, evidence has shown interleukin-6 and interleukin-8 concentrations to positively correspond to the degree of HIBD injury, increased white matter injury, and an increased risk for developing CP.⁹⁹ Enhanced inflammation during the post-HIBD reperfusion phase has also been demonstrated to result in the increased production of ROS, NOS, and free radicals; these are known to contribute to the deleterious and long-lasting effects of inflammation in the post-HIBD reperfusion period and, as previous stated, contribute to further brain injury due to the neonatal brain's underdeveloped antioxidant system.^{62,105} Inflammation arising in the latent reperfusion phase may last for weeks, months, or years if left untreated, contributing to further brain injury.⁵⁷ Hence, reducing the inflammatory processes as soon as possible during the 6-hour window of opportunity is an essential treatment strategy and vital therapeutic target for neonatal HIBD. In hand, inhibiting inflammation has demonstrated clinical and biomedical relevance through the reduction of inflammatory cytokines, activated microglia, and neuronal death.¹⁰⁶⁻¹⁰⁹

The brain is also capable of producing enzymes such as superoxide dismutase, glutathione peroxidase, thioredoxin, heme oxygenase, and glutathione to endogenously protect itself against the damaging effects of oxidative and nitrate stress caused by ROS, NOS, and free radicals during the latent phase.^{83,110-114} Astrocytes resistant to HIBD have been hypothesized to confer neuroprotection via their ability to produce glutathione as well as its glutamine, cysteine, and glycine precursors, which may be utilized by neurons to produce their own glutathione.^{83,115-119}

Secondary Energy Failure

In the event that interventions are unable to fully ameliorate the brain injury during the latent phase of injury, delayed oxidative mechanisms stemming from the initial HIBD insult and

energy depletion may resurface at early or late time-points, approximately 6-18h or between 24-48h respectively after reperfusion.^{57,120} This phenomenon was first observed in adult HIBD gerbils¹²¹ and later reported in human HIBD neonates in the late 1980s.¹²²⁻¹²⁵ This secondary phase is characterized by seizure reappearance in human neonates⁸⁵, brain swelling (edema)¹²⁶, mitochondrial morbidity due to ATP exhaustion¹²⁷, lack of acidosis,¹²⁸ and most importantly, delayed pathological apoptotic cell death^{29,46,128,129}, the latter of which is the target of many therapies currently under study.⁸¹ Apoptosis may be either caspase-dependent or independent.¹³⁰ While the extrinsic and intrinsic divisions of caspase-dependent apoptosis both result in immutable cell death via the activation of the caspase-3 death effector, extrinsic apoptosis is mediated by caspase-8 stimulation, whereas intrinsic apoptosis requires caspase-9 activation.¹³⁰ Conversely, caspase-independent apoptosis involves cell death via the release of AIF from mitochondria.¹³¹ Askalan et al. found caspase-dependent apoptosis to prevail in the leading core insult as opposed to the surrounding penumbral infarct in neonatal rat HIBD.⁵⁴ Caspase inhibition post-HIBD has been assessed with studies demonstrating reduced apoptosis and neuronal injury.¹³² While studies have focused on combating neuronal death in this stage of HIBD, the effect of energy manipulation has not been assessed.

AMPK and Stroke-Related Brain Injury

As previously mentioned, energy metabolism in the brain is dependent on oxygen and glucose¹³³ and cerebral HIBD emerges from the brain's deprivation from these substrates and the resulting energy failure. Sustained ATP loss may lead to energy dysregulation and possibly infarction in the areas affected by HIBD. Adenosine monophosphate kinase (AMPK) is the master cell energy regulator and modulates energy homeostasis by promoting catabolic activities and turning off anabolic ones.^{134,135} AMPK is a trimeric holoenzyme consisting of the α , β , and γ subunits that is

activated (phosphorylated; p-AMPK) by upstream mediators such as the ratio of low ATP:high AMP, liver kinase B-1 (LKB1), calcium/calmodulin-dependent protein kinase kinase β (CaMKK- β), and transforming growth factor – β -activated kinase 1 (TAK1).^{134,136,137} AMPK activation, or lack thereof, in the injured brain may be linked to how affected brain tissue responds to HIBD.

While AMPK activation in times of energy failure and nutrient restriction may be cytoprotective^{134,137}, the role of AMPK in the brain has yet to be fully examined.¹³⁸ Several adult stroke models have shown prolonged activation of p-AMPK to be associated with increased neuronal death^{136,139–143}, with AMPK α -1/2 involved in damage progression.¹³⁶ Artificially inhibiting AMPK with Compound-C prior to ischemic stroke has resulted in increased ischemic tolerance in astrocytes¹⁴⁴ and reduced apoptosis in neurons.¹⁴⁵ Hence, researchers have postulated that inhibition of AMPK early after HIBD and activation of AMPK in the late stages of HIBD may be neuroprotective for targeting chronic apoptosis and inflammation.¹³⁹

To date, few studies have examined the role of AMPK activation/inhibition in the neonatal brain after HIBD. Rousset et al. studied AMPK *in vivo* and *in vitro* with time-points during hypoxia (5min, 20min, 50min) and into recovery (10min, 30min, 1h, 3h, 6h, 24h, 72h), finding p-AMPK to peak at the end of hypoxia and return to baseline levels during recovery in the hippocampus, striatum, and cortex.¹³⁸ Prolonged artificial AMPK activation during *in vitro* HIBD resulted in more injury, however abolishing AMPK prior to injury was also detrimental.^{138,142} This presents a dual role for AMPK activation and downstream activity, in that the neonatal brain requires p-AMPK as a preventative protection.

Currently, knowledge is limited on how therapeutic agents may affect AMPK-mediated activity in the core and penumbra of an HIBD-induced lesion, but this knowledge may be beneficial in developing novel therapeutic regimens for the treatment and/or prevention of neonatal HIBD.

Post-Ischemic Hypothermia

Currently, post-ischemic hypothermia, or cooling of the head or full body, is the only independent intervention to have successfully conferred lasting neuroprotection to both human infants and animals with HIBD as a rescue therapy, with significant reductions in mortality and neurological disability by 18 months of age.¹⁴⁶ Administered within the window-of-opportunity of 6h of HIBD diagnosis after birth, it is the gold-standard rescue therapy for HIBD.¹⁴⁶ While other drug interventions have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing HIBD in animal and cell models, none have been as independently successful in human neonates as hypothermia.²⁴

Unfortunately, the neuroprotection offered by cooling is incomplete and does not extend to the full extent of injury, nor does it benefit neonates with severe HIBD (>50% brain damage with large HIBD cores that extend into the deep gray matter), with approximately 22% of cooled neonates still presenting with mortality and neurological disabilities.^{21,146} These complications enforce why more adequate and effective treatments must be developed for HIBD newborns.

History of Hypothermia for Neonatal HIBD

Therapeutic hypothermia has been utilized in clinical medicine for thousands of years.¹⁴⁷

Cooling as a therapeutic agent has been documented as early as in Hippocrates' time (460-375 BC), where he found benefit in covering wounded soldiers in snow.¹⁴⁸ Hypothermia was first introduced into medical practice by Dominique-Jean Larrey (1766-1842), a surgeon during Napoleon's reign, as a form of emergency clinical therapy.¹⁴⁹ Animal experiments studying the

effects of cooling for various bodily ailments occurred in the 1950s, but ceased in the 1970s-80s due to reports that hypothermia was having harmful repercussions.¹⁴⁸ Studies re-commenced in the 1990s when beneficial evidence surfaced of hypothermia as a protective agent against cardiac arrest and ischemic stroke.^{150,151}

While Colbourne et al. sparked interest in the field of cooling as a viable and effective post-ischemic therapy^{152,153}, Young et al.^{154,155} and Busto et al.^{156,157} pioneered the use of post-ischemic cooling as a therapy for neonatal HIBD, and hence it is currently the clinical standard of care and only approved therapy for neonatal HIBD.^{2,158} The aim of hypothermia, either via selective head cooling or whole body cooling, is to reduce an individual's body temperature by approximately 3-5°C in an effort to reach and protect areas of the brain that are selectively vulnerable to HIBD.^{146,159} To be clinically relevant as a rescue therapy, hypothermia in animal models must be administered after HIBD induction and within the 6h window of opportunity; while some studies have shown neuroprotection with delayed cooling administration (e.g. cooling induced 1-3h post-HIBD), treatments provided after this time window are less likely to exert protection.¹⁶⁰ Hence, hypothermia's protection is correlated with its initiation time and duration of maintenance¹⁶¹⁻¹⁶⁴, thus having minimal-to-no effect on HIBD injury that has been evolving for more than 6 hours.¹⁶⁵ Trescher et al. were the first to discover that hypothermia's neuroprotection is merely transient, with post-HIBD cooled rats showing exacerbated brain damage akin to HIBD-only controls at 4 weeks post-injury.¹⁶⁶ Clinical interest in post-HIBD hypothermia piqued with Gunn et al.'s fetal lamb studies^{85,163,167}, showing dramatic injury reduction via selective head cooling, after which clinical trials began to surface.

Hypothermia in Clinical and Randomized-Controlled Trials

Since its translation from animal to human neonates, mild-moderate hypothermia (32-34°C) has shown to be neuroprotective in term and late preterm HIBD neonates, also improving long-term neurodevelopmental outcomes; this is supported by several recent systematic reviews and meta-analyses^{146,168-170} and is now standard treatment for moderate-severe HIBD neonates, even though cooling does not protect against severe HIBD and standardized cooling protocols remain to be developed between and across institutions.^{2,146,158,170} Initially, preliminary pilot studies in the HIBD newborn confirmed the safety and efficacy of cooling administration in term neonates^{85,171-177}, but hypertension, sinus bradycardia, fat necrosis, and increased duration of ventilatory aid were noted as possible side effects.^{146,171} Neonates with normal or mild neuroimaging results do not undergo hypothermia, as they have been shown to exhibit relatively normal outcomes in childhood without treatment.¹⁷⁸

To date, many large-scale randomized-controlled trials (RCTs) have demonstrated consistent safety and efficacy of whole-body^{36,179-181} and selective-head cooling^{182,183} in human neonates with mild-moderate HIBD. Overall, 48-72h of mild-moderate cooling (33-35°C) within 6h of birth has been demonstrated to reduce seizure occurrence and improve physical and cognitive outcomes, as well as survival rate, in mild-moderate HIBD newborns after follow-up at 18 months of age.^{146,168,175} Neuromotor outcome was enriched only with whole-body cooling.^{36,179-181} Granted, death or severe neurodevelopmental disability (i.e. CP, cognitive delay¹⁶⁹) subsisted as the primary outcomes of all these RCTs¹⁷⁰, but were significantly and clinically reduced as compared to neonates not receiving post-ischemic cooling.¹⁴⁶ While post-ischemic cooling remains the most successful rescue therapy for mild-moderate neonatal HIBD, the full range of mechanisms by which neuroprotection is conferred are still being uncovered.

Proposed Mechanisms of Hypothermic Neuroprotection

Post-ischemic hypothermia is believed to exert a general suppressive effect on metabolic activity, glutamate excitotoxicity, and oxidative stress^{65,184}, however the specific mechanisms underlying hypothermic neuroprotection for mild-moderate HIBD are multifactorial, globally-acting, and still not comprehensively understood.^{54,184} Part of the difficulty of developing effective therapies for HIBD arises from how currently available treatments are likely unable to target all of the cellular pathways affected by neurotoxicity. A multi-pronged approach is important in this case to prevent injury from spreading. Reviews examining the potential mechanisms of hypothermic neuroprotection are available.^{65,184–188}

Overall, reduced cerebral metabolism¹⁸⁹, improved glucose metabolism^{190–192}, and delayed brain atrophy¹⁶⁶ contribute to hypothermic neuroprotection and manifest as improved neuronal survival^{164,193–199} and behavioural/neurological outcome.^{1,200,201} Zhao et al. demonstrated that per every °C lowered, cooling reduced brain oxygen consumption and glucose metabolism by 5%.²⁰² To complement this, hypothermia has also been demonstrated to limit the passage of Ca²⁺ through AMPA receptor channels by modestly upregulating the glutamate receptor-2 subunit of the AMPA receptor to prevent excitotoxicity.²⁰³ Prevention of lactate accumulation and ATP loss in the HIBD brain¹⁹², as well as improved integrity of the blood-brain barrier through reduction of matrix metalloproteinases²⁰⁴ are also evident as neuroprotective mechanisms of hypothermia. Reduced cerebral blood flow, increased blood viscosity, and extended cerebral hypo-perfusion have also been reported during cooling.^{171,189,205–207} Together, these mechanisms may help prevent complete blood flow cessation as induced by ischemia, perhaps functioning to delay cell depolarization during anoxic conditions.^{65,208} However, these factors should be monitored, as

sustained cerebral hypo-perfusion²⁰⁹, as well as hyperthermia²¹⁰⁻²¹⁴, during ischemic reperfusion have been demonstrated to exacerbate HIBD under normothermic conditions.

The anti-oxidative, anti-inflammatory, and anti-apoptotic effects of post-ischemic hypothermia have been widely deliberated. Research has shown cooling to enhance anti-oxidant production²¹⁵ and suppress the release of deleterious excitotoxins (e.g. ROS, free radicals, glutamate, calcium, nitric oxide)^{203,216-220} and inflammatory mediators (e.g. NFκB)^{188,221-223}. Additionally, hypothermia has been demonstrated to upregulate caspase inhibitors^{54,55} and inhibit pro-apoptotic caspases (e.g. caspase-3^{193,224,225}, caspase-2²²⁴) and caspase-independent mediators^{54,226-228}, thus having an overall suppressive effect on apoptotic cell death.

Furthermore, hypothermia has been theorized to only further delay the process of cell death.⁵⁴ This may represent and give consideration to the plausibility that damage beyond a proposed injury threshold is unrescuable.^{164,229,230} For instance, early cooling has been shown to preserve the inactive phosphorylated form of phosphatase and tensin homolog (PTEN), but not delayed cooling which allowed PTEN activation and the perpetuation of cell death functions.²²⁸

With regards to the HIBD core and penumbra, while Yuan et al. found cooling to reduce their respective volumes between 24-48h after HIBD²²³, and decreased translocation of apoptosis-inducing factor (AIF) has been reported in each area of injury⁵⁴, the precise mechanisms of hypothermia during HIBD neuropathology and whether they benefit or harm the core/penumbra are still at large. Current research demonstrates that hypothermia does not upregulate X-linked inhibitor of apoptosis (XIAP) in the penumbra, an aspect that could be harnessed with combination therapies.⁵⁵ Also, hypothermia has been found to reduce caspase-3 expression in the infarct core for up to 1 week, also having a transient effect on the penumbra with caspase-3 levels initially reduced, but quantitatively increased after 48 hours.⁵⁴ The role of hypothermia has

not been fully elucidated regarding its effects on AMPK energy homeostasis, however some evidence suggests that cooling may suppress AMPK activation after ischemic stroke.^{231,232}

A positive correlation between reduced brain damage and decreasing temperature with focal²³³ and whole-body cooling^{60,234,235} emerged in neonatal animal models, with optimal protection at temperatures below 34°C. Interestingly, evidence points to a correlation between the increasing depth of hypothermia and neuroprotection, with an internal temperature of 31°C protecting better against neurotoxic injury than 34°C in neonatal rats.¹⁹² In newborn pigs, no additional metabolic benefit has been seen with cooling at colder than 18°C¹⁸⁹, and increasing the depth (30°C) and duration of cooling (48h) in newborn rats was not effective against severe HIBD.²³⁶ Thus, progressively decreasing the body's internal temperature may not be a good idea. While different temperature depths and durations may be effective against different HIBD animal species, human clinical care has standardized hypothermia administration to 72h at 33.5 ± 0.5 °C.^{85,146,237} Research has shown adequate protection of both the deep and cortical gray matter with this temperature range, whereas other temperatures may affect brain structures differently.²³⁸ Clinical trials examining post-ischemic hypothermia at 32°C for 120h after HIBD found increased brain acidosis along with a risk for increased mortality; the calculated probability for seeing a statistically significant benefit for longer, deeper cooling was 2%.^{239,240} However, evidence demonstrates that the neuroprotective effect of cooling is neither complete nor indiscriminate, as moderately-affected neonates appear to benefit most from hypothermia as opposed to those severely-affected.^{36,179,182,241}

In any case, the complete gamut of cellular mechanisms affected by hypothermia during HIBD pathogenesis and reperfusion remains elusive. Notwithstanding, the extent of hypothermia's therapeutic effect on the damaged brain likely depends on the severity of HIBD, as well as the

susceptibility of the brain tissue affected.²⁴² As cooling simultaneously exerts neuroprotective effects so broadly on multiple levels during injury and manipulates drug activity and effectiveness^{243,244}, supplementing hypothermia with another therapy is a challenging task.²⁴⁵ Reviews examining hypothermic neuroprotection also note that it is largely incomplete and likely depends on the extent and severity of the initial insult, with protection for moderate brain injury typically being more robust than for severe HIBD.^{36,182,241,246} Thus, the concept of additive/synergistic neuroprotective treatments in combination with cooling has been pursued in an effort to further improve outcome and perhaps even benefit neonates with severe damage.^{4,24,247,248}

Pharmacotherapy in Combination with Hypothermia for Newborn HIBD

One could postulate that the next step in developing new therapeutics would be in the direction of enhancing hypothermic neuroprotection, but this is a challenging task. Theoretically, this could be accomplished by pharmacotherapies acting either synergistically or additively with hypothermia. Although a review paper detailing the effects of combination therapies for adult ischemic stroke is available²⁴⁹, no such all-encompassing review currently exists for neonatal HIBD; Cilio and Ferriero published a review in 2010 detailing only the effects of various anticonvulsants as adjuncts with cooling for HIBD with minimal discussion on other tested treatments.²⁴ Below, the successful and unsuccessful adjuncts together with hypothermia for HIBD are described.

Experimentally-Successful Combination Therapies

Currently, the noble gas inhalant Xenon (Xe; 20-50%²⁵⁰) is the only therapy that has consistently shown additive neuroprotection clinically and experimentally with post-ischemic cooling.²⁵¹

Notably, neuroprotection has been retained with delayed and asynchronous administration of Xe at 1h, 4h, and up to 5h following experimental neonatal HIBD; this was shown by significant neuronal viability, reduced brain lesion volumes, less apoptotic cell death.²⁵²⁻²⁵⁴ Restoration of functional behaviour²⁵⁵ and stabilization of blood pressure and cerebrovascular reactivity^{256,257} have also been recorded with this combination therapy in the neonatal rat and pig respectively. However, neuroprotection may be limited to mild-moderate HIBD, as no protection with Xe and cooling have been observed for severe HIBD.²⁵⁸ The mechanisms by which Xe exerts neuroprotection include inhibition of the N-methyl D-aspartate (NMDA) receptor.^{259,260} While standard clinical practice has not yet implemented the use of Xe inhalation therapy alongside standard therapeutic hypothermia, recent clinical studies^{261,262} and an RCT²⁶³ have confirmed the safety and feasibility of recirculating Xe therapy, although results from the TOBY RCT have shown no effect of this combination therapy on moderate-severe HIBD.²⁶³

Erythropoietin (EPO), a hematopoietic cytokine that stimulates the oxygen-carrying capacity of red blood cells, is perhaps the next treatment in line with considerable promise for improving HIBD injury. Only two studies to date^{230,264} have combined EPO and hypothermia to treat neonatal HIBD, and although both utilized similar animal models and protocols, they offer contradictory results.²⁶⁵ Fan et al.²⁶⁴ observed neuroprotection and sensorimotor improvement in female rats treated with 5000 U/g EPO plus hypothermia (33°C for 3h), while Fang et al.²³⁰ implemented cooling for 8h with 3 doses of 1000U/g EPO, showing no significant effect of combination treatment at any point. RCTs assessing EPO for term neonatal HIBD deemed EPO to be safe while also reducing death and disability by 18 months, but showed improvement for moderate and not severe injury.^{266,267}

Other studies examining adjunct treatments with post-ischemic cooling have also reported enhanced hypothermic neuroprotection. As phenobarbital, a seizure treatment drug, is frequently administered in the clinic post-HIBD, it was hypothesized that perhaps it would promote further protection with post-ischemic cooling. Laboratory results indicate varied internal temperature profiles²⁶⁸, no additional effect with phenobarbital pretreatment²⁶⁹, and long-term contralateral motor improvement even though short-term histological protection was not sustainable after 32-40 days.²⁷⁰ Additionally, the anticonvulsant topiramate has been examined as a safe potential adjunct therapy²⁷¹ and a clinical RCT is currently ongoing.^{272,273} Delayed administration of topiramate with hypothermia in a neonatal animal model demonstrated an extended window of opportunity post HIBD, further reduced cortex and gray matter injury, and improved behavioural function.²⁷⁴ Further studies are required to determine the full range of phenobarbital's and topiramate's neuroprotective efficacies with hypothermia for HIBD.

Several one-off studies have also reported enhanced HIBD protection with cooling. For instance, statistically-significant additive neuroprotection with cannabidiols plus hypothermia combination therapy for neonatal HIBD in piglets.²⁷⁵ Additionally, the anti-oxidant N-acetylcysteine has been shown to reduce HIBD infarct volumes, white matter damage, and attenuate neonatal reflexes when combined with post-ischemic cooling^{204,276}, but other studies have reported detrimental or unchanging prognoses N-acetylcysteine which must not be overlooked.²⁷⁷⁻²⁷⁹ Another anti-oxidant, N-tert-butyl-(2-sulphophenyl)-nitron (S-PBN), exerted robust neuroprotection of striatal spiny neurons and contralateral forepaw reaching when delivered every 12h in a pre- and post-treatment paradigm with hypothermia and HIBD.²⁸⁰ Caspase inhibitors as a method of reducing apoptotic cell death may also be beneficial to counteract the HIBD neurotoxic cascade, but although the caspase inhibitor Boc-aspartyl—(OMe)-fluoromethyl-ketone (BAF) together with

post-ischemic cooling significantly reduced Cleaved Caspase-3 activity and protect hippocampal cells²⁸¹, BAF has also not been successful in reducing brain damage volume.²⁸² Insulin-like growth factor-1 (IGF-1) has also been examined with hypothermia for neonatal HIBD, but the results offer conflicting reports; one study found multiple doses of IGF-1 with cooling to extend the therapeutic time window²⁸³, whereas another study did not find this duo to enhance hypothermic neuroprotection.²⁸⁴ Notably, the application of mesenchymal stem cells in combination with hypothermia (34°C for 5h) under oxygen-glucose deprivation (OGD) conditions yielded approximately 90% cell viability, also reducing mitochondrial stress much more effectively than with cooling at 25°C.²⁸⁵

Unsuccessful Combination Therapies

The potent ROS scavenger Manganese 3-methoxy N,N'-bis(salicylidene)ethylenediamine chloride (EUK-134) with hypothermia has demonstrated enhanced neuroprotection of the striatum and putamen, but in a follow-up study with a similar protocol, this combination therapy was neither additive nor synergistic.²⁸⁶ These negative results are consistent with previous work,^{287,288} warranting caution and further study. Finally, dizocilpine (MK-801) was shown to protect the brain against HIBD²⁸⁹⁻²⁹³, but these claims were refuted with data indicating that MK-801 acted independently to inherently produce its own neuroprotective cooling, irrespective of additional therapeutic hypothermia.²⁹⁴⁻²⁹⁶ Due to its negative side effects and safety concerns in human neonates and children,²⁴ MK-801 is no longer recommended for use.

Current Gaps in the Literature

All-in-all, neonatal HIBD is a complex pathological process, beginning with a depletion of energy regulation. Hypothermia, while an effective neuroprotectant, complicates this process further. The notion that the HIBD core and penumbra may be differentially-affected during post-

HIBD hypothermia also complicates this paradigm and the approach to future and additive neuroprotective treatments.

A review of the literature has determined that anti-oxidant therapies and nutraceuticals have been sparsely tested as HIBD therapies. Due to the neonatal brain's immature anti-oxidant system^{297,298}, it may be beneficial to provide an additional boost of anti-oxidants with the intent of reducing brain injury. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, energy failure due to AMPK dysregulation is believed to play a major role in the neurotoxic cascade and delayed neuronal injury in HIBD. Although post-ischemic cooling is standard of care for HIBD, the full extent of hypothermia's effect on AMPK and its downstream regulators has not been completely elucidated. Additionally, neither has been examined in the HIBD core and penumbra, two distinct regions of injury.

The two studies encompassing my Master's Thesis aimed to examine sulforaphane (SFN), a potent anti-oxidative and anti-inflammatory compound derived from the ingestion of cruciferous vegetables, as a potential rescue therapy supplement to hypothermia. Our findings in this first study, that SFN did not potentiate the beneficial effects of hypothermia, in conjunction with that of others failing to enhance the effect of hypothermia, led to the development of my second study. That is, it became clear that a better understanding of the role of hypothermia in protecting the brain from damage was necessary in order to effectively supplement this therapy. In particular, knowing the role of hypothermia in the post-ischemic 'window of opportunity' would lead to a better understanding of the type and timing of supplementary therapeutic intervention. In this regard, we were interested in better understanding the effect of hypothermia on energy regulation, as that initial phase leading to cellular injury, either necrotic or apoptotic in nature. We set out to delineate the evolution of p-AMPK activation during and after post-

ischemic hypothermia in the HIBD core and penumbra to determine when and where biomedical research and clinical practice could possibly provide additional beneficial influence.

Chapter 2: Objectives, Rationales, and Hypotheses

Study #1: Sulforaphane plus Hypothermia Combination Therapy for Neonatal HIBD

Purpose

- To examine if a combination therapy of sulforaphane (SFN) plus moderate post-ischemic hypothermia (HYPO) would further reduce HIBD injury as compared to HYPO alone.

Objectives

- Determine whether HYPO + SFN is more neuroprotective than either therapy alone, after HIBD.
- Test a dose-response paradigm of various SFN doses.
- Determine if additional neuroprotection is afforded by an increase in the dose of SFN.

Rationale

Sulforaphane (SFN) is an isothiocyanate compound produced via the catalyzed reaction of ingested glucoraphanin and the myrosinase enzyme.^{299,300} Metabolized via the mercapturic acid pathway and excreted as dithiocarbamates via the urine³⁰¹, SFN has been demonstrated to exert neuroprotective and anticarcinogenic influences against disorders such as stroke^{83,302-304}, and various types of cancer.³⁰⁵⁻³¹¹ Mechanistically, protection by SFN involves stimulating antioxidant production via the molecular Nrf2-ARE (Nuclear Related Factor 2 – Antioxidant Response Element) pathway.^{83,312,313} In this paradigm, SFN binds to the Keap1-Nrf2 (Kelch-like ech-associated protein 1 – Nuclear factor (erythroid-derived 2)-like-2) complex within the cell, resulting in Nrf2's dissociation and translocation to the nucleus, thereby inducing the production of Phase II antioxidants via activated ARE gene expression. Another recently discovered

mechanism of SFN, inflammasome inhibition, may also contribute to its potent effects³¹⁴.

Inflammasomes are innate cytosolic sensors that mount inflammatory responses against pathogens. This anti-inflammatory mechanism of SFN has been reported to act independently of the Nrf2-ARE pathway to indirectly inhibit caspase-1 and interleukin-1 β secretion and maturation.³¹⁴ Collectively, these two mechanisms contribute to the protective and preventative effects of SFN seen in numerous biomedical research studies.^{83,299,303,307,315-318} Given the neuroprotective action of SFN discussed, it is conceivable that its combination with HYPO would provide additive benefit in an HIBD model.

Only four HIBD studies to date have examined the effect of SFN therapy on *in-vivo*³¹⁹ and *in-vitro*³²⁰⁻³²² neonatal HIBD, all demonstrating neuroprotection as measured by reduced brain damage, increased cell viability, reduced inflammation, and increased antioxidant production. Fundamentally, these studies demonstrate that SFN is capable of protecting neonatal cells and neurons against hypoxic-ischemic damage.

However, the neuroprotection offered by both hypothermic cooling and SFN independently is insufficient to completely protect the HIBD brain. Post-ischemic hypothermia within 6h of birth is only partially-protective against mild-moderate HIBD and not protective at all for severe HIBD.^{36,146,179,182,241} Also, SFN therapy has not been observed to completely absolve the neonatal hypoxic-ischemic brain from injury.³¹⁹

Research suggests that combining post-ischemic cooling with another independently-neuroprotective therapy may produce additive neuroprotection of the hypoxic-ischemic brain injury itself. Whether an even further protection of brain tissue from HIBD affords additional behavioural improvement, or is even necessary to improve behavioural impairments, is currently unknown. While a review of the literature has revealed that most pharmacotherapies tried

together with hypothermia have not been successful in enhancing hypothermic neuroprotection, no studies have examined SFN and cooling together on HIBD. Due to SFN's status as a safe-to-use compound with potent anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory effects³²³, we theorized that it may be of advantage to examine these two therapies together. Furthermore, we examined several different SFN doses (1, 5, and 10 mg/kg) to elucidate any dose-dependent neuroprotective effects.

Hypotheses

- Supplementation of HYPO with SFN will have an additive neuroprotective benefit beyond HYPO alone.
- A higher dosage of SFN will be more neuroprotective than a lower dose, both independently and in conjunction with HYPO.
 - i.e.) 10 mg/kg > 5 mg/kg > 1 mg/kg

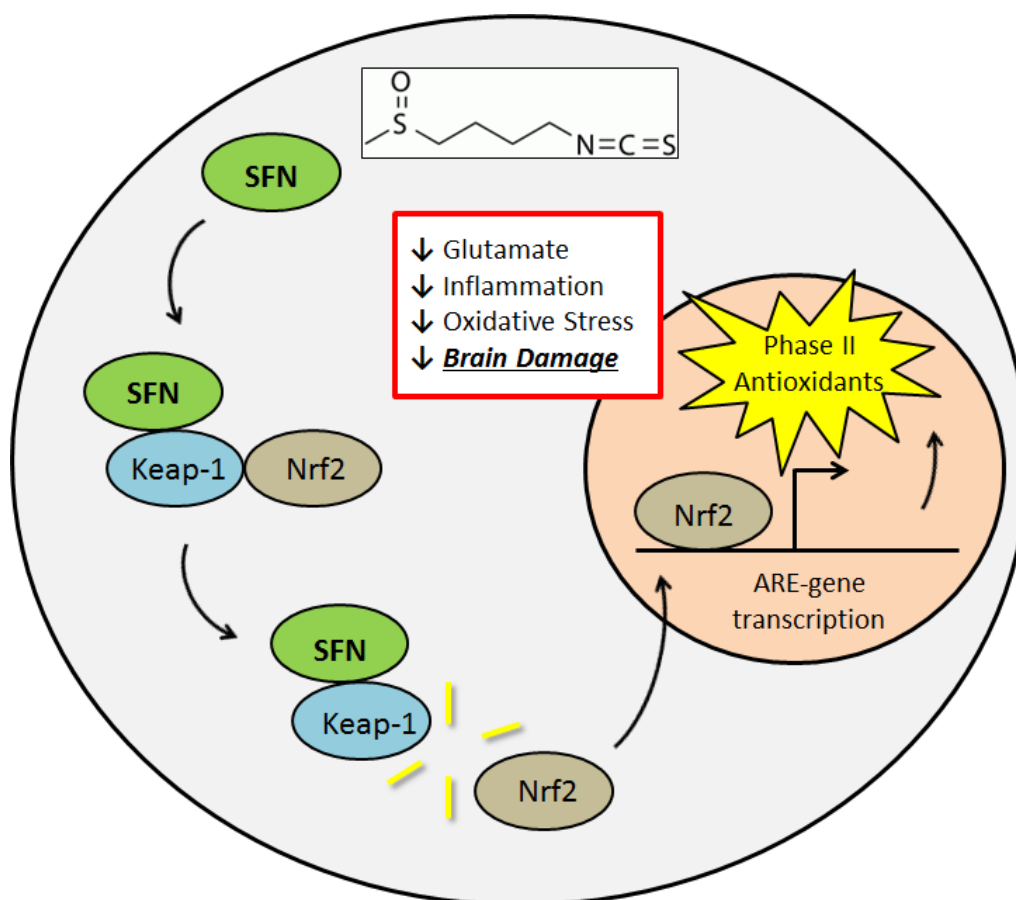


Figure 1: Mechanism of Sulforaphane Action via the Nrf2-ARE Pathway

SFN has been shown to act primarily through the Nuclear factor-erythroid 2-related factor 2 – Antioxidant Response Element (Nrf2-ARE) pathway. Once SFN enters the cell, it binds to the Kelch-like ECH-associated protein 1 (Keap1)-Nrf2 complex, dissociating Nrf2 and allowing it to enter the nucleus. Within the nucleus, Nrf2 is free to bind to the promoter of the Antioxidant Response Element gene and induce the transcription of downstream Phase II antioxidants. This in turn has been shown to result in the reduction of glutamate, inflammatory mediators, and oxidative stress, ultimately aiding in the reduction of brain injury.

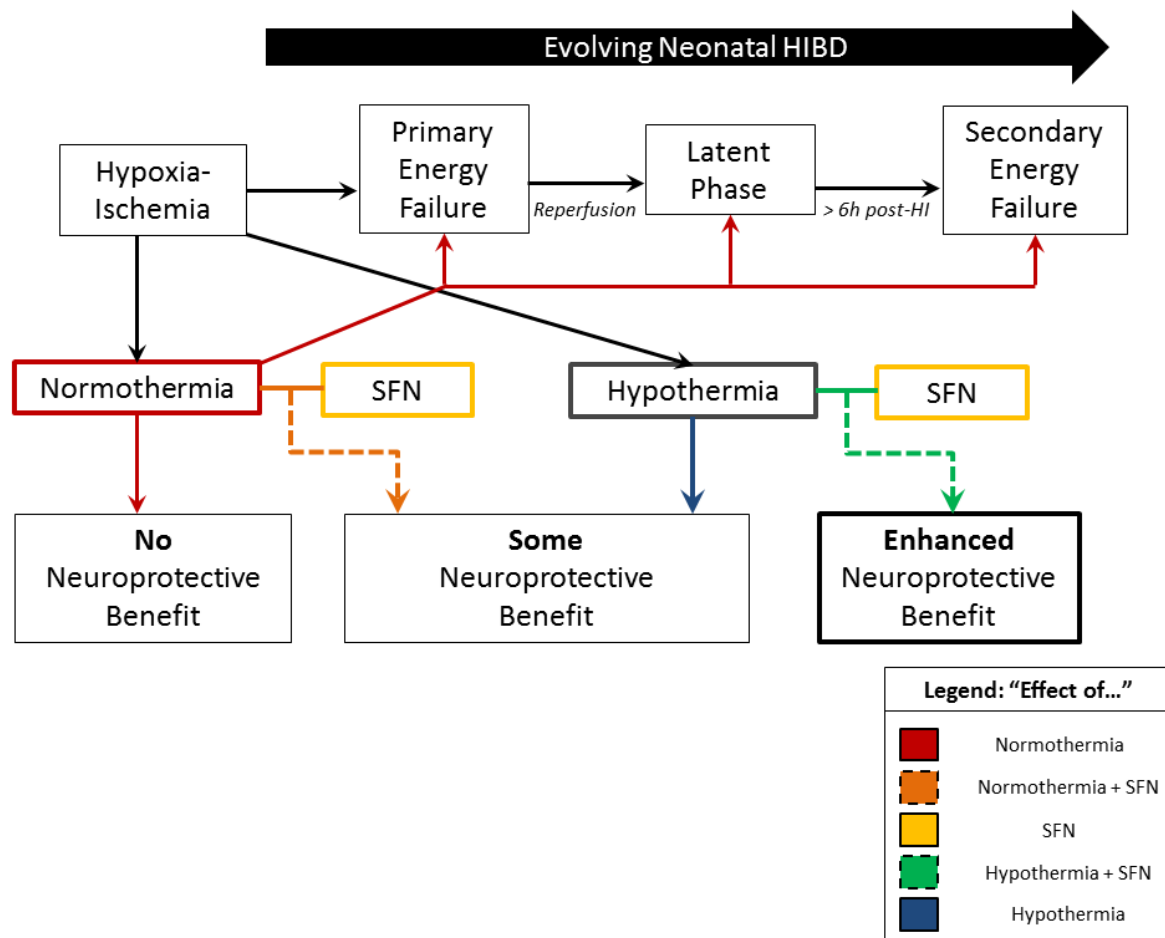


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework of Study #1

This conceptual framework illustrates my hypotheses for Study #1. Through a literature review, I hypothesized that combining both HYPO and SFN therapies would produce an enhanced neuroprotective effect for HIBD. No therapy at all would promote the evolution of injury, while hypothermia would provide only partial neuroprotection. Studies examining SFN alone have also seen some neuroprotective benefit.

Study #2: The Effect of Hypothermia on AMPK/p-AMPK and Cell Survival/Death in the Hypoxic-Ischemic Core/Penumbra

Purpose

To elucidate how HYPO affects energy recovery and cell death/survival pathways in the Core and Penumbra during HIBD in the neonatal rodent.

Objectives

- To determine the differential effects of hypothermia on the evolution of neonatal HIBD in the core and penumbra.

Specific Aims

- To determine the effects of hypothermia on: (1) AMPK activation, (2) pathways leading to cell survival and (3) cell death, in the core and penumbra of the HIBD lesion.
 - We quantified GLUT3 as a marker of cell survival, LC3-II as a marker of starvation-induced autophagic activity, Bim as a mediator of intrinsic apoptosis, and Cleaved Caspase-3 as a final marker of apoptotic cell death.

Rationale

As indicated in my Introduction, while post-ischemic hypothermia has been partially protective following hypoxic-ischemic brain injury in the newborn, and is currently standard of care, supplementing this therapy has been less than successful. My first study, combining SFN and HYPO underscores the challenge in finding supplemental therapies, as do other studies from our laboratory (Creatine [unpublished]), and others.²⁴ In our laboratory, this had led to a further review of the underlying mechanisms of HYPO, and questioning where supplemental therapies may be beneficial or additive.

Examining hypothermia's effect on the master energy regulator, AMPK, after HIBD is of interest from a therapeutic perspective. However, limited studies have examined how cooling acts on this axis in the brain.^{231,324} One study found perinatal stroke to robustly activate AMPK in the brain; this effect was less pronounced in older mice due to the baseline increase of p-AMPK during aging, and may contribute to the differential effects of stroke pathophysiology and effect of treatment between neonates and the elderly.³²⁴ Hypothermia was found to be protective through inhibiting AMPK activity after middle cerebral artery occlusion (MCAO) 24h after MCAO, in adult rodents.²³¹ In a mouse model of hindlimb ischemia, exposure to post-ischemic hypothermia (32°C and 28°C) suppressed p-AMPK and increased mammalian target of rapamycin (mTOR) expression via increased phosphorylation of ribosomal protein S6.³²⁵ Interestingly, however intra-hypoxic (1% O₂) hypothermia at 32°C and 28°C did not inhibit AMPK-activation.³²⁵

Currently, it is unknown how hypothermia affects AMPK-mediated activity in the core and penumbra of an HIBD-induced lesion. The penumbra is secondarily affected by waves of stroke-induced neurotoxicity and surrounds the lesion's core, which is primarily necrosed by HIBD. Penumbral targeting is especially important for functional recovery post-stroke due to its remaining perfusion capacity.⁵³ Administering hypothermia after HIBD reduced the amount of cell death in both areas, but the penumbra most significantly.⁵⁴ This suggests that the penumbra is sensitive to signals communicating cell death versus survival. Hence, targeting the penumbra with therapeutic interventions to enhance neuronal survival after HIBD would be of interest. Furthermore, determining the role of hypothermia on the activation/inhibition of AMPK and its downstream effectors is highly valuable in elucidating the mechanisms of hypothermia on HIBD pathophysiology, as well as in determining additional drug treatments or specific adjunct

therapies that could specifically target proteins within the pathways that are either not influenced by hypothermia, or influenced adversely.

To gain an understanding of how p-AMPK and related downstream neuronal survival/death markers are affected by HIBD and cooling, several protein markers were examined. These were deemed as most representative of their effector functions and most directly linked to p-AMPK activity. GLUT3 was chosen as a marker of neuronal survival, LC3-II represented the final autophagosome of the autophagic cell death system, and Bim and Cleaved Caspase-3 exemplified intrinsic apoptosis; Bim was chosen due to its function as a pro-apoptotic mediator and its apoptotic role in the FoxO3a pathway that is directly affected by p-AMPK.^{326–329}

Hypotheses

- Hypothermia will **suppress** p-AMPK expression in the Core and Penumbra.
- **Suppressing** p-AMPK in the **Core** → May be **protective**.
 - Due to the **absent** substrate supply in the HIBD core and primary location of energy failure, we hypothesize that **activating** p-AMPK in the HIBD core would be detrimental to neuronal survival. Activating AMPK in the HIBD core, requires some substrate and energy to initiate ATP recovery through uniting ADP and AMP. Stimulating the core may therefore act to further aggravate the injured area by requiring a substrate demand that outstrips supply.
- **Suppressing** p-AMPK in the **Penumbra** → May be **detrimental**.
 - The HIBD penumbra is hypo-perfused, as opposed to having no blood supply, and contains both living and dying cells. Due to the **present** substrate supply in the

HIBD penumbra and the presence of living cells, we hypothesize that rather **activating** p-AMPK in the HIBD penumbra would be beneficial in harnessing the endogenous ability of this injured area to generate ATP to promote neuronal survival and prevent the depolarizing nature of the core (prevent core expansion).

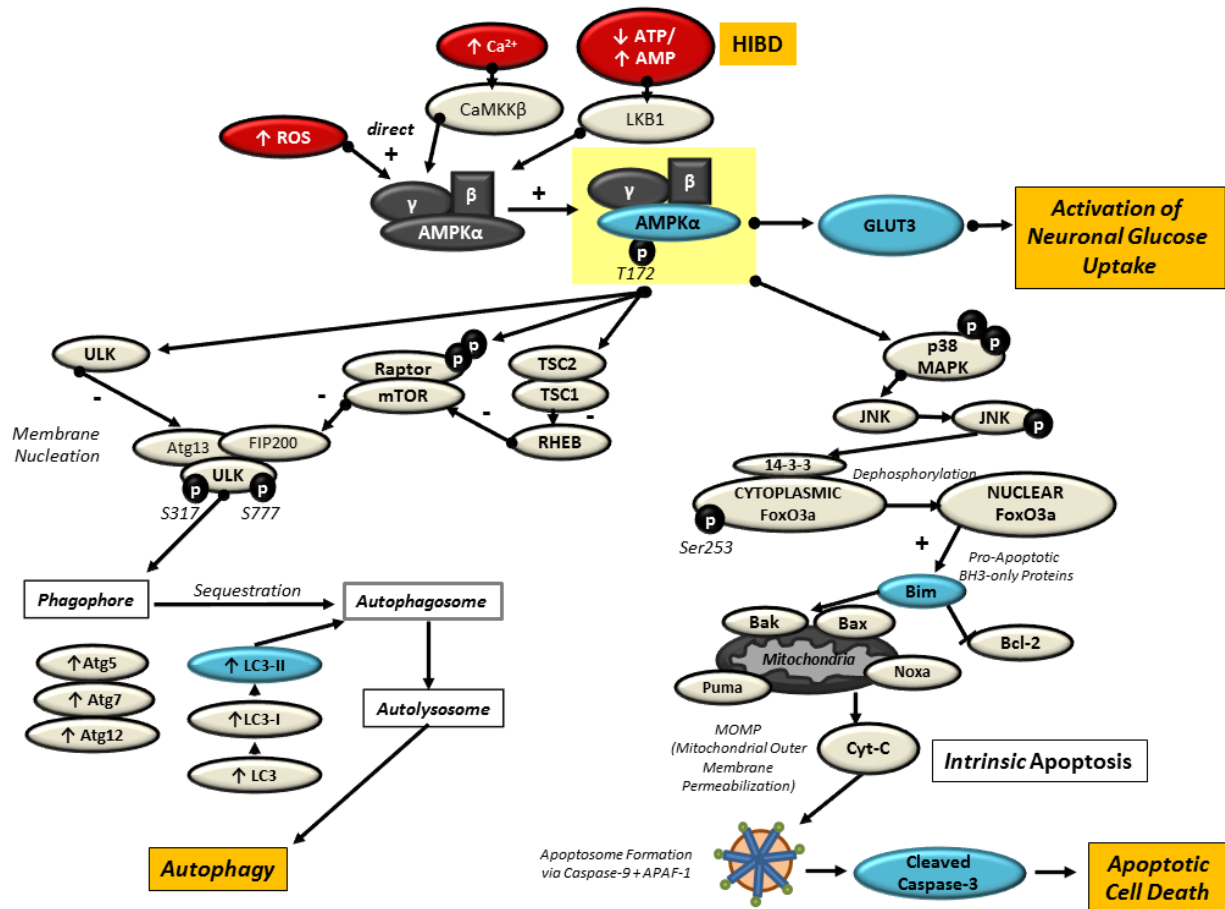


Figure 3: Molecular Pathways and Antibodies Examined in Study #2

This figure depicts the molecular pathways and proteins examined during Western Blotting for the Core/Penumbra study. As energy failure and fluctuations characterize HIBD, we probed for p-AMPK α (Thr172), the activated form of the master energy regulator AMPK, and its downstream effectors. GLUT3 was examined as a marker of neuronal glucose uptake. For autophagy, LC3-II expression was analyzed. Within the intrinsic apoptosis pathway, we examined the mediator, Bim, and the final effector, Cleaved Caspase-3.

Chapter 3: Materials and Methods

Study Population

Studies have demonstrated that the 7-day-old (PD7) neonatal rat brain is developmentally similar to that of the late premature human neonate and is at its peak growth period at this time.^{330–332}

The Rice-Vannucci model of perinatal HIBD³³³, modified after Levine's model of adult anoxic-ischemia³³⁴, is the best-characterized and most utilized model of comparative biomedical HIBD research. Their landmark study is considered the cornerstone of HIBD research. Thus, PD7 neonatal rats used under the Rice-Vannucci protocol permit conceivably translatable research findings. In my studies, both male and female PD7 Long-Evans rats (12-16g) were used, with litters culled to 10 pups to ensure an equal growth rate within and between groups, preventing litter bias.

Pregnancies for these studies were untimed as all work was done postnatally. Two female rats was placed with one male rat for 2 weeks. The female was then placed in a cage by herself until delivery. Rats were checked twice daily for delivery. The day of birth was postnatal day 1. Rat pups were reared with their dam until weaning at PD21. At this point rats were separated from the dam and housed at 2 rats/cage until euthanasia. Rat dams and pups (after PD21) were fed *ad libitum* and maintained on a 12 hour on/off light cycle.

Ethical Considerations

All research was conducted in accordance with the guidelines set by the Canadian Council for Animal Care and approved by the University of Alberta's Health Sciences Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (Animal Use Protocol #AUP00000363). Rats were maintained by our Health Sciences Laboratory Animal Services and had *ad libitum* access to chow and water.

Study Designs

Study #1: Post-Ischemic Hypothermia and Sulforaphane Combination Therapy

Study #1 aimed to address the effects of hypothermia (HYPO) + sulforaphane (SFN) combination therapy on moderate neonatal HIBD.

All rat pups were randomized for sex, weight, and therapy. On PD7, experimental pups underwent surgery to have their right carotid artery ligated and severed (Rice-Vannucci model of HIBD³³³). After a two-hour recovery period, these pups were exposed to hypoxia at 8% O₂/ 92% N₂ for 90 minutes to induce Moderate HIBD in the right hemisphere of the brain. When possible, 2 of the 10 pups within each litter remained with their dam throughout the study to facilitate milk production. Immediately after hypoxia, experimental pups were randomly assigned to receive either Normothermic (NORMO, 37°C) or Hypothermic (HYPO, 28°C) environmental conditions for 24h, and received either normal saline vehicle (NS) or sulforaphane (SFN) injections, with 2 pups per condition per litter to avoid influences of batch-effects.

All experimental pups were given one subcutaneous injection (100 µl) of either NS (0.9% NaCl; Normal Saline) or SFN (1, 5, or 10 mg/kg) made up in NS within 15 minutes of NORMO/HYPO induction. Hence, four treatment groups were stratified and randomly assigned: NORMO + NS, NORMO + SFN, HYPO + NS, and HYPO + SFN. Injections were administered once every 24 h for a total of 7 days (PD7-13). Pups remained with their dams until PD21 when they were weaned and separated into their own cages based on sex. Euthanization occurred on PD30.

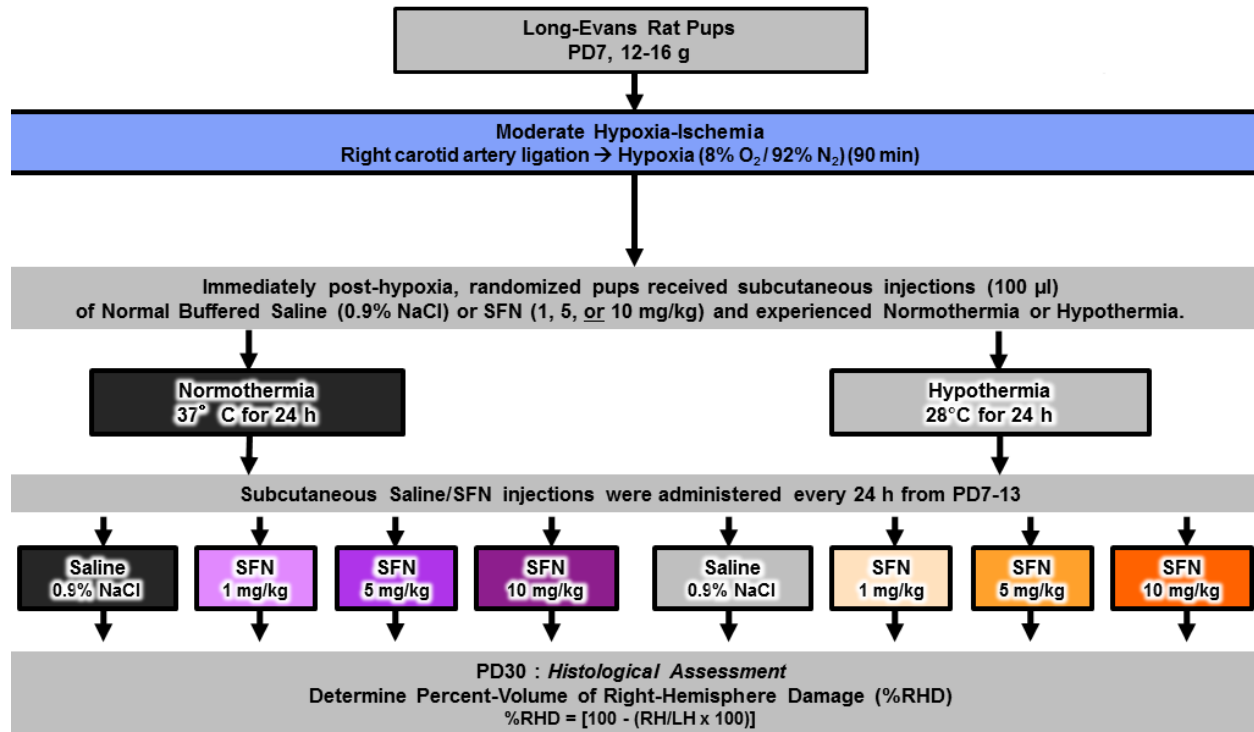


Figure 4: Hypothermia + Sulforaphane Combination Therapy Study Design

This flowchart depicts the study design for the HYPO + SFN combination therapy experiment.

Study #2: AMPK, Cell Death and/or Survival during Hypothermic Recovery in the Core & Penumbra

Study #2 aimed to address the results from Study #1 and provide insight into the mechanisms by which HYPO exerts neuroprotection for HIBD. The information will aid us in determining what supplemental agents in conjunction with HYPO, will be beneficial.

As in Study #1, PD7 experimental pups underwent Moderate HIBD as described within sections in Study #1. NORMO and HYPO conditions were identical to Study #1, however the time-points examined were different.

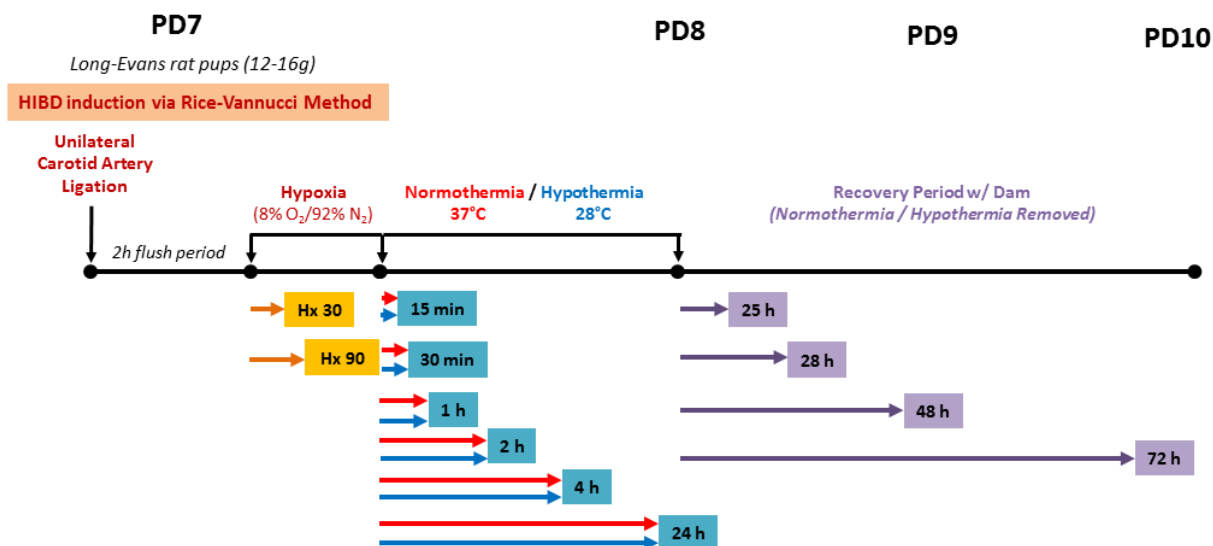


Figure 5: Post-Ichemic Hypothermia in the Core & Penumbra – Study Design & Timeline

The timeline above depicts an overview of the experimental time course and methods for Study #2.

General Methodologies

Induction of Moderate Neonatal HIBD

Rice-Vannucci Model

Unilateral Common Carotid Artery Ligation Surgery

The standard Rice-Vannucci model of neonatal HIBD was performed on PD7 Long-Evans rat pups (12-16 g)³³⁵. Prior to surgery, all pups were weighed, and sexed. Pre- and post-surgery, pups were held in an infant incubator (Isolette Infant Incubator; Air-Systems Vickers) set at 35°C to maintain normal body temperature. During surgery, pups were laid supine and fitted with a nose cone by which they were anaesthetized with isoflurane anaesthetic (4% induction, 2% maintenance). Each surgical procedure was completed in under 10 minutes, as isoflurane has been reported to exert neuroprotection after more than 10 minutes of exposure.

Once fully anaesthetized, as determined via lack of reflexes after pinching the hands, feet, and tail, a 1cm-long vertical incision was made with straight, fine scissors (Catalogue No. 91460-11; Fine Science Tools) at the midline of the pup's neck. Two sets of forceps, a thick pair (RS-5138 Graefe Micro-Dissecting Forceps [ROBOZ Surgical Store]) and a thin pair (Miltex 18-784 Eye Dressing Forceps [MedPlus Physician Supplies]) were used. Once the trachea was located, the isoflurane was turned down and maintained at 2% throughout surgery.

Afterwards, the thin pair of forceps was used to break through the translucent membrane of tissue underneath the sternohyoid muscles and immediately right of the trachea and the common carotid artery (CCA) was identified. The CCA is attached to the white vagal nerve and is located immediately alongside the trachea. To validate its identity, the thin forceps were manoeuvred

underneath and used to gently scoop and isolate it. If the red colour appeared and disappeared due to fluctuations in blood flow during this process, the CCA had been identified.

The right CCA was subsequently isolated from the vagal nerve and ligated twice with double-knots using 5-0 braided surgical silk (Harvard Apparatus). The right CCA was then permanently cut between the two ligations to stop blood flow. Once the CCA was successfully ligated the incision closed up with 5-0 silk sutures using a curved needle held with a needle driver (Halsey Needle Holder; 13 cm, Catalogue No. 91201-13) and trimmed of excess silk.

Post-surgery, pups were ear-notched for identification according to their assigned number and returned to the incubator to recover. When all surgeries were completed, pups were returned to their dam to recover for 2 hours.

Hypoxia

After 2 hours with their dam, pups were individually placed in covered glass jars (with inlet and exit ports) floating and partially submerged in a pre-heated water bath (36.5-37°C) and exposed to a hypoxic environment of 8% O₂/92% N₂ for 90 min. The combination of cerebral ischemia and hypoxia act together to produce moderate brain damage in the right hemisphere of the brain (ipsilateral to the CCA ligation)³³⁵. Mortality was approximately 5% for moderate HIBD. Pups were regularly monitored throughout hypoxia. Post-hypoxia, pups to be used for maintaining milk production were removed from their glass jars and held at room temperature for 5 minutes before being returned to their home cage. The remaining experimental pups either remained at 37°C or were transferred to glass jars partially submerged in a cooled 28°C environment. This procedure is further elucidated in the next section.

Normothermia & Moderate Post-Ischemic Hypothermia

Immediately after hypoxia, pups were randomized by sex and matched by weight to either NORMO (36.5-37°C) or HYPO (28°C, core temperature of 31°C²³⁴) experimental group. NORMO/HYPO was conducted in individual glass jars floating in water baths and lasted for 24 hours. Prior to induction, each experimental pup was fitted with a polyethylene (PE-10) catheter inserted subcutaneously between the scapulae on their back (into a hole created by a 25G needle) which delivered 15% glucose at a flow rate of 40 µl/h for NORMO or 10 µl/h for HYPO during the 24-hour period away from their dam⁵⁴ to prevent hypoglycemia.³³⁶⁻³³⁸

Rats experienced NORMO (37°C) or moderate HYPO (28°C) conditions in glass jars floating in water baths for the entire 24-hour period, which extended into PD8, unless part of Study #2 and allocated to an experimental timepoint occurring during NORMO/HYPO. Water baths were covered with enclosed lids to maintain humidity levels. Following NORMO/HYPO on PD8, PE tubing was removed and pups were held at room temperature for 5 minutes before being weighed and returned to their dam unless their experimental timepoint was at the end of NORMO/HYPO.

Sample Processing & Assessment

Histopathology

Coronal Brain Slice Collection

All HIBD brains were first assessed for neuropathology via histological staining. Whole brains were cut coronally at 14 µm/slice using a cryostat (Cryocut 1800, Reichert-Jung) set at -20°C.

Hematoxylin & Eosin (H&E) Staining

Brain slices was stained with Harris' H&E, using our lab's modified protocol, to visualize the two hemispheres of the brain for a gross physical assessment of brain damage. This immunostaining method allowed for easy determination of HIBD cysts. All sections were photographed (Leica MC170 HD) through a microscope (Leica GZGE) over a lightbox prior to assessment.

Study-Specific Methodologies

Study #1

Subcutaneous Injections

Shortly after initiating NORMO/HYPO, all experimental rats in Study #1 were randomized by sex and weight to receive subcutaneous injections (100 μ l) of either normal saline vehicle (NS; 0.9% NaCl) or SFN diluted in normal saline (1, 5, or 10 mg/kg). Injections were administered every 24h for 7 days (PD7-13) via a 30-gauge needle attached to a 1cc syringe. Rats were weighed daily, and the concentration of SFN adjusted according to the average weight of the litter on the day of injection. PD8 injections occurred 2 hours after NORMO/HYPO end to allow for the skin opening on their scapulae (exposed after removal of the PE tubing) to close.

Experimental Time-Points & Animal Euthanization

Rats were given an overdose of 5% isoflurane and euthanized via decapitation 21 days after NORMO/HYPO (PD30). Their brains were subsequently extracted and brains were immediately frozen in ice-cold isopentane (2-methylbutane, 99%) in a dry ice + ethanol bath and stored at -80°C, for later histopathological assessment.

Infarct Volume Measurement

For Study #1 brains, serial sections were cut anterior to posterior and obtained in duplicate every 0.5 cm (36 turns), beginning at the joining of the anterior commissure and ending at the separation of the corpus callosum.

H&E-stained brain sections were then analyzed for percent-volume of right hemisphere brain damage. From the beginning of the anterior commissure to the separation of the corpus callosum, the areas of all right and left hemispheres, of each section and of each brain, were individually traced in ImageJ (Version 1.42q; National Institutes of Health). Due to brain size variability, the number of sections analyzed anterior (2) and posterior to bregma (5) were standardized across brains to provide the most accurate volume determinate. The areas of each hemisphere were then integrated with the distance between sections to determine the total hemisphere volume. The percent-damage of the right hemisphere was taken to be: $[100 - ([\text{right hemisphere volume} - \text{left hemisphere volume}] \times 100)]$.

Study #2

Experimental Time-Points & Animal Euthanization

Randomized pups from different litters were utilized for Study #2 to understand how AMPK and its downstream effectors are expressed during HIBD. Here, subsets of pups were euthanized at 30 and 90 minutes of hypoxia. After HIBD, other pups were euthanized at 15min, 30min, 1h, 2h, 4h, and 24h into NORMO/HYPO to examine how each temperature treatment affected the proteins of interest. Brains were additionally collected at 25h, 28h, 48h, and 72h after the end of hypoxia (1, 4, 24, and 48h after removal from NORMO/HYPO) to examine protein expression after hypothermic conditions ceased.

At each experimental time point, pups were swiftly removed from their glass jars and rapidly decapitated, with brains extracted (in less than 1 minute) and frozen in isopentane in a dry ice + ethanol bath. All brains were stored at -80°C until further processing. This method of euthanasia ensures that proteins are not affected by prolonged exposure to anaesthesia or room temperature.

Determination of Core and Penumbra

To aid in the determination of the core and penumbra within HIBD brains, posterior brain sections from Study #2 were stained with H&E, and a separate subset from an individual litter stained with TTC (2,3,5,-triphenyl-2H-tetrazolium chloride). Comparisons between both these stains showed no difference in the localization of core and penumbra. Thus, the H&E-stained sets were used for core/penumbra determination.

Our goal was to determine the differences in the core and penumbral insults, and how hypothermia affected each pattern of damage. From this information, core and penumbra tissue was collected from each brain for Western Blotting.

TTC Staining

TTC is a rapid metabolic tissue stain that colours metabolically-active tissue red while leaving dead or dying tissue unstained. In the stroke literature, it is a common and reliable stain used to define the location and relative perfusion of cerebral infarction. TTC staining was performed to determine the location, severity, and extent of the HIBD lesion, as well as the location of core and penumbra at each time point.

A preliminary set of PD7 Long-Evans rats were subjected to Moderate or Severe HIBD (90 and 150 minutes of hypoxia, respectively) plus NORMO or HYPO and euthanized 4h, 24h, 48h, or 72h after hypoxia had ended. Immediately after extraction, serial (2 mm) coronal brain sections were obtained using a rat brain cutting matrix and stained with 2% TTC for 10 minutes at 37°C. Brains were then transferred to 10% neutral-buffered formalin, photographed, and subsequently stored at 4°C; TTC brains were not used or analyzed for any other procedure.

While Kramer et al.³³⁹ confirmed that TTC-stained brain tissue is indeed reliably able to be used for Western Blotting, for our purposes we opted to use a different set of animals whose brains had not been stained with TTC.

H&E Staining

All Study #2 posterior brain sections were obtained in duplicate at the first instance of a full hippocampus, but prior to the joining of the corpus callosum (14 $\mu\text{m/slice}$). This was achieved by mounting the anterior end of the Study #2 brains to the cryostat chuck with CryoMatrix™ (Thermo Scientific) and cutting from the posterior end beginning at the cerebellum and moving anteriorly with each section cut. Slides were stored at -20°C until stained.

All posterior brain sections were stained with H&E as per protocol and photographed, the locations of the HIBD core and penumbra for each brain then determined by investigators blinded to the experimental groups and timepoints. Next, core and penumbra were collected into pre-chilled 2 ml Eppendorf tubes via punch biopsy (2 mm, Miltex by Kai) at -20°C . Any remaining brain tissue was stored at -80°C . Core and penumbra samples were then kept on dry ice and prepared for Western Blotting.

Western Blotting

Sample Preparation

Core and penumbra samples were each respectively homogenized in 200 μl of AMPK lysis buffer (recipe courtesy of Dr. Jason Dyck's lab of the University of Alberta's Cardiovascular Research Institute; resulted in the best visualization of p-AMPK α) including protease/phosphatase inhibitors (ThermoFisher) and sodium orthovanadate and allowed to sit on ice for 10 minutes to permit activation of the inhibitors. Samples were subsequently spun at 10,000 g at 4°C for 10 minutes. Supernatants were extracted and pellets were discarded.

Supernatant lysates were aliquoted, used for protein concentration analysis, and stored at -80°C until further use.

Bicinchoninic Acid (BCA) Assay

BCA assays were performed in 96-well plates using gradients of colour change compared to a standard curve to determine the protein concentration of each core and penumbra sample. For each plate, dilutions of $2000\ \mu\text{g/mL}$ of Bovine Serum Albumin (Product #23210, ThermoScientific) were prepared, according to protocol, to form a standard curve when read by the plate reader. A 1:50 dilution of each homogenized sample lysate was prepared in ddH₂O. Each well was then filled with $125\ \mu\text{l}$ of Reagent A and Reagent B (1:50, Product #23223 and #23224, ThermoScientific). All samples and standard curve determinates were pipetted in triplicate to ensure readout accuracy and incubated at 37°C for 30 min. Protein concentrations within each well were determined using a VersaMax Turntable Plate Reader (Molecular Devices) and SoftMax Pro software (Version 5.2, Molecular Devices); r^2 values of 0.95 or greater were deemed acceptable. Protein concentrations derived from the BCA assays were used to determine stock protein loading amounts for immunoblotting. BCA assays were repeated for dilutions with r^2 values lower than 0.95.

Western Blotting Procedure

Western blotting was performed to quantify the amounts of proteins of interest in each core and penumbra brain sample per experimental condition. Initially, stock sample lysates were each briefly centrifuged at $10,000\ \text{g}$. Diluted stock samples were then separately prepared on ice in a mixture of ddH₂O + 4X SDS (sodium dodecyl sulfate) + BME (β -mercaptoethanol; $40\ \mu\text{l}$ per

1000 μ l 4X SDS) + 0.1 M EDTA (ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid) as per calculation for a total of 35 μ g of protein per 10 μ l. Diluted samples were briefly vortexed and centrifuged at 10,000 g before being sonicated in a water bath for 2 minutes to further promote protein denaturation; this was to better allow the proteins to run smoothly through the gel. Subsequently, samples were boiled at 95°C for 5 minutes. Boiled samples were then briefly vortexed, centrifuged briefly at 10,000 g, and left at room temperature to prevent SDS precipitation. They were subsequently pipetted into their respective wells in a premade 15-well electrophoresis gel (4-15% Mini-PROTEAN® TGX™ Precast Protein Gels; Bio-Rad; #4561086) preassembled within a Mini-PROTEAN® Electrophoresis Cell filled with 1X running buffer. The samples loaded into each gel were representative of one time point and contained core and penumbra samples from both NORMO and HYPO animals. A combination of 4 right hemispheres of the brain from 4 animals that had not received HIBD was used as a naïve control between gels, and an electrophoresis ladder (Precision Plus Protein™ Dual Color Standard; Bio-Rad) was run in the first and last lanes of each gel. Gels were run at 100V until the sample buffer dye had exited the stacking gel, whereafter the voltage was increased to 130V and stopped when the dye had just reached the bottom of the gel and before the ladder could run off the gel.

Pre-transfer, PVDF (polyvinylidene difluoride) membranes were pre-activated for 10 minutes in 100% methanol and equilibrated in transfer buffer for at least 30 minutes until the membrane no longer floated on the surface of the buffer. When electrophoresis was complete, samples were transferred from the gels to PVDF membranes at 100V for 2 hours on ice at 4°C within a Mini Trans-Blot® Electrophoretic Transfer Cell (Bio-Rad) containing an ice-pack, stir bar, and filled with transfer buffer. After transferring, membranes were rinsed in 1X tris-buffered saline (TBS) and blocked in 5% milk in 1X TBS at room temperature for 1 hour on a rotator. Afterwards,

membranes were cut horizontally just above the 50 kDa and 25 kDa molecular marker locations to probe for multiple antibodies (Ab) at once and also prevent unnecessary protein stripping. Membranes were individually incubated in primary antibodies (1°Ab) at 4°C overnight, or at room temperature for 1 hour, on a rotator; 1°Ab utilized were: p-AMPK α (1:1000, Cell Signaling, #2535), GLUT3 (1:1000, AbCam, #ab191071), Bim (1:500, AbCam, #ab17003), cleaved caspase-3 (1:1000, Cell Signaling, #9664), and LC3II (1:1000, AbCam, #ab48394). β -actin (1:1000, AbCam, #ab8226) was used as the normalized loading control. All 1°Ab were made-up in 5% milk-TBS. The next day, membranes were washed in 1X TBS-0.1% Tween (TBST) once for 5 minutes and 3 times for 10 minutes and incubated in their respective anti-rabbit (α R-IgG Horseradish Peroxidase-Linked Whole Ab from Donkey; 1:1000; GE Healthcare LTD; #NA934V) or anti-mouse (α M-IgG Horseradish Peroxidase-Linked Whole Ab from Sheep; 1:10,000; GE Healthcare LTD; #NA931V) 2°Ab in 5% TBS-milk at room temperature for 1 hour. Membranes were then washed in 1X TBST once for 5 minutes and 3 times for 10 minutes and incubated in an enhanced chemiluminescent (ECL) detection reagent (Western Lightning Plus ECL; PerkinElmer Inc.) This brand of ECL provided stronger signal readouts than our usual Millipore ECL (Millipore Luminata™ Classic – Western HRP Substrate). In the event that bands were still weak after these steps, a much stronger Femto ECL (SuperSignal™ West Femto Maximum Sensitivity Substrate; Thermo Fisher Scientific; #34095) was applied; this method was used sparingly due to the side effect of producing high background distortion. Films were subsequently developed onto X-ray film (Super RX Fuji Medical X-ray Film; 47410 19238) in a darkroom. Films were scanned as Greyscale JPEGs, converted to TIFF format, and analyzed for densitometry using the ImageJ (Version 1.42q, National Institute of Health) software.

In the event that membranes needed to be stripped of the last 1°/2° Ab, they were first washed in 1X TBS for 5 minutes and then incubated in a thin layer of Restore™ Stripping Buffer (Thermo Scientific) at room temperature for 7 minutes on a rotator. Afterwards, membranes were washed in 1X TBS for 5 minutes followed by blocking and 1°/2° Ab procedures, as previously stated. When all probing was complete, membranes were stored in 50 mL Falcon tubes completely filled with 1X TBS at 4°C.

Western Blotting Analysis

For densitometry, scanned images were saved as 8-bit TIFF files and analyzed in ImageJ (Version 1.42q, National Institutes of Health). The density (peak area + darkness) of each band of interest was determined. The raw density value for each Ab was divided over its β -actin value to determine the respective ratio for the sample's protein expression. Ratio values were graphed per time-point.

Statistical Analyses

Sample sizes for both studies were determined in STATA (Version 12.0, StataCorp LP). To calculate these, standard deviations were obtained from a previous unpublished HIBD variability study in our lab for Study #1 and data from previous HIBD immunoblotting literature for Study #2; sample sizes of 8 pups per group and 6 pups per group were respectively required to reach a significance of $\alpha = 0.05$, with a power of 0.80 and Type II b-error of 0.20.

Statistical analyses were performed in PRISM. Statistical significance was $p < 0.05$ for all analyses. All data are presented as mean \pm SD (standard deviation). All photographs are representative samples of their respective experimental groups.

Study #1

Infarct volume analyses for Study #1 were assessed via a 2-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) parametric statistics, with 1-way ANOVAs plus Tukey's post-test then conducted to determine the loci of significance. These analyses were chosen to compare the multiple drug doses within and between temperatures with their relevant comparison groups.

Study #2

The ultimate goal of this study was to determine whether hypothermia has a different effect on p-AMPK and its downstream markers of cell death and survival in the core and penumbra during and following HIBD. As a result, comparisons were made between the normothermic and hypothermic core and the normothermic and hypothermic penumbra during a variety of time points during the evolution of HIBD injury. Secondary analyses determined differences between the core and penumbra within treatment groups. [Antibody/ β -actin] ratios derived from immunoblotting were analyzed via 2-way ANOVA followed by 1-way ANOVA with Tukey's post-test when comparing between Normothermia and Hypothermia within and between areas. T-tests were performed when comparing between two groups only. Outliers were removed using the box-plot feature of SPSS.

Chapter 4: Results

Study #1

Mortality

Of the 103 experimental pups, 2 pups died during HIBD surgery due to rupture of the CCA and 2 died during hypoxia. 1 pup was euthanized after HYPO due to excessive swelling to one of its hindlimbs that had severely impeded its movement and was causing pain. All other pups survived to their experimental endpoint. No mortality occurred as a result of HYPO or SFN treatment.

Weights

There were no significant differences in weight between any of the groups during the 7 days of injections (PD7-13; Figure 6). However, on PD30, pups administered 10 mg/kg SFN at either temperature were significantly heavier than all other rats (NORMO: $p < 0.001-0.05$; HYPO: $p < 0.0001-0.001$). Data depicted as mean \pm SD.

Weight of Rat Pups over Time

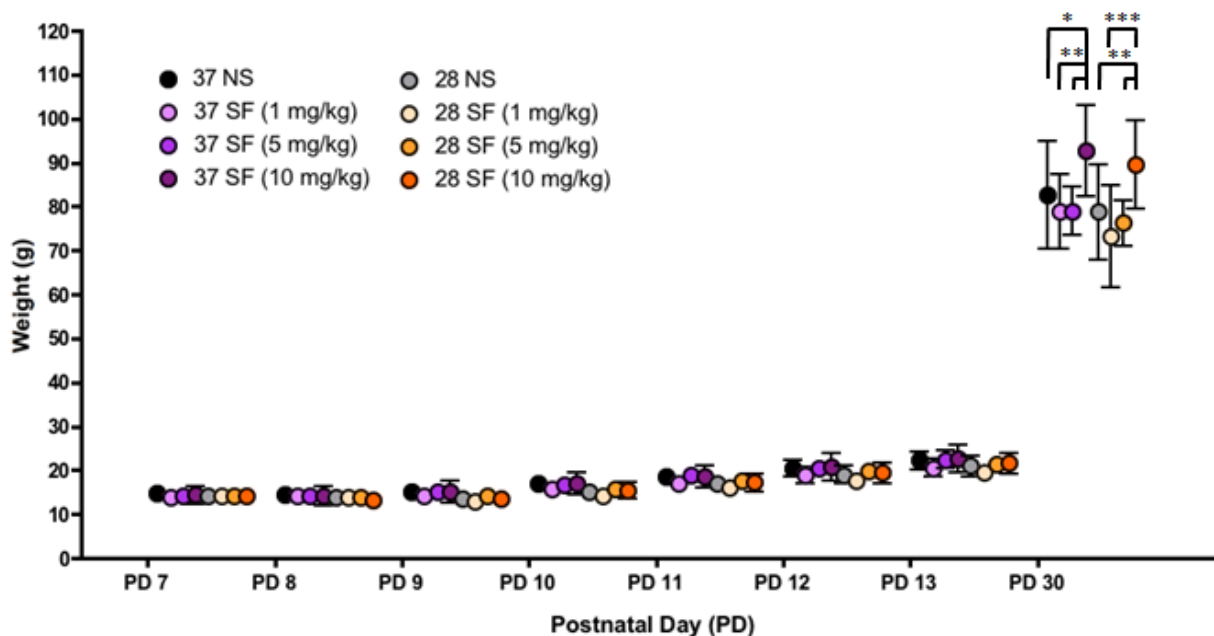


Figure 6: Weight of Rat Pups over Time

Weights between groups only differed on PD30 in regards to the 10 mg/kg SFN dose. On average, these pups were significantly heavier than all other pups (NORMO: $p < 0.001-0.05$; HYPO: $p < 0.0001-0.001$). Data depicted as mean \pm SD.

Histology

The images depicted in Figure 7 show H&E-stained HIBD brain sections on PD30 in each of the experimental groups. Noticeable infarcts were present in the Normothermic control and SFN (10 mg/kg) groups.

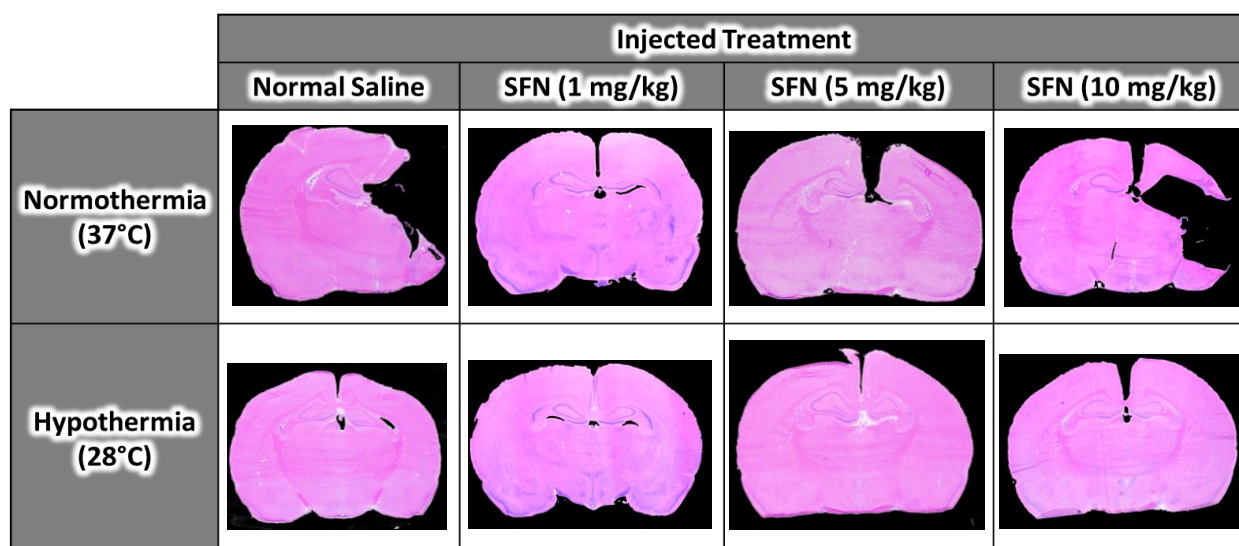
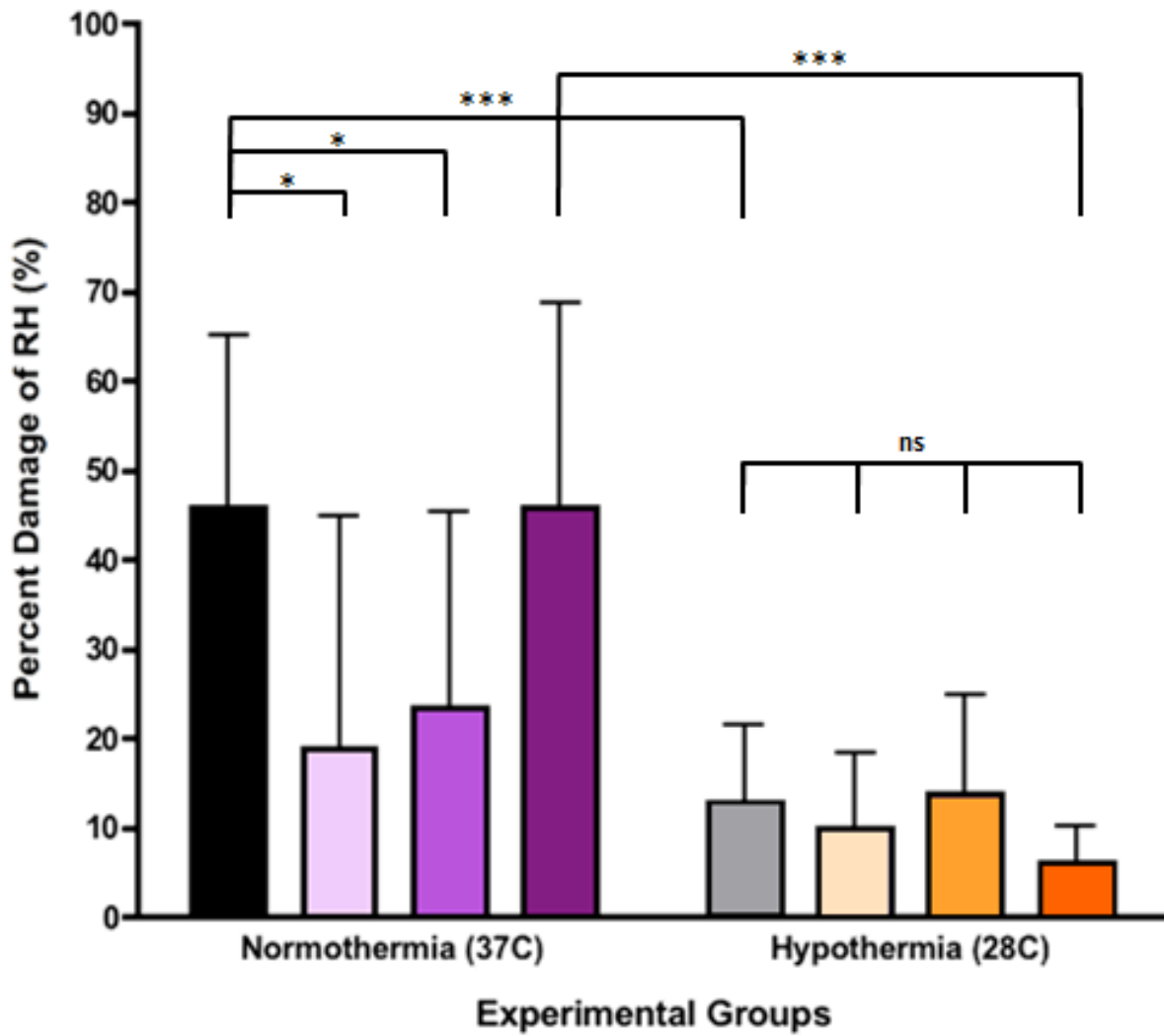


Figure 7: Study #1 – H&E-stained Brains from each Experimental Group

Brain Injury Pathology

Figure 8 A & B depict the percentage of right-hemisphere brain damage as determined by Image-J tracing. Hypothermia (28°C) was significantly neuroprotective alone and regardless of SFN dose ($p < 0.001$). SFN at 1 mg/kg and 5 mg/kg independently reduced injury ($p < 0.05$). However, SFN (10 mg/kg) alone did not provide HIBD neuroprotection. No additive effect was demonstrated when hypothermia (28°C) and SFN were combined at any of the administered doses. Statistics obtained via Two-way and One-way ANOVA with Tukey's post-test [Interaction: $p = 0.0095$ ($F = 4.105$); Drug Dose: $p = 0.0253$ ($F = 3.287$); Temperature: $p < 0.0001$ ($F = 34.9$)]. Data depicted as mean \pm SD.

(A)

Temperature vs. Drug Dose: Comparison of %RH Volume Damage

(B)

%RH Brain Damage								
	37°C Saline	37 SFN (1 mg/kg)	37 SFN (5 mg/kg)	37 SFN (10 mg/kg)	28°C Saline	28 SFN (1 mg/kg)	28 SFN (5 mg/kg)	28 SFN (10 mg/kg)
Mean	45.72%	18.81%	23.5%	45.83%	12.69%	9.948%	13.77%	6.162%
SD	±19.32%	±26.02%	±21.85%	±22.93%	±8.805%	±8.44%	±11.05%	±4.074%

Figure 8: Temperature vs. Drug Dose in relation to Percent Right-Hemisphere Brain Damage

SFN at 1 and 5 mg/kg was significantly neuroprotective compared to the Normothermic controls ($p < 0.05$), whereas the 10 mg/kg dose was not protective. Hypothermia significantly conferred neuroprotection alone and also together with SFN ($p < 0.001$). SFN combination therapy did not enhance hypothermic neuroprotection.

Study #2

Mortality

Of the 170 experimental pups, 2 pups died during HIBD surgery due to rupture of the CAA and 1 died during hypoxia. All other pups survived to their experimental time-point.

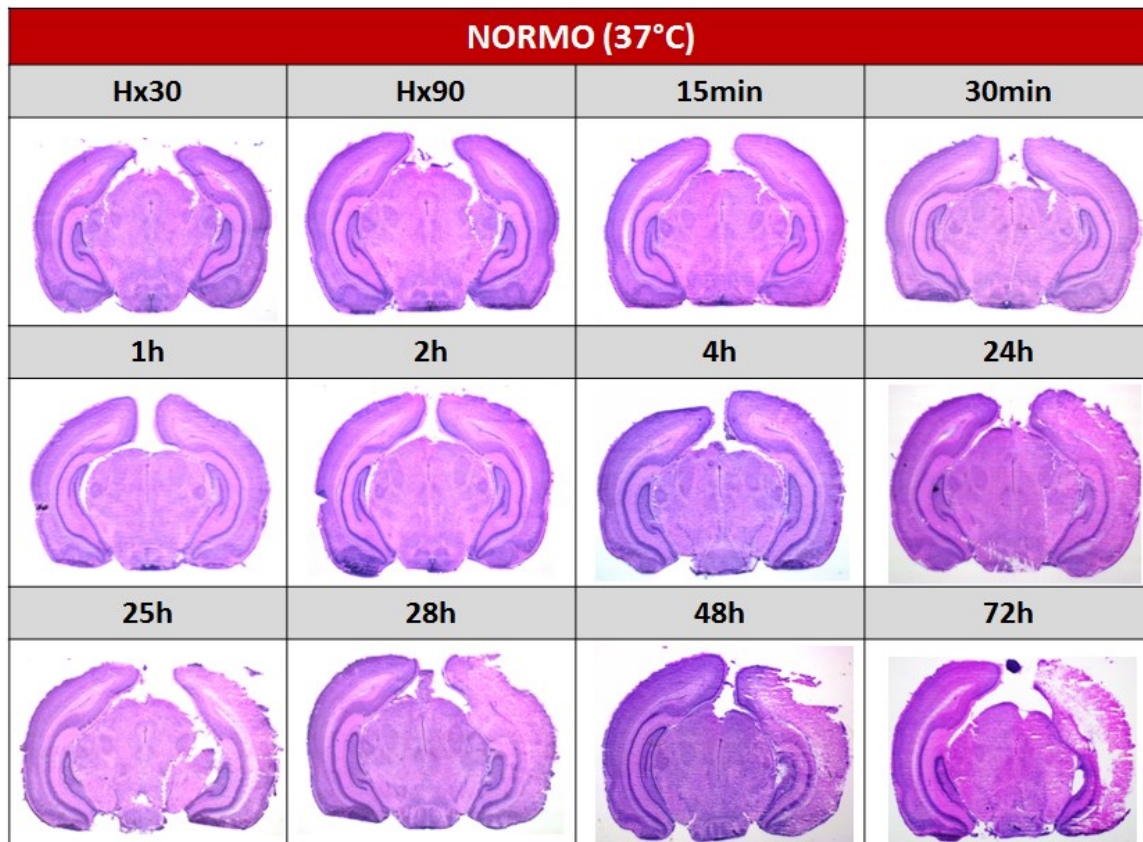
H&E Staining

Brains of NORMO pups exhibited a progressive degeneration of the right hemisphere (ipsilateral to the CAA ligation). This was evident by H&E starting at 24h post-HIBD and most severe at 72h post-HIBD (Figure 9A).

Pups exposed to HYPO also showed right hemisphere brain injury, appearing restricted to the region of core injury, in the cortex, with minimal expansion to the penumbra (thalamus).

Minimal-to-no gross pathologic damage was observed during hypoxia (90 min) and from 15min to 2h of recovery, following HIBD for both temperatures (Figure 9B). All images depicted are representative of their treatment groups and time-point.

(A)



(B)

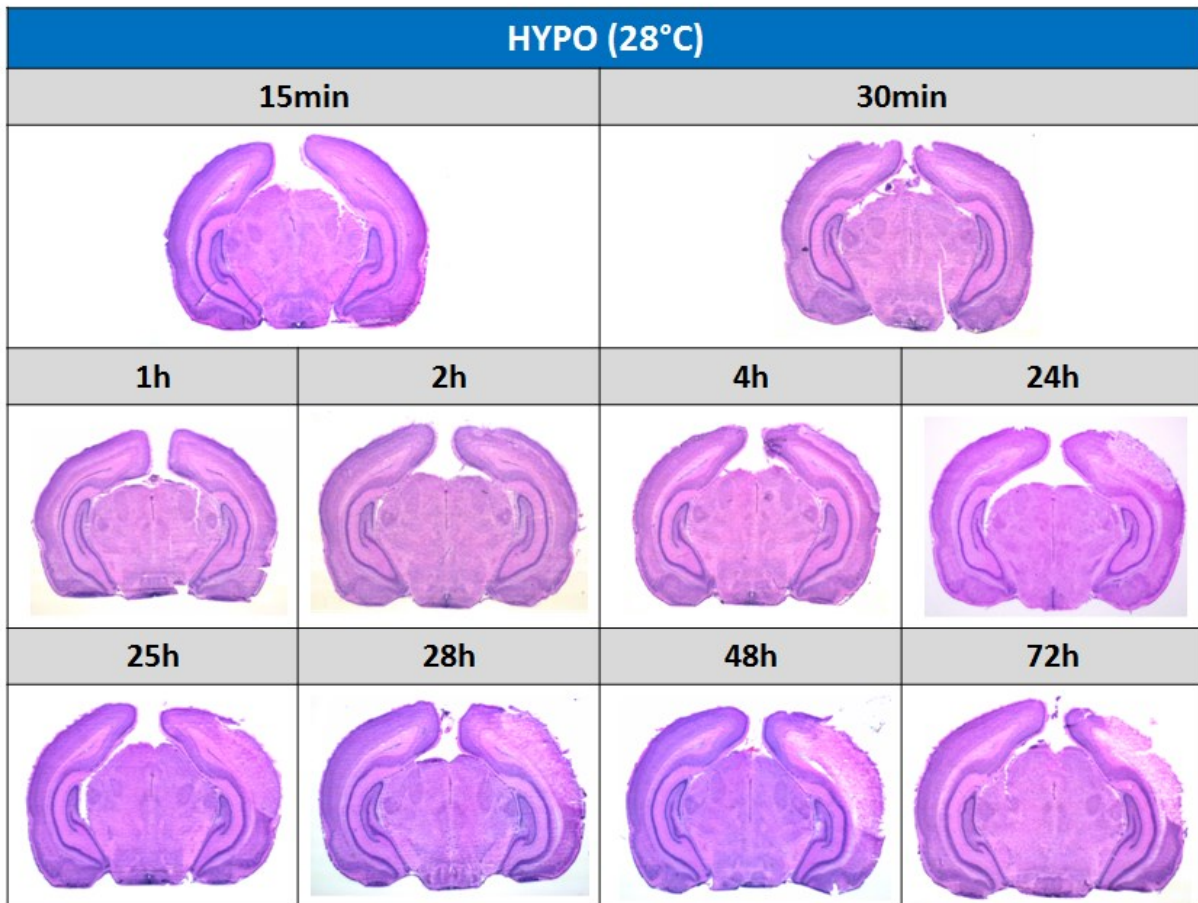


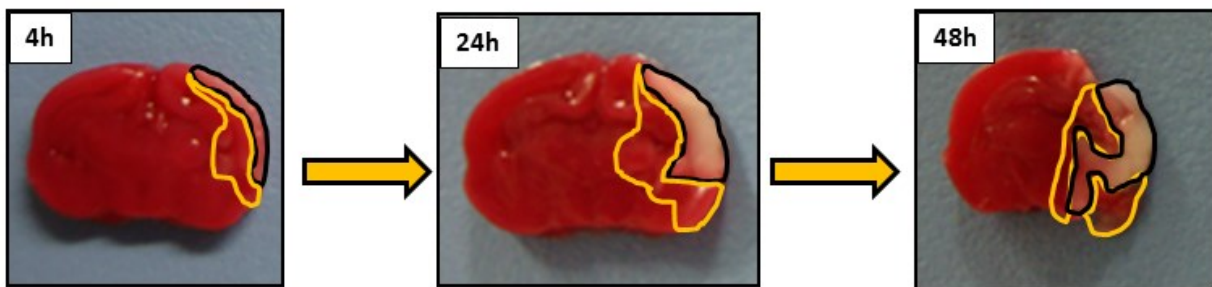
Figure 9: Study #2 – H&E-stained Brain Sections from NORMO and HYPO HIBD Pups

These images depict representative posterior sections from HIBD rat pups exposed to (A) NORMO and (B) HYPO conditions at each time-point. Each section was assessed for the approximate locations of core and penumbra to be later extracted for Western Blot protein analysis.

Comparison of H&E and TTC Staining

Figure 10 photosets A & B depict TTC- and H&E-stained coronal brain slices from six different neonatal Long-Evans rats taken at the level of the full hippocampus at 4h, 24h, and 48h after HIBD. The core of the HIBD lesion is outlined in black, whereas the surrounding penumbra is outlined in yellow. Left untreated, the injury progressively became worse, with the apoptotic and necrotic core increasing in size and reducing the amount of salvageable tissue available. Each stain visualized the damage similarly.

(A) TTC Staining



(B) H&E Staining

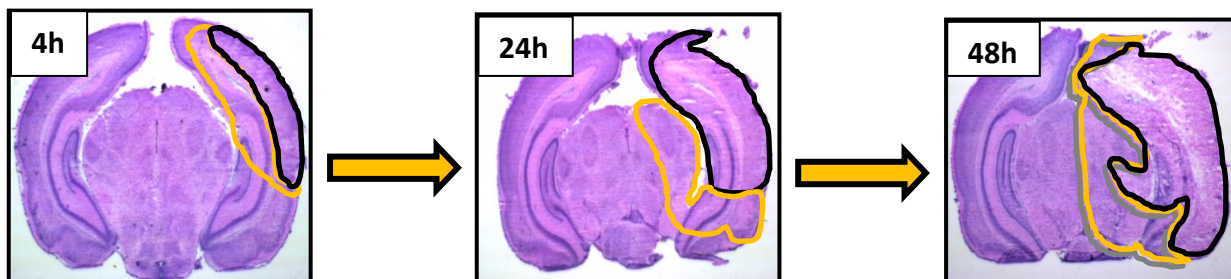


Figure 10: Evolution of HIBD Injury in a Normothermic Rat

(A) TTC-stained brain sections and (B) H&E-stained posterior brain sections at the level of a full hippocampus at 4, 24, and 48h post-HIBD. Left untreated, the HIBD core expanded from the cortex into the deep gray matter tissue. Each pictured section is from a different rat pup.

Western Blot Densitometry

The following graphs and photos depict Western Blot analysis for markers depicting energy regulation, and those along the pathway of cell death or survival (p-AMPK, GLUT3, LC3-II, Bim, and Cleaved Caspase-3).

Expression of p-AMPK

Figure 11 depicts p-AMPK as analyzed on each gel at the representative time-points of (A) 90 minutes of hypoxia, (B) 4h after HIBD (During NORMO/HYPO) and (C) 25h post-HIBD (After NORMO/HYPO).

By the end of hypoxia, penumbral p-AMPK was significantly higher than in the HIBD core. No differences between the two areas were seen at 30min into hypoxia (Figure 12 A-B).

Figure 13 (A-F) depict p-AMPK expression during the NORMO/HYPO period. At 1h into recovery, p-AMPK was significantly elevated in the HYPO core compared to the HYPO penumbra ($F(1,16) = 4.925$, $p = 0.01$). This phenomenon in the HYPO group was also observed after the removal of NORMO/HYPO (Figure 14 A-D) at 25h ($F(1,17) = 16.10$, $p = 0.01$), 28h ($F(1,17) = 7.097$, $p = 0.0164$; Interaction: $F(1,17) = 14.885$, $p = 0.0417$), and 72h ($F(1,18) = 10.87$, $p = 0.004$; Interaction: $F(1,18) = 11.98$, $p = 0.028$) post-HIBD, after HYPO was removed. Differences in regional p-AMPK exposure in the NORMO group were only observed at 4h post-HIBD, with activity higher in the penumbra ($F(1,20) = 8.810$, $p = 0.0076$; Interaction: ($F(1,20) = 8.180$, $p = 0.0097$). This elevation of NORMO penumbral p-AMPK was significantly higher than in the HYPO penumbra ($p < 0.05$). No differences within or between the core and penumbra were observed at any of the other time-points.

Figure 15 (A-B) shows p-AMPK activity over time within the (A) core and (B) penumbra comparing between the NORMO and HYPO groups. Within group differences were seen only at 4h in the penumbra ($p < 0.05$). All data depicted as mean \pm SD.

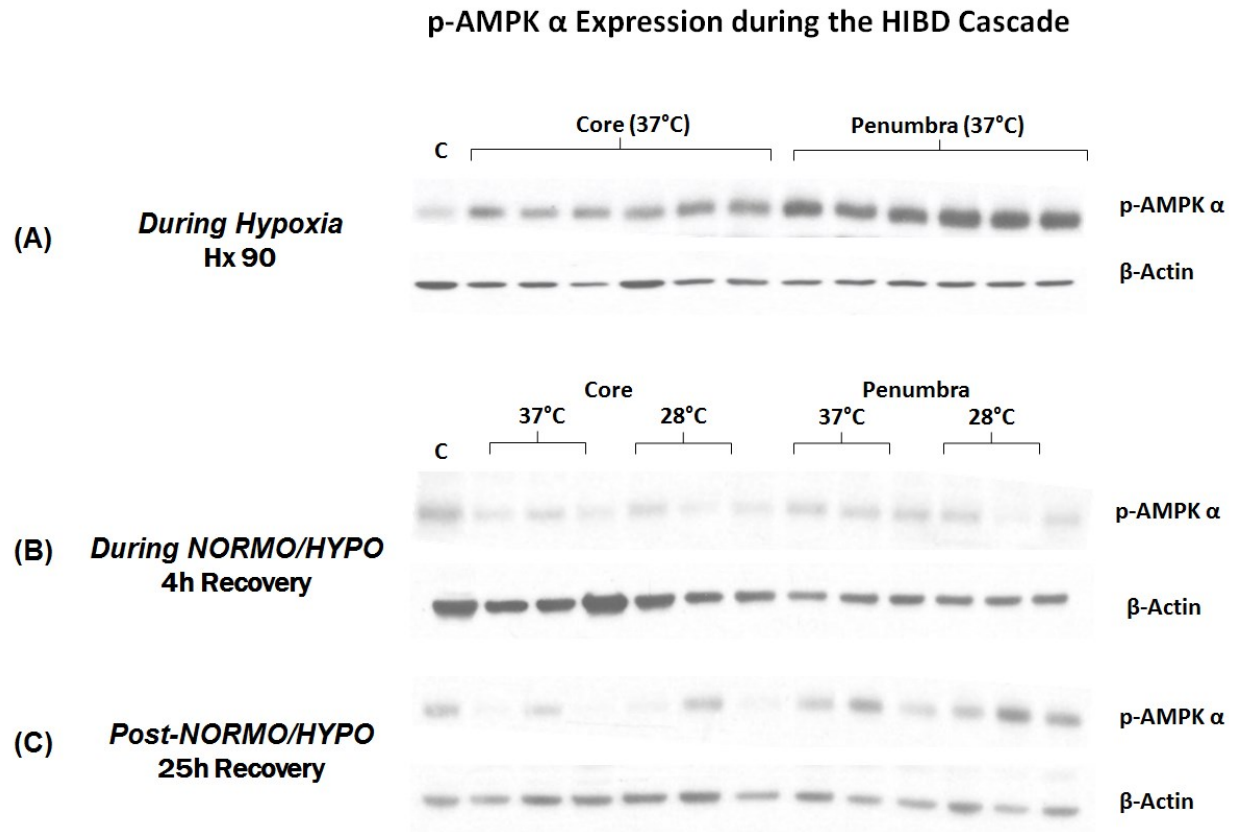


Figure 11: p-AMPK Western Blots – During Hypoxia, During Treatment, and Post-Treatment

These sets of Western Blot images depict p-AMPK α (62 kDa) as expressed at (A) the end of 90 minutes of hypoxia (Hx90), (B) 4h during the NORMO/HYPO normoxic temperature exposure, and (C) 25h after HIBD, 1h after removal from NORMO/HYPO. NORMO and HYPO core and penumbra samples from the same time-point were run per gel. A homogenate of undamaged right hemispheres from 4 naïve pups was used as a control between gels and pipetted into the first lane (denoted ‘C’). β -actin (42 kDa) was used as a loading control.

p-AMPK Expression during HIBD Hypoxia

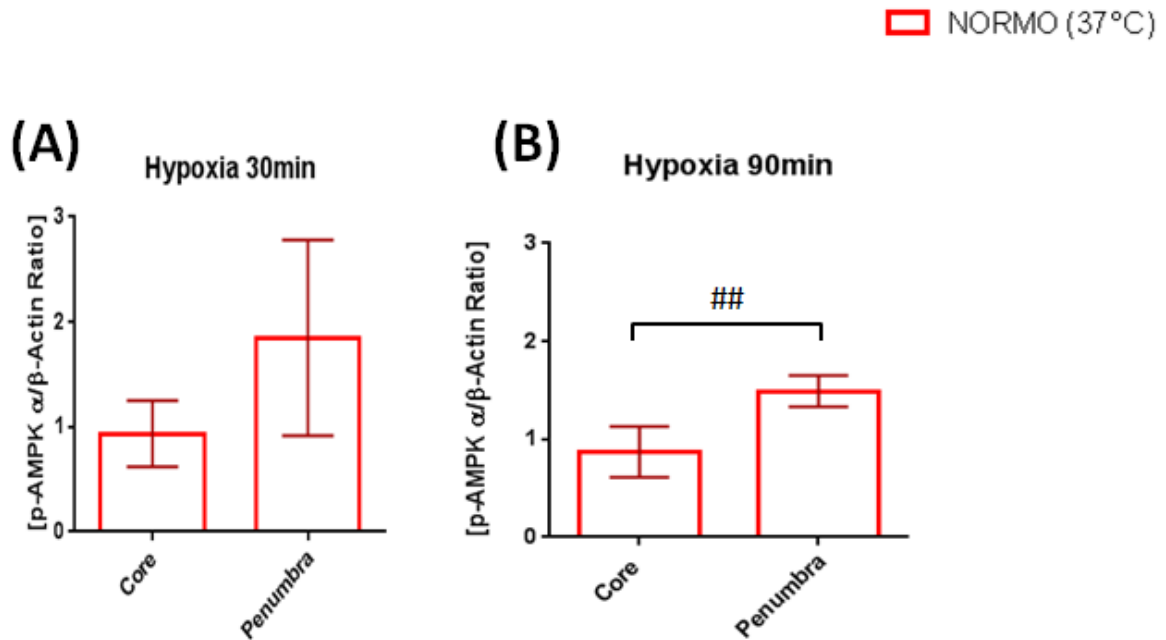


Figure 12: p-AMPK Expression during Hypoxia

Expression of p-AMPK α at (A) 30min and (B) 90min of hypoxia in the core and penumbra at 37°C. No differences were observed at 30min of hypoxia. Penumbra p-AMPK α was significantly increased at the end of 90min of hypoxia (## p < 0.01). Mean \pm SD.

p-AMPK Expression during NORMO/HYPO

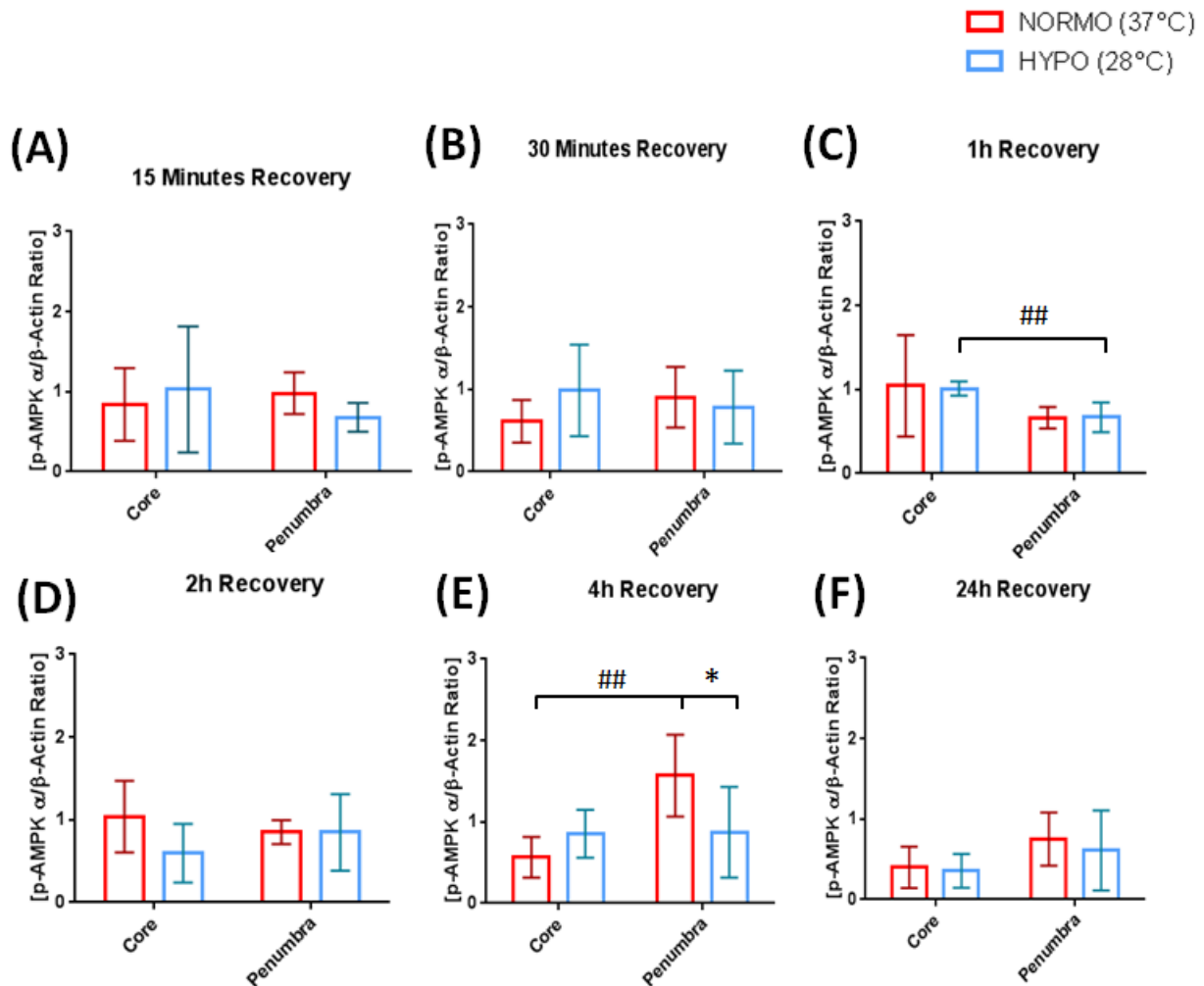


Figure 13: p-AMPK Expression During NORMO/HYPO

Expression of p-AMPK α at (A) 15min, (B) 30min, (C) 1h, (D) 2h, (E) 4h, and (F) 24h after HIBD during the NORMO and HYPO temperature exposures. At (C) 1h post-HIBD, penumbral p-AMPK α in the HYPO penumbra was significantly lower than in the HYPO core (## $p < 0.01$). At (E) 4h post-HIBD, HYPO suppressed p-AMPK α expression in the penumbra (* $p < 0.05$). Mean \pm SD.

p-AMPK Expression post-NORMO/HYPO

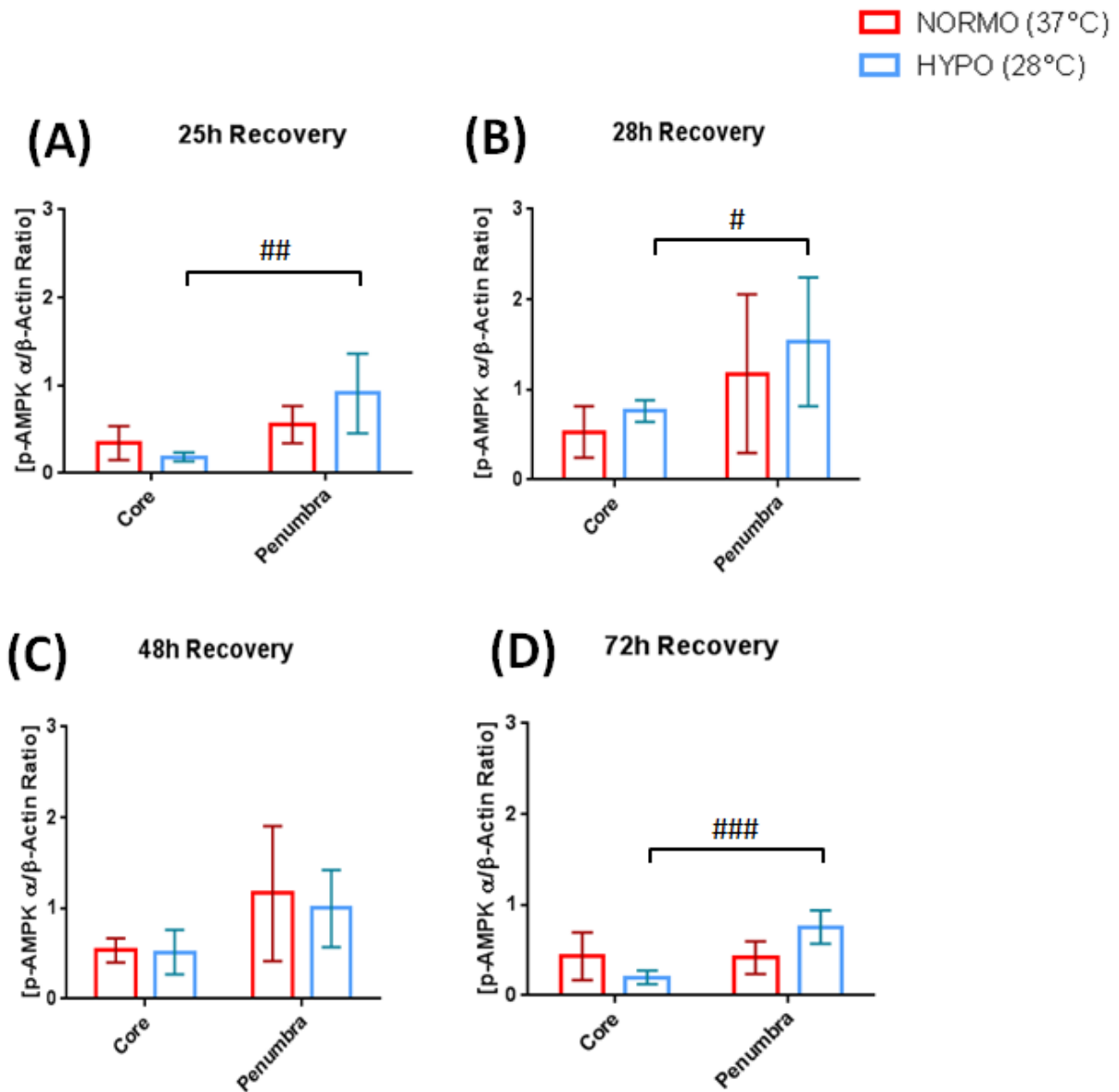


Figure 14: p-AMPK Expression post-NORMO/HYPO

Expression of p-AMPK α at (A) 25h (B) 28h, (C) 48h, and (D) 72h post-HIBD, after removal from the NORMO and HYPO environments. HYPO p-AMPK α was significantly elevated compared to the HYPO core at (A) 25h (## $p < 0.01$), (B) 28h (# $p < 0.05$), and (D) 72h (### $p < 0.001$). Mean \pm SD.

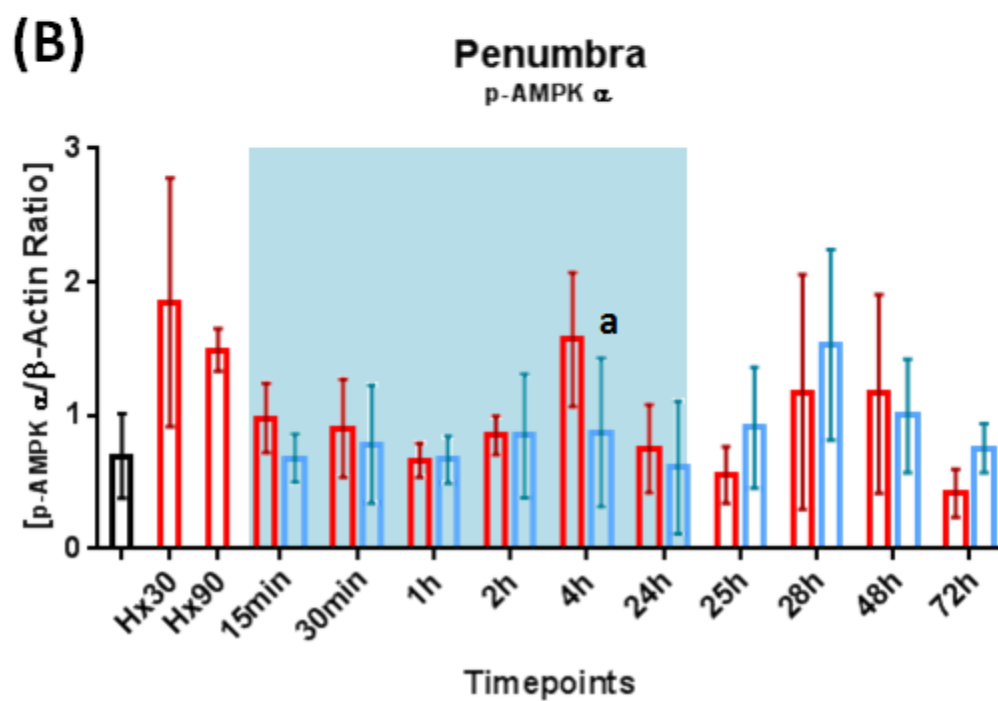
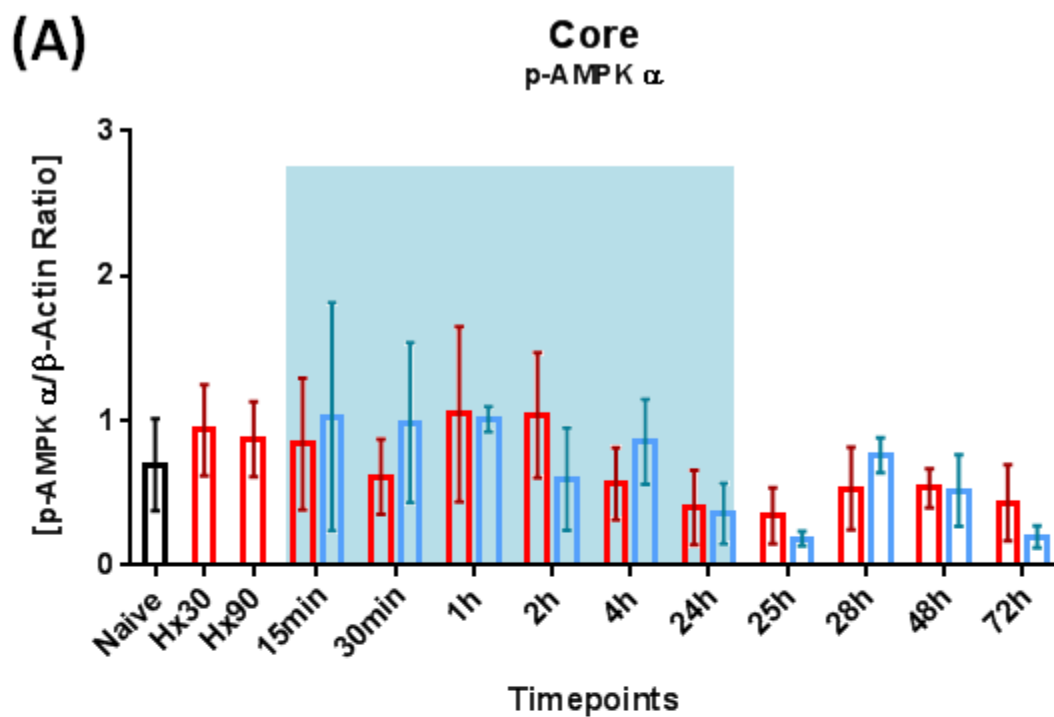


Figure 15: Temporal p-AMPK Expression in the NORMO and HYPO Core and Penumbra

Expression levels of p-AMPK α with NORMO and HYPO at each of the examined time-points within the (A) core and (B) penumbra. Solid blue box indicates the 24 hour NORMO/HYPO normoxic exposure period. (a) $p < 0.05$ vs. NORMO. Mean \pm SD.

Expression of GLUT3

Figure 16 depicts GLUT3 as analyzed on each gel at the representative time-points of (A) 90 minutes of hypoxia, (B) 4h after HIBD (During NORMO/HYPO) and (C) 25h post-HIBD (After NORMO/HYPO).

GLUT3 expression was significantly higher in the penumbra throughout hypoxia (Hx30: $p < 0.05$; Hx90: $p < 0.001$ Figure 17 A-B).

During NORMO/HYPO (Figure 18 A-F), this elevation in penumbral GLUT3 remained significant 15min ($F(1,19) = 9.025, p < 0.01$), 30min ($F(1,18) = 71.25, p < 0.0001$), 2h, and 4h into NORMO recovery, with the exception of 1h and 24h post-HIBD, where levels returned to baseline. The same was true within the HYPO group (15min: $p < 0.01$; 30min: $p < 0.0001$; 2h: $p < 0.01$; 4h: $p < 0.01$).

After NORMO/HYPO were removed (Figure 19 A-D), the NORMO penumbra again displayed significantly higher levels of GLUT3 at 28h post-HIBD ($F(1,18) = 7.097, p < 0.05$). However in the HYPO group, penumbral GLUT3 activity rose significantly compared to the HYPO core at 25h ($F(1,20) = 15.96, p < 0.01$), 28h ($p < 0.01$), and 72h ($F(1,20) = 16.59, p < 0.05$). Within the HIBD core, HYPO consistently suppressed GLUT3 activity at 25h ($p < 0.05$), 28h ($p < 0.001$), and 72h ($p < 0.05$) compared to NORMO after HIBD. Values between regions and treatment groups did not differ at 48h post-HIBD.

GLUT3 was significantly higher in the NORMO core than the HYPO core at 30min ($p < 0.05$), 25h ($p < 0.05$), 28h ($p < 0.001$), and 72h ($p < 0.05$; Figure 20 A-B). GLUT3 values between the temperatures in the penumbra did not statistically differ at any of the examined time-points. All data depicted as mean \pm SD.

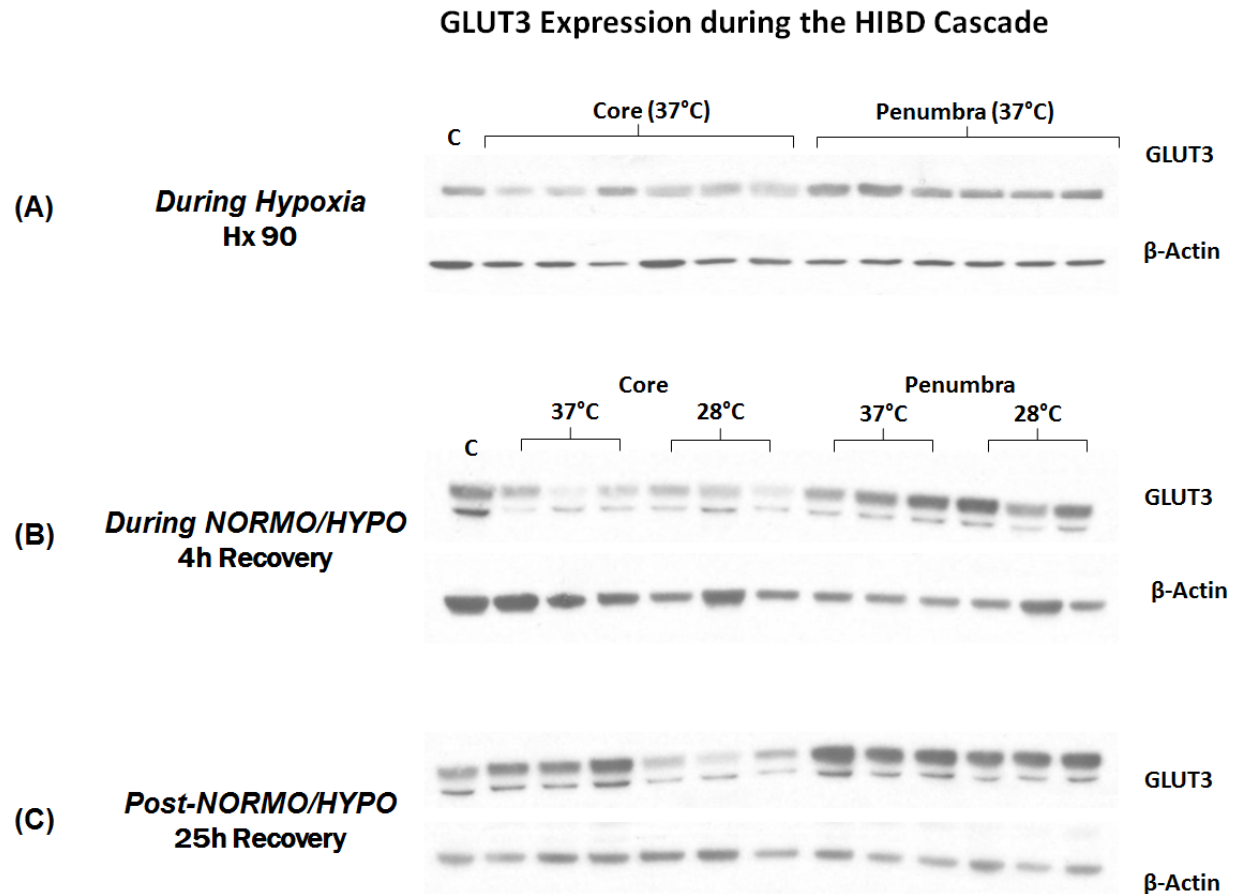


Figure 16: GLUT3 Expression – During Hypoxia, During Treatment, and Post-Treatment

These sets of Western Blot images depict GLUT3 (54 kDa) as expressed at (A) the end of 90 minutes of hypoxia (Hx90), (B) 4h during the NORMO/HYPO normoxic temperature exposure, and (C) 25h after HIBD, 1h after removal from NORMO/HYPO. NORMO and HYPO core and penumbra samples from the same time-point were run per gel. A homogenate of undamaged right hemispheres from 4 naïve pups was used as a control between gels and pipetted into the first lane (denoted ‘C’). β -actin (42 kDa) was used as a loading control.

GLUT3 Expression during HIBD Hypoxia

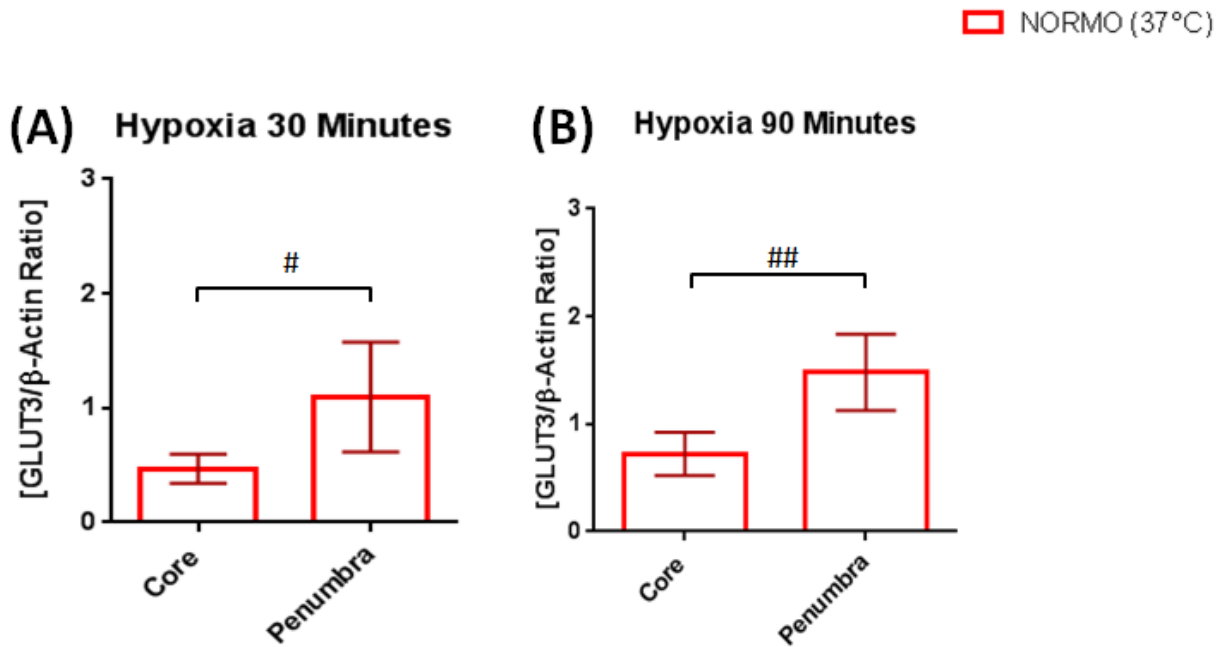


Figure 17: GLUT3 Expression during Hypoxia

Expression of GLUT3 at (A) 30min and (B) 90min of hypoxia in the core and penumbra at 37°C.

GLUT was consistently and significantly elevated in the HIBD penumbra (30min: # $p < 0.05$;

90min: ## $p < 0.01$). Mean \pm SD.

GLUT3 Expression during NORMO/HYPO

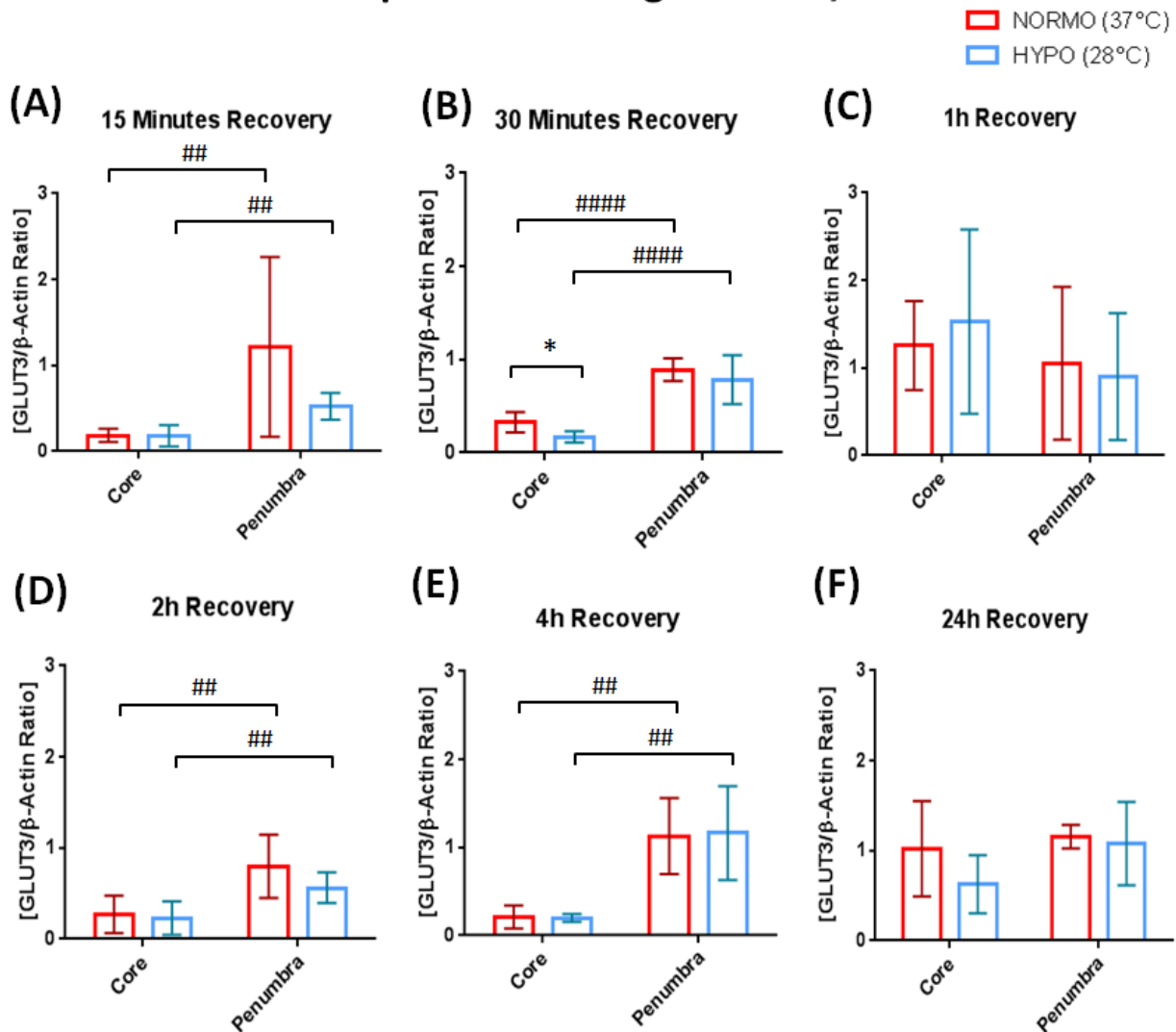


Figure 18: GLUT3 Expression During NORMO/HYPO

Expression of GLUT3 at (A) 15min, (B) 30min, (C) 1h, (D) 2h, (E) 4h, and (F) 24h after HIBD during the NORMO and HYPO temperature exposures. Within the HIBD core, compared to NORMO, HYPO suppressed GLUT3 at 30min of recovery (B; * $p < 0.05$). At (A) 15min (## $p < 0.01$), (B) 30min (### $p < 0.001$), (D) 2h (## $p < 0.01$), and (E) 4h (## $p < 0.01$) of recovery, GLUT3 was significantly suppressed in the NORMO and HYPO core compared to their corresponding penumbra. Mean \pm SD.

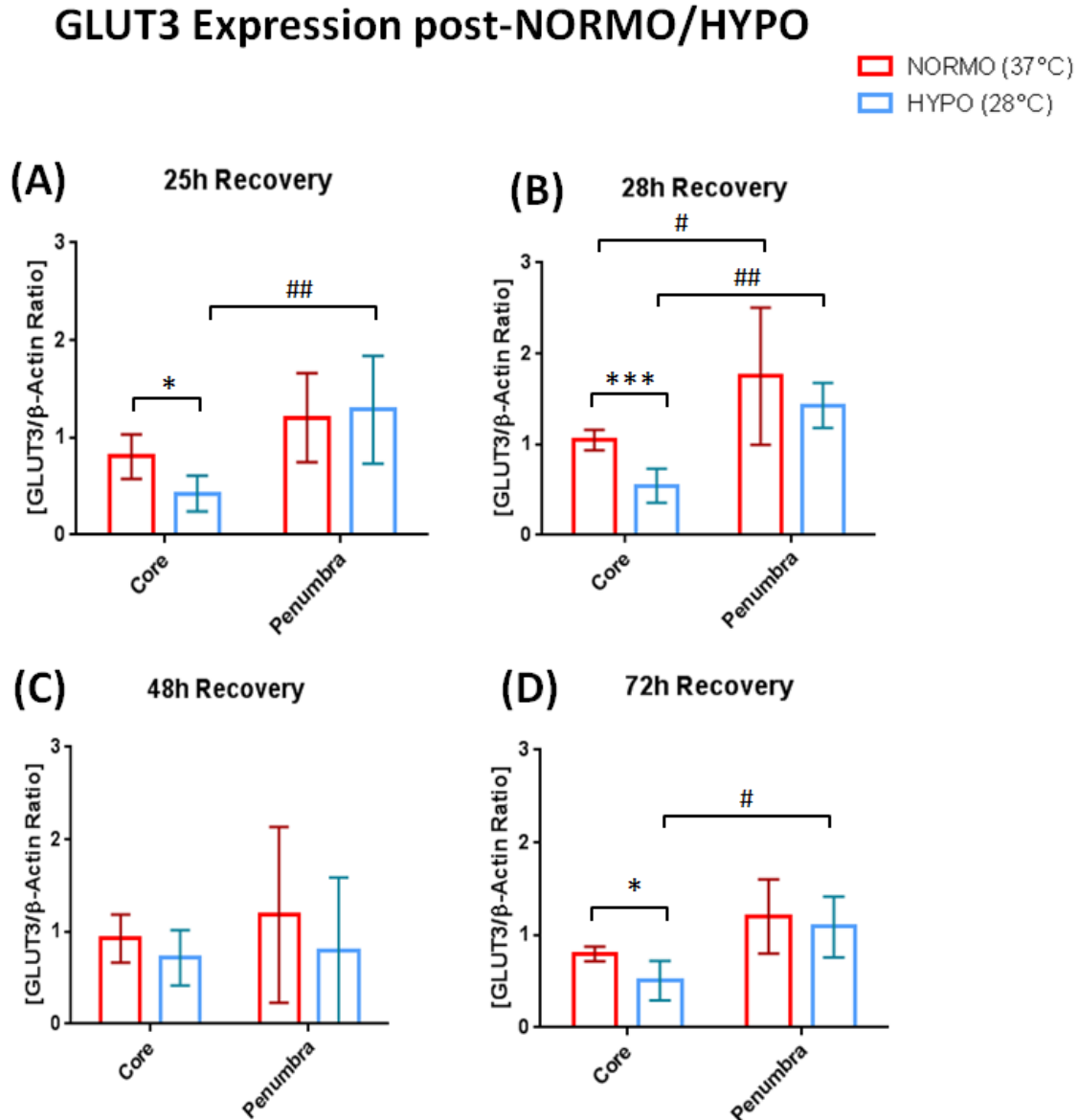


Figure 19: GLUT3 Expression post-NORMO/HYPO

Expression of GLUT3 at (A) 25h (B) 28h, (C) 48h, and (D) 72h post-HIBD, after removal from the NORMO and HYPO environments. Within the HIBD core, HYPO significantly suppressed GLUT3 at (A) 25h (* $p < 0.05$), (B) 28h (***) $p < 0.001$), and (C) 72h (* $p < 0.05$). GLUT3 was also significantly suppressed in the HYPO core compared to the penumbra within temperatures at these time-points. Mean \pm SD.

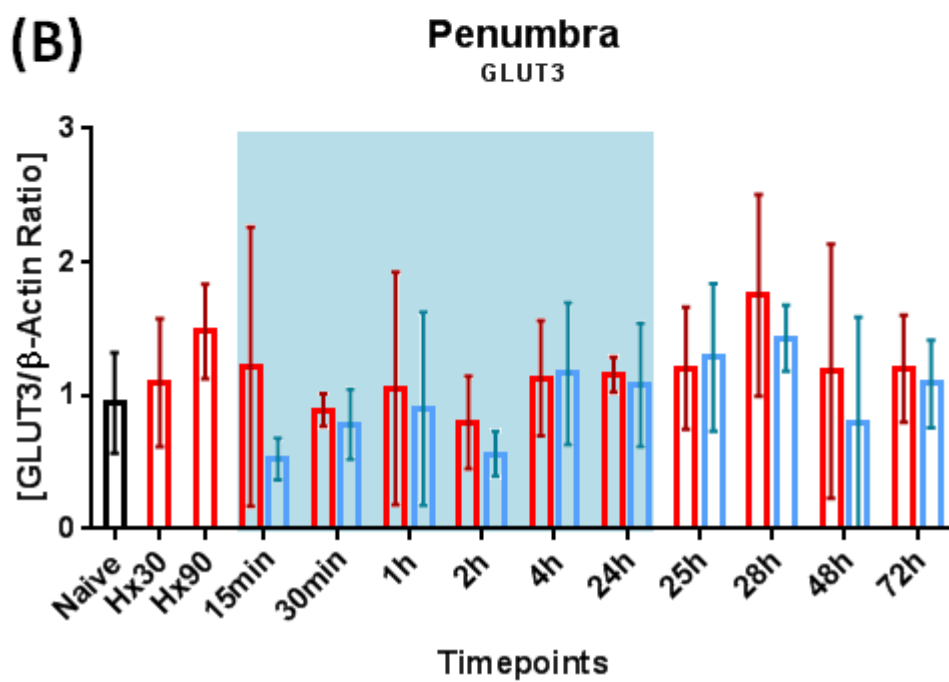
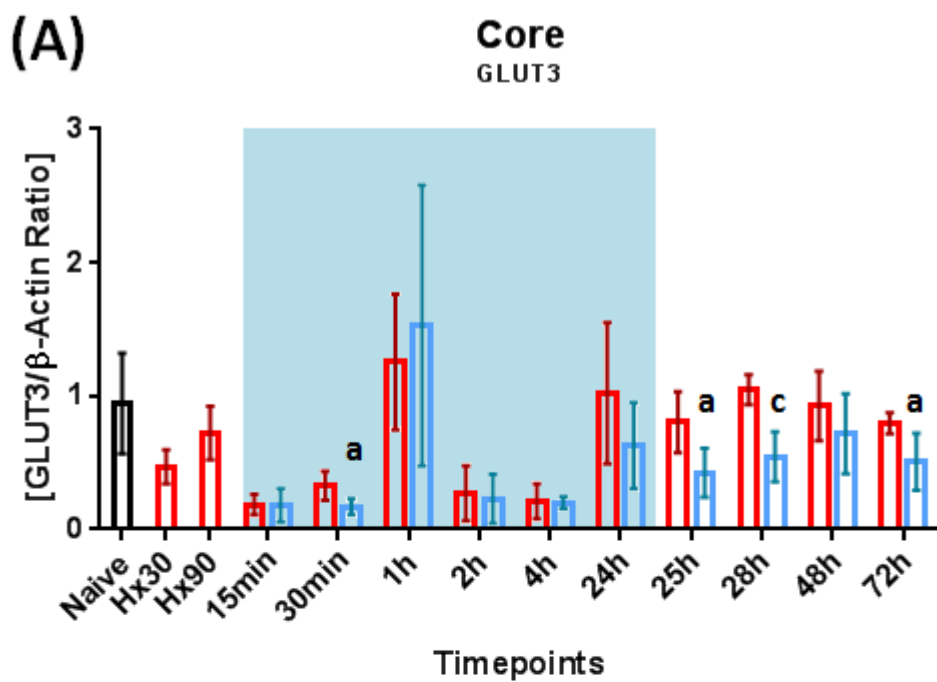


Figure 20: Temporal GLUT3 Expression in the NORMO and HYPO Core and Penumbra

Expression levels of GLUT3 with NORMO and HYPO at each of the examined time-points within the (A) core and (B) penumbra. Solid blue box indicates the 24 hour NORMO/HYPO normoxic exposure period. (a) $p < 0.05$ vs. NORMO, (c) $p < 0.001$ vs. NORMO. Mean \pm SD.

Expression of LC3-II

Figure 21 (A-B) depicts LC3-II as analyzed on each gel at the representative time-points of (A) 90 minutes of hypoxia, (B) 4h after HIBD (During NORMO/HYPO) and (C) 25h post-HIBD (After NORMO/HYPO).

LC3-II expression did not differ between core and penumbra during hypoxia (Figure 22 A-B). During NORMO/HYPO, LC3-II levels did not differ significantly between and within regions (Figure 23 A-F), apart from 1h post-HIBD where the HYPO penumbra expressed significantly higher levels of LC3-II than the NORMO penumbra ($p < 0.05$; Figure 22 C).

After removal of NORMO/HYPO (Figure 24 A-D), HYPO suppressed LC3-II levels in the HIBD penumbra at 25h ($p < 0.05$) and 48h ($p < 0.05$). At 28h post-HIBD, LC3-II was significantly upregulated in the NORMO core as compared to the NORMO penumbra ($F(1,19) = 20.06$, $p < 0.01$) and the HYPO core ($p < 0.05$); this shows that HYPO significantly suppressed autophagy in the core.

Figure 25 (A-B) depict LC3-II levels within their respective time points and treatments in the (A) core and (B) penumbra. In the HIBD core, no differences in expression were observed within each temperature, apart from 28h post-HIBD where HYPO exerted a suppressive effect ($p < 0.05$). In the HIBD penumbra, HYPO enhanced LC3-II expression at 1h post-HIBD only and suppressed its expression at 25h and 48h post-HIBD. No other significant differences were observed within each time-point. All data depicted as mean \pm SD.

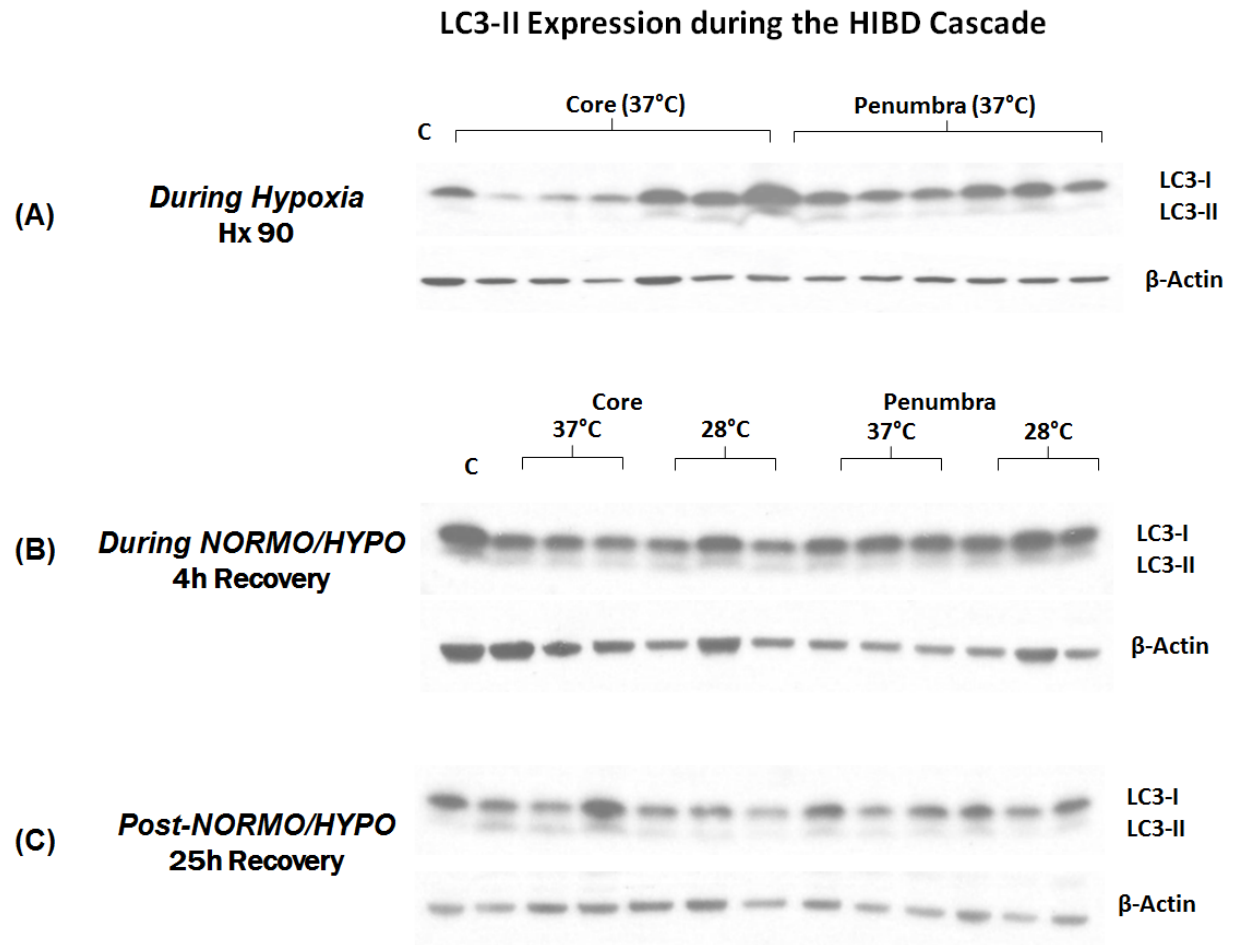


Figure 21: LC3-II Expression – During Hypoxia, During Treatment, and Post-Treatment

These sets of Western Blot images depict LC3-II (17-19 kDa) as expressed at (A) the end of 90 minutes of hypoxia (Hx90), (B) 4h during the NORMO/HYPO normoxic temperature exposure, and (C) 25h after HIBD, 1h after removal from NORMO/HYPO. NORMO and HYPO core and penumbra samples from the same time-point were run per gel. A homogenate of undamaged right hemispheres from 4 naïve pups was used as a control between gels and pipetted into the first lane (denoted ‘C’). β-actin (42 kDa) was used as a loading control.

LC3-II Expression during HIBD Hypoxia

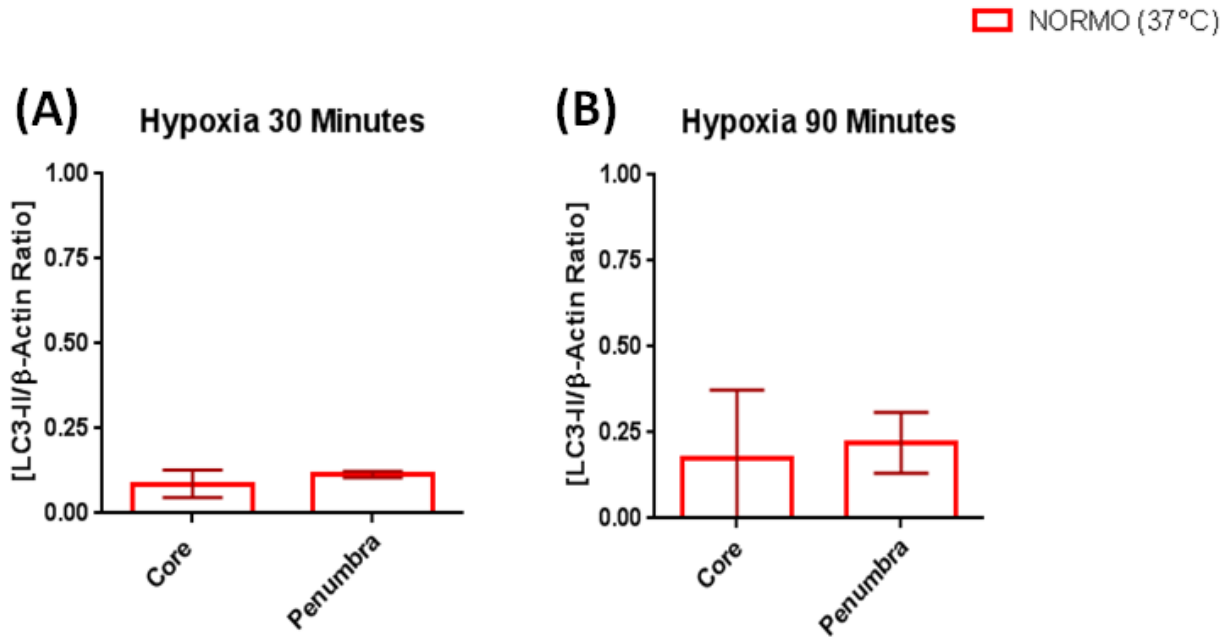


Figure 22: LC3-II Expression during Hypoxia

Expression of LC3-II at (A) 30min and (B) 90min of hypoxia in the core and penumbra at 37°C.

No differences in expression were observed at these time-points. Mean \pm SD.

LC3-II Expression during NORMO/HYPO

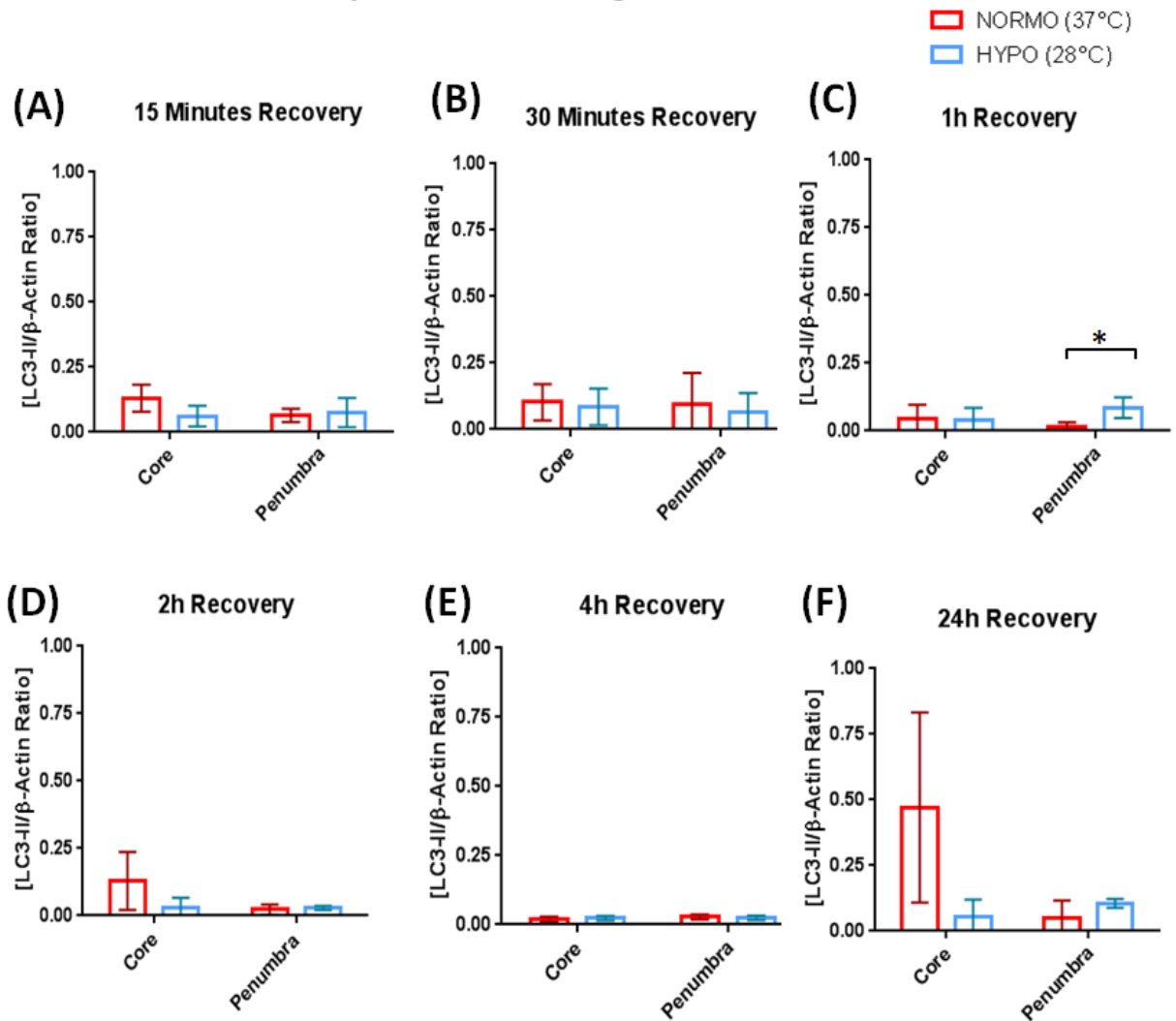


Figure 23: LC3-II Expression During NORMO/HYPO

Expression of LC3-II at (A) 15min, (B) 30min, (C) 1h, (D) 2h, (E) 4h, and (F) 24h after HIBD during the NORMO and HYPO temperature exposures. In the HIBD core, no differences between temperatures were observed. In the HIBD penumbra, a significant increase in LC3-II expression was seen at (C) 1h post-HIBD in the HYPO treatment (* $p < 0.05$). Mean \pm SD.

LC3-II Expression post-NORMO/HYPO

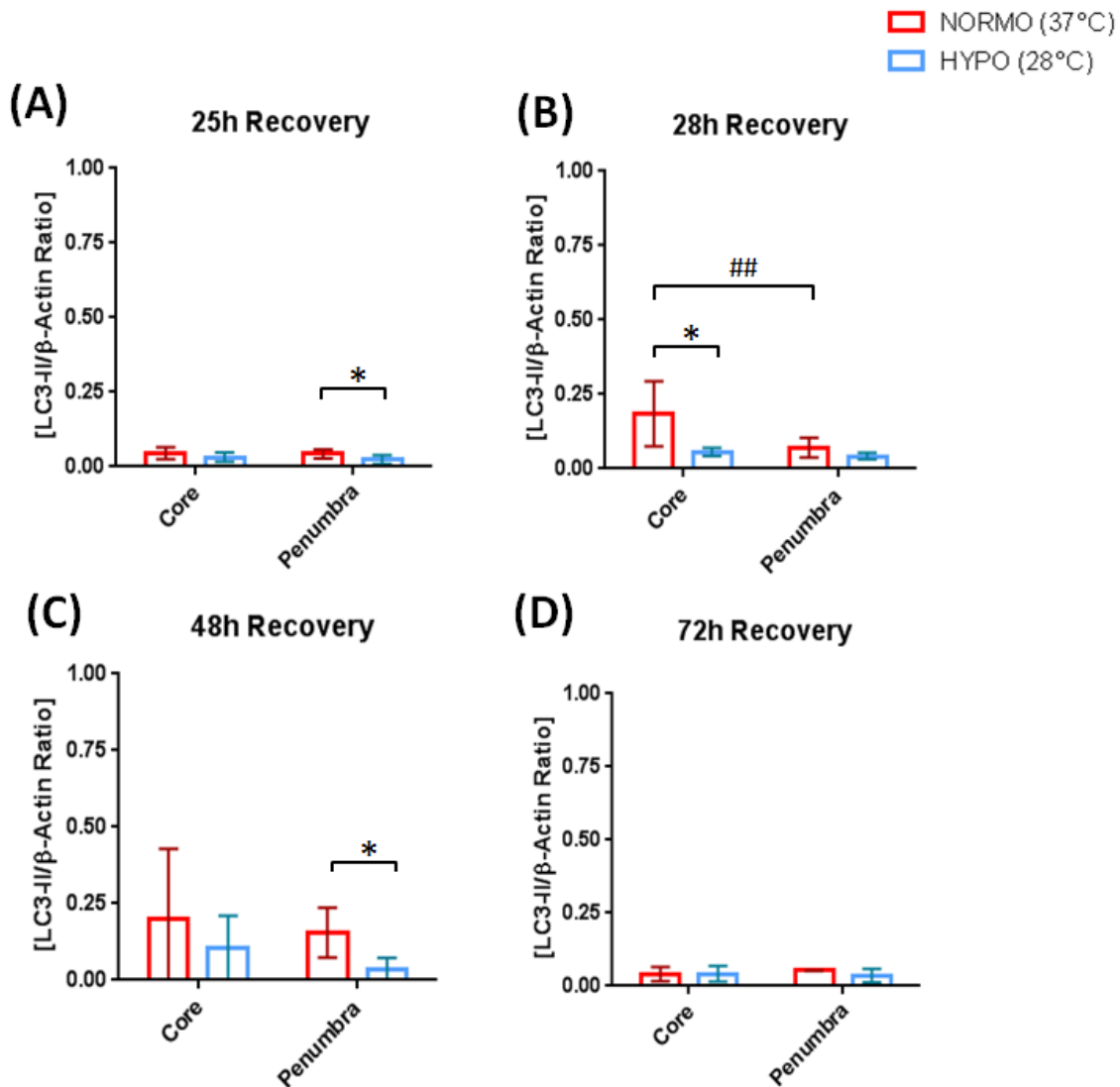


Figure 24: LC3-II Expression post-NORMO/HYPO

Expression of LC3-II at (A) 25h (B) 28h, (C) 48h, and (D) 72h post-HIBD, after removal from the NORMO and HYPO environments. LC3-II was significantly suppressed in the HYPO penumbra at (A) 25h and (C) 48h of recovery (* $p < 0.05$). HYPO suppressed LC3-II in the HIBD core only at (B) 28h of recovery (* $p < 0.05$). Mean \pm SD.

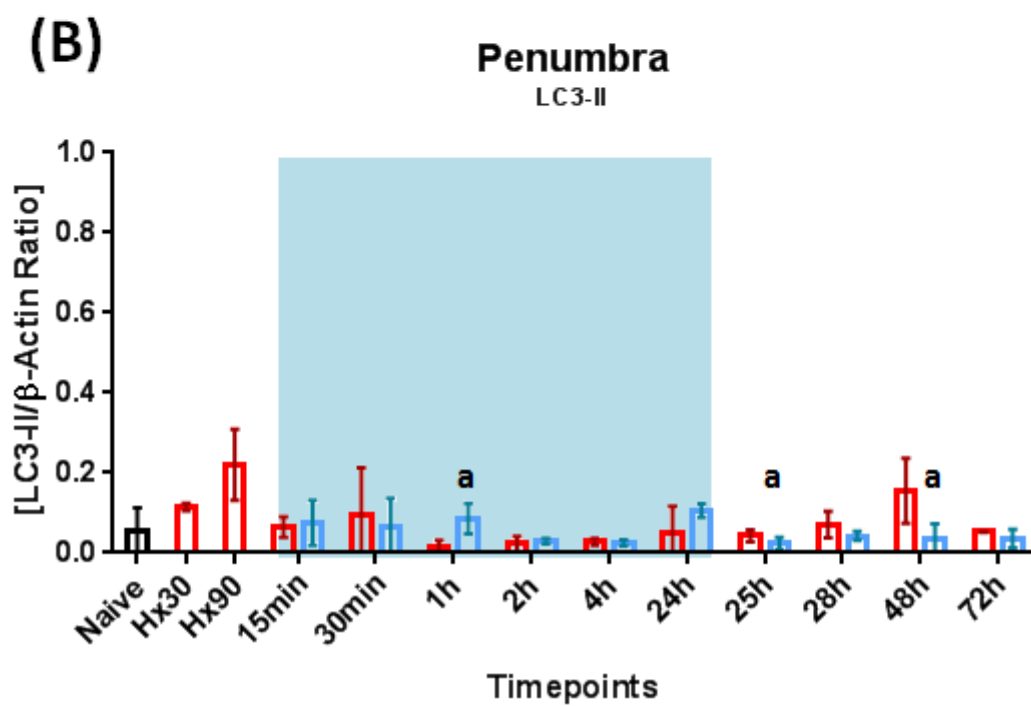
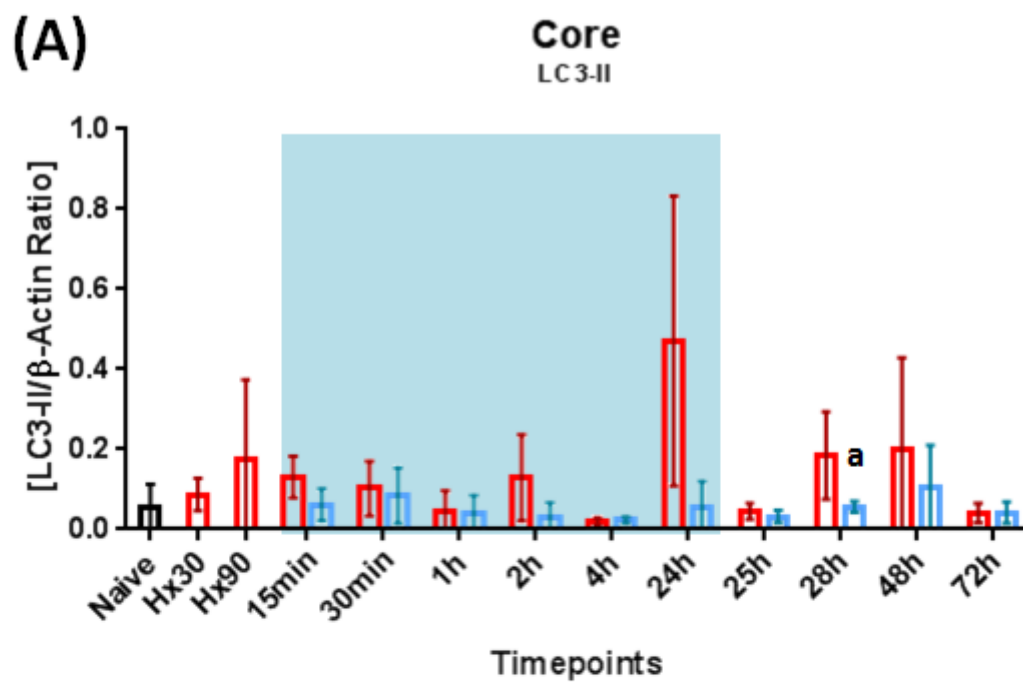


Figure 25: Temporal LC3-II Expression in the NORMO and HYPO Core and Penumbra

Expression levels of LC3-II with NORMO and HYPO at each of the examined time-points within the (A) core and (B) penumbra. Solid blue box indicates the 24 hour NORMO/HYPO normoxic exposure period. (a) $p < 0.05$ vs. NORMO. Mean \pm SD.

Expression of Bim

Figure 26 (A-B) depicts Bim as analyzed on each gel at the representative time-points of (A) 90 minutes of hypoxia, (B) 4h after HIBD (During NORMO/HYPO) and (C) 25h post-HIBD (After NORMO/HYPO).

Bim activity was significantly higher in the penumbra compared to the core at 30min into hypoxia ($p < 0.001$), but this difference was not maintained to the end of hypoxia (Figure 27 A-B).

During NORMO/HYPO (Figure 28 A-F), Bim expression was significantly increased in the NORMO penumbra as compared to the core ($F(1,19) = 9.361$, $p < 0.01$) at 4h post-HIBD; this activity was suppressed by HYPO in the penumbra at this time ($p < 0.001$). At 24h post-HIBD, HYPO significantly upregulated Bim expression in the core as compared to the NORMO core ($p > 0.05$) and the HYPO penumbra ($F(1,19) = 8.750$, $p < 0.0001$).

After removal of NORMO/HYPO (Figure 29 A-D), suppression of Bim was observed in the HYPO core at 25h ($p < 0.05$) and 48h ($p < 0.05$) post-HIBD. At these times ($F(1,18) = 10.14$, $p < 0.05$), and also at 28h post-HIBD ($F(1,18) = 30.74$, $p < 0.01$), Bim was also significantly lower than in the HYPO penumbra. 28h post-HIBD, BIm expression in the NORMO penumbra was significantly higher than the NORMO core ($p < 0.05$).

In the HIBD core, HYPO enhanced Bim at 24h ($p < 0.05$) and suppressed it at 25h ($p < 0.05$) and 48h ($p < 0.05$) compared to NORMO (Figure 30 A). In the HIBD penumbra, HYPO only suppressed Bim activity at 4h post-HIBD ($p < 0.001$; Figure 30 B). No other significant differences were observed within each time-point. All data depicted as mean \pm SD.

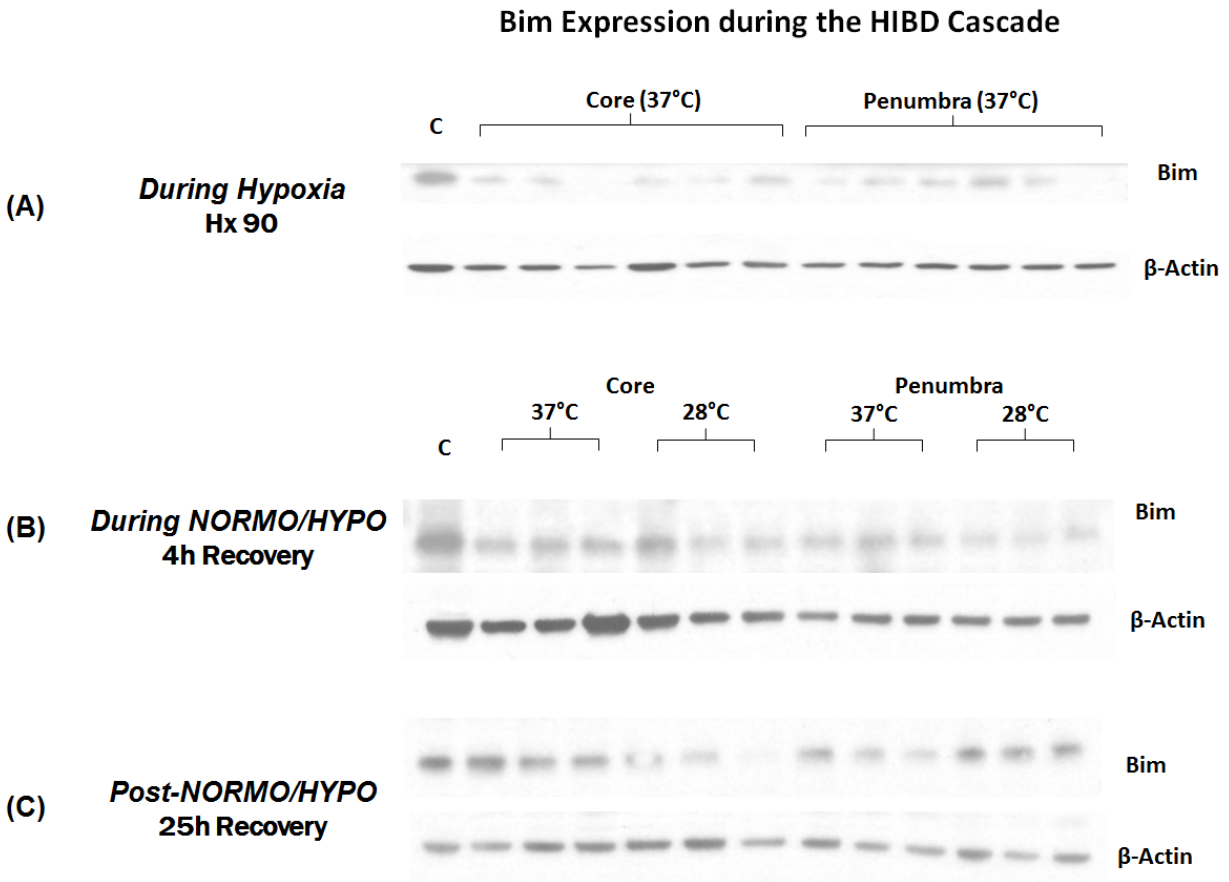


Figure 26: Bim Expression – During Hypoxia, During Treatment, and Post-Treatment

These sets of Western Blot images depict Bim (23 kDa) as expressed at (A) the end of 90 minutes of hypoxia (Hx90), (B) 4h during the NORMO/HYPO normoxic temperature exposure, and (C) 25h after HIBD, 1h after removal from NORMO/HYPO. NORMO and HYPO core and penumbra samples from the same time-point were run per gel. A homogenate of undamaged right hemispheres from 4 naïve pups was used as a control between gels and pipetted into the first lane (denoted ‘C’). β -actin (42 kDa) was used as a loading control.

Bim Expression during HIBD Hypoxia

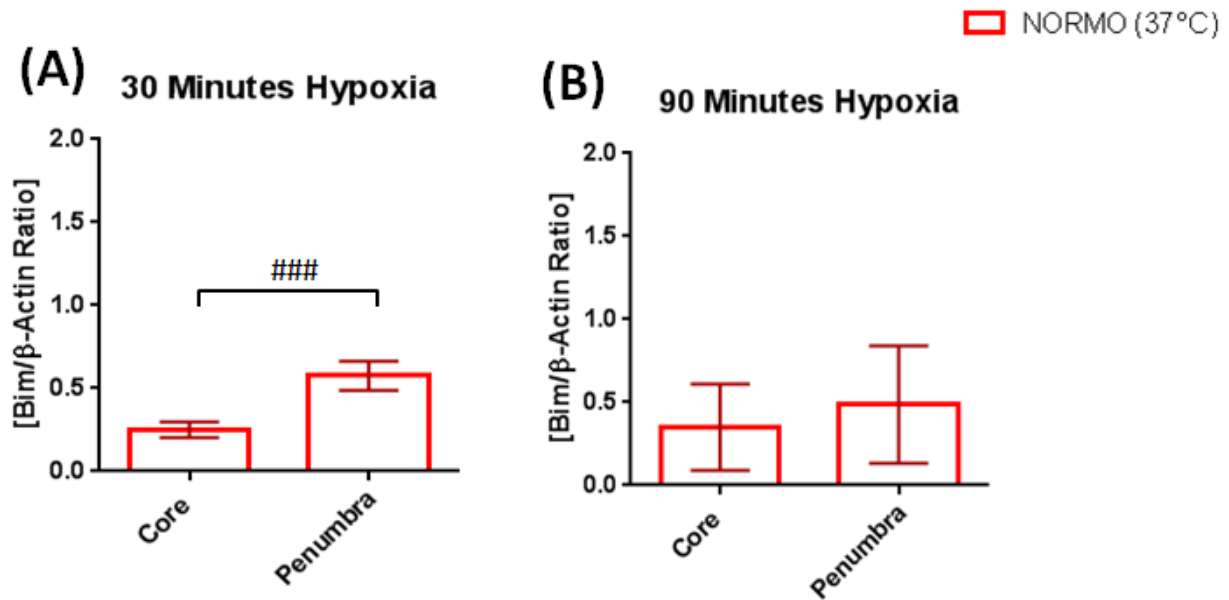


Figure 27: Bim Expression during Hypoxia

Expression of Bim at (A) 30min and (B) 90min of hypoxia in the core and penumbra at 37°C.

Bim was significantly elevated in the penumbra at (A) 30min of hypoxia (### $p < 0.001$), but this difference was not observed at the end of hypoxia. Mean \pm SD.

Bim Expression during NORMO/HYPO

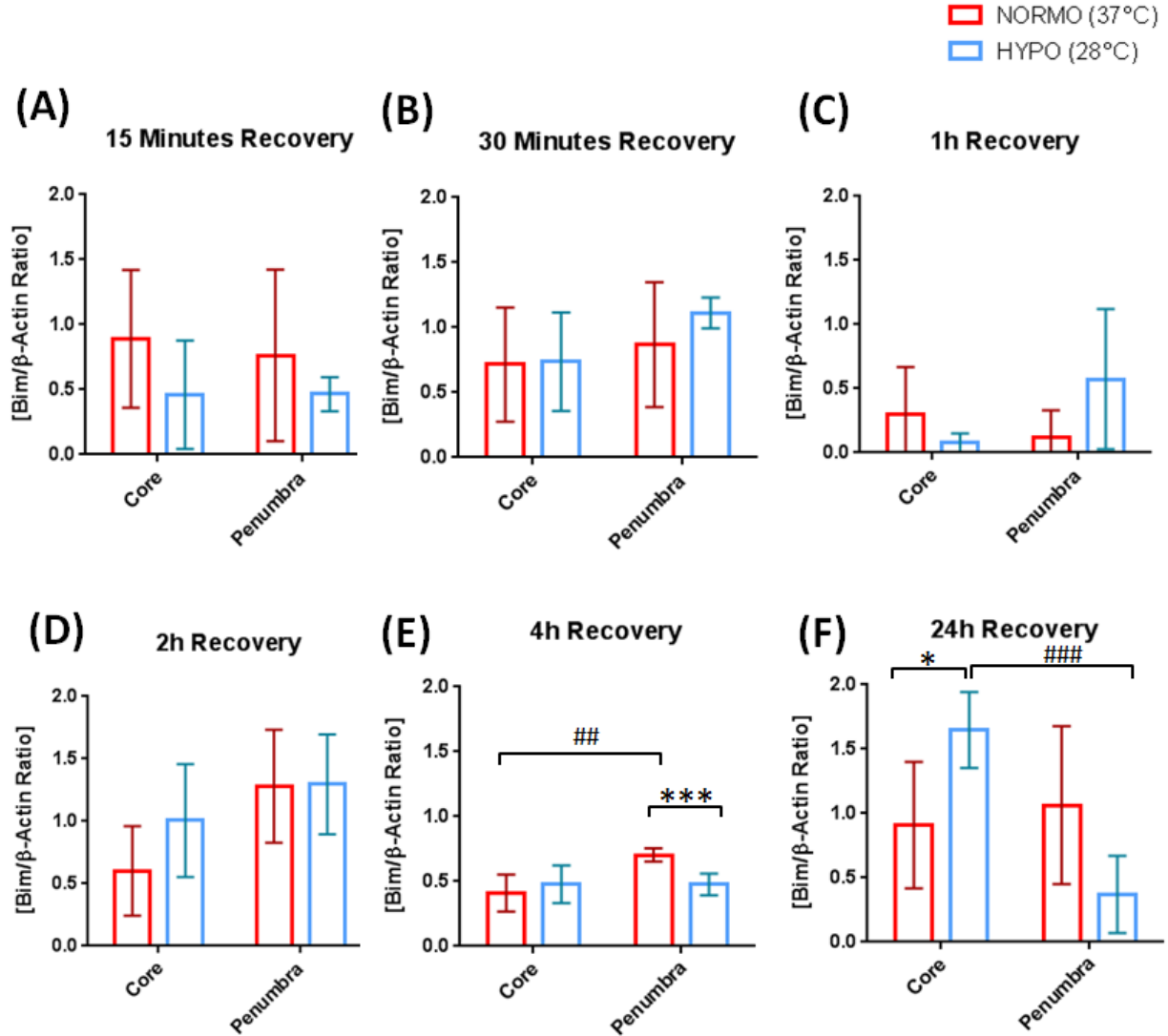


Figure 28: Bim Expression During NORMO/HYPO

Expression of Bim at (A) 15min, (B) 30min, (C) 1h, (D) 2h, (E) 4h, and (F) 24h after HIBD during the NORMO and HYPO temperature exposures. HYPO significantly suppressed Bim in the HIBD penumbra at (E) 4h post-HIBD (***) $p < 0.001$). In the HIBD core, Bim was significantly elevated with HYPO at 24h post-HIBD (*) $p < 0.05$. Mean \pm SD.

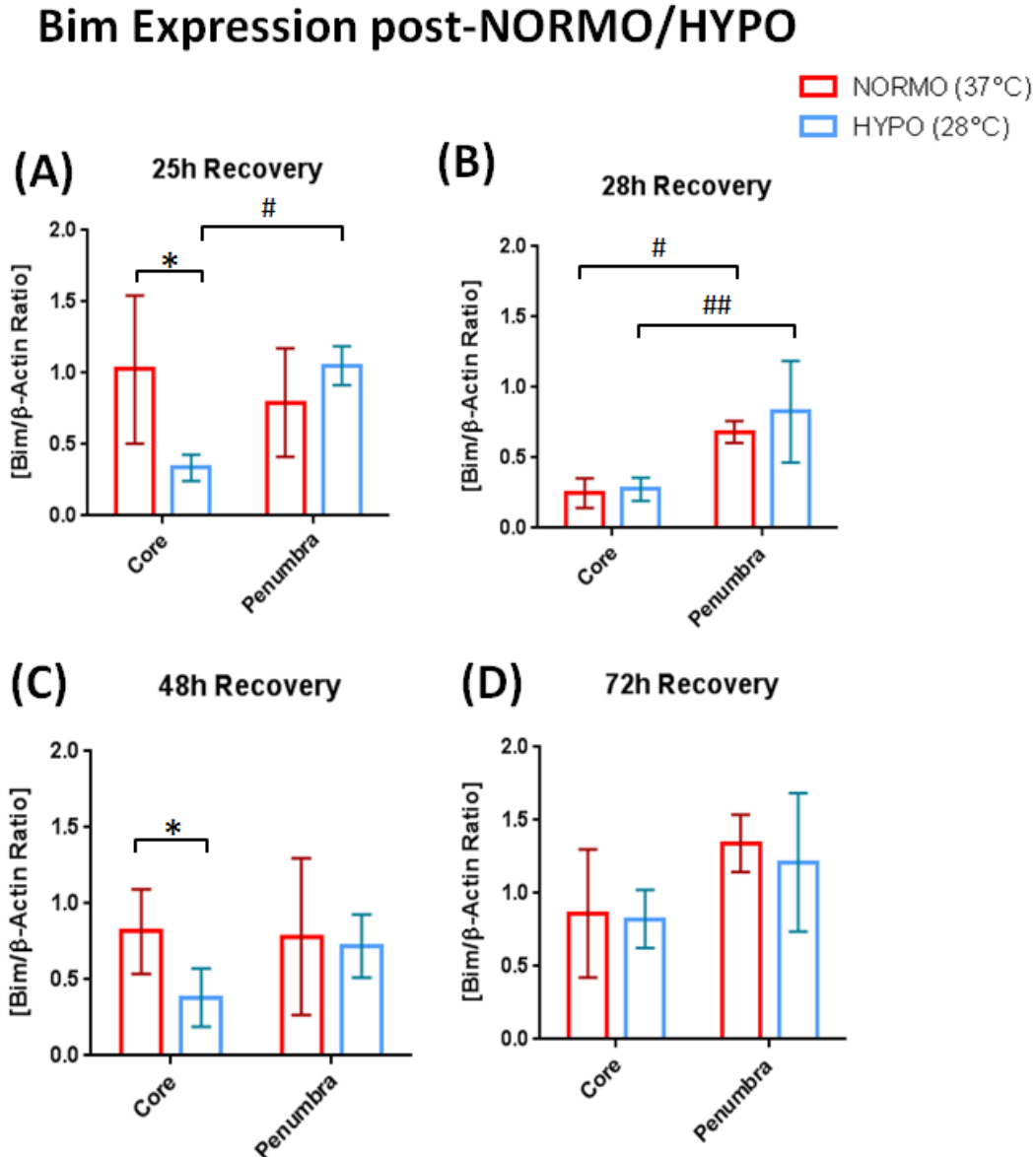


Figure 29: Bim Expression post-NORMO/HYPO

Expression of Bim at (A) 25h (B) 28h, (C) 48h, and (D) 72h post-HIBD, after removal from the NORMO and HYPO environments. HYPO significantly suppressed Bim in the HIBD core at (A) 25h and (C) 48h of recovery (* $p < 0.05$). The HYPO penumbra expressed significantly more Bim than its core at (A) 25h (# $p < 0.05$) and (B) 28h (## $p < 0.01$) of recovery. Mean \pm SD.

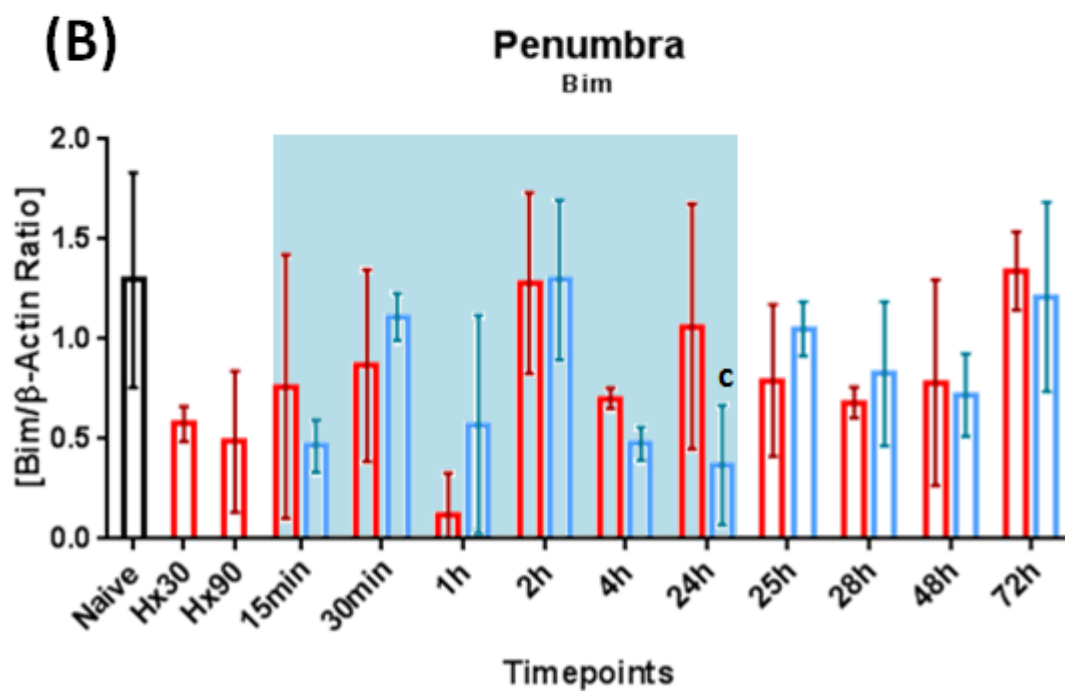
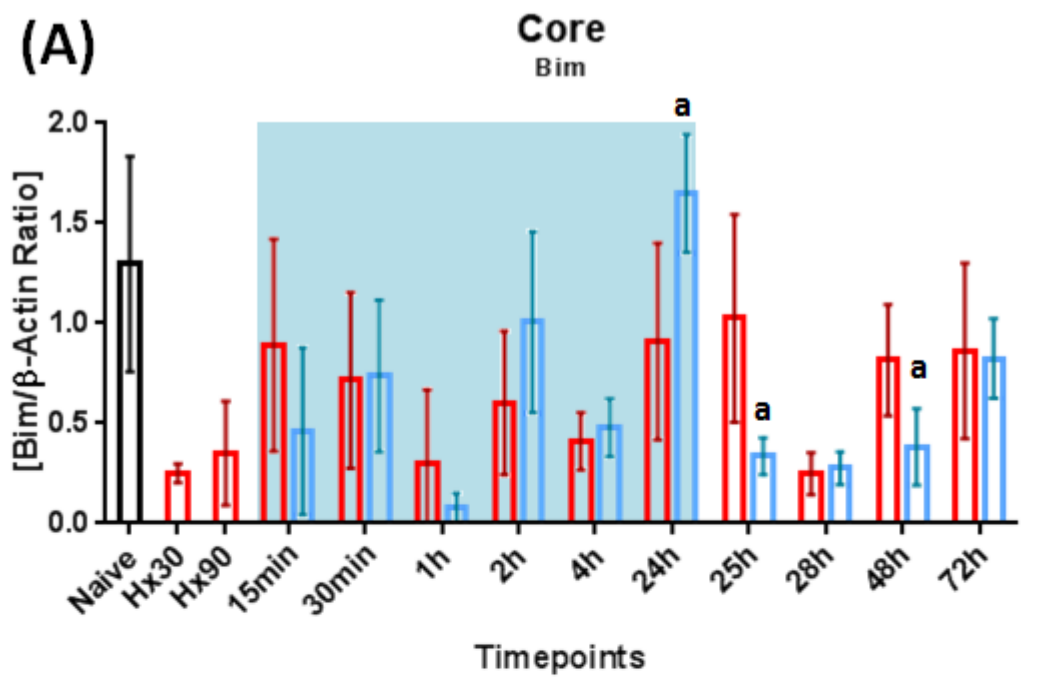


Figure 30: Temporal Bim Expression in the NORMO and HYPO Core and Penumbra

Expression levels of Bim with NORMO and HYPO at each of the examined time-points within the (A) core and (B) penumbra. Solid blue box indicates the 24 hour NORMO/HYPO normoxic exposure period. (a) $p < 0.05$ vs. NORMO. (C) $p < 0.001$ vs. NORMO. Mean \pm SD.

Expression of Cleaved Caspase-3

Figure 31 (A-B) depicts Bim as analyzed on each gel at the representative time-points of (A) 90 minutes of hypoxia, (B) 4h after HIBD (During NORMO/HYPO) and (C) 25h post-HIBD (After NORMO/HYPO).

Activity of Cleaved Caspase-3 did not differ between the core and penumbra during hypoxia (Figure 32 A-B).

During NORMO/HYPO (Figure 33 A-F), the only differences observed in expression of Cleaved Caspase-3 were at 4h post-HIBD (Figure 33 E); expression was significantly higher in the NORMO penumbra ($F(1,16) = 57.30, p < 0.00001$). HYPO suppressed this penumbra increase in Cleaved Caspase-3 at this time ($p < 0.01$). No differences in apoptosis were observed between the core and penumbra and between NORMO and HYPO after removal of NORMO/HYPO (Figure 34 A-D).

Figure 35 (A-B) depicts Cleaved Caspase-3 expression within the (A) core and (B) penumbra between each temperature treatment at each time-point. HYPO did not significantly affect expression in the HIBD core. HYPO suppressed Cleaved Caspase-3 at 4h-post HIBD in the penumbra ($p < 0.01$). No other significant differences were observed within each time-point. All data depicted as mean \pm SD.

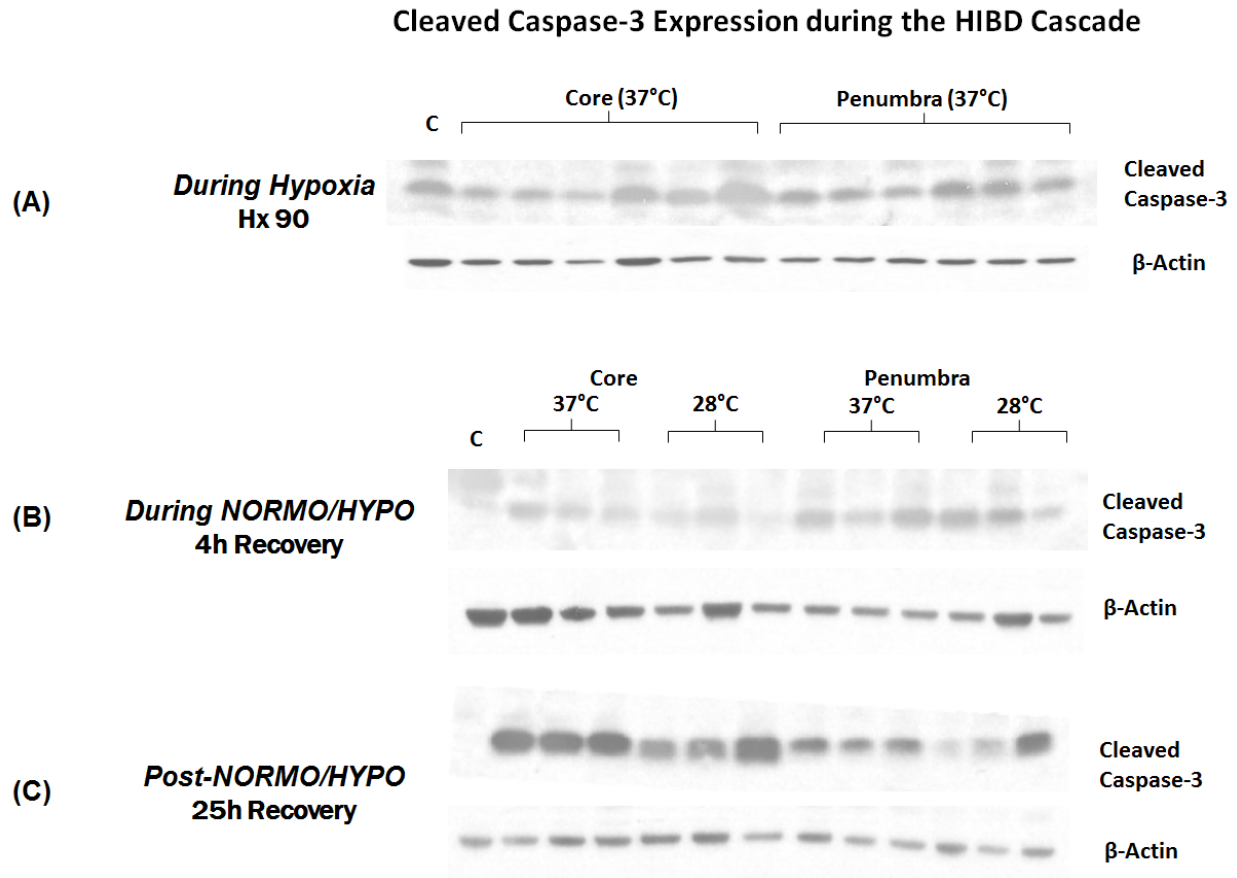


Figure 31: Cleaved Caspase-3 Expression – During Hypoxia, During Treatment, and Post-Treatment

These sets of Western Blot images depict Cleaved Caspase-3 (17-19 kDa) as expressed at (A) the end of 90 minutes of hypoxia (Hx90), (B) 4h during the NORMO/HYPO normoxic temperature exposure, and (C) 25h after HIBD, 1h after removal from NORMO/HYPO. NORMO and HYPO core and penumbra samples from the same time-point were run per gel. A homogenate of undamaged right hemispheres from 4 naïve pups was used as a control between gels and pipetted into the first lane (denoted 'C'). β -actin (42 kDa) was used as a loading control.

Cleaved Caspase-3 Expression during HIBD Hypoxia

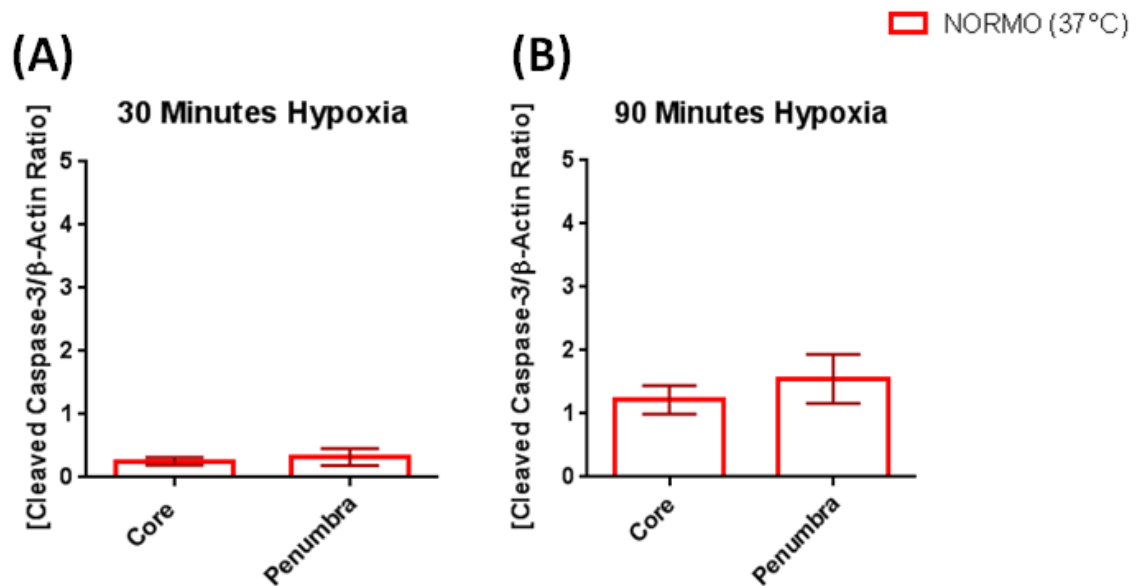


Figure 32: Cleaved Caspase-3 Expression during Hypoxia

Expression of Cleaved Caspase-3 at (A) 30min and (B) 90min of hypoxia in the core and penumbra at 37°C. No differences in expression between the two regions were observed at each examined time-point. Mean \pm SD.

Cleaved Caspase-3 Expression during NORMO/HYPO

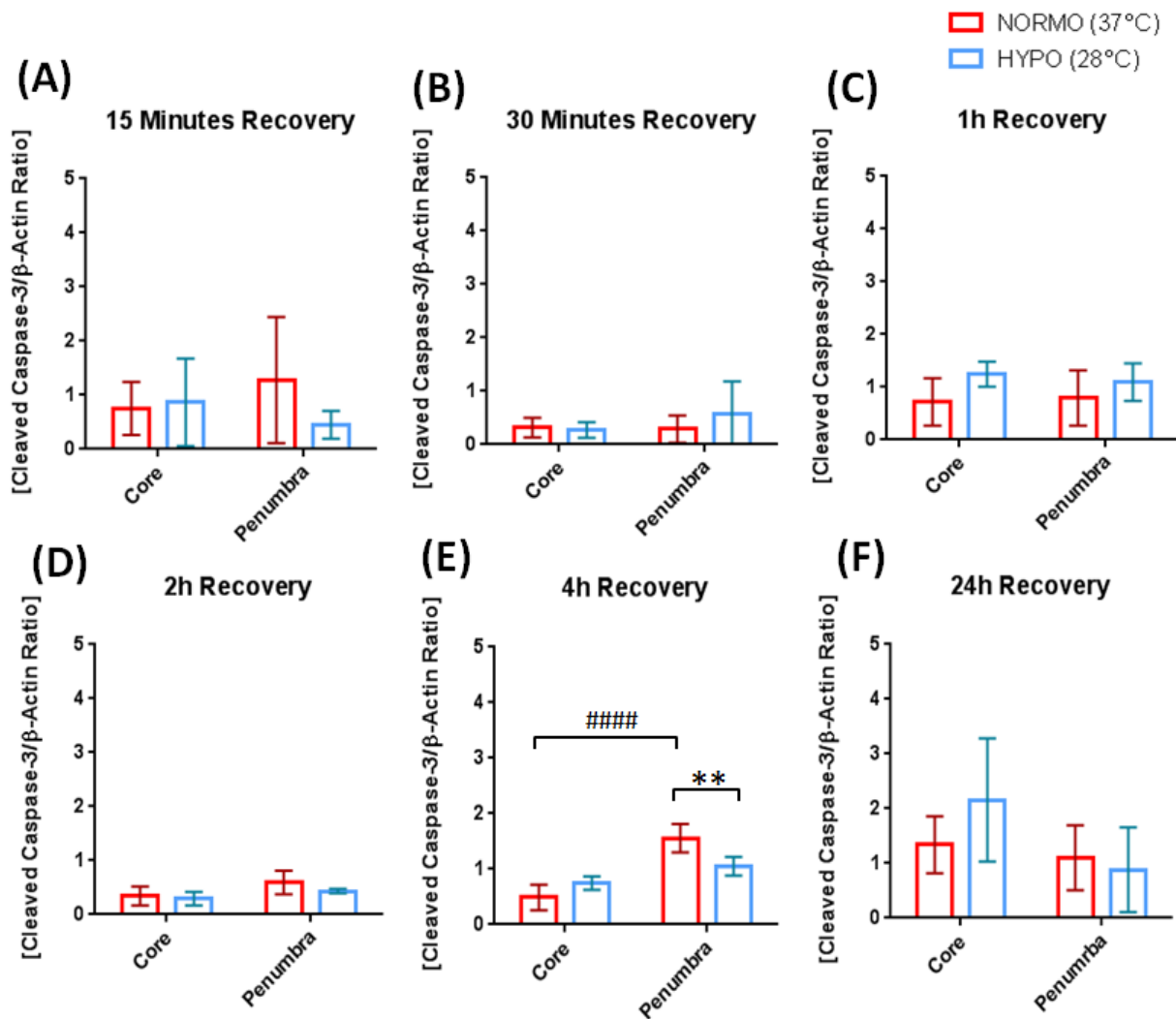


Figure 33: Cleaved Caspase-3 Expression During NORMO/HYPO

Expression of Cleaved Caspase-3 at (A) 15min, (B) 30min, (C) 1h, (D) 2h, (E) 4h, and (F) 24h after HIBD during the NORMO and HYPO temperature exposures. HYPO suppressed expression of Cleaved Caspase-3 at (E) 4h post-HIBD (** $p < 0.01$). No other differences in expression were observed between treatment groups. Mean \pm SD.

Cleaved Caspase-3 Expression post-NORMO/HYPO

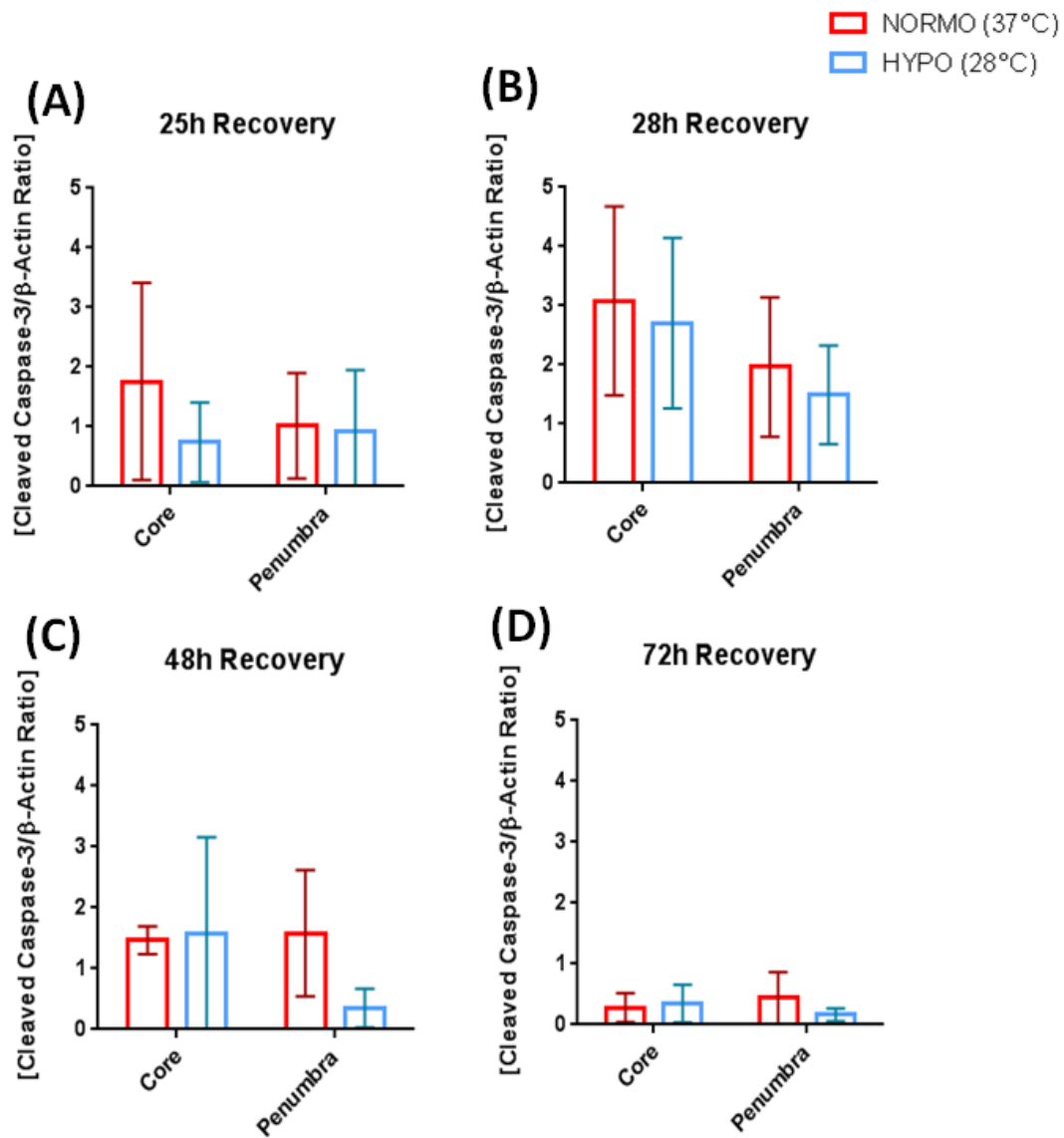
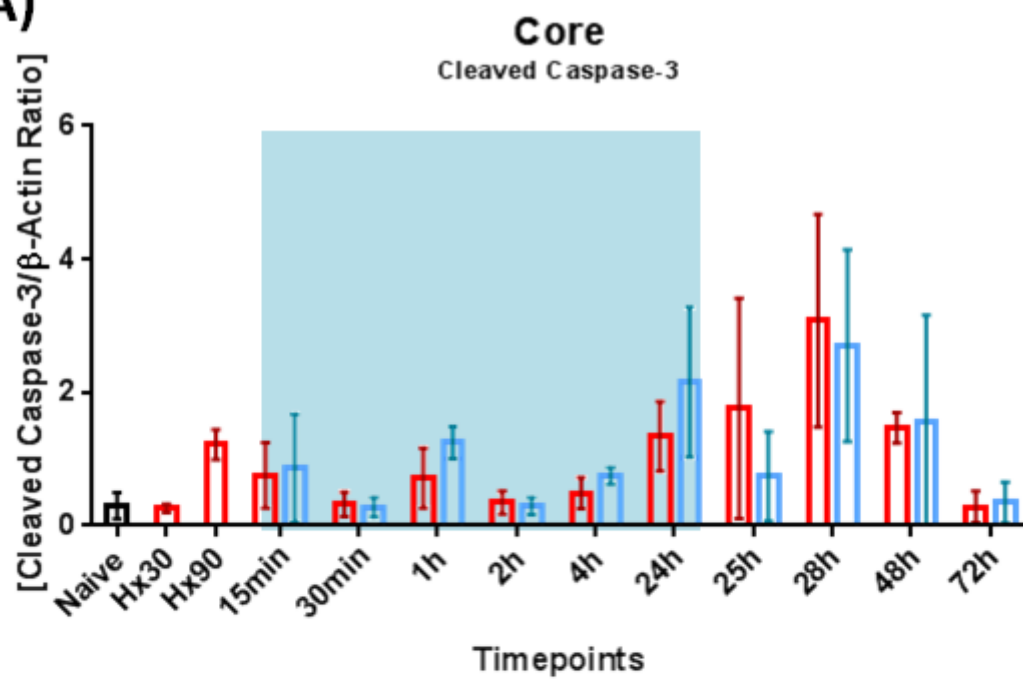


Figure 34: Cleaved Caspase-3 Expression post-NORMO/HYPO

Expression of Cleaved Caspase-3 at (A) 25h (B) 28h, (C) 48h, and (D) 72h post-HIBD, after removal from the NORMO and HYPO environments. No differences in expression were observed between regions or within treatment groups. Mean \pm SD.

(A)



(B)

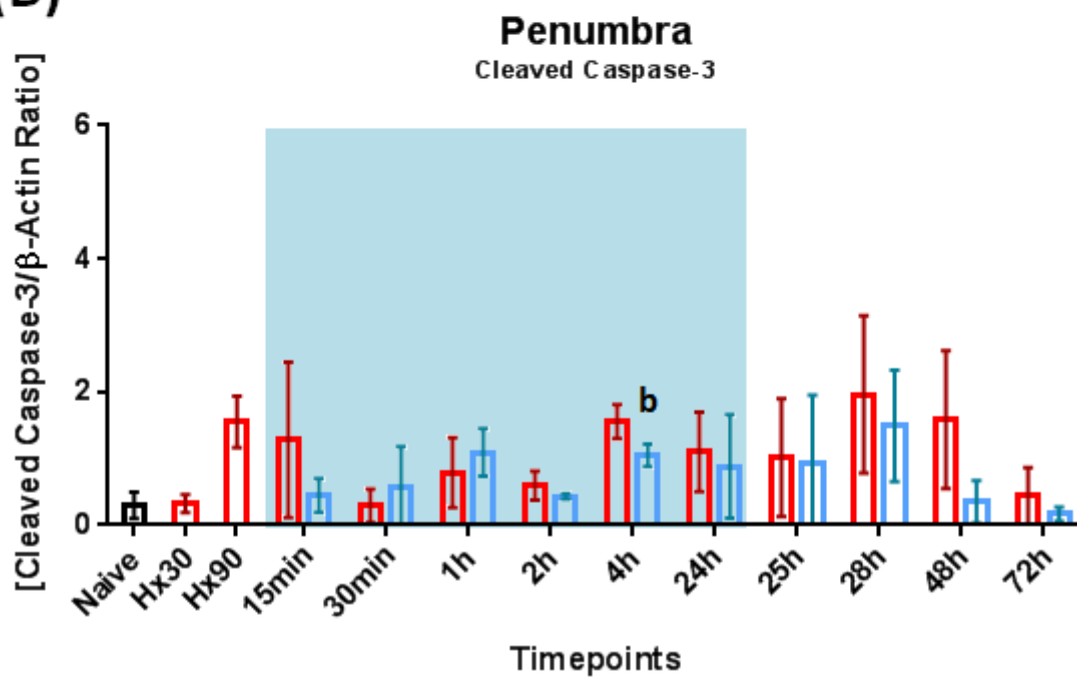


Figure 35: Temporal Cleaved Caspase-3 Expression in the NORMO and HYPO Core and Penumbra

Expression levels of Cleaved Caspase-3 with NORMO and HYPO at each of the examined time-points within the (A) core and (B) penumbra. Solid blue box indicates the 24 hour NORMO/HYPO normoxic exposure period. (b) $p < 0.01$ vs. NORMO. Mean \pm SD.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Study #1

- SFN (1 & 5 mg/kg) and Hypothermia (28°C) independently provide significant neuroprotection following an HIBD insult.
- Our highest dose of SFN (10 mg/kg) alone was not neuroprotective. Whether it was detrimental or not is unknown.
- Our results do not show additive neuroprotection in HIBD pups treated with a combination of both hypothermia and SFN.
- These results are consistent with several other laboratories that have studied combination therapies for neonatal HIBD.
- Our results further suggest that hypothermic neuroprotection, and the effect of SFN on HIBD, could be targeting similar mechanisms, and therefore may be competitive rather than complementary.
- A better understanding of the mechanisms underlying hypothermic neuroprotection is required to determine the best timing and therapeutic modality for an additive and/or synergistic effect with hypothermia.

Study #2

- **Energy regulation through p-AMPK examination:**
 - During HIBD and recovery there were no differences in the HYPO vs NORMO p-AMPK expression in the HIBD core.
 - HYPO suppressed penumbral p-AMPK activity at 4h compared to normothermia during the first 24 hours of recovery. There were no other differences between the normothermic and hypothermic groups.
 - Following hypothermic recovery at 25 – 72 hours, p-AMPK activity was higher in the penumbra of the hypothermic group compared to its homologous core.

- **Neuronal survival as expressed by GLUT3:**
 - Within the HIBD core, HYPO had a suppressive effect on GLUT3 at 30min of recovery from HIBD, during Hypothermia, and following Hypothermia at 25h, 28h, and 72h after HIBD, compared to the Normothermic group.
 - Penumbral GLUT3 activity did not differ between the HYPO and NORMO groups at any of the examined time-points.
 - Between the HYPO core and penumbra, GLUT3 expression in the core was consistently and significantly lower than in the penumbra at 15min, 30min, 2h, 4h, 25h, 28h, and 72h post-HIBD.

- **Autophagy** as expressed by **LC3-II**:
 - HYPO suppressed autophagy in the HIBD core at 15min and 28h, as well as at 25h and 48h in the penumbra after HIBD. Upregulation of autophagy in HYPO was observed only at 1h of recovery in the penumbra.

- **Intracellular apoptosis** as examined through **Bim** and **Cleaved Caspase-3**:
 - Administration of HYPO enhanced Bim activity in the core at 24h post-HIBD, during Hypothermia, whereas it was suppressed at 25h and 48h after HIBD and temperature normalization, in the hypothermic group.
 - HYPO suppressed Bim expression in the penumbra at 4h post-HIBD
 - Elevated Cleaved Caspase-3 activity in the NORMO penumbra was observed at 4h into recovery, but this was significantly suppressed by HYPO at this time-point.
 - HYPO did not significantly affect core or penumbral expression of Cleaved Caspase-3 and penumbral activity of Bim.
 - HYPO generally did not have a suppressive effect against apoptosis in this examined paradigm.

- **Post-ischemic hypothermia** overall did not have a sustained suppressive or enhancing effect on all of the proteins examined.
 - The only major effect of HYPO recorded was a sustained suppression in the HYPO core of GLUT3 at 30min, 25h, 28h, and 72h into recovery, and Bim at 25h and 48h into HYPO.

- HYPO did not have an effect on p-AMPK in the HIBD core. It only exerted significant suppressive influence at 4h post-HIBD in the penumbra.
- While differences between NORMO and HYPO, as well as between the core and penumbra, were seen at several time-points, many of these effects were variable between time points and regions.

Chapter 6: Discussion

There is increasing awareness about the problems of neonatal encephalopathy and how to effectively treat it. While some successes have been made in the field of HIBD, such as post-ischemic hypothermia therapy, the growing understanding of HIBD mechanisms, as well as therapeutic timing, there is still much work to be done in improving HIBD neuroprotection and long-term recovery.

Study #1

The purpose of my Study #1 was to examine whether SFN combination therapy at various doses would enhance hypothermic neuroprotection in a neonatal rat model of HIBD. As SFN is an anti-oxidative and anti-inflammatory compound that has been demonstrated to reduce brain injury, it was hypothesized that these mechanisms would either complement or add to hypothermic neuroprotection.

SFN Dosages

Here, SFN at 1 and 5 mg/kg independently conferred neuroprotection against neonatal HIBD when administered once every 24 hours for 7 days following HIBD induction (Figure 8). Many SFN studies have utilized the dosage of 5 mg/kg, and this particular dosage has demonstrated neuroprotective properties against spinal cord injuries^{318,340-344}, neurodegenerative brain disorders such as Parkinson's disease^{345,346}, and adult acute ischemic stroke^{302-304,317,322,347,348}. Cardiovascular³⁴⁹ and cancer^{305,307,308,311,312,350-353} studies have also shown 5 mg/kg of SFN to induce protection. Notably, Ping et al.'s 2010 study evaluating SFN for neonatal HIBD demonstrated reductions in infarct size, neuroinflammation, and oxidative stress with this SFN dosage³¹⁹. While I did not directly examine neuroinflammation and oxidative stress, HIBD rats treated alone with 5 mg/kg once every 24h for 7 days exhibited significantly reduced brain injury

than those left untreated (Figure 8). From this, we can infer that SFN at a dose of 5 mg/kg is independently neuroprotective against gross neonatal HIBD pathology.

The independent SFN dose of 1 mg/kg also significantly improved brain pathology when administered to HIBD rats. This dose was chosen to complement other studies, as well as the projects in our lab, that have consistently observed long-term improvement in behaviour and brain connectivity with the dietary supplementation of 200 mg of broccoli sprouts during gestation and weaning³⁵⁴ and for hypertension^{355,356}; This amount of broccoli sprouts has been deemed to be equivalent to 500µg of SFN in fetuses after their dams ingested 200 mg of broccoli sprouts.³⁵⁴ As similar HIBD neuroprotection was afforded with the SFN doses of 1 mg/kg and 5 mg/kg, it could be postulated that SFN at these doses may induce neuroprotection to an analogous extent, meaning that although SFN is a safe-to-use compound, perhaps the lower dose of SFN would be favoured as opposed to the higher dose of 5 mg/kg in a clinical or research setting. However, it is unknown if either SFN dose affords differential behavioural improvement after neonatal HIBD. Since the 5 mg/kg SFN dose has been used consistently in the SFN literature, more studies would be required to further evaluate the neuroprotective efficacy of the 1 mg/kg dose.

Additionally, we found that 10 mg/kg of SFN did not independently reduce brain injury (Figure 8). This is a notable finding, as cortical neuronal oxygen-glucose deprivation cell culture results from a collaborating lab have demonstrated neuronal cytotoxicity when SFN was administered at 50µM under normoxic conditions in premature neurons [unpublished data]. This may indicate that SFN at high concentrations may be, in fact, detrimental to the immature brain. However, this SFN dose together with HYPO still resulted in HIBD neuroprotection (Figure 8). It is unknown whether the potentially harmful effects of this high SFN dose were counter-acted by hypothermia.

Weights

Pups injected with 10 mg/kg of SFN weighed on average significantly more than their experimental counterparts (Figure 6). This was evident regardless if pups received 10 mg/kg SFN under NORMO or if they received the combination of HYPO + SFN (10 mg/kg) treatment. As all SFN doses were administered subcutaneously, this weight gain effect could have been due to various global systemic effects caused by an over-concentration of phytochemicals (e.g. vitamins E, C, K, iron, zinc, etc.); these are all associated with SFN-related health effects.³⁵⁷ Alternatively, the weight gain in this group of animals could have been simply due to an increase in appetite, but this is in contrast to research that has demonstrated SFN to attenuate obesity; this has been demonstrated with both the upregulation and suppression of AMPK activation, hence further studies are required in this field.^{358,359} While the 10 mg/kg SFN may have resulted in weight gain regardless of treatment, the overall health effects of this dose have not been fully elucidated on the brain, behaviour, and other systemic systems throughout the pups' bodies. Independently and combined, the weights of pups that received SFN at 1 or 5 mg/kg and HYPO did not significantly differ from their grouped controls (Figure 6), and may be an indicator of treatment safety. More research into the safety of SFN dose is recommended.

Post-Ischemic Hypothermia

As expected, post-ischemic hypothermia for 24 hours after moderate HIBD was consistently and significantly neuroprotective, including when combined with SFN at all three doses utilized (Figure 8). Our results are thus consistent with the hypothermia literature for mild-moderate HIBD, and clinically confirmed through multiple RCTs and its gold-standard status as a rescue therapy.^{146,170} While no statistically-significant differences were observed in pathology between

rats treated with SFN at 1 and 5 mg/kg and all the HYPO and HYPO + SFN groups, I would recommend that therapeutic cooling always be administered as opposed to only providing low doses of SFN to infants affected by mild-moderate HIBD. This is due to hypothermia's consistency and reliability as a neuroprotective intervention.

Hypothermia + SFN Combination Therapy

No additive histological neuroprotection (i.e. reduction in brain damage) was observed when SFN supplementation was combined with hypothermia. While a trend of reduced HIBD injury was observed with 10 mg/kg of SFN plus HYPO, the number needed to treat to observe a statistically-significant difference numbered in the thousands, indicating that this combination therapy would still not be a successful neuroprotective candidate. These negative results are also consistent with other combination therapy studies for HIBD.

Pharmacokinetics and Pharmacodynamics with Hypothermia

Furthermore, HYPO's ability to modulate pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics must not be overlooked. Reviews by Van den Broek et al.³⁶⁰, Totrorici et al.²⁴⁴, and Zhou & Poloyac³⁶¹ illustrate these well. However, they raise caution that while TH may extend a drug's half-life, its efficacy may also be reduced. Generally, HYPO functions to reduce cerebral metabolism, but in the process, also reduces drug clearance and absorption.³⁶⁰ Hence, cooling may be preventing the complete and effective metabolism of some combination drug treatments. Importantly, raising a drug's dose to counterbalance this situation could produce systemic toxicity due to reduced clearance of the drug^{322,362-368}; this has also been observed to be the case for drugs metabolized

by the cytochrome-P450 pathway.^{244,368} As post-ischemic HYPO has been demonstrated to slow cerebral blood flow^{171,205,206,369}, this may restrict optimal delivery of pharmacotherapies delivered via the bloodstream. Drug-binding capabilities to their respective enzymes may also be compromised.²⁴⁴ Thus, the safety, efficacy, and dosage of drugs administered during hypothermia must be fully evaluated before administering to patients in need.

Limitations

Perhaps the biggest limitation of Study #1 was not including a behavioural analysis component. Many studies in the HIBD field unfortunately do not include this portion as well, focusing more on the short-term effects of HIBD and potential treatments. To effectively see if long-term improvement is afforded, behavioural studies are required. Behavioural studies for HIBD in neonatal rats are exceedingly rare, but some research has demonstrated favourable long-term outcomes of animals and human infants with HIBD when exposed to hypothermic cooling^{146,170,370–372}, although any long-term benefits of SFN administration for neonatal HIBD have not yet been elucidated. While the examination of gross pathology provided a clear image of how HYPO and each SFN dose affect overall brain injury, it is unknown whether the combination would have provided behavioural improvement. Additionally in this Rice-Vannucci model, rats only received a unilateral brain injury, leaving the other hemisphere intact to HIBD cystic pathology. Due to the time-period in which HIBD occurs, the brain is still malleable and responsive to cortical reorganization and plasticity.³⁷³ Perhaps the administration of SFN + HYPO combination therapy may have resulted in the reorganization of neural circuitry in the ipsilateral brain hemisphere, thus improvement of hemiplegic motor impairment; unfortunately we did not test these parameters. In my study, to research these ideas and examine any cognitive

or motor changes, behavioural tests such as skilled reaching (depending on paw preference), beam walking, the cylinder test, and the Morris Water maze could have been conducted.

The temporality in which drug therapies are administered relative to HYPO onset must also be considered and evaluated prior to clinical trial. Hence, the administration paradigm of SFN together with HYPO may have contributed to the final results. In this study, SFN was first supplied at the onset of HYPO and was re-injected into the subcutaneous space once every 24h for a period of 7 days. Due to SFN's anti-oxidative and anti-apoptotic nature, this rescue therapy dosing regime was chosen to theoretically further protect against oxidative stress in the immediate post-hypoxic period and provide a lasting protective base against inflammatory mechanisms in the delayed period of secondary energy failure.⁵⁷ From our results, HYPO consistently and significantly protected the brain until the final endpoint of 21 days after HIBD, but SFN treatment in combination with HYPO did not improve the gross neuroprotection seen in the damaged hemisphere. Perhaps altering the administration schedule could have made a neuroprotective difference. For instance, delayed administration of SFN in a traumatic brain injury model at 1h post-injury, but no longer than 6h, attenuated brain damage and improved behavioural function.³⁷⁴ Studies examining other therapies with HYPO for HIBD have also utilized delayed administration models and seen additional benefit.³⁷⁵⁻³⁷⁷ Even delayed administration of HYPO itself for up to 6h has shown to be neuroprotective for HIBD.^{201,376,378,379} Thus, hypothermia would still be considered the gold-standard therapy for neonatal HIBD, but the optimal timing of SFN administration, HYPO, or any other adjunct therapy after newborn HIBD is still unclear.

To address these concerns, Study #2 was undertaken to better understand how HYPO modulates energy regulation and cell death/survival at various time-points during and after HIBD.

Study #2

Study #2 was focused on examining how hypothermia affected the HIBD core and penumbra at various time-points during recovery. Reviewing the literature, it was hypothesized that downstream effectors of AMPK would be differentially affected by hypothermic cooling in the core and penumbra. This is due to AMPK's critical involvement in energy failure and recovery that define HIBD cell death, and how cooling has been consistently shown to protect the mild-moderate HIBD brain against injury. Our results show differential expression profiles within the NORMO and HYPO HIBD core and penumbra. These are interesting and may point to where and when additional neuroprotective therapies could be introduced.

Energy Regulation by p-AMPK

As previously elaborated, p-AMPK was the main protein of interest in this study. McCullough et al.'s 2005 study initially pioneered research examining AMPK activation and inhibition in adult mice and rats after MCAO stroke, also studying how the core and penumbra were differentially-affected. They discovered that from 2-6h post-stroke, p-AMPK activity is significantly higher in the adult cortical penumbra than in the ischemic core.¹⁴² In newborn rats, the temporal activation course of AMPK after HIBD in several brain regions has been recently detailed by Rousset et al.¹³⁸ Here, p-AMPK levels peaked during hypoxia/HIBD, returning to baseline levels once normoxia was restored; this pattern was evident in the cortex, striatum and hippocampus.

Comparison of core and penumbra were not evaluated. In our study, we examined the core and penumbra of the HIBD lesion and the influence that hypothermia demonstrated, post-ischemia, to: (1) Determine whether hypothermia might influence energy regulation differentially, and (2) Examine a time frame during which supplemental therapy may be beneficial.

In concordance with recent work by Rousset et al.¹³⁸, p-AMPK levels rose significantly in the penumbra by the end of HIBD (Figure 12 B). As expected, p-AMPK in the immediate post-hypoxic recovery period returned to baseline levels as has been observed in the literature (Figure 13).¹³⁸ Due to the potential for cystic infarction and necrotic death in the immediate primary energy failure period, we hypothesized that p-AMPK levels would be nearly absent in the HIBD core. However, in contrast to our hypotheses, p-AMPK expression did not significantly decrease in the NORMO HIBD core at any of the time-points examined, instead remaining at baseline. It is possible that while p-AMPK levels, as measured, did not change, the requirements for p-AMPK increase; demand outstripping supply. Additionally, though dying, cells and their intracellular components have not yet been removed in the early post-ischemic period. As such their diminished effective concentrations may not be reflected. Nonetheless, cell death continues from other sources including glutamate excitotoxicity and the production of reactive oxygen species.²⁸ In this regard, the unchanging temporal profile of p-AMPK in the core during HIBD may be a sign of the core's inability to generate additional energy supplies to overcome the neurotoxic cascade, hence irreversible cell death in 'core' cells.

Similar to adult MCAO work performed by McCullough et al.¹⁴², our results did show significant differences in p-AMPK expression between the NORMO HIBD core and penumbra. Their results depicted increases in penumbral p-AMPK, theorizing this to represent the activation of compensatory protective pathways in viable neurons to retain a survivable energy supply. We found p-AMPK to be significantly increased in the penumbra compared to the core in the Normothermic group. Though only seen at the terminus of HIBD, and at 4h into HIBD recovery (Figure 13 E), we did not measure this marker again until 24 hours of recovery. How long penumbral p-AMPK remained elevated is therefore unclear, and hence may well represent an

attempt of penumbral cells, during normothermic, normoxic recovery, to replenish their energy supply, leading to survival. Alternatively, this may represent the differences and challenges regarding age and sensitivity to brain injury.³⁸⁰ This increase was not shown by Rousset et al. in their neonatal HIBD p-AMPK time course findings.¹³⁸

Furthermore, core p-AMPK was not affected by HYPO at any point when compared with NORMO (Figure 13). We hypothesized that p-AMPK activation in the core would be detrimental, due to the need for a supply of nutrients to replenish energy stores. However, given that activation of p-AMPK requires energy, its activation is likely detrimental in attempting to maintain constant energy stores, in the core. Although p-AMPK activity was significantly higher in the HYPO core than the HYPO penumbra at 1h of recovery, neither of the NORMO values differed from each other, nor the HYPO values within each respective region of injury (Figure 13). The increased core value of p-AMPK at 1 hour of recovery, in hypothermia, compared to the penumbra, may therefore be a detrimental effect of hypothermia on the core, and be partially responsible for the incomplete effect of hypothermia as a neuroprotectant. Moreover this may partially explain the complete lack of effect of hypothermia on severe injury, where the core consumes the majority of the lesion. Alternatively, the findings may be a statistical error, given the wide SD of the normothermic core group.

At 4h of recovery, p-AMPK was significantly increased in the NORMO penumbra, while hypothermia led to a significant suppression, compared to the normothermic group (Figure 13 E). No further differences were found between the normothermic and hypothermic groups. This may again, be of interest regarding treatment. We would assume that p-AMPK suppression 4h post-HIBD in the penumbra would be detrimental.

Following hypothermia, there was an increase in p-AMPK activity from 25-28h after HIBD, and again at 72h (Figure 14). This phenomenon is in keeping with our hypotheses that p-AMPK upregulation in the penumbra could be beneficial to neuroprotection. These results may suggest that the lasting protective effects of cooling may act on and influence the HIBD penumbra rather than the core at various time-points, and may contribute to why the HYPO penumbra was diminished in this group and did not expand into the thalamus. Additionally, as HYPO is an established and consistent therapeutic modality, this sustained enhancement in energy metabolism in the penumbra after the initial phase of primary energy failure may serve as a preconditioning and preventative measure to preclude further damage as a result of secondary energy failure.³⁸¹ This could be further verified by testing p-AMPK-enhancing and suppressing agents in the HIBD penumbra after cooling is removed.^{146,382}

Interpretation of our results, particularly with respect to p-AMPK is challenging. The findings are somewhat inconsistent through the course of injury, recovery and post-hypothermic recovery. This may simply be a reflection of wide standard deviations, challenges in sampling core vs penumbral tissue and the variability that this model presents, or technical difficulties.

Our findings at 4 hours, whereby hypothermic brains showed a decrease compared to the normothermic group, might, on the other hand, reflect the total reduction of metabolism during hypothermia. Hence the reduced p-AMPK may in fact not be detrimental, but rather beneficial or simply neutral. Its increase in the post-hypothermic phase, may be a phase during which a rebound of p-AMPK in the hypothermic group provides if protection.

There is currently a debate regarding whether activation or inhibition of AMPK in the damaged HIBD brain is beneficial. While some preventative stroke research has implied AMPK activation to exert neuroprotection, its sustained activation into the neurotoxic and recovery

periods has been deemed detrimental to brain recovery.^{138,139,383–388} Recently, studies have strongly pointed to AMPK inhibition as a neuroprotective strategy.^{138,383,389–391} Brain cells require ATP to function, meaning that sustained suppression of AMPK may not be a viable route either. This duality of survival and death must be considered when exposing injured tissue to agents that affect AMPK activity.^{136,139,387}

GLUT3 and Neuronal Survival

Neurons require high amounts of glucose, but are poor at storing it.³⁹² GLUT3 is a high-affinity extracellular glucose transporter that mediates glucose influx into neurons, and astrocytes to a lesser extent, and is hypoxia-responsive.³⁹³ In addition to being directly upregulated by p-AMPK³⁹⁴, GLUT3 is a downstream target of HIF-1 α ^{133,395} which is also activated in response to HIBD.^{393,396} Surface expression of GLUT3 due to p-AMPK activation has been shown to promote neuronal and astrocytic tolerance to HIBD energy failure³⁹⁷, with glycolysis and glucose/glycogen uptake/storage as a pro-survival adaptation to post-HIBD glutamate excitotoxicity.^{394,396–399} Dornbos et al. found GLUT3 levels to be enhanced acutely post-stroke in adult rats receiving chronic exercise, suggesting exercise to stimulate glucose metabolism post-stroke that may have contributed to neuroprotection.⁴⁰⁰ Additionally, Li et al. demonstrated increased neuronal GLUT3 levels 24h post-HIBD in neonatal rats pre-treated with progesterone.³⁹⁹ Vannucci et al. conducted a temporal analysis of glucose transporter expression in neonatal HIBD rat brains and found enhanced GLUT3 levels in the penumbral piriform cortex and amygdala during HIBD.³⁹⁶ In the cortex, GLUT3 expression was reduced after 1, 3, and 5h of recovery after HIBD, and was absent after 24 and 72h; absence of GLUT3 expression was correlated with emergence of necrosis in the HIBD hemisphere. At the 3h and 5h time-points,

GLUT3 reduction spread to include the cortex and hippocampus, while positive expression was still detected in the amygdala. My study is the first to examine how hypothermia affects the GLUT3 pathway in the HIBD core and penumbra.

Our results show an increase in GLUT3 expression in the HIBD penumbra compared to the core during hypoxia ischemia (Figure 18). This would reflect enhanced utilization of glucose in penumbral cells during ischemia, which makes sense, given this is the region of injury with better circulation and therefore substrate supply.

During recovery, in both the hypothermic and normothermic groups, this pattern continued. Penumbral GLUT3 was significantly greater in the penumbra than the core up to 4 hours of recovery (Figure 18). No differences were found in GLUT3 concentrations between the hypothermic and normothermic recovery groups. Though not significant, the hypothermic penumbral GLUT3 was lower than the normothermic group, perhaps suggesting suppression in its activity. This alteration in neuronal glucose uptake is similar to what has been observed in the literature.³⁹⁶

Following hypothermic recovery at 25-72h, penumbral GLUT3 was consistently more elevated than the core in both the normothermic and hypothermic groups, though not always statistically (Figure 19). Interestingly, core GLUT3 was significantly lower in the hypothermic animals compared to the normothermic ones. Whether this was protective, given the lack of blood flow to this region, is frankly difficult to know. One might think this to be the case, given previous findings from our group⁵⁵, that the hypothermic core shows a decrease in apoptotic death. However, to be sure, further analysis may be required in measuring the volume of core injury in the hypothermic vs normothermic groups. GLUT3 expression in the NORMO and HYPO penumbra did not significantly differ from each other at any of the examined time-points. This

may indicate that HYPO neuroprotection in the penumbra may not be dependent on the significant upregulation of glucose uptake.

In adults, glucose accumulation during periods of metabolic failure may lead to post-stroke hyperglycemia and increased brain damage.¹⁴³ Overexpression of GLUT3 post-HIBD has been linked to neuronal death.³⁹⁶ While therapeutic targeting of GLUT3 may be beneficial to reducing stroke pathophysiology in neonates, consideration regarding the time, duration, and extent of activation must be taken if applying GLUT3 activators in the immediate period following HIBD.⁴⁰¹

Autophagy and LC3-II

Autophagy is an increasingly important non-apoptotic mode of cell death/survival that contributes to programmed cell turnover and quality control.⁴⁰² The role of autophagic cell death is still not fully understood in the brain, with conflicting studies showing both protective^{403–406} and damaging effects of autophagy.^{402,407–411} While autophagy enhancement in the penumbra of adult brains affected by ischemic stroke has been shown to provide protection⁴¹², other studies paint a less favourable picture.^{409,413} Within the autophagy pathway, evidence linking deletion of the Atg7 autophagy mediator gene to neuroprotection after severe HIBD provides the most compelling evidence for autophagic cell death as detrimental to the neonatal HIBD brain.⁴¹¹ Studies have also shown the extent of autophagy to be influenced by the severity of excitotoxic stress and the presence of reactive oxygen species^{402,410}, which may be a factor in why autophagy has been reported to be a debilitating factor in severe HIBD.^{410,411}

HYPO has largely demonstrated neuroprotection by suppressing autophagy in focal ischemic stroke⁴¹⁴ and cardiovascular dysfunction.⁴¹⁵ In traumatic brain injury, however, research indicates that the activation of autophagy by cooling has been protective.⁴¹⁶⁻⁴¹⁸

Overall, we did not find many differences in the LC3-II activity between the core and penumbra, or between the hypothermic and normothermic animals (Figures 32-34). Significantly higher levels of LC3-II were recorded at a single time point during the recovery period. One hour into recovery the HYPO penumbra showed significantly greater concentrations of LC3-II compared to the normothermic penumbra. In conjunction with the alterations of p-AMPK at this time point, where there is no difference in the penumbra, but is significantly lower than the hypothermic core, might this suggest autophagy to be in a ‘holding pattern’; deciding or as yet determining the path to take. In other words, does hypothermia at this stage simply delay the decision making of the cell?

LC3-II was significantly reduced in the HYPO core at only 28h into recovery (Figure 19 B), and in the HYPO penumbra at 25h and 48h post-HIBD (Figure 19 A & C), compared to the equivalent time frame normothermic group. Again, together with the changes in GLUT3, this action may represent neuroprotection. By suppressing autophagic cell death in the period after hypothermic cooling is removed, perhaps allowing for sustained neuroprotection. This mechanism may also serve in preventing the expansion of the HIBD core into the penumbra. It should be noted that at no point did the HYPO core and penumbra differ in regards to their LC3-II expression profiles. Hence, neuroprotection against autophagic cell death could be as simple as inhibiting or suppressing LC3-II expression via HYPO administration in both the core and penumbra at different times.

Intrinsic Apoptosis via Bim & Cleaved Caspase-3

Delayed neuronal cell death is the most characteristic feature of secondary phase of energy failure in HIBD neuropathology.^{28,29} This may occur hours, days, or weeks after the onset of HIBD. Study #2 assessed how post-ischemic cooling affected apoptotic cell death via the internal mitochondrial pathway. Bim was chosen as a pro-apoptotic intermediate marker of this pathway as its immediate upstream regulator, FoxO3a, is directly manipulated by activated AMPK. Nuclear p-FoxO3a is an important regulator of cell survival and death related to energy failure, and acts directly on Bim.⁴¹⁹⁻⁴²¹ Ischemic stroke studies have shown that prolonged activation of AMPK results in apoptosis stemming from Bim activation.^{136,139,141,383,385,422} Activation of Bim also suppresses anti-apoptotic Bcl-2 proteins, thus resulting in the formation of the Bak/Bax pro-apoptosis/mitochondrial permeability pore initiation complex^{139,420}, and accordingly, it has been shown to be involved in neuronal apoptosis after neonatal HIBD.^{326,423} This is the first study to examine the effect of hypothermia on the expression of Bim in the HIBD core and penumbra. Cleaved Caspase-3 was measured as the final effector of apoptosis.

Our results showed that during hypoxia, Bim was significantly upregulated in the HIBD penumbra, during the early phases (Figure 27).^{424,425} During the recovery period, no significant differences between NORMO and HYPO within and between the core and penumbra were recorded until 4h post-HIBD (Figure 28 E). At this time, there was a significant upregulation of Bim and Cleaved Caspase-3 in the NORMO penumbra compared to the HYPO group (Figure 28 E, Figure 33 E). We would theorize that this shows that intrinsic apoptosis was evident in the HIBD penumbra at this time, and that HYPO's neuroprotection extended to its suppression.

No other differences in Cleaved Caspase-3 were recorded between the experimental groups and regions at any other time. Bim expression varied until 72h post-HIBD. At the end of

Hypothermic recovery at 24h, Bim activity was significantly elevated in the HYPO core compared to the NORMO core, as well as the HYPO penumbra (Figure 28 F). This finding is difficult to justify, given the known protective effect of hypothermia. However, it does reflect only the intrinsic death pathway, and it is therefore possible to affect this mitochondrial pathway differently than the extrinsic cytoplasmic death pathway, which was not measured in our study.

Once hypothermia ended, Bim activity in the HYPO core became significantly reduced compared to the normothermic group (Figure 29). Perhaps this latter result indicates a neuroprotective mechanism of HYPO within the core at these times.

This suppression of Bim by HYPO after HIBD, but no differences in total levels of the final Cleaved Caspase-3 effector, suggests that cooling has a selective, yet incomplete, suppressive effect on the intrinsic apoptotic pathway but may not be exerting complete protection against extrinsic death receptor-mediated apoptosis, or even necroptosis in this model.⁴²⁶ HIBD-induced neurotoxicity has been demonstrated to induce extrinsic apoptosis via TRAIL (tumor necrosis factor-related apoptosis inducing ligand), tumor necrosis factor- α , and the Fas ligand through inflammation.^{426,427} HYPO has been shown to suppress inflammatory responses^{428,429}, but has not been successful in a two-hit inflammation-sensitized model of neonatal HIBD.^{430,431} Additionally, Caspase-8 inhibition has been demonstrated to significantly reduce HIBD.⁴³² Adult rat MCAO studies have shown reduced Fas ligand and Caspase-8 levels with HYPO^{433,434}, but the effect of HYPO on these modes of apoptosis in the newborn HIBD brain has not yet been fully elucidated and these types of cell death were not examined in Study #2. While administering anti-inflammatory SFN in Study #1 proved protective on its own at low doses when provided every 24h starting at the onset of HYPO, this paradigm was not sufficient to additively enhance hypothermic neuroprotection (Figure 8). It is reasonable that this indicates that additionally

suppressing inflammation during HYPO may not be a viable method of improving neuroprotection. Unfortunately molecular pathway analyses were not conducted on these brains to determine the extent of HYPO + SFN combination therapy on the different types of programmed cell death. If it is the case that post-ischemic hypothermia does not fully protect against extrinsic cell death or necroptosis, then combination therapies targeting inflammation, TRAIL, Caspase-8, and/or the RIP1-RIP3 necrosome complex may be beneficial.⁴²⁶

Limitations

Some limitations arising from Study #2 include the (1) time-points sampled, (2) the limited number of samples per group, (3) the lack of cell death markers other than for intrinsic apoptosis, (4) possible technical issues, and (5) the variability of the Rice-Vannucci HIBD model itself.

In this study, many times along the evolutionary course of the HIBD neuropathologic cascade were examined. While this allowed for a more in-depth examination of the various stages of brain injury in a temporal manner, the many different level of groups and subgroups introduced within each time-point increased the number of comparisons to be made, thus increasing the likelihood of false positive statistical errors in significance in the results. Hence, some of our results may be falsely significant. This issue goes hand-in-hand with our limitation regarding group sample sizes; while sample-size calculations were run to optimize the number of samples per group/subgroup, 6 samples per group is still relatively small; however this study is more powered than others that only have group sizes of 2-3. Further increasing the power of each group would permit more confidence in the results obtained, and would likely reduce the large variations in SDs observed. Additionally, with a larger group sample size, comparisons between

male and female pups would have been able to be conducted; the importance of these analyses is discussed in Chapter 7.

Ideally, one time-point during hypoxia, during NORMO/HYPO, and post-NORMO/HYPO could have been evaluated, resulting in increased numbers per group and significantly reduced the statistical type-1 errors of false positives. To remedy this using the current results, the data could be lumped into the 3 groups as previously suggested; (e.g.) (1) During Hypoxia = Hypoxia at 30min and 90min, (2) During NORMO/HYPO = all time-points from 15min – 24h post-HIBD, and (3) Post-NORMO/HYPO = all time-points from 25h – 72h post-HIBD. Next, the Levene Test of equal variance and heterogeneity could be conducted. In the event of unequal variances or not normally-distributed data, log transformations of each data point could be performed in an attempt to mathematically transform and normalize any inequalities. Multi-factor ANOVAs could then be performed to more correctly determine any areas of significance and examine the temporal changes of each protein over time within each group and region.

As discussed in the previous section, in Study #2, only markers of intrinsic apoptosis were examined. However, extrinsic apoptosis, necrosis, and necroptotic modes of cell death also exist. Unfortunately, these were not assessed and could have provided valuable insight into where HYPO could have had effect during and after HIBD.

Possible variability regarding technical issues (e.g. sampling the core and penumbra) and the HIBD model itself also could have lent to the overall lack of differences seen within and between treatment groups and regions. Furthermore, inherent model variability resulted in difficulties obtaining consistent regions of injury. Allowing for increased sample power could have alleviated the statistical ramifications of these issues.

Summary

Interpretation of our current results is challenging. There are several areas of potential deficits in our data and findings. Given that this was a first attempt at analyzing metabolic alterations in the core and penumbra of a newborn rat brain, and that the injury itself is known to be variable, it is not surprising that our standard deviation errors are wide, and may contribute to the variability in significance found. Moreover, sampling of the core and/or penumbra is technically difficult, also perhaps contributing to the variability in the results.

Nonetheless, it may be possible to see some patterns. Overall there were alterations in p-AMPK activity as a result of post-ischemic hypothermia, which may suggest a beneficial role of hypothermia during the time frame after post-ischemic hypothermia is lifted. Whether the opposite is true (its effect, or lack of it, on p-AMPK during post-ischemic hypothermia is detrimental) is unclear, and requires further, and perhaps more specific evaluation. Similarly, our results for GLUT3, as a reflection of cell survival, and Bim and Cleaved Caspase-3 for cell death, may have suffered similar technical challenges.

Improvements to the current work would stem from an examination of: (1) the core and penumbral volume of damage, (2) markers reflecting the extrinsic death pathway, to correlate findings within the intrinsic pathway, and (3) perhaps working with an injury that is less variable in nature, such that representation of the core and penumbra are technically less challenging.

Chapter 7: Future Directions

Possible Combination Therapies Arising from the Current Thesis

To achieve additive neuroprotection for neonatal HIBD, combining the gold standard of post-ischemic hypothermia with another neuroprotective therapy appears to be the best bet. While many such treatments have failed to achieve this, perhaps examining AMPK activators and inhibitors together with post-ischemic cooling would be advantageous.

Currently, the drug metformin is showing promise. Metformin is the first line approved hypoglycemic therapy for type 2 diabetes⁴³⁵ and is also prescribed for cardiovascular dysfunction.⁴³⁶ For these diseases, metformin functions to indirectly upregulate AMPK and p-AMPK activity, via increasing AMP:ATP ratios, thereby increasing ATP production and promoting glycolysis to improve energy supply in impoverished areas.^{437,438} Long-term metformin treatment has been reported to significantly reduce the incidence and severity of stroke in diabetic adults^{435,439}, prompting its investigation in stroke research.

Current studies illustrate a more complex nature of metformin post-treatment for stroke, showing both beneficial and detrimental results.⁴³⁸ While exacerbated brain injury has been demonstrated with cerebral AMPK activation^{142,440}, long-term AMPK activation beginning in the secondary phase of energy failure has demonstrated neuroprotective effects.^{143,436} These outcomes may be influenced by the timing and duration of metformin treatment, as well as cell type; neuronal activation of AMPK by metformin in the acute injury period was not protective, whereas glial AMPK activation was neuroprotective.^{438,441}

It must be noted that it is still unknown how AMPK upregulation by metformin would affect a neonatal HIBD-affected brain in the immediate injury period. As previously mentioned, AMPK

upregulation in the neonatal HIBD brain may be detrimental due to its potential to upregulate AMPK activity which may exacerbate brain injury.^{141,143,442} However, from our Study #2 data and hypotheses, we can propose that supplying metformin as a supplement to hypothermia, in the HIBD penumbra starting as early as 4h post-injury and continuing into the phase of secondary HIBD energy failure could provide neuroprotection. Another potential biomedical test would be to pre-treat pregnant animals with metformin and examine how their offspring fare when induced with HIBD. Theoretically, this may be neuroprotective with regards to stimulating the prenatal brain to produce additional energy stores.^{443,444} While pretreatment with AMPK-stimulating compounds may be effective in this regard, the safety, efficacy, and other various clinical implications within the pregnant mother's body under these circumstances have not been fully assessed.⁴⁴⁵ Additionally, metformin's pharmacokinetics and neuroprotective potential have still not been assessed under hypothermic conditions. With regard to AMPK inhibitors, Compound-C has been used extensively in the experimental literature, but this agent is likely not viable for clinical use due to its global suppressive effects. More studies into developing AMPK inhibitors that are safe for human use are required, as well as when/for how long would be most appropriate to administer them during the HIBD neurotoxic cascade. Further safety and efficacy studies are required in these areas before attempting clinical translation.

Patient-Specific Therapies

In this age of technology and knowledge, patient-specific therapies are the future of medical treatments. In the instance of neonatal HIBD, several technologies could be harnessed to deliver individualized therapy to patients. For instance, the progression of magnetic resonance neuroimaging (i.e. Diffusion-Weighted Imaging) is a technique that could be used to identify and delineate possible HIBD core and penumbral areas within the brain. Therapeutic treatments

could then be chosen specifically for the patient(s) at hand in a targeted approach to treating the core and penumbral areas of injury to prevent further infarction. Furthermore, developing core- and penumbral-targeted therapies using biologically-tagged nano-scaffolds and nanoparticles is also a possible therapeutic route. Nano-scaffolds and nanoparticles as therapeutic vessels are up-and-coming in the field of medical technology and medicine.⁴⁴⁶⁻⁴⁴⁸ Recent experimental studies have shown that these nanotechnologies are safe for brain tissue and able to deliver therapeutic agents to the brain^{448,449}, including neonatal rat brain tissue.⁴⁵⁰ While the implementation of these therapies in clinical medicine is still in the distant future, the first step to promoting patient-specific therapies for neonatal HIBD is delineating the underlying HIBD mechanisms. Additionally, these technologies have not yet been tested or trialed in HIBD individuals. Hence, further studies are required to determine the safety and efficacy of such specific treatments, and whether these therapies are effective at differentially-targeting the HIBD core and penumbra.

Sex Differences

Research now shows that sex differences play a significant role in individuals' susceptibility to and ability to recover from neonatal HIBD. Overall, HIBD males consistently present with more severe damage and are neuroprotected to a lesser degree than their female counterparts.⁴⁵¹⁻⁴⁵⁶ This male vulnerability is also evident in reduced neurogenesis early after injury, and also presents with impaired motor and cognitive functioning.⁴⁵⁷ Interestingly, neuroprotection has been achieved with exposure to the estrogen hormone, which may partially explain why term females typically present with better outcomes⁴⁵⁸⁻⁴⁶⁰, however enhanced estrogen has been reported to be detrimental for HIBD in premature infants.⁴⁶¹ In developing novel treatment methods, the two sexes appear to stimulate different main apoptotic pathways in response to HIBD.^{462,463} Data demonstrating increased caspase-3 expression in females and AIF

translocation in males, as well as more enhanced neuroprotection overall in females than males, has provided evidence for a possible sex difference in apoptotic response to neonatal HIBD.^{451,453,455,462,463} This could serve as an additional target for future HIBD therapies. As few studies have examined caspase-independent pathways of neuronal death with regards to neuroprotection, even with HYPO suppressing this type of apoptosis to an extent^{54,226-228}, this avenue of study may prove fruitful for improving male neuropathological and behavioural outcome after HIBD.

Severity of Brain Damage

No biomedically- and clinically-successful therapies for mild-moderate HIBD have been translatable to those with severe HIBD. This includes post-ischemic hypothermia^{146,258,464} and Xe plus HYPO combination therapy.²⁵⁸ Clinically, infants with severe HIBD are more likely to present with death and significant cognitive and behavioural impairments at 18 months.^{36,146} The duration of exposure to the hypoxic-ischemic environment is possibly the most vital factor in the development of severe injury, as to experimentally induce severe HIBD, animals/cells are exposed to hypoxia for longer than the duration necessary to produce a moderate injury.¹⁶⁵ Within this extended duration, there is likely a point of no return at which rescue therapies just may not work at all regardless of the timing, type, and duration of treatment.⁴⁶⁵ This may be due to overwhelming glutamate excitotoxicity that irreversibly destroys brain tissue, something which is unlikely to be cured by hypothermia and another drug and is probably best remedied with preventative treatments. Perhaps the core and penumbra of severely-affected hypoxic-ischemic brains are different from those with moderate HIBD and may require different types and dosages of therapeutics. Examining how AMPK and its downstream effectors expressed in

the severe HIBD core and penumbra may lead to possible strategies to treat severe HIBD with rescue therapies and prevent lasting neurological disorders in newborns with severe HIBD.

Prevention of HIBD

Finally, a major clue into how we can approach the treatment of HIBD may actually lie in its early prevention. My experiments have approached HIBD treatment from the perspective of a rescue therapy, meaning that the interventions being applied are to brain damage that has already occurred or is in the process of occurring. Due to the accumulating destructive nature of this type of formative injury, many protective agents that show potential for other neural or systemic disorders may not be protective against neonatal HIBD as rescue therapies in the post-injury period. However, approaching this issue from a preventative perspective, if we start early by treating fetuses through pregnant mothers, the issue of neonatal HIBD could become less of a problem. With ongoing prevention, the theory is that preventative therapies may be more effective in reducing the risk of newborn HIBD and/or preparing the brain tissue against severe HIBD to result in an injury that is less severe and more likely to be salvageable.

Pretreatment in neonatal animals has been examined with regards to neonatal HIBD, showing significant neuroprotection with agents such as resveratrol⁴⁶⁶, carnosine⁴⁶⁷, and hesperidin⁴⁶⁸, showing reduced infarct volume, ROS, inflammation, apoptosis, and also behavioural improvement. Pretreatment experiments in pregnant animals have yet to be conducted for neonatal HIBD, however research has shown increased progesterone to be protective against HIBD.⁴⁶⁹ The mechanism by which preventative treatments offer protection has been hypothesized to lie in the maintenance of mitochondrial integrity and the reduction of ROS^{319,466}, as well as preparing the brain tissue with survival substrates to cushion the blow against potential forthcoming neurotoxicity. Also, metformin, as previously mentioned, has been documented to

reduce the incidence of stroke in diabetic adults.⁴³⁵ While the effectiveness of neonatal HIBD prevention or reduction has not yet been evaluated in mothers using metformin, this is an interesting avenue of study.

While prevention of neonatal HIBD is a viable strategy, implementing effective preventative strategies may be clinically difficult during pregnancy. Our laboratory (Yager) has been focusing on supplementing pregnant rats with 200 mg of dried broccoli sprouts every day during the final trimester of their pregnancy, and during the first 3 weeks of the pups' lives, with successful neuropathological and neurodevelopmental outcomes.^{470,471} Broccoli sprouts have been determined to contain the highest concentration of SFN precursors, glucoraphanin³⁰⁰, and their safe and efficacious properties have been confirmed.³²³ Additionally, pretreating newborn rats with SFN prior to HIBD protected against injury.³¹⁹ As there is heightened interest in complementary and alternative therapies, including natural foods, pregnant women may be more willing to consume such cruciferous plants.⁴⁷²

In summary, together with these ideas, we are closer to determining in which direction to embark in studying therapeutic interventions that may be effective in enhancing hypothermic neuroprotection for neonatal HIBD, and also determining the best time(s) to administer them during the neurotoxic cascade. Although post-ischemic hypothermia is the most effective neuroprotectant available for mild-moderate HIBD, there is still a ways until we uncover the optimal equilibrium of adjunct therapy type, timing, and duration of administration to complement post-ischemic hypothermia and improve HIBD outcome.

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