

This is the author-created version of the following work:

Bailey, Tom G., Perissiou, Maria, Windsor, Mark, Schulze, Karl, Nam, Michael, Magee, Rebecca, Leicht, Anthony S., Green, Daniel J., Greaves, Kim, Golledge, Jonathan, and Askew, Christopher D. (2018) *Effects of acute exercise on endothelial function in abdominal aortic aneurysm patients*. American Journal of Physiology-Heart and Circulatory Physiology, 314 (1) H19-H30.

Access to this file is available from:

<https://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/50800/>

Please refer to the original source for the final version of this work:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1152/ajpheart.00344.2017>

1
2
3 **EFFECTS OF ACUTE EXERCISE ON ENDOTHELIAL**
4 **FUNCTION IN PATIENTS WITH ABDOMINAL AORTIC**
5 **ANEURYSM**

6
7 TOM G. BAILEY¹
8 MARIA PERISSIOU¹
9 MARK WINDSOR¹
10 KARL SCHULZE²
11 MICHAEL NAM³
12 REBECCA MAGEE³
13 ANTHONY S. LEICHT⁴
14 DANIEL J. GREEN^{5,6}
15 KIM GREAVES^{1,3}
16 JONATHAN GOLLEDGE^{7,8*}
17 CHRISTOPHER D. ASKEW^{1*}

18
19 ¹ *VasoActive Research Group, School of Health and Sport Sciences, University of the Sunshine*
20 *Coast, Maroochydore DC, QLD Australia.*

21 ² *Sunshine Vascular Clinic, Buderim, Australia*

22 ³ *Sunshine Coast University Hospital, Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service, Australia*

23 ⁴ *Sport and Exercise Science, James Cook University, Townsville, Australia*

24 ⁵ *School of Sport Science, Exercise and Health, The University of Western Australia*

25 ⁶ *Research Institute for Sport and Exercise Sciences, Liverpool John Moores University, UK*

26 ⁷ *Queensland Research Centre for Peripheral Vascular Disease, College of Medicine and*
27 *Dentistry, James Cook University, Townsville, Australia*

28 ⁸ *Department of Vascular and Endovascular Surgery, The Townsville Hospital, Townsville,*
29 *Australia*

30
31 *Senior authorship responsibilities were shared

32
33 **SHORT TITLE:** Exercise and endothelial function in AAA

34
35 **AUTHOR FOR CORRESPONDENCE:**

36 A/Prof Christopher Askew, +61 7 5456 5961 caskew@usc.edu.au

39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63

ABSTRACT

Endothelial dysfunction is observed in patients with abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA), who have increased risk of cardiovascular events and mortality. This study aimed to assess the acute effects of moderate and higher-intensity exercise on endothelial function, as assessed by flow-mediated-dilation (FMD), in AAA patients (n=22; 74±6 y) and healthy adults (n=22; 72±5y). Participants undertook three randomised visits, including moderate-intensity continuous exercise (40% peak power output, PPO), higher-intensity interval exercise (70% PPO), and a no-exercise control. Brachial artery FMD was assessed at baseline, 10- and 60-min after each condition. Baseline FMD was lower in AAA patients compared to healthy adults [by 1.10%, (95% CI, 0.72 to 1.81), $P=0.044$]. There were no group differences in the FMD responses after each condition ($P=0.397$). FMD did not change after the control condition, but increased by 1.21% (95% CI, 0.69 to 1.73, $P<0.001$) 10 min after moderate-intensity continuous exercise in both groups, and returned to baseline levels after 60-min. Conversely, FMD decreased by 0.93% (95% CI, 0.41 to 1.44, $P<0.001$) 10-min after higher-intensity interval exercise in both groups, and remained decreased after 60 min. This study found that the acute response of endothelial function to exercise is intensity-dependent and similar between AAA patients and healthy adults. This provides evidence that regular exercise may improve vascular function in AAA, as it does in healthy adults. Improved FMD following moderate-intensity exercise may provide short-term benefit. Whether the decrease in FMD following higher-intensity exercise represents additional risk and/or a greater stimulus for vascular adaptation remains to be elucidated.

64 **NEW AND NOTEWORTHY**

65 Abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) patients have vascular dysfunction. We observed a short-
66 term increase in vascular function after moderate-intensity exercise. Conversely, higher-intensity
67 exercise induced a prolonged reduction in vascular function which may be associated with both
68 short-term increases in cardiovascular risk, and signalling for longer term vascular adaptation in
69 AAA patients.

70

71

72 **KEY WORDS**

73 Abdominal aortic aneurysm; exercise; endothelial function; flow-mediated dilation;
74 cardiovascular risk

75

76 **INTRODUCTION**

77 Abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) is characterized by the abnormal progressive dilatation of the
78 abdominal aorta, and is usually diagnosed when maximum abdominal aortic diameter is ≥ 30 mm
79 (106). Screening studies suggest 1-4% of men and 0.5-1% of women aged over 60 years have an
80 AAA (19, 79). AAA is responsible for ~2% of all deaths (30, 65, 83) and these patients are at
81 high risk of cardiovascular events, such as myocardial infarction and stroke, and mortality
82 compared to age-matched healthy adults (13, 14, 66). These patients also have a risk of aortic
83 rupture due to the weakening of the aortic wall at the site of the aneurysm (25, 63). Currently the
84 only treatment for the weakened aorta is surgical repair, however there is no treatment-related
85 survival benefit in patients with small AAA (<55mm) (27). Screening reduces AAA-related
86 mortality by 50%, yet has no impact on all-cause mortality (29, 105). With AAA there is an
87 increased prevalence of cardiovascular comorbidities, including ischemic heart disease (~45%),
88 myocardial infarction (~27%) and stroke (~14%) (13, 14), and the risk of cardiovascular
89 mortality increases by 3% each year after diagnosis of small AAA (13). Patients with small
90 AAAs are monitored by regular imaging, but up to 70% progress to a diameter ≥ 55 mm
91 necessitating surgical repair (63), with the associated perioperative mortality and morbidity risk
92 (52, 89), and cost. Novel therapies are needed which reduce both the risk of cardiovascular
93 events and the progression of aortic weakening in AAA patients.

94

95 Alterations in the connective tissue of the aortic wall, including an imbalance between
96 diminished elastin concentration and collagen proteolysis, is the hallmark of AAA disease. AAA
97 pathogenesis is not well understood, however endothelial dysfunction is suggested to contribute
98 to AAA development via increased oxidative stress, inflammation and impaired NO
99 bioavailability [see recent detailed review (87)]. Thus, treatment that targets endothelial

100 dysfunction may benefit patients with AAA. Systemic vascular endothelial dysfunction is
101 observed in patients with AAA and has been implicated in AAA growth. For example, reduced
102 bioavailability and sensitivity to nitric-oxide (NO) has been reported in experimental and human
103 AAA (53, 107). Endothelial function, as assessed by flow-mediated dilation (FMD), has been
104 reported to be reduced in patients with AAA compared to healthy adults which is, in part, NO-
105 mediated (35, 58, 112). Importantly, brachial artery FMD is associated with AAA size, future
106 aneurysm growth, and is improved following surgical repair of AAA (58, 61, 93). FMD is also
107 strongly associated with the general risk of cardiovascular-related events and mortality in healthy
108 individuals and those with cardiovascular disease (37, 59). Thus, improving endothelial function
109 could be a valuable treatment target for reducing cardiovascular risk, and possibly limiting
110 aneurysm growth, in patients with AAA.

111

112 Brachial FMD improves after regular exercise in patients with known cardiovascular disease and
113 established endothelial dysfunction, including in individuals with coronary and peripheral artery
114 disease (21, 70, 108), suggesting that exercise might be a possible treatment option to reverse
115 endothelial dysfunction in patients with AAA. Vascular improvements with exercise training
116 depend somewhat on the intensity of exercise (76, 84). An important contribution to the
117 beneficial effect of exercise on arterial remodelling has been attributed to the repetitive, acute
118 increases in blood flow and shear stress observed during a single-bout of exercise (36), which
119 have also been suggested to be beneficial for preventing AAA growth at the site of the aorta (3).

120 In healthy adults, endothelial function is reported to increase after low and moderate-intensity
121 exercise, but decrease after higher-intensity exercise (10, 15, 24, 49). The effect of exercise on
122 FMD in individuals with underlying endothelial dysfunction may be augmented (22) compared

123 to healthy adults (51). However, the effect of exercise intensity on endothelial function in
124 patients with established cardiovascular disease is less clear, with transient increases (23) and
125 decreases (51, 60, 88, 104) in FMD reported after both moderate and higher-intensity exercise.
126 Whether increased exercise intensity has a negative influence at the site of the aneurysm is
127 unclear. However, aortic wall shear stress has been reported to increase during mild and
128 moderate-intensity exercise. and decreases aortic flow stasis associated with aneurysm
129 progression in patients with AAA (91).

130
131 To date, exercise therapy in patients with AAA has been prescribed using a relatively low- to
132 moderate-intensity continuous exercise (11, 12, 55, 64, 95, 110). Higher-intensity interval
133 exercise enables a greater volume of exercise to be achieved with shorter bouts, and may have
134 additional cardiovascular benefits in clinical groups, including increases in endothelial function,
135 compared to moderate-intensity continuous exercise (76). Higher-intensity interval exercise has
136 been suggested as an alternative method of training for patients with AAA, but has not been
137 thoroughly investigated (109). A better understanding of the acute effect of different exercise
138 intensities on endothelial function in patients with AAA could provide insight in to the potential
139 role of exercise training in reducing cardiovascular risk and for limiting AAA growth in these
140 individuals. We therefore aimed to determine the effect of a single-bout of moderate- and higher-
141 intensity cycling exercise on FMD in patients with AAA and healthy older adults. We
142 hypothesized that exercise intensity would alter the post-exercise FMD response in both groups,
143 and that the overall FMD response to exercise would be augmented in patients with AAA
144 compared to healthy older adults

145

146 **METHODS**

147 **Participants**

148 All study participants (patients with AAA and healthy adults) were included if they were 60-86
149 years old, able to exercise and did not have medically untreated, or uncontrolled hypertension
150 (defined as an average SBP ≥ 140 mmHg and/or an average DBP ≥ 90 mmHg). For all
151 participants, the exclusion criteria included a BMI over 39, reversible or inducible myocardial
152 ischemia during exercise stress testing for which a cardiologist judged they were not suitable for
153 exercise or diagnosed uncontrolled cardiac arrhythmia with recurrent episodes or symptoms on
154 exertion. Further exclusion included documented medical history of the following; chronic heart
155 failure, severe aortic stenosis, ankylosing spondylitis or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.
156 Participants with documented peripheral neuropathy, venous insufficiency or any concomitant
157 vascular disease (e.g. Raynaud's or vasculitis) were also excluded prior to study entry.
158 Additional to the above study exclusion criteria, healthy control participants were excluded if
159 they had a family history of AAA or known aneurysmal disease.

160

161 Twenty-two males with small AAA (30-45 mm maximal diameter) were recruited from public
162 and private vascular units on the Sunshine Coast, Australia. All patients were under current
163 clinical surveillance and AAA size was confirmed with ultrasound by a trained vascular
164 sonographer at study entry. Twenty-two healthy males were recruited as control participants
165 through local advertisement and from a University of the Sunshine Coast Alumni group. During
166 the study, participants continued to take all prescribed medication. All participants provided
167 written informed consent. The study conformed to the Declaration of Helsinki and was approved

168 by the human research ethics committees of the Prince Charles Hospital, Brisbane
169 (HREC/12/QPCH/13), and the University of the Sunshine Coast.

170

171 **Research Design**

172 This was a cross-sectional, randomized cross-over study. AAA and healthy participants
173 underwent four visits on separate days to the clinical exercise physiology laboratory at the
174 University of the Sunshine Coast. Participants refrained from alcohol and exercise for 24h and
175 caffeine for 12h before each visit (97). Visit 1 consisted of measurement of height, body mass,
176 and estimation of body composition using bio-impedance scales (BC 545N, Tanita, Australia).
177 Participants then underwent a maximal incremental cycling test for the determination of VO_{2peak}
178 and peak power output (PPO). Experimental visits (2-4) were conducted in a randomised,
179 counter-balanced order and consisted of two separate acute cycling exercise conditions
180 (moderate-intensity continuous vs. higher-intensity intervals) or a no-exercise control condition
181 (Figure 1). Blood pressure and brachial artery FMD were assessed following 20 min of supine
182 rest at baseline, 10-min and 60-min into recovery after exercise or control conditions. Each
183 experimental visit followed an overnight fast with a standardised breakfast (oat biscuits) 3 hours
184 prior. To control for diurnal variation in blood pressure and vascular function each visit was
185 performed at the same time of day (50). Visits were >3 days apart to ensure recovery between
186 them. All visits were conducted in a mean laboratory temperature of 23 ± 0.9 °C.

187

188 **Maximal incremental cycling test for determination of cardiorespiratory fitness**

189 After pre-exercise measures, the test commenced with a 3-min warm up at 0W on a cycle
190 ergometer (Lode Corival, Groningen, Netherlands). Intensity then increased to 20W for 1 min,

191 and by a further 10 W/min until volitional cessation. Participants were required to self-select and
192 maintain a pedal cadence between 60 and 90 RPM throughout the test. Expired gases were
193 continuously collected (Parvo Medics, UT, USA) for the determination of oxygen uptake ($\dot{V}O_2$),
194 and carbon dioxide production ($\dot{V}CO_2$), and the respiratory exchange ratio (RER: $\dot{V}CO_2/\dot{V}O_2$),
195 which were averaged every 15 s. Heart rate was measured continuously using 12-lead ECG
196 (Mortara Inc., WI, USA) and was recorded alongside ratings of perceived effort (RPE) in the
197 final 10 s of each stage. VO_{2peak} was determined as the highest 15s average during the final 60 s
198 of peak exercise. Peak power output (PPO) was used to establish cycling intensity during the
199 subsequent experimental visits.

200

201 **Experimental exercise and control conditions (visits 2-4)**

202 The experimental protocol is summarised in Figure 1. Following pre-exercise measurements of
203 blood pressure and FMD, participants undertook 27 mins of either: 1) moderate-intensity
204 continuous cycling, 2) higher-intensity interval cycling, or 3) seated-rest as a no-exercise control.
205 Both exercise conditions commenced with a 3-min warm-up at 0W, followed by 24 mins of *i*)
206 moderate-intensity continuous cycling exercise at 40% PPO, or *ii*) higher-intensity interval
207 cycling exercise incorporating 12 x 60 s bouts at 70% PPO, each separated by 60 s at 10% PPO.
208 The moderate-intensity continuous and higher-intensity interval cycling exercise conditions were
209 matched for total duration and work, for each individual. Heart rate (12-lead ECG) and rating of
210 perceived exertion (RPE) (18) were recorded at 60 s intervals throughout each condition. Blood
211 pressure was monitored and recorded every 6-min using a manual sphygmomanometer. During
212 higher-intensity interval exercise, this was performed during the 60s of the high-intensity

213 intervals. Immediately following each exercise/control condition, participants returned to the
214 supine position for measurement of blood pressure and FMD at 10 and 60 min post.

215

216 **Measurement of brachial artery FMD**

217 Brachial blood pressure was obtained from the right arm, ≥ 5 min prior to each brachial artery
218 FMD measurement, and all FMD measurements were performed in line with recent technical
219 recommendations (17, 39, 97). FMD was performed with participants in the supine position, on
220 the right arm with the cuff placed distal to the olecranon process. A 12-MHz multi-frequency
221 linear array probe, attached to a high-resolution duplex ultrasound machine (T3000; Terason,
222 Burlington, MA), was used to image the brachial artery in the distal third of the upper arm to
223 simultaneously record the longitudinal B-mode image and Doppler blood velocity trace. The
224 Doppler angle of insonation was maintained at 60° . Images were optimised, and the settings
225 (depth, focus position and gain) were maintained between FMD assessments within each test
226 visit, as was the location of the probe which was marked on the skin using sweat-resistant ink.
227 Following a 60-s recording period of diameter and velocity, the cuff was rapidly inflated (220
228 mmHg) and maintained for 5 mins (D.E. Hokanson, Bellevue, WA). Diameter and velocity
229 recordings resumed 30s prior to rapid cuff deflation (< 2 s) and continued for 3 mins thereafter.

230

231 Analysis of brachial artery diameter was performed using custom-designed edge-detection and
232 wall-tracking software, which is largely independent of investigator bias. Recent papers contain
233 detailed descriptions of the analysis approach (17, 97). FMD was calculated as [(peak diameter-
234 baseline diameter) / baseline diameter] and expressed as a percent change in vessel diameter.
235 From synchronised diameter and velocity data, blood flow (the product of lumen cross- sectional

236 area and Doppler velocity) was calculated at 30 Hz. Shear rate was calculated as 4 times mean
237 blood velocity/vessel diameter (expressed as s^{-1}). The coefficient of variation (CV) for baseline
238 FMD% across the three visits in this study was 12.1 ± 2.7 %, which is similar to those previously
239 reported (10.1-14.7%) (101, 111). Using FMD data from our control condition (baseline and 10
240 min post control) we established that the within-day CV for FMD% was 9.50 ± 4.37 %.

241

242 **Statistical analysis**

243 Continuous data were normally distributed as assessed by Shapiro-Wilks test. A students *t*-test
244 was used to assess differences in baseline continuous data between patients with AAA and
245 healthy adults. Pearson's Chi Squared test was used to assess differences in categorical data
246 between patients with AAA and healthy adults. A three-way (group*condition*time) linear
247 mixed model (LMM) analysis was used to analyse changes in FMD parameters [brachial
248 diameter, peak diameter and FMD (mm), FMD (%), time to peak, shear rate area-under-the-
249 curve (SRauc), blood flow,] and blood pressure between the two groups (AAA and healthy),
250 across "time" (baseline, 10- and 60-min post) during each condition (control, moderate- and
251 higher-intensity exercise). This LMM analysis allows for random factor subjects and fixed
252 factors of group, condition and time. Absolute FMD (mm) was analysed using a LMM analysis.
253 In line with recent recommendations (9), and to account for the influence of baseline artery
254 diameter on FMD% (5, 7, 8) FMD% was assessed using allometric scaling of logarithmically
255 transformed absolute diameter change (difference between peak artery diameter and baseline
256 diameter in mm). Logarithmically transformed baseline diameter and shear rate were also
257 included as covariates specific to each FMD% test. For each group, condition and time-point, the
258 logged absolute diameter changes were back-transformed and interpreted in the conventional

259 manner to obtain allometrically scaled FMD (percent diameter change) for comparative purposes
260 in line with recent recommendations (4, 10, 86, 102). All other FMD parameters were not logged
261 for LMM analysis.

262 To further explore the magnitude and direction of change in FMD% following exercise and
263 control, we used a three-way (group*condition*time) LMM to analyse delta changes from
264 baseline in FMD% (again, with baseline diameter and shear rate specific to each time-point
265 included as covariates). Based on our previous study in healthy older adults (10), we aimed to
266 detect a minimum absolute difference of 1.5% FMD (representing the difference between the
267 change in FMD after moderate and higher-intensity exercise). We required 19 participants per
268 group to detect this difference within and between each group, assuming a 3% standard deviation
269 of the change, and an alpha level of 0.05 with a statistical power of 80% (10).

270

271 Three-way LMM analysis was also used to detect any differences in heart rate, blood pressure
272 and perceived exertion in response to the acute protocols between the two groups (AAA and
273 healthy adults), across time (at 2 and 6 min intervals for HR/RPE and BP, respectively) during
274 each protocol (control, moderate- and high-intensity exercise). Statistically significant
275 interactions were further investigated with multiple comparisons using the least significant
276 difference approach (71, 82). The strength of the association between AAA diameter, VO_{2peak}
277 and FMD% were assessed using Pearson correlation coefficient. Analyses were conducted using
278 the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (Version 22; IBM SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL). Statistical
279 significance was defined at $P < 0.05$ and exact P values are cited (P values of “0.000” are reported
280 as “<0.001”). Data are presented in the text as mean (95% confidence interval, 95%CI) unless
281 otherwise stated.

282

283 **Results**284 **Participant characteristics**

285 Participant characteristics are presented in Table 1. Mean age was similar in AAA and healthy
286 adults ($P=0.200$). Mean resting blood pressure was similar in patients with AAA and healthy
287 adults. Cardiorespiratory fitness, measured as VO_{2peak} , was significantly lower in patients with
288 AAA compared to healthy adults [mean difference $5.5 \text{ ml}\cdot\text{kg}^{-1}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ (3.4 to 7.3), $P<0.001$]. Heart
289 rate at peak exercise during the cardiorespiratory fitness test was significantly lower in patients
290 with AAA compared to healthy adults [mean difference of 22 bpm (1 to 31), $P<0.001$].

291

292 **Heart rate, blood pressure and perceived exertion during experimental conditions**

293 There were no significant differences between patients with AAA and healthy adults in heart
294 rate, blood pressure and RPE throughout each condition ($P>0.05$). Heart rate responses during
295 exercise were normalised for the peak heart rate obtained during the cardiorespiratory fitness test
296 in visit 1. Across both groups ($P=0.213$), heart rate was highest during higher-intensity interval
297 exercise [mean $68 \%HR_{peak}$ (64 to 71 %)] compared to moderate-intensity continuous exercise
298 [mean $62 \%HR_{peak}$ (59 to 64%, $P<0.01$)], and lowest during control [mean $42 \%HR_{peak}$ (95% CI,
299 39 to 44), $P<0.01$]. The increase in mean arterial pressure during higher-intensity interval
300 exercise [mean change of 14 mmHg (12 to 17)] was similar during moderate-intensity
301 continuous exercise [mean change of 14 mmHg (11 to 16), $P=0.720$], whilst increases in mean
302 arterial pressure responses during both exercise conditions were higher compared to control
303 [mean change 10 mmHg (8 to 13), $P<0.05$]. RPE was higher during higher-intensity interval

304 exercise [mean RPE 4 AU (3 to 4)] compared to during moderate-intensity continuous exercise
305 [mean RPE 3 AU (2 to 3, $P < 0.001$)].

306

307 **Effect of exercise on endothelial function**

308 *Baseline brachial FMD*

309 Brachial FMD was 1.10% (0.72 to 1.81; $P=0.044$) lower in patients with AAA compared to
310 healthy adults. No differences in baseline brachial artery diameter were observed between groups
311 ($P=0.604$). SR_{AUC} after cuff deflation was higher in healthy adults compared to patients with
312 AAA [mean difference of $5.7 \cdot 10^3 \cdot s^{-1}$ (95% CI, 2.4 to 9.1), $P=0.001$]. Time to peak diameter was
313 longer in patients with AAA compared to healthy adults [mean difference 14 s (95% CI, 1 to 27),
314 $P=0.044$]. Baseline FMD and VO_{2peak} were moderately correlated in the combined group of
315 participants ($r=0.655$, $P = 0.006$; Figure 2). In patients with AAA, there was a modest, but non-
316 significant inverse correlation between maximum AAA diameter and VO_{2peak} ($r=-0.356$,
317 $P=0.103$). There was no significant correlation between maximum AAA diameter and baseline
318 FMD ($r=-0.041$, $P=0.429$).

319

320 *FMD responses after exercise and control conditions*

321 Baseline and recovery (10 and 60 min post) brachial FMD% and associated variables are shown
322 in Table 2. The (delta) changes in FMD% from baseline to recovery (10- and 60-min post
323 condition) are shown in Figure 3.

324

325 Brachial FMD increased after moderate-intensity continuous exercise, but decreased after
326 higher-intensity interval exercise in both patients with AAA and healthy adults (Figure 3, Table

327 2). Overall, there were no differences in the magnitude of the FMD response over time between
328 patients with AAA and the healthy older adults ($P=0.154$). FMD tended to decrease from
329 baseline after control [at 60-min by 0.43 % (95% CI, -1.10 to 0.96, $P=0.115$)], but this was not
330 significant. FMD increased from baseline by 1.21% (0.69 to 1.73), $P<0.001$) at 10-min after
331 moderate-intensity continuous exercise, which then returned to near baseline FMD at 60-min.
332 Conversely, FMD decreased from baseline at 10- and 60-min after higher-intensity interval
333 exercise, by 0.93% (0.41 to 1.44, $P<0.001$), and 0.51% (0.01 to 1.02, $P=0.040$), respectively.
334 Thus, the FMD 10-min after the cessation of exercise was significantly higher after moderate-
335 intensity continuous exercise compared with after control (mean difference in FMD of 1.21 %
336 (95% CI, 0.63 to 1.75, $p<0.001$) and higher-intensity interval exercise (mean difference of 1.87
337 % (95% CI, 1.36 to 2.39). At 60-min after exercise, FMD was significantly lower after higher-
338 intensity interval compared to moderate-intensity continuous exercise (mean difference of 0.60
339 % [95% CI, 0.06 to 1.13], $P=0.028$). The different responses of FMD% between moderate-
340 intensity continuous and higher-intensity interval exercise were also observed for absolute FMD
341 (mm) ($P=0.024$; Table 2).

342

343 To account for differences in FMD% at baseline between AAA and healthy adults, we calculated
344 the delta change in FMD% after exercise and control (Figure 3). Outcomes of this analysis were
345 consistent with the analysis based on absolute FMD% in Table 2, and we found an intensity*time
346 interaction on delta FMD% ($p=0.033$), but no differences between groups in the delta FMD %
347 responses after each condition ($p=0.522$).

348

349 *Blood flow and shear rate responses after exercise and control*

350 Brachial blood flow and shear rate responses are displayed in Table 2. Resting blood flow was
351 significantly elevated 10 min following both exercise conditions compared to control ($P<0.01$),
352 and was greater following higher-intensity compared with moderate-intensity exercise [mean
353 difference of $0.38 \text{ mL}\cdot\text{s}^{-1}$ (95% CI, -0.08 to 0.68), $P=0.014$] (Table 2). Overall, shear rate was
354 higher in healthy older adults compared to patients with AAA (mean difference of 4.78 s^{-1} (95%
355 CI, 2.21 to 7.35), $P=0.002$), but was similarly altered by exercise in AAA and healthy adults
356 ($P=0.760$). Shear rate was elevated 10 min after both exercise protocols compared with control
357 (Table 2, $P=0.005$), and was similar after higher-intensity interval compared to moderate-
358 intensity continuous exercise [mean difference of $1.14 \cdot 10^3 \text{ s}^{-1}$ (95% CI, -1.22 to 3.16), $P=0.342$].

359

360 **Heart rate and blood pressure responses after exercise**

361 There was a condition*time interaction for HR, SBP and MAP ($P<0.001$, see Table 2) where the
362 mean changes in HR (increase), SBP and MAP (decrease) were larger after exercise compared to
363 those observed after control. Moreover, no group differences were observed for the HR
364 ($P=0.885$) and blood pressure ($P=0.553$) responses following each condition. Overall, MAP
365 decreased by 3 mmHg (95% CI, 1 to 5, $P<0.004$) and 4 mmHg (95% CI, 2 to 6, $P<0.001$) 60-
366 min after moderate- and high-intensity exercise, respectively, compared to control.

367

368 **Discussion**

369 To our knowledge, this is the first study to assess the response of endothelial function during
370 early recovery from different exercise intensities in patients with AAA. The main finding of this
371 study was that the response of FMD to a single bout of cycling exercise was similar in patients
372 with AAA compared to healthy adults of the same age and sex. For both groups, we observed an

373 immediate increase in FMD following moderate-intensity continuous exercise, which returned to
374 near-baseline levels after one hour of recovery. In contrast, FMD decreased immediately
375 following higher-intensity interval exercise and remained decreased after one hour in both
376 groups.

377

378 **Basal FMD in patients with AAA**

379 In this study, we observed reduced basal FMD in patients with AAA compared to healthy adults,
380 which is consistent with previous reports (61, 94). Previous studies assessing FMD in AAA fail
381 to report cardiorespiratory fitness levels, which may also contribute to differences in FMD%.
382 Poor fitness has previously been shown to be associated with impaired FMD (62), and we
383 observed a significant relationship between resting FMD and VO_{2peak} in this study.

384

385 Impaired FMD is independently associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular events and
386 mortality (37, 48, 54, 92), and may contribute to the high burden of cardiovascular disease and
387 the observation that ~70% of cardiovascular events and mortality in patients that have small
388 AAAs is independent of aneurysm-related complications (57, 66, 72). As expected, there was a
389 higher prevalence of comorbidities amongst the patients with AAA compared to the healthy
390 adults, such as hypertension and dyslipidaemia, which may have contributed to the impairment
391 of endothelial function identified (26, 96). Patients with AAA also have a higher prevalence of
392 comorbidities compared to other surgical populations including cardiac (60-70%), respiratory
393 (50%), and kidney and metabolic disease (10-12%) , all of which are associated with vascular
394 dysfunction (28, 44, 68, 77). Poor endothelial function in patients with AAA might contribute to

395 their elevated cardiovascular risk, and is likely to be exacerbated by the presence of
396 comorbidities, which reinforces the potential of FMD as a treatment target for this population.

397

398 **Time course of FMD response to exercise**

399 The increase in FMD after moderate-intensity exercise in this study has been observed in some
400 (10, 20, 49, 80), but not all (22, 114) previous studies of healthy adults and those with
401 cardiovascular disease. Similarly, the observed decrease in FMD after higher-intensity exercise
402 has been reported in some (15, 51), but not all (23) studies. Discrepancies between studies may
403 be related to the timing of measurements after exercise as the FMD response to acute exercise is
404 suggested to be bi-phasic, with an immediate decrease followed by an increase or return to
405 baseline FMD after a further period of recovery (1-24h) (24). In this study, we attempted to
406 capture the bi-phasic response by measuring FMD immediately, and then one hour after exercise.
407 We found an immediate increase in FMD that then returned to baseline one hour after moderate-
408 intensity continuous exercise, but an immediate and prolonged decrease in FMD after higher-
409 intensity interval exercise. These responses are in line with our previous findings in older adults
410 that have a poor cardiorespiratory fitness (10), and in patients with peripheral arterial disease
411 (51). It is possible that we may have observed an improvement in FMD with an extended
412 recovery period after the higher-intensity exercise, as other studies in individuals with
413 established endothelial dysfunction have demonstrated a delayed increase in FMD 1-4 hours
414 after exercise (20, 40).

415

416 Our findings of no difference in the FMD response after exercise between AAA and healthy
417 adults in this study were somewhat unexpected. It has previously been suggested that a

418 “basement effect” exists in older adults with poor endothelial function, where there is an
419 incapacity for a decrease in FMD after exercise (78). In patients with coronary artery disease
420 who exhibit severe endothelial dysfunction an increase, not a decrease, was observed in FMD
421 after exercise, yet no direct comparisons were made to healthy adults of similar age (22). In this
422 study, both the patients with AAA and the healthy older adults exhibited a degree of endothelial
423 dysfunction at rest compared with values reported in healthy younger adults (16), potentially due
424 to older age (99). Despite differences in fitness between groups in this study and its relationship
425 with endothelial function, the fitness of both groups was “poor” based on normative values for
426 healthy older adults (1). Further, despite observing no differences in the FMD response between
427 normotensive and controlled hypertensive individuals in this study (data not shown), we cannot
428 rule out the potential confounding influence of other known comorbidities and antihypertensive-,
429 statin- and β -blocker medication on the FMD responses. Nonetheless, cardiovascular risk factors
430 such as hypertension and known cardiovascular disease, including coronary heart disease, stroke
431 and previous myocardial infarction are highly prevalent in patients with small AAA (13, 14) and
432 as such our findings are likely to be generalizable to this patient group. Including a comparative
433 group with known cardiovascular risk factors and disease may allow for the influence of AAA to
434 be separated from the influence of other cardiovascular comorbidities. The similar responses in
435 FMD after exercise in both groups in this study suggests the exercise stimulus *per se* affects the
436 endothelium in older-aged individuals in a similar way, irrespective of the resting level of
437 endothelial function, disease status, medication use or known cardiovascular risk factors.

438

439 Shear rate was lower throughout all conditions and time-points in patients with AAA compared
440 with healthy older adults. Shear stress is proposed as the primary stimulus for FMD (75, 97), and

441 may therefore have contributed to the lower FMD in patients with AAA. Whilst simple
442 normalization of FMD to shear rate is sometimes utilised (74), we found no linear relationship
443 between FMD and shear rate ($P=0.271$, $r= 0.21$), and therefore used a recommended statistical
444 model that controlled for shear rate and baseline diameter (6, 9). Given we observed no group
445 differences in brachial artery diameter, the lower shear rate is likely a consequence of the
446 decreased reactive hyperaemia in patients with AAA in this study, which may be indicative of
447 microvascular impairment. As peak reactive hyperaemia is also predictive of future
448 cardiovascular events in vascular patients (45), further studies investigating microvascular
449 function in patient with AAA are warranted.

450

451 As we did not directly assess all the mechanisms responsible for exercise-intensity dependent
452 changes in FMD, we can only speculate on the possible causes, which are suggested to include
453 changes in blood pressure, shear stress, reactive oxygen species and sympathetic nervous activity
454 (24). Blood pressure did not differ significantly during and after moderate- and higher-intensity
455 exercise, and is therefore unlikely to explain the observed differences in FMD responses. NO
456 bioavailability has been shown to be impaired in patients with AAA (53, 87), and therefore
457 altered NO bioavailability after moderate-intensity exercise may explain the increase in FMD.
458 Blood flow patterns during exercise, including increased antegrade flow and shear stress,
459 enhances NO availability and increases FMD (98, 101, 103). Conversely increases in exercise
460 intensity and oscillatory shear and/or retrograde flow increase reactive oxygen species, including
461 superoxide anions (32, 47), which are capable of scavenging NO. This is suggested to reduce
462 FMD in atherosclerotic-prone arteries (85), which may include and be acutely detrimental to the
463 aorta, however this is unknown. The observed decrease in brachial FMD following higher-

464 intensity interval-based exercise in this study may be attributed to repeated and abrupt increases
465 in brachial artery oscillatory flow (101) observed at the onset of cycling exercise (34), whereas
466 continuous rhythmic exercise elevates antegrade blood flow and increases FMD (100, 103).
467 There is also evidence to suggest that FMD may not be solely NO-mediated (69, 73, 112), and
468 hence other factors should also be considered. Reductions in FMD after higher-intensity, but not
469 moderate-intensity exercise, may be due to a dose-dependent increase in oxidative stress (32),
470 endothelin-1 expression (42), or increased sympathetic nervous activity (41), that negatively
471 impacts endothelial function.

472

473 If the changes in brachial artery FMD responses to exercise mirror changes in the aorta, it is
474 possible that different exercise intensities may have differing effects on aortic remodelling, and
475 potentially AAA growth and rupture risk. This, however, remains to be investigated.
476 Interestingly, aortic blood flow increases during steady-state moderate-intensity cycling exercise
477 in patients with AAA, enhances wall shear stress and decreases platelet aggregation which has
478 been suggested to be conducive to preventing AAA progression (43). Whether this proposed
479 benefit remains during higher-intensity interval exercise warrants investigation, although
480 exercise-induced increases in shear stress may enhance eNOS expression and vascular repair
481 mechanisms (81), including the mobilisation of endothelial progenitor cells (113). We did not
482 measure the effect of exercise on aortic endothelial function in this study, however it has recently
483 been reported that brachial artery FMD is improved following surgical repair of AAA (58),
484 suggesting a direct association between aortic and systemic endothelial health in patients with
485 AAA.

486

487 **FMD responses and potential adaptations with exercise training**

488 The rationale for assessing the time-course of responses in endothelial function after a single
489 bout of exercise relates to the potential impact of repeated bouts on vascular adaptation with
490 exercise training (38). FMD is improved following exercise training in sedentary elderly
491 individuals (56), and the similar acute FMD responses between patients with AAA and healthy
492 adults in this study suggest a capacity for vascular adaptation in AAA patients. Importantly,
493 FMD may be further improved after higher-intensity compared to moderate-intensity exercise
494 training in older adults and in individuals with cardiovascular disease (33, 76, 84). Whether the
495 difference in the acute FMD responses between moderate- and higher-intensity exercise is
496 important for future vascular adaptation in patients with AAA is currently unknown. A reduction
497 in FMD for 60 minutes after higher-intensity interval exercise observed in this study may be
498 linked to vascular remodelling after a period of exercise training (67). Myers et al (2014)
499 reported no significant effect on AAA size after a two year exercise therapy intervention, despite
500 a tendency for a slower aneurysm growth rate after exercise training compared to usual care (64).
501 That study only used low-to-moderate intensity exercise, and this raises the possibility that any
502 potential benefit of exercise on vascular function and AAA growth may be dependent on higher-
503 intensity exercise that promotes a greater perturbation in arterial haemodynamics and endothelial
504 function.

505

506 **Exercise and CV risk in patients with AAA**

507 While the absolute risk of exercise is low, acute cardiovascular events induced by a single-bout
508 of exercise are more common in the elderly and those with atherosclerotic disease (2). Exercise
509 studies in patients with AAA to date have adopted a conservative approach, potentially due to

510 concerns over the safety of higher-intensity exercise in patients deemed high-risk. Higher
511 intensity interval exercise is increasingly being prescribed for patients with cardiovascular
512 disease and other chronic conditions (21, 46, 76, 84, 90, 114), and our study is the first to report
513 the short-term vascular effects of higher-intensity exercise in patients with AAA. Long-term, a
514 decrease in FMD of 1% has been associated with a 9-17% increase in cardiovascular event rate
515 (37, 48). Whether the acute decreases in FMD (of ~1.0% after higher-intensity interval exercise
516 in this study) are associated with increased risk of acute events, or conversely are important in
517 triggering the benefits of exercise, is not known (31, 67). The use of higher-intensity exercise in
518 patients with AAA needs to consider the short-term, potentially harmful, reduction in endothelial
519 function and the possible benefits of improved cardiorespiratory fitness and endothelial function
520 in the longer term. A recent hospital-based study using high-intensity exercise in patients with
521 AAA reported no detrimental effects, although measures of cardiovascular function were not
522 reported (109).

523

524 This study has some limitations that should be noted. Since AAA is asymptomatic it is possible
525 that some of the healthy controls could have had an AAA, although given the low prevalence of
526 AAA, this is unlikely. We only recruited men and therefore the findings may not be generalised
527 to women with AAA. We cannot rule out the potential influence of cardiovascular risk reducing
528 medication on the current findings, including antihypertensive and statin therapy, and further
529 research is needed to understand the direct impact of medication use on the FMD response to
530 exercise in patients with cardiovascular disease. Nonetheless, this is the first study to investigate
531 the acute effects of different exercise-intensities on endothelial function in patients with AAA
532 compared to healthy adults. Further studies are required to more fully explore the interaction

533 between exercise intensity, endothelial function and cardiovascular risk in patients with AAA.
534 Investigations of the longer-term benefits of higher-intensity exercise training in patients with an
535 AAA are warranted.

536

537

538 **Conclusions**

539 The present study suggests that the acute FMD responses to exercise in patients with AAA are
540 similar to healthy adults of similar age. We show that FMD transiently improves after moderate-
541 intensity continuous exercise whereas decreases in FMD are observed for up to one hour after
542 higher-intensity interval exercise. Future studies on the effects of exercise training will be
543 important to better understand the role of transient changes in endothelial function with acute
544 exercise on AAA growth and cardiovascular risk.

545

546
547
548
549
550
551
552
553

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: NONE

FUNDING: This research was funded by grants from the National Health and Medical Research Council (1000967, 1022752, 1079369), The Townsville Hospital, and the Inflammation and Healing Cluster at the University of the Sunshine Coast. Professor Green’s research is supported by an NHMRC Principal Research Fellowship (1090914). Professor Jonathan Golledge’s work is supported by fellowships from the NHMRC (1117061) and the Queensland Government (Senior Clinical Research Fellowship).

References

- 555
556 1. **ACSM.** *ACSM's Guidelines for Exercise Testing and Prescription.* Baltimore, USA:
557 2014.
- 558 2. **Albert CM, Mittleman MA, Chae CU, Lee IM, Hennekens CH, and Manson JE.**
559 Triggering of sudden death from cardiac causes by vigorous exertion. *The New England journal*
560 *of medicine* 343: 1355-1361, 2000.
- 561 3. **Arzani A, Les AS, Dalman RL, and Shadden SC.** Effect of exercise on patient specific
562 abdominal aortic aneurysm flow topology and mixing. *International journal for numerical*
563 *methods in biomedical engineering* 30: 280-295, 2014.
- 564 4. **Atkinson CL, Carter HH, Dawson EA, Naylor LH, Thijssen DH, and Green DJ.**
565 Impact of handgrip exercise intensity on brachial artery flow-mediated dilation. *Eur J Appl*
566 *Physiol* 115: 1705-1713, 2015.
- 567 5. **Atkinson G.** The dependence of FMD% on baseline diameter: a problem solved by
568 allometric scaling. *Clinical science (London, England : 1979)* 125: 53-54, 2013.
- 569 6. **Atkinson G.** Shear rate normalization is not essential for removing the dependency of
570 flow-mediated dilation on baseline artery diameter: past research revisited. *Physiological*
571 *Measurement*
572 35: 1825-1835, 2014.
- 573 7. **Atkinson G, and Batterham AM.** Allometric scaling of diameter change in the original
574 flow-mediated dilation protocol. *Atherosclerosis* 226: 425-427, 2013.
- 575 8. **Atkinson G, and Batterham AM.** The clinical relevance of the percentage flow-
576 mediated dilation index. *Curr Hypertens Rep* 17: 4, 2015.
- 577 9. **Atkinson G, Batterham AM, Thijssen DH, and Green DJ.** A new approach to improve
578 the specificity of flow-mediated dilation for indicating endothelial function in cardiovascular
579 research. *Journal of hypertension* 31: 287-291, 2013.
- 580 10. **Bailey TG, Perissiou M, Windsor M, Russell F, Golledge J, Green DJ, and Askew**
581 **CD.** Cardiorespiratory fitness modulates the acute flow-mediated dilation response following
582 high-intensity but not moderate-intensity exercise in elderly men. *Journal of applied physiology*
583 *(Bethesda, Md : 1985)* 122: 1238-1248, 2017.
- 584 11. **Barakat HM, Shahin Y, Barnes R, Gohil R, Souroullas P, Khan J, McCollum PT,**
585 **and Chetter IC.** Supervised exercise program improves aerobic fitness in patients awaiting
586 abdominal aortic aneurysm repair. *Annals of vascular surgery* 28: 74-79, 2014.
- 587 12. **Barakat HM, Shahin Y, Khan JA, McCollum PT, and Chetter IC.** Preoperative
588 Supervised Exercise Improves Outcomes After Elective Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Repair: A
589 Randomized Controlled Trial. *Annals of surgery* 264: 47-53, 2016.
- 590 13. **Bath MF, Gokani VJ, Sidloff DA, Jones LR, Choke E, Sayers RD, and Bown MJ.**
591 Systematic review of cardiovascular disease and cardiovascular death in patients with a small
592 abdominal aortic aneurysm. *The British journal of surgery* 102: 866-872, 2015.
- 593 14. **Bath MF, Saratzis A, Saedon M, Sidloff D, Sayers R, and Bown MJ.** Patients with
594 Small Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm are at Significant Risk of Cardiovascular Events and this
595 Risk is not Addressed Sufficiently. *European journal of vascular and endovascular surgery : the*
596 *official journal of the European Society for Vascular Surgery* 53: 255-260, 2017.
- 597 15. **Birk GK, Dawson EA, Batterham AM, Atkinson G, Cable T, Thijssen DH, and**
598 **Green DJ.** Effects of exercise intensity on flow mediated dilation in healthy humans. *Int J*
599 *Sports Med* 34: 409-414, 2013.

- 600 16. **Black MA, Cable NT, Thijssen DH, and Green DJ.** Impact of age, sex, and exercise on
601 brachial artery flow-mediated dilatation. *American journal of physiology Heart and circulatory*
602 *physiology* 297: H1109-1116, 2009.
- 603 17. **Black MA, Cable NT, Thijssen DH, and Green DJ.** Importance of measuring the time
604 course of flow-mediated dilatation in humans. *Hypertension* 51: 203-210, 2008.
- 605 18. **Borg G.** [Physical training. 3. Perceived exertion in physical work]. *Lakartidningen* 67:
606 4548-4557, 1970.
- 607 19. **Cornuz J, Sidoti Pinto C, Tevaearai H, and Egger M.** Risk factors for asymptomatic
608 abdominal aortic aneurysm: systematic review and meta-analysis of population-based screening
609 studies. *European journal of public health* 14: 343-349, 2004.
- 610 20. **Cosio-Lima LM, Thompson PD, Reynolds KL, Headley SA, Winter CR, Manos T,**
611 **Lagasse MA, Todorovich JR, and Germain M.** The acute effect of aerobic exercise on
612 brachial artery endothelial function in renal transplant recipients. *Prev Cardiol* 9: 211-214, 2006.
- 613 21. **Currie KD, Dubberley JB, McKelvie RS, and MacDonald MJ.** Low-volume, high-
614 intensity interval training in patients with CAD. *Med Sci Sports Exerc* 45: 1436-1442, 2013.
- 615 22. **Currie KD, McKelvie RS, and Macdonald MJ.** Brachial artery endothelial responses
616 during early recovery from an exercise bout in patients with coronary artery disease. *BioMed*
617 *research international* 2014: 591918, 2014.
- 618 23. **Currie KD, McKelvie RS, and Macdonald MJ.** Flow-mediated dilation is acutely
619 improved after high-intensity interval exercise. *Med Sci Sports Exerc* 44: 2057-2064, 2012.
- 620 24. **Dawson EA, Green DJ, Cable NT, and Thijssen DH.** Effects of acute exercise on flow-
621 mediated dilatation in healthy humans. *Journal of applied physiology (Bethesda, Md : 1985)*
622 115: 1589-1598, 2013.
- 623 25. **Emeto TI, Seto SW, and Golledge J.** Targets for medical therapy to limit abdominal
624 aortic aneurysm progression. *Current drug targets* 15: 860-873, 2014.
- 625 26. **ESVS.** Second Vascular Surgery Database Report 2008.
- 626 27. **Filardo G, Powell JT, Martinez MA, and Ballard DJ.** Surgery for small asymptomatic
627 abdominal aortic aneurysms. *The Cochrane database of systematic reviews* Cd001835, 2015.
- 628 28. **Gander JC, Sui X, Hebert JR, Hazlett LJ, Cai B, Lavie CJ, and Blair SN.**
629 Association of Cardiorespiratory Fitness With Coronary Heart Disease in Asymptomatic Men.
630 *Mayo Clin Proc* 90: 1372-1379, 2015.
- 631 29. **Glover MJ, Kim LG, Sweeting MJ, Thompson SG, and Buxton MJ.** Cost-
632 effectiveness of the National Health Service abdominal aortic aneurysm screening programme in
633 England. *British Journal of Surgery* 101: 976-982, 2014.
- 634 30. **Golledge J, Muller J, Daugherty A, and Norman P.** Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm:
635 Pathogenesis and Implications for Management. *Arterioscler Thromb Vasc Biol* 26: 2605-2613,
636 2006.
- 637 31. **Goodman JM, Burr JF, Banks L, and Thomas SG.** The Acute Risks of Exercise in
638 Apparently Healthy Adults and Relevance for Prevention of Cardiovascular Events. *The*
639 *Canadian journal of cardiology* 32: 523-532, 2016.
- 640 32. **Goto C, Higashi Y, Kimura M, Noma K, Hara K, Nakagawa K, Kawamura M,**
641 **Chayama K, Yoshizumi M, and Nara I.** Effect of different intensities of exercise on
642 endothelium-dependent vasodilation in humans: role of endothelium-dependent nitric oxide and
643 oxidative stress. *Circulation* 108: 530-535, 2003.
- 644 33. **Grace FM, Herbert P, Ratcliffe JW, New KJ, Baker JS, and Sculthorpe NF.** Age
645 related vascular endothelial function following lifelong sedentariness: positive impact of

- 646 cardiovascular conditioning without further improvement following low frequency high intensity
 647 interval training. *Physiological reports* 3: 2015.
- 648 34. **Green DJ, Bilsborough W, Naylor LH, Reed C, Wright J, O'Driscoll G, and Walsh**
 649 **JH.** Comparison of forearm blood flow responses to incremental handgrip and cycle ergometer
 650 exercise: relative contribution of nitric oxide. *J Physiol* 562: 617-628, 2005.
- 651 35. **Green DJ, Dawson EA, Groenewoud HM, Jones H, and Thijssen DH.** Is flow-
 652 mediated dilation nitric oxide mediated?: A meta-analysis. *Hypertension* 63: 376-382, 2014.
- 653 36. **Green DJ, Hopman MTE, Padilla J, Laughlin MH, and Thijssen DHJ.** Vascular
 654 adaptation to exercise in humans: The role of hemodynamic stimuli. *Physiological reviews* In
 655 Press Sept 13.: 2016.
- 656 37. **Green DJ, Jones H, Thijssen D, Cable NT, and Atkinson G.** Flow-mediated dilation
 657 and cardiovascular event prediction. *Hypertension* 57: 363-369, 2011.
- 658 38. **Green DJ, Maiorana A, O'Driscoll G, and Taylor R.** Effect of exercise training on
 659 endothelium-derived nitric oxide function in humans. *J Physiol* 561: 1-25, 2004.
- 660 39. **Harris RA, Nishiyama SK, Wray DW, and Richardson RS.** Ultrasound assessment of
 661 flow-mediated dilation. *Hypertension* 55: 1075-1085, 2010.
- 662 40. **Harris RA, Padilla J, Hanlon KP, Rink LD, and Wallace JP.** The Flow-mediated
 663 Dilation Response to Acute Exercise in Overweight Active and Inactive Men. *Obesity* 16: 578-
 664 584, 2008.
- 665 41. **Hijmering ML, Stroes ES, Olijhoek J, Hutten BA, Blankestijn PJ, and Rabelink TJ.**
 666 Sympathetic activation markedly reduces endothelium-dependent, flow-mediated vasodilation. *J*
 667 *Am Coll Cardiol* 39: 683-688, 2002.
- 668 42. **Himburg HA, Dowd SE, and Friedman MH.** Frequency-dependent response of the
 669 vascular endothelium to pulsatile shear stress. *American journal of physiology Heart and*
 670 *circulatory physiology* 293: H645-653, 2007.
- 671 43. **Hoshina K, Sho E, Sho M, Nakahashi TK, and Dalman RL.** Wall shear stress and
 672 strain modulate experimental aneurysm cellularity. *Journal of vascular surgery* 37: 1067-1074,
 673 2003.
- 674 44. **Howden EJ, Weston K, Leano R, Sharman JE, Marwick TH, Isbel NM, and**
 675 **Coombes JS.** Cardiorespiratory fitness and cardiovascular burden in chronic kidney disease.
 676 *Journal of science and medicine in sport / Sports Medicine Australia* 18: 492-497, 2015.
- 677 45. **Huang AL, Silver AE, Shvenke E, Schopfer DW, Jahangir E, Titas MA, Shpilman**
 678 **A, Menzoian JO, Watkins MT, Raffetto JD, Gibbons G, Woodson J, Shaw PM, Dhady M,**
 679 **Eberhardt RT, Keaney JF, Gokce N, and Vita JA.** Predictive Value of Reactive Hyperemia
 680 for Cardiovascular Events in Patients With Peripheral Arterial Disease Undergoing Vascular
 681 Surgery. *Arterioscler Thromb Vasc Biol* 27: 2113-2119, 2007.
- 682 46. **Hwang C-L, Yoo J-K, Kim H-K, Hwang M-H, Handberg EM, Petersen JW, and**
 683 **Christou DD.** Novel all-extremity high-intensity interval training improves aerobic fitness,
 684 cardiac function and insulin resistance in healthy older adults. *Experimental gerontology* 82:
 685 112-119, 2016.
- 686 47. **Hwang J, Ing MH, Salazar A, Lassegue B, Griendling K, Navab M, Sevanian A, and**
 687 **Hsiai TK.** Pulsatile versus oscillatory shear stress regulates NADPH oxidase subunit expression:
 688 implication for native LDL oxidation. *Circulation research* 93: 1225-1232, 2003.
- 689 48. **Inaba Y, Chen J, and Bergmann S.** Prediction of future cardiovascular outcomes by
 690 flow-mediated vasodilatation of brachial artery: a meta-analysis. *The International Journal of*
 691 *Cardiovascular Imaging (formerly Cardiac Imaging)* 26: 631-640, 2010.

- 692 49. **Johnson BD, Padilla J, and Wallace JP.** The exercise dose affects oxidative stress and
693 brachial artery flow-mediated dilation in trained men. *Eur J Appl Physiol* 112: 33-42, 2012.
- 694 50. **Jones H, Green DJ, George K, and Atkinson G.** Intermittent exercise abolishes the
695 diurnal variation in endothelial-dependent flow-mediated dilation in humans. *American journal*
696 *of physiology Regulatory, integrative and comparative physiology* 298: R427-432, 2010.
- 697 51. **Joras M, and Poredos P.** The association of acute exercise-induced ischaemia with
698 systemic vasodilator function in patients with peripheral arterial disease. *Vascular medicine*
699 *(London, England)* 13: 255-262, 2008.
- 700 52. **Karthikesalingam A, Holt PJ, Vidal-Diez A, Bahia SS, Patterson BO, Hinchliffe RJ,**
701 **and Thompson MM.** The impact of endovascular aneurysm repair on mortality for elective
702 abdominal aortic aneurysm repair in England and the United States. *Journal of vascular surgery*
703 2016.
- 704 53. **Knipp BS, Peterson DA, Rajagopalan S, Kehrer C, Ford JW, D'Alecy LG, Whitesall**
705 **SE, Eagleton MJ, Wakefield TW, Henke PK, Jacobs LA, Greenfield LJ, Stanley JC, and**
706 **Upchurch GR, Jr.** Impaired vasoreactivity despite an increase in plasma nitrite in patients with
707 abdominal aortic aneurysms. *Journal of vascular surgery* 35: 363-367, 2002.
- 708 54. **Kodama S, Saito K, Tanaka S, Maki M, Yachi Y, Asumi M, Sugawara A, Totsuka**
709 **K, Shimano H, Ohashi Y, Yamada N, and Sone H.** Cardiorespiratory fitness as a quantitative
710 predictor of all-cause mortality and cardiovascular events in healthy men and women: a meta-
711 analysis. *JAMA : the journal of the American Medical Association* 301: 2024-2035, 2009.
- 712 55. **Kothmann E, Batterham AM, Owen SJ, Turley AJ, Cheesman M, Parry A, and**
713 **Danjoux G.** Effect of short-term exercise training on aerobic fitness in patients with abdominal
714 aortic aneurysms: a pilot study. *British journal of anaesthesia* 103: 505-510, 2009.
- 715 56. **Landers-Ramos RQ, Corrigan KJ, Guth LM, Altom CN, Spangenburg EE, Prior**
716 **SJ, and Hagberg JM.** Short-term exercise training improves flow-mediated dilation and
717 circulating angiogenic cell number in older sedentary adults. *Applied physiology, nutrition, and*
718 *metabolism = Physiologie appliquee, nutrition et metabolisme* 41: 832-841, 2016.
- 719 57. **Lederle FA, Wilson SE, Johnson GR, Reinke DB, Littooy FN, Acher CW, Ballard**
720 **DJ, Messina LM, Gordon IL, Chute EP, Krupski WC, Busuttil SJ, Barone GW, Sparks S,**
721 **Graham LM, Rapp JH, Makaroun MS, Moneta GL, Cambria RA, Makhoul RG, Eton D,**
722 **Ansel HJ, Freischlag JA, and Bandyk D.** Immediate repair compared with surveillance of
723 small abdominal aortic aneurysms. *The New England journal of medicine* 346: 1437-1444, 2002.
- 724 58. **Lee R, Bellamkonda K, Jones A, Killough N, Woodgate F, Williams M, Cassimjee I,**
725 **and Handa A.** Flow Mediated Dilatation and Progression of Abdominal Aortic Aneurysms.
726 *European journal of vascular and endovascular surgery : the official journal of the European*
727 *Society for Vascular Surgery* 53: 820-829, 2017.
- 728 59. **Matsuzawa Y, Kwon TG, Lennon RJ, Lerman LO, and Lerman A.** Prognostic Value
729 of Flow-Mediated Vasodilation in Brachial Artery and Fingertip Artery for Cardiovascular
730 Events: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Journal of the American Heart Association* 4:
731 2015.
- 732 60. **McGowan CL, Levy AS, Millar PJ, Guzman JC, Morillo CA, McCartney N, and**
733 **Macdonald MJ.** Acute vascular responses to isometric handgrip exercise and effects of training
734 in persons medicated for hypertension. *American journal of physiology Heart and circulatory*
735 *physiology* 291: H1797-1802, 2006.

- 736 61. **Medina F, de Haro J, Florez A, and Acin F.** Relationship between endothelial
737 dependent vasodilation and size of abdominal aortic aneurysms. *Annals of vascular surgery* 24:
738 752-757, 2010.
- 739 62. **Montero D.** The association of cardiorespiratory fitness with endothelial or smooth
740 muscle vasodilator function. *European journal of preventive cardiology* 22: 1200-1211, 2015.
- 741 63. **Moxon JV, Parr A, Emeto TI, Walker P, Norman PE, and Golledge J.** Diagnosis and
742 monitoring of abdominal aortic aneurysm: current status and future prospects. *Curr Probl*
743 *Cardiol* 35: 512-548, 2010.
- 744 64. **Myers J, McElrath M, Jaffe A, Smith K, Fonda H, Vu A, Hill B, and Dalman R.** A
745 randomized trial of exercise training in abdominal aortic aneurysm disease. *Med Sci Sports Exerc*
746 46: 2-9, 2014.
- 747 65. **Nordon IM, Hinchliffe RJ, Loftus IM, and Thompson MM.** Pathophysiology and
748 epidemiology of abdominal aortic aneurysms. *Nature reviews Cardiology* 8: 92-102, 2011.
- 749 66. **Ouriel K, Clair DG, Kent KC, and Zarins CK.** Endovascular repair compared with
750 surveillance for patients with small abdominal aortic aneurysms. *Journal of vascular surgery* 51:
751 1081-1087, 2010.
- 752 67. **Padilla J, Simmons GH, Bender SB, Arce-Esquivel AA, Whyte JJ, and Laughlin**
753 **MH.** Vascular effects of exercise: Endothelial adaptations beyond active muscle beds.
754 *Physiology* 26: 132-145, 2011.
- 755 68. **Pandey A, Garg S, Khunger M, Garg S, Kumbhani DJ, Chin KM, and Berry JD.**
756 Efficacy and Safety of Exercise Training in Chronic Pulmonary Hypertension: Systematic
757 Review and Meta-Analysis. *Circulation Heart failure* 8: 1032-1043, 2015.
- 758 69. **Parker BA, Tschakovsky ME, Augeri AL, Polk DM, Thompson PD, and Kiernan**
759 **FJ.** Heterogenous vasodilator pathways underlie flow-mediated dilation in men and women.
760 *American journal of physiology Heart and circulatory physiology* 301: H1118-1126, 2011.
- 761 70. **Pearson MJ, and Smart NA.** Effect of exercise training on endothelial function in heart
762 failure patients: A systematic review meta-analysis. *International journal of cardiology* 231:
763 234-243, 2017.
- 764 71. **Perneger TV.** Whats wrong with Bonferroni adjustments? *British Medical Journal* 316:
765 1236, 1998.
- 766 72. **Pretre R, and Turina M.** Mortality results for randomised controlled trial of early
767 elective surgery or ultrasonographic surveillance for small abdominal aortic aneurysms. The UK
768 Small Aneurysm Trial Participants. *Lancet* 352: 1649-1655, 1998.
- 769 73. **Pyke K, Green DJ, Weisbrod C, Best M, Dembo L, O'Driscoll G, and Tschakovsky**
770 **M.** Nitric oxide is not obligatory for radial artery flow-mediated dilation following release of 5
771 or 10 min distal occlusion. *American journal of physiology Heart and circulatory physiology*
772 298: H119-126, 2010.
- 773 74. **Pyke KE, Dwyer EM, and Tschakovsky ME.** Impact of controlling shear rate on flow-
774 mediated dilation responses in the brachial artery of humans. *Journal of applied physiology*
775 *(Bethesda, Md : 1985)* 97: 499-508, 2004.
- 776 75. **Pyke KE, and Tschakovsky ME.** The relationship between shear stress and flow-
777 mediated dilatation: implications for the assessment of endothelial function. *J Physiol* 568: 357-
778 369, 2005.
- 779 76. **Ramos JS, Dalleck LC, Tjonna AE, Beetham KS, and Coombes JS.** The impact of
780 high-intensity interval training versus moderate-intensity continuous training on vascular

- 781 function: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Sports medicine (Auckland, NZ)* 45: 679-692,
782 2015.
- 783 77. **Ramos JS, Ramos MV, Dalleck LC, Borrani F, Walker KB, Fassett RG, Sharman**
784 **JE, and Coombes JS.** Fitness Is Independently Associated with Central Hemodynamics in
785 Metabolic Syndrome. *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* 48: 1539-1547, 2016.
- 786 78. **Ranadive SM, Kappus RM, Cook MD, Yan H, Lane AD, Woods JA, Wilund KR,**
787 **Iwamoto G, Vanar V, Tandon R, and Fernhall B.** Effect of acute moderate exercise on
788 induced inflammation and arterial function in older adults. *Experimental Physiology* 99: 729-
789 739, 2014.
- 790 79. **Rooke TW, Hirsch AT, Misra S, Sidawy AN, Beckman JA, Findeiss LK, Goltzarian**
791 **J, Gornik HL, Halperin JL, Jaff MR, Moneta GL, Olin JW, Stanley JC, White CJ, White**
792 **JV, and Zierler RE.** 2011 ACCF/AHA focused update of the guideline for the management of
793 patients with peripheral artery disease (updating the 2005 guideline). *Vascular medicine*
794 *(London, England)* 16: 452-476, 2011.
- 795 80. **Rooks CR, McCully KK, and Dishman RK.** Acute exercise improves endothelial
796 function despite increasing vascular resistance during stress in smokers and nonsmokers.
797 *Psychophysiology* 48: 1299-1308, 2011.
- 798 81. **Ross MD, Malone E, and Florida-James G.** Vascular Ageing and Exercise: Focus on
799 Cellular Reparative Processes. *Oxid Med Cell Longev* 2016: 3583956, 2016.
- 800 82. **Rothman KJ.** No adjustments are needed for multiple comparisons. *Epidemiology* 1: 43-
801 46, 1990.
- 802 83. **Sampson UKA, Norman PE, Fowkes FGR, Aboyans V, Song Y, Harrell Jr FE,**
803 **Forouzanfar MH, Naghavi M, Denenberg JO, McDermott MM, Criqui MH, Mensah GA,**
804 **Ezzati M, and Murray C.** Global and regional burden of aortic dissection and aneurysms:
805 Mortality trends in 21 world regions, 1990 to 2010. *Global Heart* 9: 171-180, 2014.
- 806 84. **Sawyer BJ, Tucker WJ, Bhammar DM, Ryder JR, Sweazea KL, and Gaesser GA.**
807 Effects of high-intensity interval training and moderate-intensity continuous training on
808 endothelial function and cardiometabolic risk markers in obese adults. *Journal of applied*
809 *physiology (Bethesda, Md : 1985)* 121: 279-288, 2016.
- 810 85. **Schreuder TH, Green DJ, Hopman MT, and Thijssen DH.** Acute impact of retrograde
811 shear rate on brachial and superficial femoral artery flow-mediated dilation in humans.
812 *Physiological reports* 2: e00193, 2014.
- 813 86. **Shenouda N, Gillen JB, Gibala MJ, and MacDonald MJ.** Changes in brachial artery
814 endothelial function and resting diameter with moderate-intensity continuous but not sprint
815 interval training in sedentary men. *Journal of applied physiology (Bethesda, Md : 1985)*
816 jap.00058.02017, 2017.
- 817 87. **Siasos G, Mourouzis K, Oikonomou E, Tsalamandris S, Tsigkou V, Vlasis K,**
818 **Vavuranakis M, Zografos T, Dimitropoulos S, Papaioannou TG, Kalampogias A,**
819 **Stefanadis C, Papavassiliou AG, and Tousoulis D.** The role of endothelial dysfunction in
820 aortic aneurysms. *Current pharmaceutical design* 21: 4016-4034, 2015.
- 821 88. **Silvestro A, Scopacasa F, Oliva G, de Cristofaro T, Iuliano L, and Brevetti G.**
822 Vitamin C prevents endothelial dysfunction induced by acute exercise in patients with
823 intermittent claudication. *Atherosclerosis* 165: 277-283, 2002.
- 824 89. **Soden PA, Zettervall SL, Ultee KH, Darling JD, Buck DB, Hile CN, Hamdan AD,**
825 **and Schermerhorn ML.** Outcomes for symptomatic abdominal aortic aneurysms in the

- 826 American College of Surgeons National Surgical Quality Improvement Program. *Journal of*
 827 *vascular surgery* 2016.
- 828 90. **Storen O, Helgerud J, Saebo M, Stoa EM, Bratland-Sanda S, Unhjem RJ, Hoff J,**
 829 **and Wang E.** The Impact of Age on the VO₂max Response to High-Intensity Interval Training.
 830 *Med Sci Sports Exerc* 2016.
- 831 91. **Suh GY, Les AS, Tenforde AS, Shadden SC, Spilker RL, Yeung JJ, Cheng CP,**
 832 **Herfkens RJ, Dalman RL, and Taylor CA.** Hemodynamic changes quantified in abdominal
 833 aortic aneurysms with increasing exercise intensity using mr exercise imaging and image-based
 834 computational fluid dynamics. *Annals of biomedical engineering* 39: 2186-2202, 2011.
- 835 92. **Sui X, LaMonte MJ, Laditka JN, Hardin JW, Chase N, Hooker SP, and Blair SN.**
 836 Cardiorespiratory fitness and adiposity as mortality predictors in older adults. *JAMA : the journal*
 837 *of the American Medical Association* 298: 2507-2516, 2007.
- 838 93. **Sung S-H, Wu T-C, Chen J-S, Chen Y-H, Huang P-H, Lin S-J, Shih C-C, and Chen**
 839 **J-W.** Reduced number and impaired function of circulating endothelial progenitor cells in
 840 patients with abdominal aortic aneurysm. *Int J of Cardiol* 168: 1070-1077, 2013.
- 841 94. **Sung SH, Wu TC, Chen JS, Chen YH, Huang PH, Lin SJ, Shih CC, and Chen JW.**
 842 Reduced number and impaired function of circulating endothelial progenitor cells in patients
 843 with abdominal aortic aneurysm. *Int J Cardiol* 168: 1070-1077, 2013.
- 844 95. **Tew GA, Moss J, Crank H, Mitchell PA, and Nawaz S.** Endurance exercise training in
 845 patients with small abdominal aortic aneurysm: a randomized controlled pilot study. *Archives of*
 846 *physical medicine and rehabilitation* 93: 2148-2153, 2012.
- 847 96. **Tew GA, Weston M, Kothmann E, Batterham AM, Gray J, Kerr K, Martin D,**
 848 **Nawaz S, Yates D, and Danjoux G.** High-intensity interval exercise training before abdominal
 849 aortic aneurysm repair (HIT-AAA): protocol for a randomised controlled feasibility trial. *BMJ*
 850 *open* 4: e004094, 2014.
- 851 97. **Thijssen DH, Black MA, Pyke KE, Padilla J, Atkinson G, Harris RA, Parker B,**
 852 **Widlansky ME, Tschakovsky ME, and Green DJ.** Assessment of flow-mediated dilation in
 853 humans: a methodological and physiological guideline. *American journal of physiology Heart*
 854 *and circulatory physiology* 300: H2-12, 2011.
- 855 98. **Thijssen DH, Bullens LM, van Bommel MM, Dawson EA, Hopkins N, Tinken TM,**
 856 **Black MA, Hopman MT, Cable NT, and Green DJ.** Does arterial shear explain the magnitude
 857 of flow-mediated dilation?: a comparison between young and older humans. *American journal of*
 858 *physiology Heart and circulatory physiology* 296: H57-64, 2009.
- 859 99. **Thijssen DH, Carter SE, and Green DJ.** Arterial structure and function in vascular
 860 ageing: are you as old as your arteries? *J Physiol* 594: 2275-2284, 2016.
- 861 100. **Thijssen DH, Dawson EA, Black MA, Hopman MT, Cable NT, and Green DJ.**
 862 Brachial artery blood flow responses to different modalities of lower limb exercise. *Med Sci*
 863 *Sports Exerc* 41: 1072-1079, 2009.
- 864 101. **Thijssen DH, Dawson EA, Tinken TM, Cable NT, and Green DJ.** Retrograde flow
 865 and shear rate acutely impair endothelial function in humans. *Hypertension* 53: 986-992, 2009.
- 866 102. **Thijssen DH, Schreuder TH, Newcomer SW, Laughlin MH, Hopman MT, and**
 867 **Green DJ.** Impact of 2-Weeks Continuous Increase in Retrograde Shear Stress on Brachial
 868 Artery Vasomotor Function in Young and Older Men. *Journal of the American Heart*
 869 *Association* 4: 2015.

- 870 103. **Tinken TM, Thijssen DH, Hopkins N, Black MA, Dawson EA, Minson CT,**
871 **Newcomer SC, Laughlin MH, Cable NT, and Green DJ.** Impact of shear rate modulation on
872 vascular function in humans. *Hypertension* 54: 278-285, 2009.
- 873 104. **Tjonna AE, Rognmo O, Bye A, Stolen TO, and Wisloff U.** Time course of endothelial
874 adaptation after acute and chronic exercise in patients with metabolic syndrome. *J Strength Cond*
875 *Res* 25: 2552-2558, 2011.
- 876 105. **Trial TUSA.** Mortality results for randomised controlled trial of early elective surgery or
877 ultrasonographic surveillance for small abdominal aortic aneurysms. The UK Small Aneurysm
878 Trial Participants. *Lancet* 352: 1649-1655, 1999.
- 879 106. **Verhoeven EL, Kapma MR, Groen H, Tielliu IF, Zeebregts CJ, Bekkema F, and**
880 **van den Dungen JJ.** Mortality of ruptured abdominal aortic aneurysm treated with open or
881 endovascular repair. *Journal of vascular surgery* 48: 1396-1400, 2008.
- 882 107. **Waeckel L, Badier-Commander C, Damery T, Kohler R, Sansilvestri-Morel P,**
883 **Simonet S, Vayssettes-Courchay C, Wulff H, and Feletou M.** Vascular dysfunctions in the
884 isolated aorta of double-transgenic hypertensive mice developing aortic aneurysm. *Pflugers*
885 *Archiv : European journal of physiology* 467: 1945-1963, 2015.
- 886 108. **Walsh JH, Bilsborough W, Maiorana A, Best M, O'Driscoll GJ, Taylor RR, and**
887 **Green DJ.** Exercise training improves conduit vessel function in patients with coronary artery
888 disease. *Journal of applied physiology (Bethesda, Md : 1985)* 95: 20-25, 2003.
- 889 109. **Weston M, Batterham AM, Tew GA, Kothmann E, Kerr K, Nawaz S, Yates D, and**
890 **Danjoux G.** Patients awaiting surgical repair for large abdominal aortic aneurysms - Can
891 exercise at moderate to hard intensities with a low risk of adverse events. *Frontiers in physiology*
892 7: 684, 2016.
- 893 110. **Wnuk BR, Durmala J, Ziaja K, Kotyla P, Wozniowski M, and Blaszczyk E.** A
894 Controlled Trial of the Efficacy of a Training Walking Program in Patients Recovering from
895 Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Surgery. *Advances in clinical and experimental medicine : official*
896 *organ Wroclaw Medical University* 25: 1241-1371, 2016.
- 897 111. **Woodman RJ, Playford DA, Watts GF, Cheetham C, Reed C, Taylor RR, Puddey**
898 **IB, Beilin LJ, Burke V, Mori TA, and Green D.** Improved analysis of brachial artery
899 ultrasound using a novel edge-detection software system. *Journal of Applied Physiology* 91: 929-
900 937, 2001.
- 901 112. **Wray DW, Witman MA, Ives SJ, McDaniel J, Trinity JD, Conklin JD, Supiano MA,**
902 **and Richardson RS.** Does brachial artery flow-mediated vasodilation provide a bioassay for
903 NO? *Hypertension* 62: 345-351, 2013.
- 904 113. **Yang Z, Wang JM, Chen L, Luo CF, Tang AL, and Tao J.** Acute exercise-induced
905 nitric oxide production contributes to upregulation of circulating endothelial progenitor cells in
906 healthy subjects. *J Hum Hypertens* 21: 452-460, 2007.
- 907 114. **Yoo JK, Pinto MM, Kim HK, Hwang CL, Lim J, Handberg EM, and Christou DD.**
908 Sex impacts the flow-mediated dilation response to acute aerobic exercise in older adults.
909 *Experimental gerontology* 91: 57-63, 2017.
- 910
- 911

912 **Table Legend**913 **Table 1. Characteristics of patients with AAA and healthy adults**

914 Data are displayed as mean±SD or number (%). BMI, body mass index; AAA, abdominal aortic aneurysm; MI,
 915 myocardial infarction; CABG, coronary artery bypass graft; ARB, Angiotensin II receptor blockers; ACE,
 916 angiotensin converting enzyme; SBP, systolic blood pressure; DBP, diastolic blood pressure; VO_2 , oxygen uptake;
 917 RER, respiratory exchange ratio.

918

919 **Table 2. Flow-mediated dilation and hemodynamic indices at rest and following acute exercise in**
 920 **healthy adults and patients with AAA**

921 Data are displayed as mean±SD. Absolute FMD (mm) was not logged for analysis. For conventional presentation of
 922 FMD%, absolute FMD data was logged for LMM analysis, back-transformed and interpreted as % change. For
 923 clarity, post-hoc p values are reported in the text only. For FMD% significant group (p=0.044), time (p<0.001), and
 924 intensity effects (p<0.001), and an intensity x time interaction (p<0.001) were observed. There were no group x time
 925 (p=0.154) or group x intensity x time (p=0.697) interactions. *significantly different to baseline [#]significantly
 926 different to seated rest (control condition) ^αsignificantly different between moderate- and high-intensity exercise.
 927 FMD, flow-mediated dilation; SRauc, shear rate area-under-the-curve; TTP, time to peak diameter; SBP, systolic
 928 blood pressure; DBP, diastolic blood pressure; MAP, mean arterial pressure.

929

930 **Figure Legend**931 **Figure 1. Study protocol for patients with AAA and healthy adults.**

932 Rest, supine position; FMD, flow-mediated dilation; Condition, control (no exercise seated rest), moderate-intensity
 933 continuous cycling (40% peak power-output), higher-intensity interval cycling (12x1 min at 70% peak power-
 934 output, separated by 1 min 10% peak power-output); Rest/Recovery, supine position

935

936 **Figure 2. Relationship between VO_{2peak} ($ml.kg^{-1}.min^{-1}$) and basal flow-mediated dilation including**
 937 **both abdominal aortic aneurysm patients (squares) and healthy older adults (triangles).**

938

939

940 **Figure 3. Mean (black circles) and individual (lines) Δ FMD (%) from baseline at 10 and 60 min**
 941 **after control, moderate- and higher-intensity exercise in healthy adults (left panels) and patients**
 942 **with AAA (right panels).**

943 Data are displayed as mean±95% CI. Significant intensity effect (p<0.001), time effect (p=0.028), intensity x time
 944 interaction (p=0.033). No group effect (p=0.128), or group x intensity x time interaction (p=0.522). *significantly
 945 different to baseline [#]significantly different to moderate-intensity exercise [‡]significantly different to control
 946 ^βsignificantly different to 10-min post. AAA, abdominal aortic aneurysm; FMD, flow-mediated dilation.

947

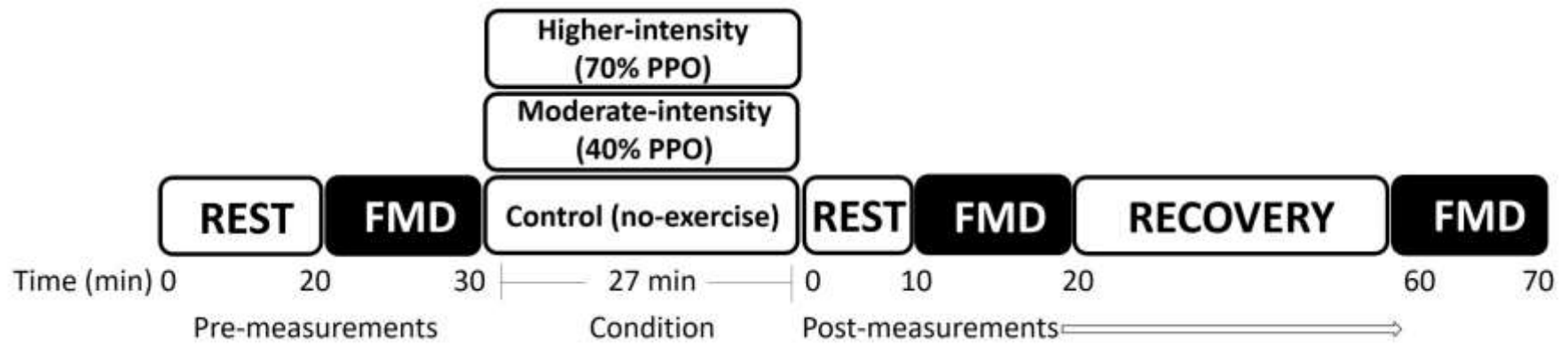


Figure 1.

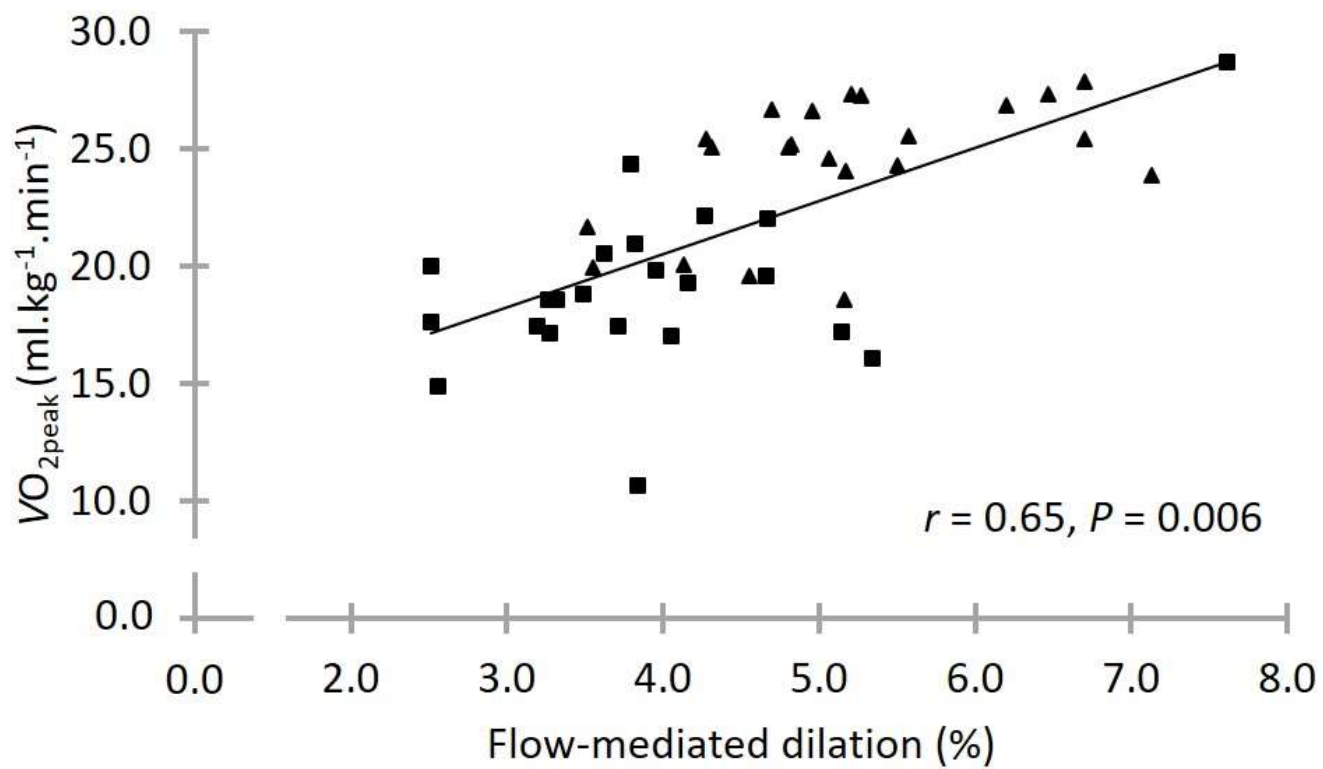


Figure 2.

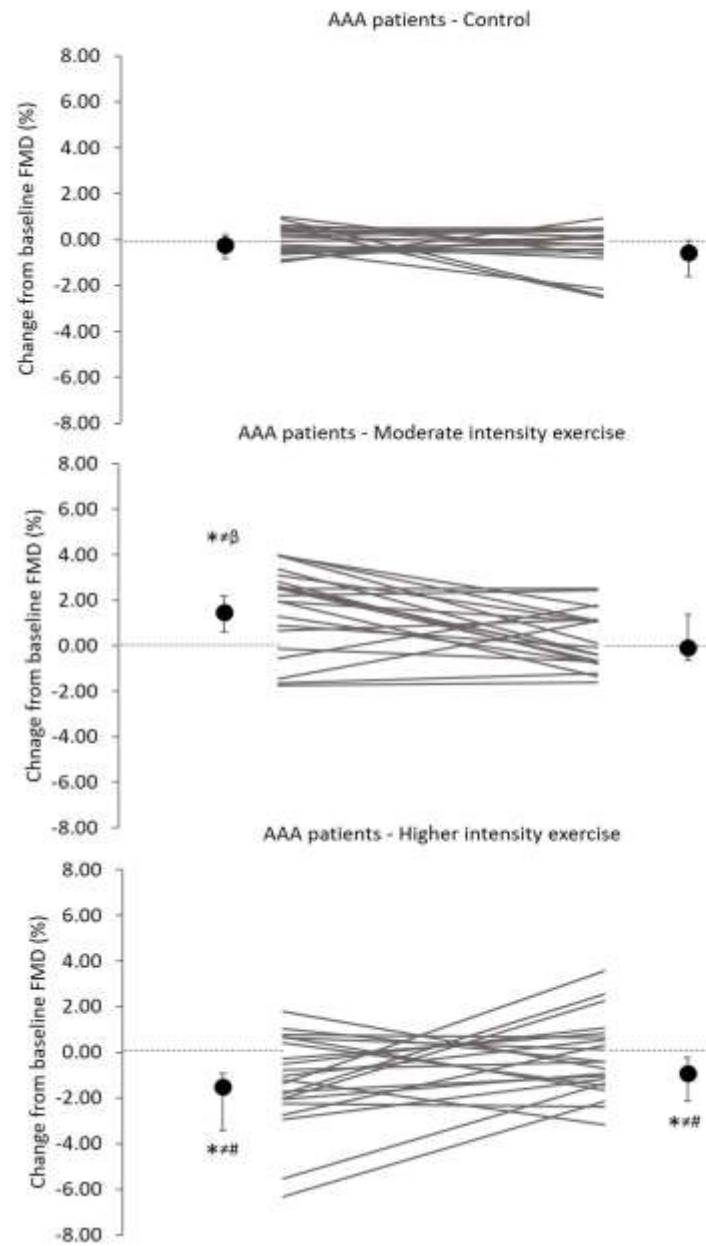
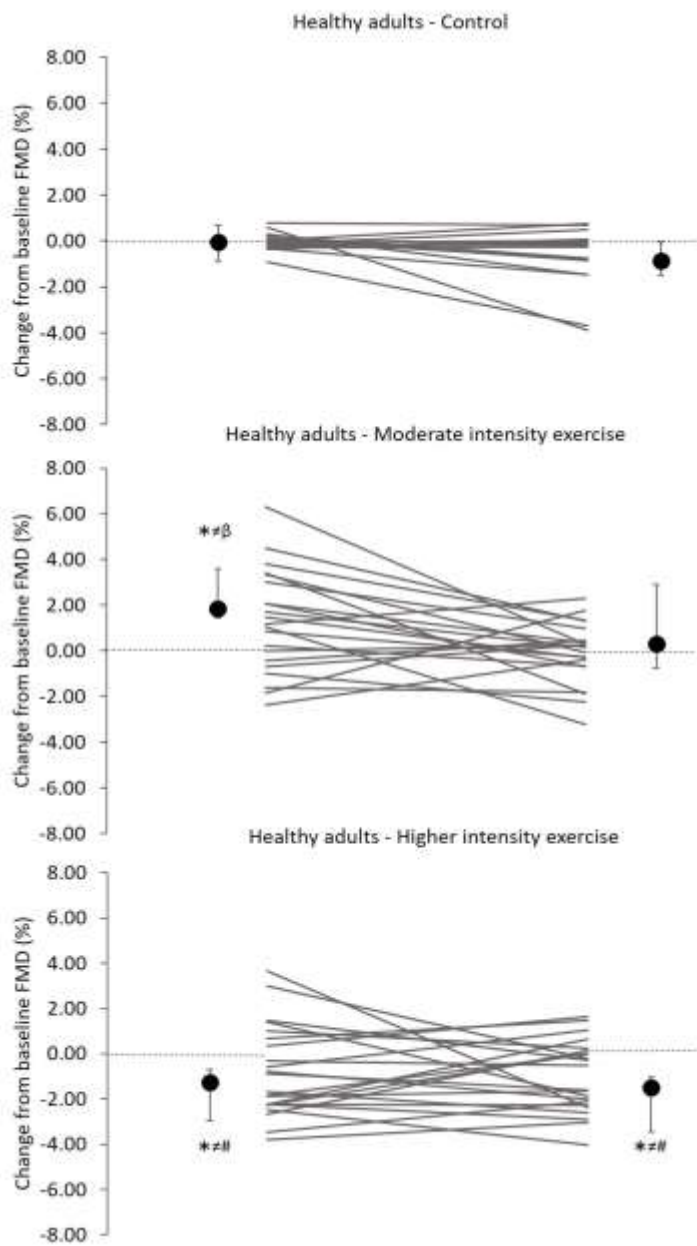


Table 1.	AAA patients (n=22)	Healthy adults (n=22)	P value
Age, years	74±6	72±6	0.200
Male, %	100	100	-
Height, m	1.73±0.07	1.75±0.07	0.463
Weight, kg	83.8±15.7	79.1±11.3	0.264
BMI, kg.m ⁻²	27.9±3.9	26.1±3.5	0.100
Clinical information			
Maximum AAA diameter (mm)	36±5	-	-
Hypertension, N (%)	15 (68)	5 (22)	0.006
Dyslipidaemia, N (%)	18 (82)	8 (36)	0.005
Diabetes	2 (9)	0 (0)	0.478
Smoking, current N (%)	2 (9)	1 (5)	0.697
Smoking, previous N (%)	12 (55)	11 (50)	0.701
Previous stroke, N (%)	2 (9)	0 (0)	0.488
Previous MI, N (%)	6 (27)	1 (5)	0.021
Previous CABG, N (%)	11 (50)	1 (5)	0.002
Medication			
ARB/ACE inhibitors, N (%)	9 (40)	4 (18)	0.140
Anti-platelet, N (%)	13 (60)	2 (9)	0.003
Beta-blockers, N (%)	9 (40)	2 (9)	0.034
Calcium channel blockers, N (%)	4 (18)	1 (5)	0.345
Statins, N (%)	20 (90)	9 (40)	0.001
Hemodynamic variables			
Resting heart rate, bpm	59±8	57±8	0.354
Brachial SBP, mmHg	129±13	124±11	0.206
Brachial DBP, mmHg	73±7	73±9	0.970
Peak Cardiorespiratory fitness			
Absolute VO ₂ , L.min ⁻¹	1.58±0.36	1.94±0.35	0.002
Relative VO ₂ , mL.kg ⁻¹ .min ⁻¹	19.03±3.54	24.47±2.78	<0.001
Peak heart rate, bpm	126±15	148±16	<0.001
Age-predicted peak heart rate, %	86±10	97±11	<0.001
Peak RER, AU	1.17±0.10	1.19±0.11	0.575
Peak Power, Watts	120±20	150±30	<0.001

Table 2

	Control (No Exercise)			Moderate-intensity continuous exercise			Higher-intensity interval exercise		
	Baseline	Post, 10 min	Post, 60 min	Baseline	Post, 10 min	Post, 60 min	Baseline	Post, 10 min	Post, 60 min
Flow-mediated dilation	<i>Healthy adults</i>								
Artery diameter, mm	4.75±0.50	4.67±0.56	4.63±0.53*	4.78±0.56	4.74±0.54 [#]	4.75±0.52	4.85±0.50	4.90±0.53* ^{#α}	4.87±0.55
FMD, mm	0.02±0.01	0.02±0.01	0.02±0.01	0.02±0.01	0.03±0.01* ^{#α}	0.02±0.01	0.02±0.01	0.02±0.01	0.02±0.01
Rest blood flow, mL.s ⁻¹	1.25±0.70	1.12±0.54	0.98±0.67*	1.34±0.61	1.69±1.02* [#]	0.97±0.67*	1.44±0.68	2.16±1.43* [#]	0.99±0.56*
Peak blood flow, mL.s ⁻¹	5.25±1.95	4.88±2.36	4.23±2.36*	4.92±2.14	5.42±2.14* [#]	5.03±2.70	5.28±3.02	6.45±2.46* ^{#α}	5.35±2.84 [#]
SR _{AUC} , 10 ³ s ⁻¹	14.03±5.42	13.85±8.58	13.37±7.31*	14.32±8.38	16.90±8.22* [#]	13.98±7.84	16.20±7.32	17.55±7.94* ^{#α}	14.61±6.50*
TTP diameter, s	64±23	58±24	70±31	62±31	66±25	63±30	65±32	69±28	63±22 [#]
FMD, %	5.06±1.50	5.12±1.10	4.75±1.10	5.20±1.58	6.14±1.94* ^{#α}	5.30±1.30	4.96±1.09	3.84±1.95* ^{#α}	4.00±1.43* ^α
Heart rate and blood pressure									
Heart rate, bpm	59±10	56±9	54±7	58±8	71±15* [#]	59±9	58±7	68±10*	58±6
Systolic BP, mmHg	123±15	130±15*	128±15*	126±13	132±13*	127±15	123±11	130±13*	123±11
Diastolic BP, mmHg	72±10	76±10	74±10	74.10±	76±8	75±11	73±9	76±9	75±10
MAP, mmHg	87±11	91±11*	90±11*	89±10	93±9*	86±10	87±9	92±11*	88±9
Flow-mediated dilation	<i>Abdominal aortic aneurysm patients</i>								
Artery diameter, mm	4.90±0.38	4.90±0.40	4.80±0.44*	4.81±0.52	4.77±0.53 [#]	4.76±0.54	4.94±0.50	4.95±0.46	4.93±0.43
FMD, mm	0.02±0.01	0.02±0.01	0.02±0.01	0.02±0.01	0.03±0.01* ^{#α}	0.02±0.01	0.02±0.01	0.01±0.01*	0.02±0.01
Rest blood flow, mL.s ⁻¹	1.14±0.78	0.85±0.57	0.60±0.47*	0.95±0.60	1.44±1.01* ^{#α}	0.88±0.92	1.10±0.63	1.69±1.38*	1.14±0.85 [#]
Peak blood flow, mL.s ⁻¹	4.28±1.89	3.78±1.49	2.76±1.36*	3.77±1.74	4.89±2.26* [#]	4.19±1.78 [#]	3.94±1.92	4.73±1.57*	4.45±2.23 [#]
SR _{AUC} , 10 ³ s ⁻¹	10.26±6.17	9.33±5.50	7.26±3.89*	9.83±5.70	12.46±7.58* [#]	10.72±6.77 [#]	9.86±5.90	13.50±5.95*	11.01±4.35*
TTP diameter, s	56±29	53±23	54±26	55±31	56±26	61±24	59±36	70±27* ^α	56±28
FMD, %	3.94±1.29	4.01±1.51	3.73±1.71	3.73±1.06	4.97±1.49* [#]	4.28±1.69	4.02±1.39	3.00±1.39* ^α	3.91±1.67* ^α
Heart rate and blood pressure									
Heart rate, bpm	59±9	56±8	56±10	60±9	68±11* [#]	58±8	59±9	69±11* [#]	60±8
Systolic BP, mmHg	127±11	136±14*	135±18*	130±15	133±16*	130±15	129±15	133±14*	127±13
Diastolic BP, mmHg	72±6	76±7	75±9	74±9	74±8	73±8	73±8	69±8	73±8
MAP, mmHg	88±7	93±9*	94±12*	90±9	92±9*	89±10	89±9	90±10*	89±9