

Original Article

Sacubitril/valsartan versus ramipril in patients with ST-segment Elevation Myocardial Infarction and cardiogenic SHOCK (SAVE-SHOCK): a pilot randomized controlled trial

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Abstract: Objectives: To evaluate the safety and efficacy of sacubitril/valsartan versus ramipril in patients with STEMI and cardiogenic shock. Methods: Patients who received primary percutaneous coronary intervention (PPCI) for STEMI complicated with cardiogenic shock were randomized 1:1 to sacubitril/valsartan versus ramipril after clinical stabilization. The primary outcome was major adverse cardiac events (MACE) at 30 days and 6 months. Secondary in-hospital clinical outcomes included recurrent shock, new or re-initiation of vasoactive medications, and acute kidney injury (AKI). All-cause death, cardiac death, hospitalization due to heart failure (HF), myocardial infarction (MI), and stroke were examined at 30 days and 6 months. Study ID 016-01-2018. Results: 100 patients with STEMI and cardiogenic shock were included (mean age 54.7±10.3 years, 87% men). Initiation of sacubitril/valsartan and ramipril occurred at 38.18±18.44 versus 39.0±21.03 hours after stabilization, respectively. The primary outcome was similar between both groups at 30 days and 6 months. No difference in in-hospital or 30-day clinical outcomes was observed. However, at 6 months, patients in the sacubitril/valsartan arm suffered less hospitalization with HF (18% vs 38%, P=0.044) compared with patients in the ramipril arm. Other clinical outcomes at 6 months were similar between both groups. Conclusions: Sacubitril/valsartan in patients with STEMI and cardiogenic shock may be associated with improved clinical outcome at 6 months compared with ramipril. Larger randomized controlled trials with longer follow-up are recommended.

Keywords: Sacubitril/valsartan, Entresto®, STEMI, cardiogenic shock

Introduction

Cardiogenic shock is the major cause of in-hospital mortality in patients with acute myocardial infarction (MI). Incidence of cardiogenic shock as a complication of MI ranges from 5 to 15% [1-8], even though some of this data originate from studies before the era of primary percutaneous coronary intervention (PPCI) [1, 2]. Despite the standard use of PPCI in patients with ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI), and the advanced technology in hemodynamic support when needed in these cases, in-hospital mortality associated with STEMI and cardiogenic shock remains high [6-11].

Hypotension after STEMI activates the RAS-aldosterone system that leads to excess an-

giotensin II production which enhances nor-epinephrine release. Both angiotensin II and NE stimulates myocyte hypertrophy and ANP secretion [12-14].

Sacubitril/valsartan is an angiotensin receptor-neprilysin inhibitor (ARNI) that showed superiority to enalapril in chronic as well as acute heart failure with reduced ejection fraction (HFrEF) in the PARADIGM-HF and PIONEER-HF trials, respectively [15-18]. Sacubitril/valsartan had demonstrated potential role in reducing heart failure hospitalizations at 6 months in patients with STEMI [19]. However, the safety and efficacy associated with early use of sacubitril/valsartan in patients who are clinically stable after STEMI and cardiogenic shock is unknown. In this study, we aimed at examining the role of sacubitril/valsartan versus conventional angio-

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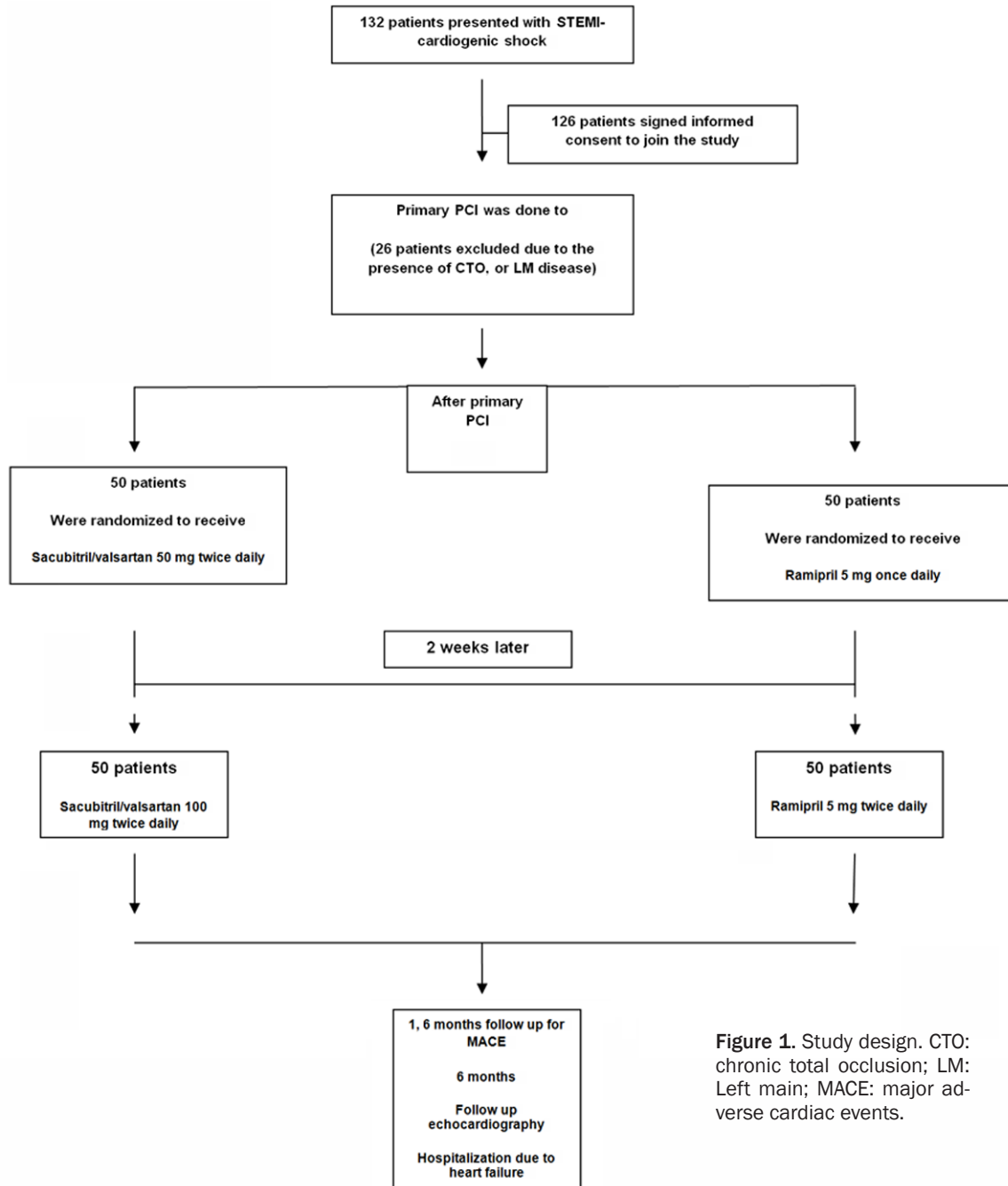


Figure 1. Study design. CTO: chronic total occlusion; LM: Left main; MACE: major adverse cardiac events.

tensin converting enzyme inhibitor in patients with STEMI and cardiogenic shock.

Methods

Study design and population

This is a prospective, double blinded, randomized study conducted in three tertiary centers in Egypt (Ain Shams University, Dar Al Fouad Hospitals, and Mabaret Al Asafra Hospital).

Patients were enrolled from February 2018 to January 2020. Patients between 18 and 90 years of age, who presented with STEMI and cardiogenic shock within 12 hours of the onset of chest pain, were included (**Figure 1**). Cardiogenic shock was defined as systolic blood pressure (SBP) less than 90 mmHg for more than 30 minutes, or the use of pharmacological/mechanical support to maintain SBP above 90 mmHg, together with evidence of end organ damage including urine output of less

than 30 ml/hour, cold extremities, or serum lactate of more than 2.0 mmol/L [20]. We excluded patients with a) known coronary artery disease (e.g., prior MI, PCI, or coronary artery bypass grafting [CABG]), b) known LV systolic dysfunction, c) bleeding tendency, or d) chronic kidney disease. Patients who developed acute kidney injury in the setting of cardiogenic were not started on either medication until improvement of kidney function.

Before PPCI, all patients were pretreated with oral aspirin 300 mg plus Ticagrelor 180 mg or clopidogrel 600 mg as a loading dose followed by maintenance dose. The use of adjunctive medical or mechanical therapy (e.g., vasoactive medications, glycoprotein IIb/IIIa inhibitors, aspiration thrombectomy, or mechanical circulatory support) was left to operators' decision. Written informed consent was provided by all participants before randomization.

Treatment, randomization, and blinding

After primary PCI, patients were randomized 1:1 to receive sacubitril/valsartan (starting dose of 50 mg twice daily) vs ramipril (starting dose of 5 mg once daily). Physicians were blinded to the treatment groups. Doses were up titrated to sacubitril/valsartan 100 mg twice daily versus ramipril 5 mg twice daily after 2 weeks if tolerated (**Figure 1**). Time for starting either medication was at least 24 hours after hemodynamic stabilization from cardiogenic shock. All patients continued on aspirin and P2Y₁₂ inhibitor (ticagrelor or clopidogrel). Other guideline-directed medical therapy was initiated after STEMI as well.

Outcomes

The primary outcome was major adverse cardiac events (MACE) at 30 days and 6 months. MACE was defined as composite endpoint of cardiac death, MI, and hospitalization due to HF. Secondary safety clinical outcomes included recurrent shock, new or re-initiation of vasoactive medications, significant hyperkalemia (i.e., >5.5 mmol/L), and acute kidney injury (AKI). AKI was defined as a rise in the creatinine concentration of ≥ 0.5 mg/dL [≥ 44 μ mol/L] and/or a decline in the estimated GFR of $\geq 25\%$ [8]. Secondary efficacy clinical outcomes included all-cause death, cardiac death, hospi-

talization due to heart failure (HF), myocardial infarction (MI), and stroke were examined at 30 days and 6 months [21].

Follow up

Patients were clinically evaluated in outpatient clinic visits one week after discharge, at 30 days, and 6 months. Echocardiographic evaluation at 6 months was performed according to the standard guidelines [22]. Physicians were blinded to the treatment groups.

Statistical analysis

Categorical variables were presented as numbers and percentages, and compared using chi-square tests, or Fisher's exact tests as appropriate, while continuous data were reported as means and standard deviations and compared using Student's t-test. A two-sided *P* value of less than 0.05 was considered significant. Kaplan Meier survival curve was obtained from log rank analysis. Statistical analyses were done using SPSS 18.0 software (SPSS Inc., Chicago, Illinois).

Ethical committee approval

This study was performed according to the ethical guidelines of the 1975 Declaration of Helsinki and was approved by the ethical committees at all centers (study ID 016-01-2018).

Patient and public involvement

Neither patients nor any public authority was involved in the study design or participated in any data collection or analysis. Patients were aware of the study after proper explanation of the protocol.

Results

During the study period, PPCI was performed to 100 patients who presented with STEMI complicated by cardiogenic shock. Mean age was 53.12 ± 9.08 vs 55.5 ± 12.5 years in the sacubitril/valsartan versus ramipril, respectively. Baseline demographic data are presented in **Table 1**. The severity of CAD, door-to-balloon time, and use of GPI or thrombus aspiration were similar in both groups. All patients received drug-eluting stents. The use of inotropic drugs (82% vs 84%) and mechanical circulatory

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Table 1. Baseline clinical characteristics

	Sacubitril/valsartan (N=50 patients)	Ramipril (N=50 patients)	P-Value
Age, years (mean ± SD)	53.12±9.08	55.5±12.5	0.281
Male gender, %	35.0	38.0	0.653
Diabetes, %	30.0	33.0	0.679
Insulin therapy, %	12.0	6.0	0.192
Hypertension, %	33.0	31.0	0.835
Dyslipidemia, %	43.0	47.0	0.318
Smoking, %	33.0	37.0	0.513
Family history of coronary artery disease, %	14.0	23.0	0.097
Renal impairment, %	0	2.0	0.495
SBP	57.4±11.6	55.6±10.5	0.418
DBP	31.2±9.8	31.0±7.4	0.908
Creatinine (mg/dL)	1.15±0.40	1.25±0.33	0.164
Creatinine CL (ml/min/m ²)	73.8±22.9	67.5±20.2	0.147

Table 2. Procedural data of both groups

	Sacubitril/valsartan (N=50 patients)	Ramipril (N=50 patients)	P-Value
Duration from onset of pain till first medical contact, hours (mean ± SD)	3.8±2.8	4.2±3.2	0.293
Door-to-balloon time, minutes (mean ± SD)	50.2±3.4	49.8±5.1	0.861
Inotropes	41 (82.0%)	42 (84.0%)	0.790
Peak CK-Mb	280.5±136.4	307.5±131.2	0.317
Mechanical Ventilation	10 (20%)	8 (16%)	0.795
Intra-aortic balloon	11 (22%)	9 (18%)	0.795
Infarct-related artery (IRA), (%)			
Left anterior descending artery	34 (68%)	31 (62%)	0.837
Right coronary artery	11 (22%)	12 (24%)	0.810
Left circumflex artery	3 (6%)	4 (8%)	1.000
Diagonal artery, Obtuse marginal	2 (4%)	3 (6%)	1.000
Baseline TIMI flow (IRA)	0.2±0.5	0.2±0.4	0.595
Thrombus burden (IRA)	4.5±1.1	4.7±0.8	0.332
Mean stent diameter, mm (mean ± SD)	3.2±0.3	3.6±0.4	0.247
Mean stent length, mm (mean ± SD)	20.2±3.1	21.4±3.4	0.061
Mean number of stents (mean ± SD)	2.5±1.0	2.5±0.7	0.735
GP IIb/IIIa inhibitors intraprocedural, (%)	5 (10%)	6 (12%)	1.000

GP= Glycoprotein; SD= standard deviation; TIMI= Thrombolysis In Myocardial Infarction; IRA= infarct related artery; NIRA= Non-infarct related artery.

support (20% vs 16%) were similar in patients in the sacubitril/valsartan versus ramipril arms, respectively. Initiation of Sacubitril/Valsartan versus ramipril started 38.18±18.44 hours versus 39.0±21.03 hours after hemodynamic stabilization (P=0.93). Procedural details are presented in **Table 2**, in-hospital course in **Table 3**.

Outcomes

The primary outcome of MACE was similar between both groups at 30 days (2% vs 8%) and 6

months (24% vs 42%). Secondary safety clinical outcomes were similar between both groups. No patients in either group had recurrent shock or significant hypotension after starting the medication. At 30 days and 6 months, the clinical outcomes of all-cause death, MI, stroke were similar. Hospitalization for HF was similar at 30 days, however, at 6 months, patients in the sacubitril/valsartan arm suffered less hospitalization with HF (18% vs 38%, P=0.044) compared with patients in the ramipril arm.

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Table 3. In-hospital course

	Sacubitril/ valsartan (N=50 patients)	Ramipril (N=50 patients)	P-Value
In-hospital			
Duration of mechanical ventilation, hours (mean ± SD)	9.4±2.5	10.8±2.4	0.230
Duration of IV inotropes, hours (mean ± SD)	8.8±7.1	9.2±5.7	0.783
Duration of intra-aortic balloon	9.2±2.6	11.8±3.2	0.096
Initiation of ACE vs Sac/Val after extubation and withdrawal of IV supports, hours (mean ± SD)	38.18±18.44	39.0±21.03	0.929
Initiation of beta blockers after extubation and withdrawal of IV supports, hours (mean ± SD)	25.09±8.4	25.5±7.6	0.915
Life threatening arrhythmias	18 (36%)	15 (30%)	0.671

Table 4. Clinical efficacy outcomes

	Sacubitril/ valsartan (N=50 patients)	Ramipril (N=50 patients)	P-Value
In-hospital			
MACE, %	6 (12%)	5 (10%)	1.000
All-cause death, %	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	
Cardiac death, %	3 (6%)	2 (4%)	1.000
Recurrent myocardial infarction, %	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	
Stroke, %	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	1.000
Bleeding, %	1 (2%)	2 (4%)	1.000
CIN	2 (4%)	3 (6%)	1.000
Renal replacement therapy	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	1.000
30 days follow up			
MACE, %	1 (2%)	4 (8%)	0.362
HF hospitalization, %	0 (0%)	2 (4%)	0.495
All-cause death, %	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	
Cardiac death, %	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	
Myocardial infarction, %	1 (2%)	2 (4%)	1.000
Stroke, %	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	
6 months follow up			
MACE, %	12 (24%)	21 (42%)	0.088
HF hospitalization, %	9 (18%)	19 (38%)	0.044
All-cause death, %	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	0.317
Cardiac death, %	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	1.000
Myocardial infarction, %	1 (2%)	2 (4%)	1.000
Stroke, %	0.0	1 (2%)	1.000

HF= heart failure; MACE= major adverse cardiac events.

Outcomes are summarized in **Table 4**. Though Kaplan Meier survival curve didn't show a significant difference, the events rate was less in the sacubitril/valsartan group (**Figure 2**).

Echocardiographic data (**Table 5**)

Echocardiographic assessment in-hospital showed an ejection fraction of 29.8±6.9% ver-

sus 29.6±5.8% (P=0.22) in the study group versus ramipril group. At 6 months, a significant improvement in the LV ejection fraction in the sacubitril/valsartan versus the ramipril group, 35.2±6.1% versus 32.4±5.8%, P=0.002 respectively.

Discussion

In the current study, we show important findings. The use of sacubitril/valsartan after clinical stabilization in patients with STEMI and cardiogenic shock was safe and associated with reduced HF hospitalization and improved systolic function at 6-month follow up compared with ramipril.

Cardiogenic shock is a life-threatening condition that complicates 5% to 10% of cases of acute MI and is the major cause of sudden cardiac death after MI. STEMI is associated with a 2-fold augmented risk for development of cardiogenic shock com-

pared to NSTEMI [23]. Survivors of MI-associated cardiogenic shock have an 18.6% risk of 30-day readmission with an average of 10 days after discharge. The risk of readmission is to some extent less among patients with STEMI versus NSTEMI. The main reasons are congestive heart failure and new myocardial infarction [24]. Once patients have received initial therapy to remove congestion and improve dyspnea

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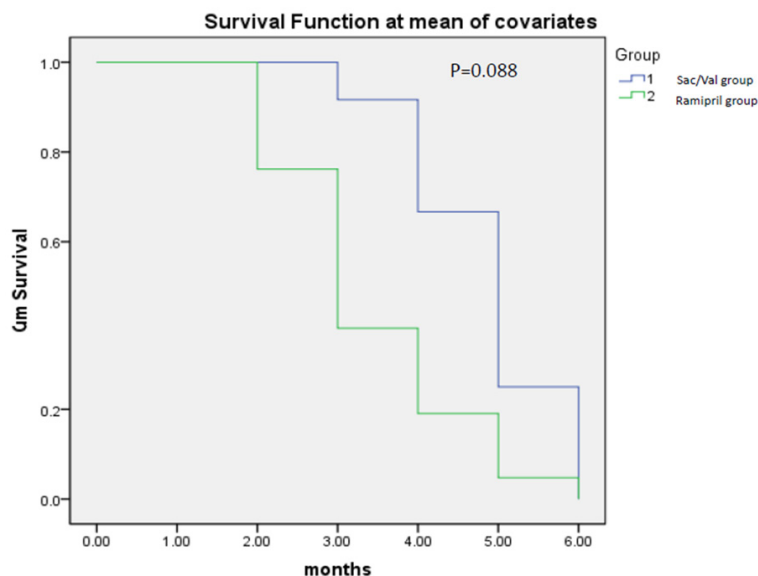


Figure 2. KM curve showing less events rates in the Sacubitril/Valsartan group and better survival compared to ramipril group though not statistically significant.

then the focus of treatment should switch to disease-modifying drugs which improve mortality and long-term outcomes such as hospitalization for heart failure, and recurrent myocardial infarction. Heart failure activates the renin-angiotensin system which increases aldosterone, and blood pressure, promotes vasoconstriction, fibrosis, and left ventricular hypertrophy. The majority of therapies such as ACE inhibitors, beta blockers, and mineralocorticoid receptor antagonists work by blocking this pathway.

This study is a multi-center, prospective, double blinded, randomized study conducted at 3 tertiary centers in Egypt. The study presents encouraging preliminary data regarding the safety of early administration of sacubitril/valsartan within few days after stabilization of patients who presented with STEMI and cardiogenic shock. The plausible cause of its beneficial effect is improving cardiac remodeling and LV function, and subsequently reducing the incidence of heart failure hospitalization. However, it is important to note that initiation of such medications in this sick population should be performed during hospitalization with involvement of heart team, intensivists, as well as nephrologists in case of renal dysfunction, and close monitoring should be

performed to avoid recurrence of hemodynamic instability.

Hypotension in the setting of myocardial infarction activates the RAS-aldosterone axis that leads to excess catecholamine production by adrenal medulla, as well as the secretion of natriuretic peptides [12]. Activation of beta-1 adrenoreceptors in the juxtaglomerular apparatus enhances renin release, which promotes the release of angiotensin II. Increased angiotensin II induces the presynaptic release of norepinephrine (NE) and blocks its reuptake, in addition to catecholamine synthesis, and potentiates the postsynaptic action of NE [13]. Both angiotensin II and NE may provoke

ET-1 production, which stimulates myocyte hypertrophy and ANP secretion [14].

No solid, sufficient data is on hand concerning safety and efficiency of Angiotensin-Nepriylsin Inhibition in the setting of STEMI complicated with cardiogenic shock. Inhibition of RAAS which is the cornerstone regulating the myocardial remodeling after MI seems beneficial and considered a cornerstone therapy in the routine protocols for the STEMI patients after primary PCI. The dual effect of inhibiting both angiotensin II production as well as neprilysin inhibition may have an additive value reducing LV dilatation and consequent reduction of the LV systolic functions after STEMI compared to the usual ACE inhibitor-only therapies.

According to our data, the main determinants whether to start Sacubitril/Valsartan or not after patient stabilization were a) the hemodynamic stability of the patient, regarding his blood pressure, perfusion, as well as the absence of any life-threatening arrhythmias, and b) eGFR, renal functions and absence of hyperkalemia. These were main factors that should guide the decision whether to initiate the treatment or not. It seems clear that early initiation markedly improved the LV systolic functions and dimensions. Accordingly, this

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Table 5. Left ventricular echocardiographic data of both groups

	Sacubitril/valsartan (N=50 patients)	Ramipril (N=50 patients)	P-Value
In-hospital			
LV end diastolic dimension, mm (mean ± SD)	57.67±6.1	57.43±6.0	0.781
LV end systolic dimension, mm (mean ± SD)	41.6±4.0	41.3±5.5	0.060
LV ejection fraction, % (mean ± SD)	29.8±6.9	29.6±5.8	0.220
Six months			
LV end diastolic dimension, mm (mean ± SD)	54.6±4.7	56.7±5.4	0.005
LV end systolic dimension, mm (mean ± SD)	38.8±4.9	40.7±5.7	0.011
LV ejection fraction, % (mean ± SD)	35.2±6.1	32.4±5.8	0.001

LV= left ventricle; SD= standard deviation.

improved the short-term outcomes, and minimized hospitalization due to heart failure within 6 months. Though it didn't have a remarkable effect on survival, but this might be attributed to the small cohort number of our study, as the KM survival curve showed relatively better survival and fewer events in the study group.

Though the maximal, long term treatment effect of ARNI remains uncertain, however, their short-term benefits in patients with acute decompensated heart failure are well proven. This group improves fluid retention, as well as New York Heart Association (NYHA) class which might relate to their long-term effects on hospitalization and mortality. Adding NI to ARBs definitely improved cardiac remodeling especially in patients with high NT-proBNP compared to the standard ACEIs. But the safety of using these drugs after acute decompensation still needs thorough evaluation. The PIONEER-HF (Comparison Of Sacubitril/valsartan Versus Enalapril on Effect on nt-pRo-bnp in Patients Stabilized From an Acute Heart Failure Episode) study may help to clarify this issue [16].

Our study is limited by including a small cohort of patients; hence, it is hard to generalize our results, and to exclude type 1 errors.

Conclusion

Sacubitril/valsartan in patients with STEMI and cardiogenic shock may be associated with improved clinical outcome at 6 months compared with ramipril. Larger randomized controlled trials with longer follow-up are recommended.

Acknowledgements

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Fouad hospital, and Mabaret Al Asafra hospital.

Disclosure of conflict of interest

None.

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