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Passive stretch regulates skeletal muscle glucose uptake independent of nitric oxide synthase

This is the Accepted version of the following publication

Kerris, Jarrod P, Betik, Andrew C, Li, J and McConell, Glenn (2019) Passive stretch regulates skeletal muscle glucose uptake independent of nitric oxide synthase. *Journal of Applied Physiology*, 126 (1). pp. 239-245. ISSN 8750-7587

The publisher's official version can be found at
<https://www.physiology.org/doi/full/10.1152/jappphysiol.00368.2018>
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1 **Passive stretch regulates skeletal muscle glucose uptake independent**
2 **of nitric oxide synthase**

3

4 Jarrod P. Kerris^{1,2}, Andrew C. Betik^{1,3}, Jinhua Li⁴, and Glenn K. McConell^{1,2}

5

6 ¹ *Institute for Health and Sport, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia*

7 ² *College of Sport & Exercise Science, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia*

8 ³ *College of Health and Biomedicine, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia*

9 ⁴ *Department of Anatomy and Developmental Biology, Monash Biomedicine*

10 *Discovery Institute, Monash University, Clayton, Australia*

11

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13 Running title: Stretch, NO and glucose uptake

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15 Corresponding Author:

16

17 Jarrod P Kerris

18 Institute for Health and Sport

19 Victoria University, Melbourne, VIC 3011

20 Phone: +61400833563

21 Email: jarrod.kerris@live.vu.edu.au

22 **Abstract**

23 Skeletal muscle contraction increases glucose uptake via an insulin-independent
24 mechanism. Signaling pathways arising from mechanical strain are activated during
25 muscle contractions, and mechanical strain in the form of passive stretching
26 stimulates glucose uptake. However, the exact mechanisms regulating stretch-
27 stimulated glucose uptake are not known. Since nitric oxide synthase (NOS) has been
28 implicated in the regulation of glucose uptake during *ex vivo* and *in situ* muscle
29 contractions and during exercise, and NO is increased with stretch, we examined
30 whether the increase in muscle glucose uptake during stretching involves NOS. We
31 passively stretched isolated EDL muscles (15 min at ~100-130 mN) from control
32 mice and mice lacking either neuronal NOS μ (nNOS μ) or endothelial NOS (eNOS)
33 isoforms, as well as used pharmacological inhibitors of NOS. Stretch significantly
34 increased muscle glucose uptake approximately 2-fold ($P < 0.05$), and this was
35 unaffected by the presence of the NOS inhibitors N^G -monomethyl-L-arginine (L-
36 NMMA; 100 μ M) or N^G -nitro-L-arginine methyl ester (L-NAME; 100 μ M).
37 Similarly, stretch-stimulated glucose uptake was not attenuated by deletion of either
38 eNOS or nNOS μ isoforms. Furthermore, stretching failed to increase skeletal muscle
39 NOS enzymatic activity above resting levels. These data clearly demonstrate that
40 stretch-stimulated skeletal muscle glucose uptake is not dependent on NOS.

41

42 Key words: nitric oxide synthase, glucose uptake, stretch, skeletal muscle

43 **New & Noteworthy**

44 Passive stretching is known to activate muscle glucose uptake through mechanisms
45 that partially overlap with contraction. We report that genetic knockout of eNOS or
46 nNOS or pharmacological NOS inhibition does not affect stretch-stimulated glucose
47 uptake. Passive stretch failed to increase NOS activity above resting levels. This
48 information is important for the study of signaling pathways that regulate stretch-
49 stimulated glucose uptake and indicate that NOS should be excluded as a potential
50 signaling factor in this regard.

51

52 INTRODUCTION

53 Exercise and ex vivo and in situ muscle contractions potently stimulate the uptake of
54 glucose into skeletal muscle via a signaling pathway that is, at least proximally,
55 independent of the canonical insulin signaling pathway (35). Signaling proteins that
56 mediate glucose uptake during exercise present as an attractive therapeutic target for
57 the treatment of Type 2 diabetes since glucose uptake and GLUT-4 translocation
58 during contraction and exercise are mostly normal in insulin resistant muscle (24, 29,
59 53). However, the exact mechanisms involved remain to be fully clarified.

60

61 The transduction of mechanical stimuli into biochemical signals has long been known
62 to regulate biological processes in skeletal muscle (9, 16, 50). Several studies have
63 shown that mechanical loading applied to isolated rodent muscles in the form of
64 passive stretching increases muscle glucose uptake (5, 18, 20, 23, 45), presumably via
65 stimulating GLUT4 translocation (45). It is likely that a mechanical signaling
66 component is essential to fully activate the glucose transport machinery during
67 contractions, as the prevention of tension development during electrically-induced
68 skeletal muscle contractions attenuates the increase in glucose uptake (2, 18, 23, 45).

69 While muscle contractions have been shown to induce metabolic disturbances and
70 activation of AMP-activated protein kinase (AMPK), this pathway is not activated by
71 stretch (5, 23, 45). On the other hand, passive stretching activates the cytoskeletal
72 regulator Rac1, and Rac1 inhibition has been shown to attenuate stretch-stimulated
73 glucose uptake (44, 45). However, Rac1 inhibition does not affect the increase in
74 glucose uptake during electrical stimulations when tension development is prevented
75 (45). This indicates that during muscle contraction mechanical stimuli activates a

76 distinct signaling pathway that contributes to glucose uptake. The exact signaling
77 mechanisms involved in this pathway are not known.

78

79 Nitric oxide synthase (NOS) activity and nitric oxide (NO) production is increased
80 during electrical stimulations in muscle cells (34, 42), muscle contractions or exercise
81 in rodents (14, 15, 31, 32, 36, 38), and exercise in humans (28). Several studies have
82 demonstrated that pharmacological inhibition of NOS attenuates the increase in
83 skeletal muscle glucose uptake during contractile activity (1, 3, 14, 24, 31, 32, 37, 38),
84 although this is not a universal finding (7, 10, 12, 13, 39). Neuronal NOS μ (nNOS μ)
85 is considered the predominant source of NO in contracting skeletal muscle (14, 26)
86 and is largely targeted to the mechanosensing dystrophin-glycoprotein complex
87 (DGC) at the sarcolemma (4). Acute passive stretch of both muscle cells and mature
88 muscle has also been reported to increase NO production (48, 54, 55), and there is
89 evidence that NOS is involved in the transduction of mechanical signal pathways
90 regulating the expression of cytoskeletal proteins (49). Given that NO contributes to
91 the regulation of glucose uptake during muscle contractions, NO production is
92 increased by stretch and NOS can participate in mechanical signaling, it is tempting to
93 speculate that mechanical-stress (stretch) regulates glucose uptake via a NOS-
94 dependent mechanism. However, to the best of our knowledge, no previous study has
95 investigated the role of NO in the regulation of this pathway.

96

97 Therefore, the aim of this study was to determine whether acute passive stretch
98 regulates glucose uptake via a NOS-dependent pathway. To determine this, we used
99 two genetically modified mouse models lacking either eNOS or nNOS μ and two
100 pharmacological NOS inhibitors which target all NOS isoforms. We hypothesized

101 that stretch-stimulated glucose uptake in mouse EDL muscle would be attenuated by
102 NOS inhibition and/or genetic deletion of nNOS μ .

103

104 **Materials and Methods**

105 *Animals*

106 All animal experimentation was conducted at the Institute of Sport, Exercise & Active
107 Living (ISEAL), Victoria University, Melbourne with the prior approval of the
108 Victoria University Animal Ethics Committee. Animal experimentation adhered to the
109 Australian Code of Practice for the use and care of animals for scientific purposes as
110 described by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) of
111 Australia. Thirteen- to sixteen-week-old C57BL/6, eNOS knockout (eNOS $^{-/-}$), and
112 nNOS μ knockout (nNOS $\mu^{-/-}$) mice were involved in this study. Six male mice lacking
113 eNOS (eNOS $^{-/-}$) (Monash Animal Services, Melbourne, Australia) and eight male
114 C57BL/6 mice (ARC, Perth, Australia) aged 14–16 weeks were used to examine the
115 role of eNOS. The eNOS $^{-/-}$ group was generated by using eNOS $^{-/-}$ breeding pairs and
116 therefore wildtype littermates (eNOS $^{+/+}$) were not produced. Since these mice were
117 generated on a C57BL/6 background we chose to use C57BL/6 mice as controls.
118 Seven nNOS $\mu^{-/-}$ mice and six wildtype littermates (nNOS $^{+/+}$) (male and female) aged
119 13–15 weeks were used to examine the role of nNOS μ . nNOS $\mu^{-/-}$ (B6, 129-
120 NOS1^{tm1plh}) mice were originally purchased from Jackson Laboratories (Bar Harbor,
121 ME, USA, stock no. 002633) (17) and backcrossed onto a C57BL/6 background for at
122 least six generations to obtain a colony of nNOS $^{-/-}$ and wild type littermate controls.
123 Male C57BL/6 mice aged 13–15 weeks (ARC, Perth, Australia) were used for NOS
124 inhibitor and NOS activity experiments. Mice were housed in standard cages and

125 maintained at 21°C on a 12-hour dark/light cycle with access to water and standard
126 rodent chow ad libitum. Mice were not fasted prior to sacrifice.

127

128 *Muscle incubations*

129 NOS inhibition in mice has previously been shown to attenuate the increase in
130 contraction-stimulated glucose uptake in extensor digitorum longus (EDL) muscles,
131 but not soleus muscles (32). In addition, electrical stimulations have been shown to
132 elevate levels of the NO downstream intermediate cGMP in EDL but not soleus
133 muscles (26). Therefore, only EDL muscles were examined in the present study. EDL
134 muscles were excised from anaesthetized mice (sodium pentobarbitone 70 mg/kg IP)
135 and suspended at resting length (~2–4 mN) (45) in organ baths (MultiMyograph
136 System; Danish Myotechnology, Aarhus, Denmark). All chemicals used were
137 purchased from Sigma-Aldrich (St. Louis, MO, USA) unless otherwise stated.
138 Muscles were pre-incubated for 30 min in Krebs-Ringer-Henseleit buffer consisting
139 of (mM): NaCl 118.5, NaHCO₃ 24.7, KCl 4.74, MgSO₄ 1.18, KH₂PO₄ 1.18, CaCl₂
140 2.5, (pH 7.4) supplemented with 0.01% BSA (Cat. # A2153), 8 mM mannitol and 2
141 mM sodium pyruvate. Incubation media was maintained at 30°C and continuously
142 oxygenated with gas containing 95% O₂ and 5% CO₂. Following the 30 min pre-
143 incubation period, muscles either remained at rest or were stretched to a tension of
144 100–130 mN for 15 minutes (44, 45). When the effects of the NOS inhibitors N^G-
145 monomethyl-L-arginine (L-NMMA, 100 μM) (12, 40), and N^G-nitro-L-arginine
146 methyl ester (L-NAME, 100 μM) (40) were examined, these inhibitors were present
147 during the entire 45 min incubation time. L-NMMA at this concentration has
148 previously been shown to attenuate the increase in NOS activity by ~90% (12, 31, 40)
149 and contraction-stimulated glucose uptake during contraction ex vivo in mouse EDL

150 by ~20-50% (14, 31, 32). L-NAME has previously been shown to exert a similar
151 dose-dependent inhibitory effect as L-NMMA on NOS activity in skeletal muscle
152 (40). Immediately following the 45-min experimental period, muscles were quickly
153 removed from the organ baths, washed in ice-cold Kreb's buffer, blotted dry on filter
154 paper, snap frozen in liquid nitrogen, and stored at -80°C for future analysis.

155

156 *Muscle processing*

157 To generate lysates for immunoblotting and NOS activity measurement, whole frozen
158 EDL muscles were homogenized in ice-cold buffer [50 mM Tris-HCl (pH 7.5), 1 mM
159 EDTA, 1 mM EGTA, 10% glycerol, 1% Triton X-100, 1 mM DTT, 1 mM
160 phenylmethylsulfonyl fluoride, 10 µg/ml aprotinin, 5 µl/ml protease inhibitor mixture,
161 50 mM sodium fluoride, and 5 mM sodium pyrophosphate] by steel beads for 2 x 30 s
162 30 Hz (TissueLyser, Qiagen, Valencia, CA), followed by end-over-end rotation for 30
163 min at 4°C. Homogenates were centrifuged at 10,000 g for 20 min at 4°C, and the
164 supernatant collected for NOS activity measurement. For immunoblotting, an aliquot
165 was collected prior to the centrifugation step and diluted in sample buffer (0.125 M
166 Tris-HCl [pH 6.8], 4% SDS, 10% glycerol, 10 mM EGTA, 0.1 M DTT and 0.01%
167 bromophenol blue) and heated at 95°C for 10 min before being subjected to SDS-
168 PAGE. Protein concentration was determined by the Red660 protein assay kit (G
169 Biosciences, St Louis, MO).

170

171 *Immunoblotting*

172 Total protein (5 µg) was separated by SDS-PAGE using stain-free gels (Bio-Rad,
173 Hercules, CA) and semi-dry transferred (TransBlot Turbo system, Bio-Rad) to PVDF
174 membranes. Prior to transfer, a stain-free image of the gel was collected to quantify

175 total protein loading. Stain-free gel analysis indicated that no differences in protein
176 loading were observed. Membranes were blocked for one hour at room temperature
177 (5% skim milk in TBST), before being probed overnight at 4°C with the following
178 primary antibodies: p-PAK1/2^{Thr423/Thr402} (1:500), p-P38 MAPK^{Thr180/Tyr182} (1:1000), p-
179 AMPK^{Thr172} (1:1000), and p-CaMKII^{Thr286} (1:1000) (Cell Signaling Technology). The
180 following day, membranes were incubated with HRP-secondary antibody for 1 hour at
181 room temperature. Protein bands were visualized using Bio-Rad ChemiDoc imaging
182 system and enhanced chemiluminescence substrate (SuperSignal West Femto, Pierce,
183 MA), and quantified using ImageLab software (Bio-Rad). Analysis of protein bands
184 were normalized to stain-free quantification of protein loading.

185

186 *NOS activity and glucose uptake measurements*

187 NOS activity was determined on muscle lysates in duplicate by measuring the
188 conversion of L-[¹⁴C] arginine to L-[¹⁴C] citrulline (14, 27). Muscle glucose uptake
189 was calculated during the final 10 minutes of stretch or basal conditions by
190 exchanging the incubation buffer with buffer containing 1 mM 2-deoxy-D-[1,2-³H]
191 glucose (0.128 μCi/mL) and 8 mM D-[¹⁴C] mannitol (0.083 μCi/mL) (Perkin Elmer,
192 Boston, MA) as described previously (14).

193

194 *Statistical analysis*

195 All data are expressed as mean ± SEM. Statistical analyses were performed using
196 GraphPad Prism 6.0 software. Glucose uptake was analyzed using one (treatment)-
197 and two (treatment and genotype)-factor ANOVA. Fisher's least significance
198 difference test was performed if the ANOVA revealed a significant difference.
199 Student's t-test was used to compare morphological characteristics between each

200 genotype and its relevant control, NOS activity and protein phosphorylation. The
201 significance level was set at $P < 0.05$.

202

203 **RESULTS**

204 *Morphology characteristics of NOS knockout mice*

205 Body mass was not different between C57BL/6 control mice and eNOS^{-/-} mice (28.1
206 ± 0.8 vs. 27.4 ± 1.3 g; $P = 0.65$; $n = 6-8$) or between nNOS $\mu^{+/+}$ and nNOS $\mu^{-/-}$ mice
207 (24.1 ± 1.1 vs. 22.4 ± 0.6 g; $P = 0.17$ $n = 6-7$). EDL muscle mass was significantly
208 lower in nNOS $\mu^{-/-}$ compared with nNOS $\mu^{+/+}$ mice (7.1 ± 0.2 vs. 8.6 ± 0.3 mg; $P <$
209 0.001 ; $n = 12-14$), whereas EDL mass was similar between C57BL/6 control mice and
210 eNOS^{-/-} mice (10.5 ± 0.4 vs. 10.1 ± 0.4 mg; $P = 0.49$ $n = 11-15$).

211

212 *Stretch-stimulated glucose uptake*

213 To investigate the involvement of NOS in the regulation of glucose uptake in
214 response to mechanical loading, we examined the effects on stretch-stimulated
215 glucose uptake in EDL muscle of 1) pharmacological NOS inhibition, and 2) deletion
216 of either eNOS or nNOS μ . In muscles from C57BL/6 mice, passive stretch
217 significantly increased glucose uptake approximately 2-fold compared with basal
218 levels ($P < 0.001$) (Figure 1). Stretch-stimulated glucose uptake was unaffected by the
219 presence of either of the NOS inhibitors L-NMMA or L-NAME (Figure 1). In
220 muscles from eNOS^{-/-} mice, stretch increased glucose uptake approximately 2-fold
221 from basal levels ($P < 0.001$) with a similar increase observed in C57BL/6 control
222 mice (Figure 2A). Stretch also increased glucose uptake approximately 2-fold in
223 muscles from nNOS $\mu^{-/-}$ and nNOS $\mu^{+/+}$ mice ($P < 0.001$). There was a main effect for
224 nNOS $\mu^{-/-}$ indicating that muscles from these mice had elevated basal and stretch-

225 activated glucose uptake compared with controls ($P = 0.02$) (Figure 2B). The delta
226 stretch-stimulated glucose uptake (the difference between basal and stretch values)
227 was similar between $nNOS\mu^{-/-}$ and $nNOS\mu^{+/+}$. These results indicate that NOS is not
228 necessary for normal increases in stretch-stimulated muscle glucose uptake.

229

230 *Effect of stretch on NOS activity and protein signaling*

231 Stretch did not increase skeletal muscle NOS activity above basal levels (measure of
232 contribution from both eNOS and nNOS) in EDL muscles from C57BL/6 mice
233 (Figure 3A). This was consistent with the lack of effect of deletion of $nNOS\mu$ or
234 eNOS, and the lack of effect of NOS inhibition on stretch-stimulated skeletal muscle
235 glucose uptake. To confirm that our stretch protocol did actually activate pathways
236 previously shown to be activated by stretch (5, 23, 45), we examined the
237 phosphorylation status of p38 MAPK as well as the activation of the cytoskeletal
238 regulator Rac1 (22) by examining phosphorylation of the Rac1 downstream kinase
239 PAK1/2 (44, 45, 51). Consistent with previous studies, stretch significantly increased
240 the phosphorylation status of $PAK1/2^{Thr423/402}$ and $p38\ MAPK^{Thr180/Tyr182}$ (~2-fold) (P
241 < 0.05) (Figure 3B and C) (5, 23, 44, 45). Skeletal muscle $p\text{-AMPK}^{Thr172}$ did not
242 increase with stretch which was also consistent with previous research (5, 23, 45)
243 (Figure 3D). Likewise, stretch also failed to increase $p\text{-CaMKII}^{Thr286}$ (Figure 3E).

244

245 **DISCUSSION**

246 The major finding of this study was that skeletal muscle stretch-induced increases in
247 glucose uptake are independent of NOS. Given that stretch activated Rac1 (as shown
248 by increased PAK1/2 phosphorylation) but did not activate NOS, it appears that
249 although $nNOS\mu$ is part of the dystrophin glycoprotein complex and linked to the

250 cytoskeleton, stretch induces glucose uptake via the cytoskeleton independently of
251 nNOS μ . In addition, eNOS is also not required for this process.

252

253 The lack of NOS activation in EDL muscles following stretch is in contrast with other
254 muscle models whereby stretch increased NO production (43, 47, 48, 54, 55). A key
255 difference is that most of these studies were conducted in cultured muscle cells where
256 a much longer stretching/loading protocol (1 – 48 hours) was applied. Therefore, the
257 increased NO production reported in these chronic stretch studies may have reflected
258 an increased NOS protein content (55) rather than activation of the existing NOS. To
259 our knowledge, only one previous study examined whether acute stretching was
260 sufficient to stimulate NO production in mature intact muscle (48). Tidball and
261 colleagues (48) reported a significant increase (~20%) in NO production from isolated
262 rat soleus muscles following a brief stretch (2 min). In the present study, NO
263 production probably did not increase with stretch-stimulation given that NOS activity
264 was not enhanced above resting levels. This inference is in agreement with a previous
265 study where stretched single mature muscle fibers (10 min) loaded with a NO-
266 sensitive fluorescent probe (DAF-FM), which allowed for a more direct NO
267 estimation, did not have an increase in NO production (33). It is possible, however,
268 that static stretching stimulates an initial burst of NOS activity/NO production that
269 diminishes rapidly over time and was therefore not detected at the time of muscle
270 harvest in our study (15 min). Indeed, it has been shown that shear stress applied to
271 endothelial cells resulted in a marked increase in NO production within 5 minutes
272 followed by little additional NO production thereafter (6). In another study, muscle
273 NOS activity was significantly elevated 3 minutes following the induction of
274 increased load applied to plantaris muscles in mice, and despite the continued load,

275 NOS activity returned to baseline levels within 1 hour (19). That study is difficult to
276 interpret, however, given that tendons of synergist muscles were ablated resulting in
277 “functional overload” of plantaris muscle and the time of overload was defined as 3
278 minutes after mice started walking post-surgery (19). In our study, it should also be
279 noted that we did not measure the muscle length required to achieve the passive
280 tension of 100-130 mN. It is possible that loss of NOS isoforms, or the presence of
281 NOS inhibitors could have affected the amount of stretch that was required to be
282 applied to the muscle to achieve the desired passive tension. Nevertheless, the lack of
283 increase in NOS activity with stretch fits with the observation that stretch-stimulated
284 glucose uptake was not attenuated by NOS inhibitors or a lack of nNOS μ or eNOS.

285

286 The mechanism(s) by which NOS regulates contraction-stimulated glucose uptake
287 remains to be determined. Since there is emerging evidence glucose uptake is largely
288 regulated by distinct metabolic (AMPK)- and mechanical-dependent (Rac1) signaling
289 arms during muscle contraction (23, 46), in this study we examined the potential
290 involvement of NOS in a mechanical-dependent signaling pathway. The lack of
291 involvement of NOS in stretch-stimulated glucose uptake and Rac1 activation
292 indicates that NOS is not involved in the mechanical signaling arm, and by extension
293 the possibility that NOS regulates glucose uptake during contraction via a mechanism
294 coupled with metabolic disturbances. However, this would likely not involve AMPK
295 (46) given we have previously shown that NOS appears to regulate muscle glucose
296 uptake during contraction independently of AMPK (30, 32). Nonetheless, it is
297 important to note that in a recent study (46), although contraction-stimulated glucose
298 uptake was largely attenuated by blockade of both metabolic (AMPK) and mechanical
299 (Rac1) signaling, some increase in glucose uptake with contraction was maintained,

300 indicating other signaling pathways are likely at play. For example, mTORC2
301 signaling has been shown to be essential for muscle glucose uptake during exercise in
302 mice independent of AMPK and Rac1 signaling (25). Therefore, further work is
303 required to examine the potential involvement of NOS in other signaling pathways
304 during contraction.

305

306 The activation of Rac1 by contraction and stretch is associated with an increase in
307 glucose transport in muscle (44, 45), however, the upstream signaling events involved
308 are largely unknown. Rac1 contains a redox-sensitive motif and it has been reported
309 that activation of Rac1 is favored in the presence of reactive nitrogen species (11).
310 Exposure of C2C12 cells to a NO donor has previously been shown to induce the
311 rapid activation of Rac1 and phosphorylation of its downstream kinase PAK1 (8),
312 indicating that NO is sufficient to stimulate Rac1 activation. Conversely, nNOS and
313 eNOS have been reported to be activated by Rac1 in human aortic endothelial cells
314 (41). These results suggest that NO/NOS could be upstream and/or downstream of
315 Rac1. We measured PAK1 phosphorylation as a surrogate for Rac1 activity and to
316 investigate possible associations between NO and Rac1/PAK1 pathway. Our data
317 indicate that NO is not necessary for Rac1 activation during stretching and vice versa,
318 given that we observed an increase in stretch-stimulated phosphorylation of PAK1
319 (and presumably Rac1 activity) without changes in NOS activation. Nonetheless,
320 future work is required to clarify whether a NO-Rac1 interaction exists in skeletal
321 muscle under situations where NO bioavailability is increased, such as during muscle
322 contractions (14).

323

324 Ca^{2+} /Calmodulin-dependent kinase II (CaMKII) has also been implicated in the
325 regulation of muscle glucose uptake during contractions in mature muscle in situ (52),
326 however, the inability of stretch to enhance the levels of phosphorylated CaMKII^{Thr286}
327 in our study suggest that CaMKII is not coupled with mechanical signaling
328 mechanisms. This contrasts with a study where stretch-stimulated glucose uptake in
329 C2C12 myotubes was blocked by a CaMK inhibitor (21). However, as discussed
330 above, the pathways regulating stretch-stimulated glucose uptake potentially differ
331 between in vitro and ex vivo models.

332

333 In conclusion, we have shown that passive stretching does not increase NOS activity
334 in skeletal muscle and stretch-stimulated glucose uptake is not attenuated by either
335 pharmacological inhibition of NOS or by deletion of eNOS or nNOS μ isoforms.
336 Therefore, our results indicate that NOS signaling is not required for stretch-induced
337 increases in skeletal muscle glucose uptake.

338

339 **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

340 J.P.K., A.C.B., J.L., and G.K.M. contributed to the study design; J.P.K., performed
341 experiments; J.P.K. and A.C.B., performed laboratory analysis; J.P.K., A.C.B., and
342 G.K.M interpreted findings; J.P.K. drafted the manuscript and all authors edited,
343 revised, and approved final version of manuscript.

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- 530

531 **FIGURE LEGENDS**

532

533 **Figure 1. NOS inhibition does not attenuate stretch-stimulated skeletal muscle**
534 **glucose uptake.** Stretch-stimulated 2-deoxyglucose uptake in EDL muscles from
535 C57BL/6 mice incubated for 30 min with or without the NOS inhibitors L-NMMA
536 (100 μ M) or L-NAME (100 μ M) (n = 4-10 per group). Data are means \pm SEM. *** P
537 < 0.001 vs. Basal.

538

539 **Figure 2. Deletion of eNOS or nNOS μ does not affect stretch-stimulated skeletal**
540 **muscle glucose uptake.** 2-deoxyglucose uptake at rest (basal) and during stretch in
541 EDL muscles of A) C57BL/6 and eNOS^{-/-} mice (n = 5-9 per group) and B) nNOS μ ^{+/+}
542 and nNOS μ ^{-/-} mice (n = 6-7 per group). Data are means \pm SEM. *** P < 0.001
543 compared to basal. § P < 0.05 main effect for genotype.

544

545 **Figure 3. Passive stretch increases phosphorylation of skeletal muscle PAK1/2**
546 **and p38 MAPK independently of NOS activation.** A) NOS activity of EDL
547 muscles at rest (basal) or following passive stretch (n = 4 per group). Immunoblot
548 quantifications for B) p-PAK1/2^{Thr423/402}, C) p-p38 MAPK^{Thr180/Tyr182}, D) p-
549 AMPK^{Thr172}, E) p-CaMKII^{Thr286}, and E) representative immunoblots of EDL muscles
550 at rest (basal) or following passive stretch (n = 4 per group). Data are means \pm
551 S.E.M.* P < 0.05 vs. Basal.

552

FIGURE 1

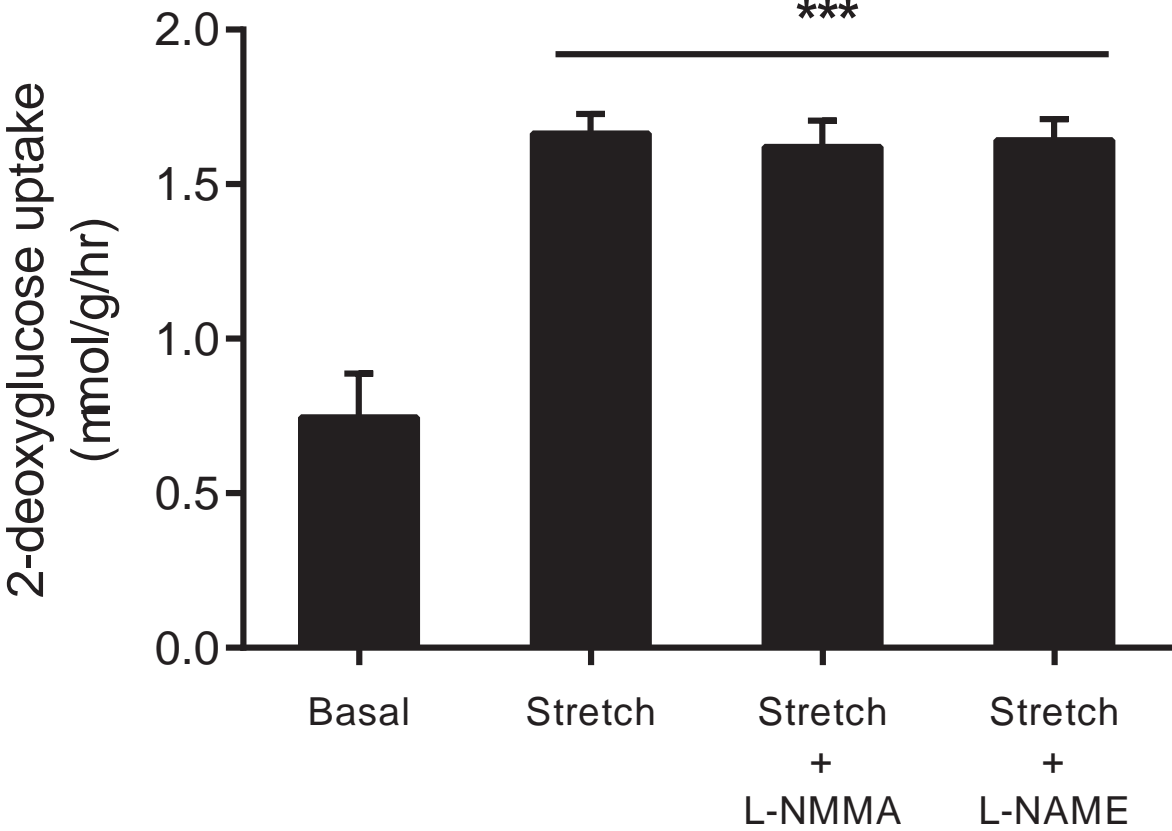
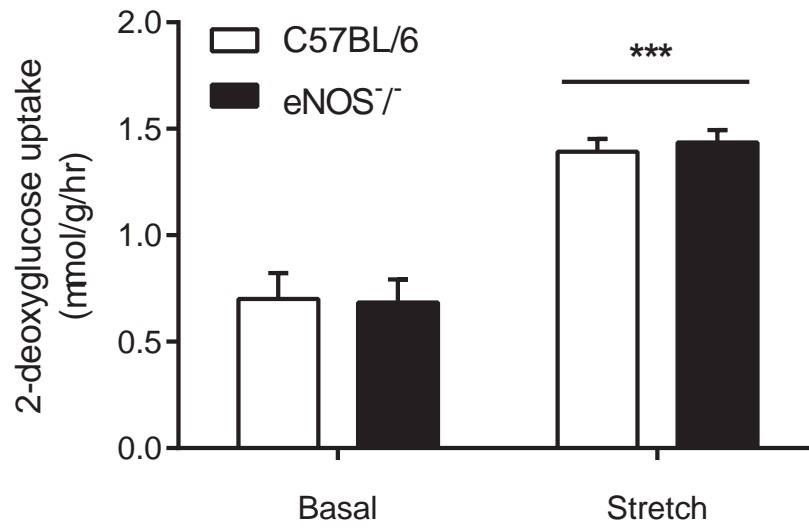


FIGURE 2

A



B

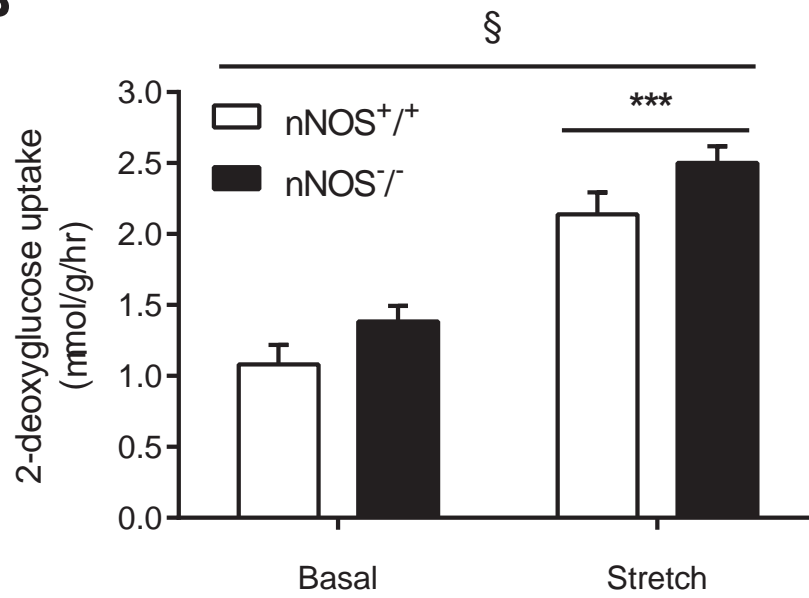
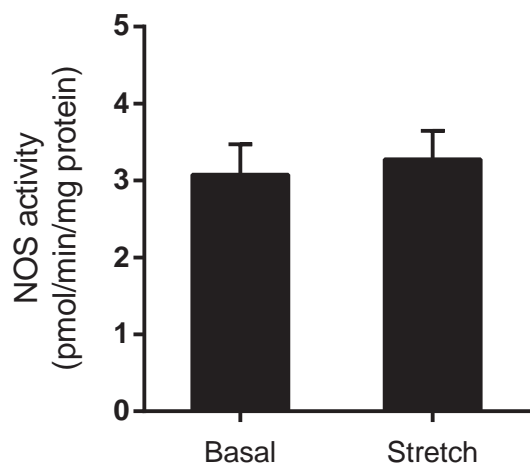
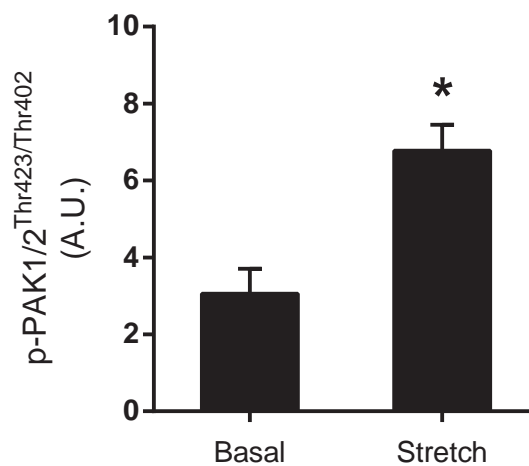


FIGURE 3

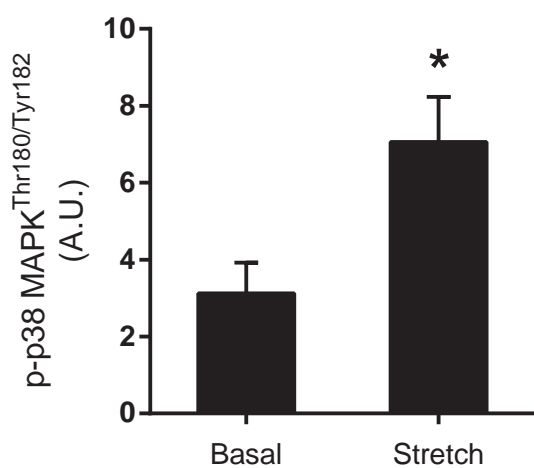
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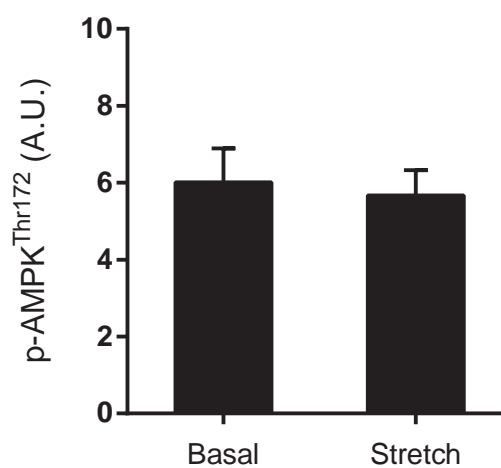
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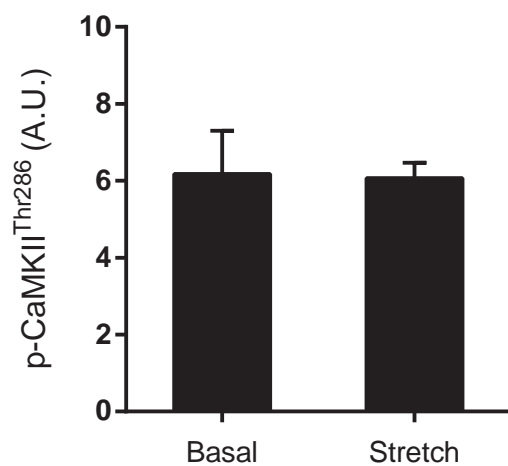
C



D



E



F

