A Comprehensive Computational Model of Renal Function and Blood Pressure Regulation Integrating Cardiovascular, Hormonal, and Neural Mechanisms

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EE798Q: Systems Medicine — Final Project Report
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April 24, 2025

Abstract

Blood pressure homeostasis, the maintenance of stable blood pressure, is crucial for human health and relies on a complex interplay between the cardiovascular system, the kidneys, various hormones, and the nervous system. Disruptions in this delicate balance can lead to serious conditions like hypertension. Understanding these intricate interactions is key to diagnosing and treating such diseases. This report presents a project focused on developing and simulating a comprehensive computational model of blood pressure regulation.

Implemented in Python using libraries like NumPy, SciPy, and Matplotlib, the model integrates key physiological components: systemic hemodynamics (blood pressure, cardiac output), detailed renal function (glomerular filtration, water and sodium handling in different kidney tubule segments), the renin–angiotensin–aldosterone system (RAAS), antidiuretic hormone (ADH) regulation, and importantly, autonomic neural control mediated by the baroreceptor reflex (sensing pressure changes) and the sympathetic/parasympathetic nervous systems.

The model is formulated as a system of 26 coupled ordinary differential equations (ODEs), capturing the dynamic changes in physiological variables over time. These equations were solved numerically over a simulated 24 h period to observe the system's behavior under baseline conditions, including the influence of circadian rhythms.

The simulation results demonstrate the model's ability to achieve stable hemodynamics, maintaining blood pressure, blood volume, and electrolyte concentrations within expected physiological ranges. The model realistically captures the dynamic responses of hormones like renin, angiotensin II, aldosterone, and ADH, as well as neural activity (sympathetic/parasympathetic tone, heart rate). The analysis highlights the critical roles of various feedback loops operating on different timescales.

This computational model serves as a valuable tool for studying the complex mechanisms of blood pressure control. It provides a platform for further research, allowing for the exploration of physiological hypotheses, simulation of disease states, and investigation of potential therapeutic interventions in a virtual environment. The project underscores the power of systems modeling in understanding integrated biological processes.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Motivation and Background

The human body possesses remarkable mechanisms to maintain a stable internal environment, a concept known as homeostasis. Among the most critical regulated variables is arterial blood pressure. Adequate pressure is essential to drive blood flow and deliver oxygen and nutrients to tissues throughout the body, while excessively high pressure (hypertension) imposes strain on the heart and blood vessels, leading to significant health risks like heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, and vision loss [2].

Blood pressure regulation involves a sophisticated coordination of multiple physiological systems operating across different timescales:

- **Short-term (seconds to minutes):** The autonomic nervous system, primarily through the baroreceptor reflex, makes rapid adjustments to heart rate, cardiac contractility, and the constriction/dilation of blood vessels [5].
- **Intermediate-term (minutes to hours):** Hormonal systems like the renin–angiotensin–aldosterone system (RAAS) become active, influencing vascular tone and instructing the kidneys to retain or excrete salt and water [3]. Other hormones like ADH (vasopressin) also play a role in adjusting water balance and vascular tone.
- **Long-term (hours to days and beyond):** The kidneys exert dominant control by adjusting the body's total fluid volume. The principle of pressure natriuresis dictates that higher blood pressure leads to increased excretion of sodium and water, thereby reducing fluid volume and lowering pressure, forming a powerful long-term feedback loop [1].

The intricate nature of these overlapping control systems, involving numerous feedback and feedforward loops, makes it challenging to intuitively predict the overall system behavior or the consequences of specific malfunctions. Hypertension, for instance, often arises from subtle dysfunctions within these regulatory networks [3].

1.2 Project Goal and Approach

The primary goal of this project was to develop and simulate a comprehensive computational model that integrates the key cardiovascular, renal, hormonal, and neural mechanisms responsible for blood pressure regulation. Such a model can serve several purposes:

- To deepen understanding of the complex interactions governing blood pressure homeostasis.
- To simulate the dynamic responses of the system over time, including circadian variations.
- To potentially serve as a basis for simulating disease states or the effects of interventions in future work.

To achieve this, a systems physiology approach was adopted. The relevant biological components were represented mathematically, primarily using ordinary differential equations (ODEs) to describe how key variables change over time. These equations capture the known physiological relationships and feedback mechanisms. The model was implemented in Python, leveraging the scientific computing capabilities of the SciPy library [7] for numerical integration of the ODEs and Matplotlib for visualizing the results. This report details the structure of the model, its mathematical underpinnings, the simulation setup, and analyzes the results obtained from a 24 h baseline simulation.

2 Model Description

The computational model is designed to simulate the dynamic interactions between the major physiological systems involved in blood pressure regulation. It follows a modular structure, representing distinct functional units that communicate through shared state variables. Figure 1 provides a high-level conceptual view.

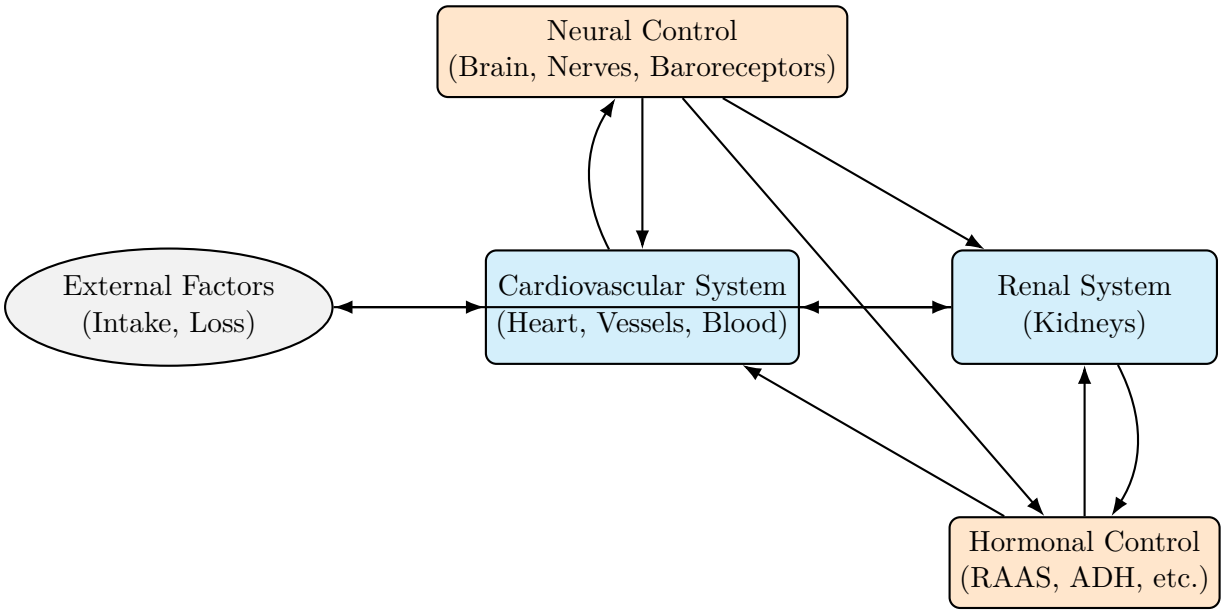

Figure 1: High-level overview of the major interacting systems involved in blood pressure regulation as represented in the model.

2.1 System Components

The model is composed of four primary interacting subsystems, each tracking several key variables:

2.1.1 Cardiovascular System

This module simulates the mechanics of blood circulation.

- **Mean Arterial Pressure (MAP):** The central variable representing average arterial pressure, dynamically determined by Cardiac Output (CO) and Total Peripheral Resistance (TPR). Target nominal MAP is 93 mmHg.
- **Cardiac Output (CO):** The volume of blood pumped by the heart per minute (nominal 5 L/min). Calculated as Heart Rate (HR) × Stroke Volume (SV). Both HR and SV are influenced by autonomic neural signals. A lagged version, `cardiac_output_delayed`, and an error term, `CO_error`, are used in some internal calculations.
- **Blood Volume (BV):** Total circulating blood volume (nominal 5 L). Changes based on the balance between fluid intake (constant rate assumed) and water excretion by the kidneys. A component representing water volume, `blood_volume_water`, is also tracked.
- **Total Peripheral Resistance (TPR):** The overall resistance to blood flow in the systemic circulation. It is influenced by the baseline resistance of vessels, vasoconstriction/dilation signals from Angiotensin II (AngII) and the sympathetic nervous system, and local tissue autoregulation mechanisms.

2.1.2 Renal System

This module simulates the kidney's filtration and transport functions.

- **Renal Vasculature:** Models resistances in the kidney's arterioles (`preafferent_arteriole_resistance`, `afferent_resistance`, `efferent_arteriole_resistance`). These resistances are dynamically adjusted based on MAP (autoregulation), AngII levels (efferent constriction), and Renal Sympathetic Nerve Activity (RSNA, afferent constriction).
- **Glomerular Filtration Rate (GFR):** The rate at which fluid is filtered from blood into the kidney tubules (nominal 120 mL/min). Calculated based on glomerular pressure, Bowman's capsule pressure, oncotic pressure, and the filtration coefficient (K_f). GFR is subject to circadian variation.
- **Tubular Function:** Simulates water and sodium (Na^+) handling along the nephron:
  - *Proximal Tubule:* Reabsorbs about 67% of filtered Na^+ and water. Influenced by AngII and RSNA (`proximal_tubule_Na_reab_frac_nom`).
  - *Loop of Henle:* Reabsorbs about 25% of filtered Na^+. Crucial for creating the medullary osmotic gradient. Water reabsorption in the descending limb is influenced by ADH (`loop_henle_Na_reab_frac_nom`).
  - *Distal Tubule & Collecting Duct:* Site of fine-tuned regulation. Reabsorb the remaining ∼8% of filtered Na^+. Highly sensitive to Aldosterone (increases Na^+ reabsorption) and ADH (increases water reabsorption). Also influenced by RSNA (`distal_tubule_Na_reab_frac_nom`, `collecting_duct_Na_reab_frac_nom`).
- **Urine Output:** The final volume of urine and amount of excreted Na^+ depend on the net balance of filtration and reabsorption. The rate of Na^+ delivery to the distal tubule (`distal_Na_delivery`) is an important signal regulating renin release.

2.1.3 Hormonal Regulation

This module simulates key endocrine pathways.

- **Renin–Angiotensin–Aldosterone System (RAAS):**
  - *Renin:* An enzyme released by the kidneys. Release is stimulated by low renal perfusion pressure, low `distal_Na_delivery` (sensed by the macula densa), and RSNA. Exhibits circadian variation.
  - *Angiotensin I (AngI):* Peptide produced when renin acts on angiotensinogen (a liver protein).
  - *Angiotensin II (AngII):* Potent vasoactive peptide produced from AngI by Angiotensin-Converting Enzyme (ACE). Causes systemic vasoconstriction (increasing TPR), constricts efferent arterioles in the kidney, stimulates aldosterone and ADH release, and enhances proximal tubule Na^+ reabsorption. ACE activity (`ACE_activity`) is tracked.
  - *Aldosterone:* Steroid hormone released from the adrenal cortex. Stimulated primarily by AngII and high plasma potassium (K^+) levels. Increases Na^+ reabsorption (and K^+ secretion) in the distal tubule and collecting duct. Exhibits circadian variation.
- **Antidiuretic Hormone (ADH / Vasopressin):** Peptide hormone released from the posterior pituitary. Release is stimulated by increased plasma osmolarity (most sensitive trigger), significantly decreased blood volume or pressure, and sympathetic activity. Increases water permeability of the collecting ducts, allowing water reabsorption and concentrating the urine.

The concentrations of these hormones change over time based on their release rates and metabolic clearance rates (represented by time constants τ).

2.1.4 Neural Control System

This module, defined in `neural_mechanisms.py`, simulates the autonomic nervous system's role.

- **Baroreceptor Reflex:** Specialized nerve endings in the carotid arteries and aorta sense the stretch caused by MAP. Increased stretch leads to increased firing rate (`baroreceptor_firing_rate`).
- **Autonomic Tone:** The baroreceptor signal is processed in the brainstem, which adjusts the balance between sympathetic (`sympathetic_tone`) and parasympathetic (`parasympathetic_tone`) outflow. High MAP inhibits sympathetic and excites parasympathetic tone, and vice versa. The speed of these adjustments is governed by time constants (τ_{symp}, τ_{para}).
- **Cardiovascular Effects:** Sympathetic tone increases HR and cardiac contractility (affecting SV), constricts systemic arterioles (increasing TPR), and constricts veins (increasing venous return). Parasympathetic tone primarily decreases HR.
- **Renal Sympathetic Nerve Activity (RSNA):** The component of sympathetic outflow specifically targeting the kidneys (`renal_symp_nerve_activity`). Increased RSNA constricts renal arterioles (especially afferent), directly stimulates renin release, and enhances Na^+ reabsorption by kidney tubules.

2.2 Feedback and Feedforward Loops

The stability of blood pressure relies on numerous interconnected feedback loops. The model incorporates several key ones:

2.2.1 Major Negative Feedback Loops

1. **Baroreceptor Reflex Loop:** (See Figure 2)
   - *Function:* Rapid buffering of MAP fluctuations.
   - *Stimulus:* Change in Mean Arterial Pressure (MAP).
   - *Sensor:* Arterial baroreceptors.
   - *Pathway:* Firing rate → Brainstem → Symp/Para outflow.
   - *Effectors & Response:* Changes in HR, Contractility, TPR counter the initial MAP change.
   - *Timescale:* Seconds to minutes.
2. **Renin-Angiotensin-Aldosterone System (RAAS) Loop:** (See Figure 3)
   - *Function:* Intermediate/long-term regulation of MAP and blood volume.
   - *Stimulus:* Decreased renal perfusion pressure (RPP), decreased NaCl delivery to macula densa, increased sympathetic activity (RSNA).
   - *Sensor:* Juxtaglomerular apparatus (JGA).
   - *Pathway:* ↑Renin → ↑AngI → ↑AngII.
   - *Effectors & Response:* AngII (↑TPR, ↑Aldo, ↑Na/H2O Reab), Aldo (↑Na/H2O Reab) → ↑BV, ↑MAP.
   - *Timescale:* Minutes to hours.
3. **ADH (Vasopressin) Osmotic Loop:** (See Figure 4)
   - *Function:* Primarily regulates plasma osmolarity.

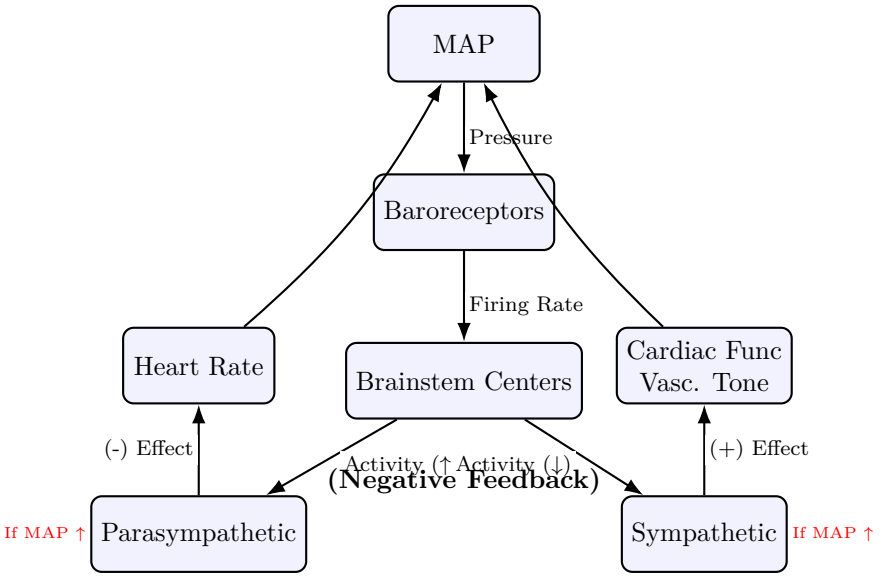

Figure 2: Simplified Baroreceptor Reflex Loop. Arrows indicate influence; (+) activation, (-) inhibition relative to baseline for an *increase* in MAP. Effect on MAP is corrective.

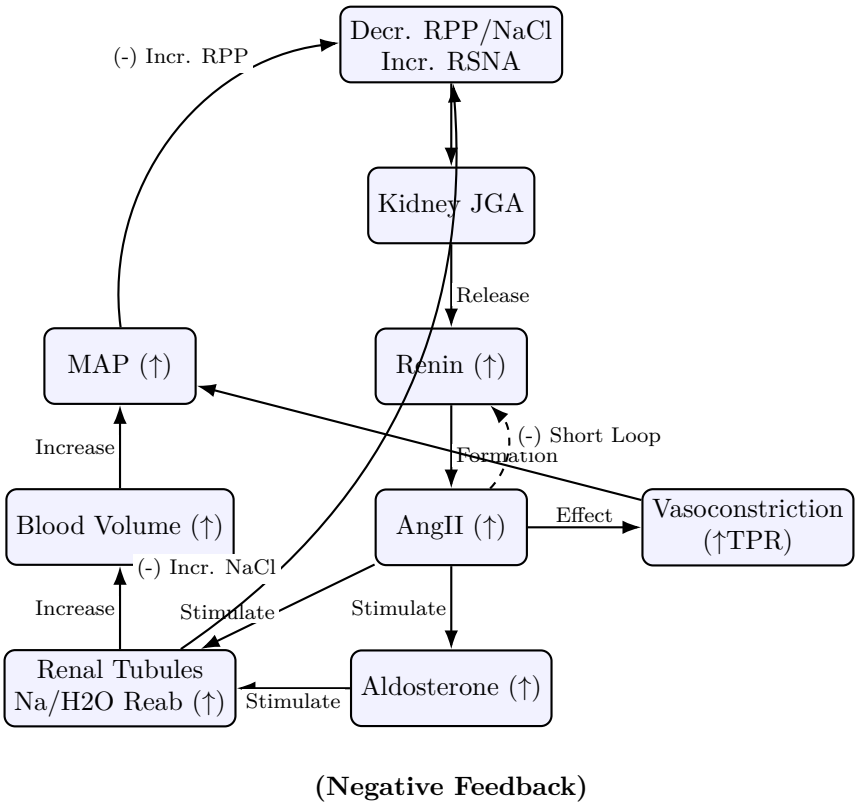

Figure 3: Simplified Renin-Angiotensin-Aldosterone System (RAAS) Loop.

- *Stimulus:* Increased plasma osmolarity.
- *Sensor:* Hypothalamic osmoreceptors.
- *Pathway:* → ↑ADH release.
- *Effector & Response:* ↑Collecting duct water permeability → ↑Water reabsorption → ↓Plasma osmolarity.
- *Timescale:* Rapid release (minutes).

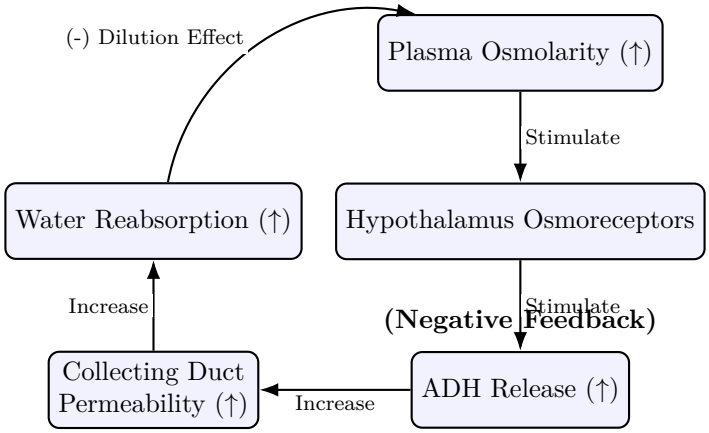

Figure 4: Simplified ADH Osmotic Control Loop.

4. **ADH (Vasopressin) Volume/Pressure Loop:** (See Figure 5)
    - *Function:* Backup for severe volume loss/hypotension.
    - *Stimulus:* Large decrease in Blood Volume or MAP.
    - *Sensor:* Baroreceptors.
    - *Pathway:* → ↑ADH release.
    - *Effector & Response:* ↑Water reabsorption (↑BV), Vasoconstriction (↑TPR) → ↑MAP.
    - *Timescale:* Triggered by significant changes (minutes).

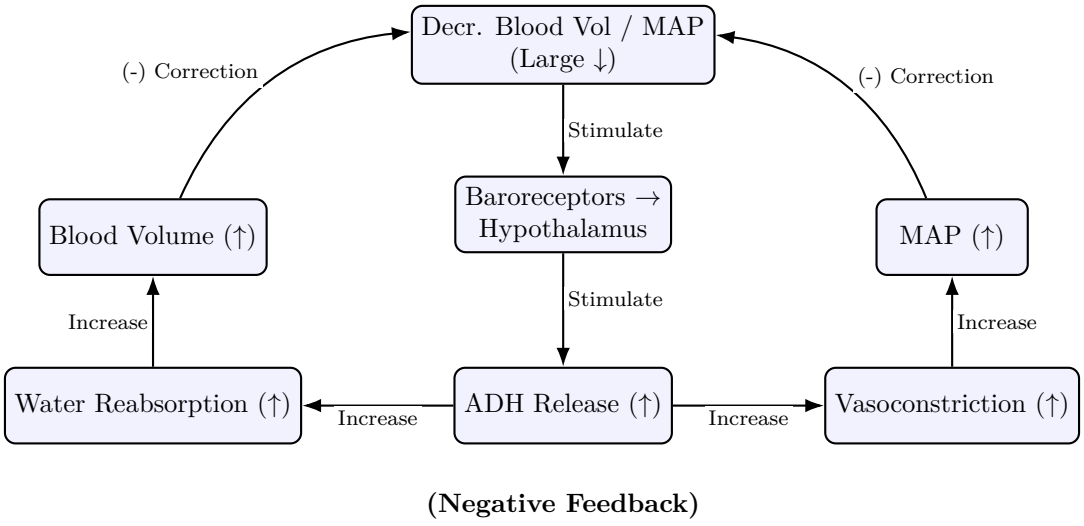

Figure 5: Simplified ADH Volume/Pressure Control Loop.

5. **Pressure Natriuresis/Diuresis Loop:** (See Figure 6)

- *Function:* Dominant long-term MAP regulation.
- *Stimulus:* Increased MAP.
- *Sensor/Effector:* Kidney.
- *Pathway:* ↑MAP → Intrarenal changes → ↓Fractional Na/H2O Reabsorption.
- *Response:* ↑Urine Excretion → ↓BV → ↓CO → ↓MAP.
- *Timescale:* Hours to days.

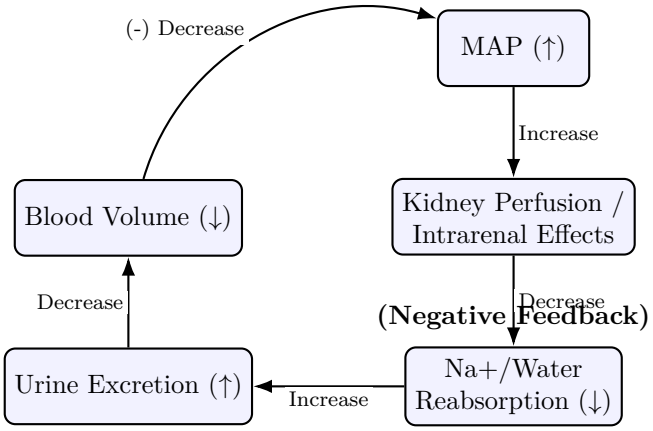

Figure 6: Simplified Pressure Natriuresis/Diuresis Loop.

6. **Tubuloglomerular Feedback (TGF):** (See Figure 7)

- *Function:* Stabilizes single nephron GFR.
- *Stimulus:* Increased NaCl at macula densa (from ↑GFR).
- *Sensor:* Macula densa.
- *Pathway:* Signal → Afferent arteriole.
- *Effector & Response:* Afferent constriction → ↓Glomerular pressure → ↓GFR.
- *Timescale:* Seconds to minutes.

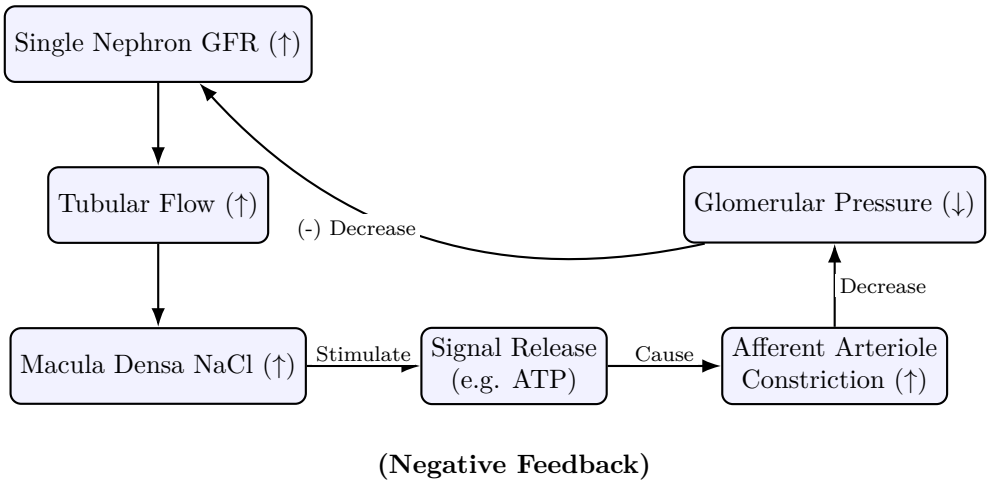

Figure 7: Simplified Tubuloglomerular Feedback (TGF) Loop.

2.2.2 Feedforward and Modulatory Influences

- **Neural Feedforward:** Central command (e.g., during exercise anticipation or stress) can directly increase sympathetic outflow independently of baroreceptor input, preparing the cardiovascular system for increased demand.
- **Circadian Rhythms:** An internal biological clock imposes daily variations on MAP (dipping during sleep), hormone levels (RAAS, cortisol peak in early morning), GFR, and sympathetic activity. This is modeled via a sinusoidal factor affecting GFR and hormone release rates.
- **Hormonal Interactions:** AngII stimulates both Aldosterone and ADH. Aldosterone action is modulated by plasma K^+.
- **Neural-Hormonal Coupling:** Sympathetic activity (RSNA) is a direct stimulus for Renin release and also contributes to ADH release, linking the fast neural system to slower hormonal responses.

The interplay of these multiple loops, operating at different speeds and sensitivities, creates the robust yet dynamic system that maintains blood pressure.

2.3 Mathematical Formulation

The dynamic behavior of the model is captured by a system of 26 coupled ordinary differential equations (ODEs). Each equation describes the rate of change ($\mathrm{d}/\mathrm{d}t$) of a specific state variable ($\mathbf{y}$) as a function (f) of time (t) and the current values of all state variables:

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}\mathbf{y}}{\mathrm{d}t} = f(t, \mathbf{y})$$

This system is implemented within the `derivatives` method of the `RenalModel` class in the Python code (`renal_model.py`). The following subsections present representative equations, simplified for clarity, to illustrate the mathematical structure for key subsystems. Variable names in brackets (e.g., [MAP]) denote the value of that state variable. Terms like WaterIntakeRate represent algebraic calculations based on current state and parameters.

2.3.1 Hemodynamics

The core hemodynamic variables evolve according to:

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}[\mathrm{BV}]}{\mathrm{d}t} = \mathrm{WaterIntakeRate} - \mathrm{UrineOutputRate} \tag{1}$$

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}[\mathrm{MAP}]}{\mathrm{d}t} = \frac{1}{\tau_{\mathrm{MAP}}}(\mathrm{CO}_{\mathrm{current}} \times \mathrm{TPR} - [\mathrm{MAP}]) \quad \text{(Effective dynamics)} \tag{2}$$

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}[\mathrm{CO}_{\mathrm{delayed}}]}{\mathrm{d}t} = \frac{1}{\tau_{\mathrm{CO}}}(\mathrm{CO}_{\mathrm{current}} - [\mathrm{CO}_{\mathrm{delayed}}]) \tag{3}$$

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}[\mathrm{CO}_{\mathrm{error}}]}{\mathrm{d}t} = \mathrm{CO}_{\mathrm{current}} - \mathrm{CO}_{\mathrm{nom}} \tag{4}$$

Here, $\mathrm{CO}_{\mathrm{current}}$ and TPR are calculated algebraically at each time step based on current BV, HR, SV, autonomic tones, AngII levels, etc., as detailed in the `calculate_systemic_hemodynamics` method. τ_{MAP} and τ_{CO} represent effective time constants for these variables.

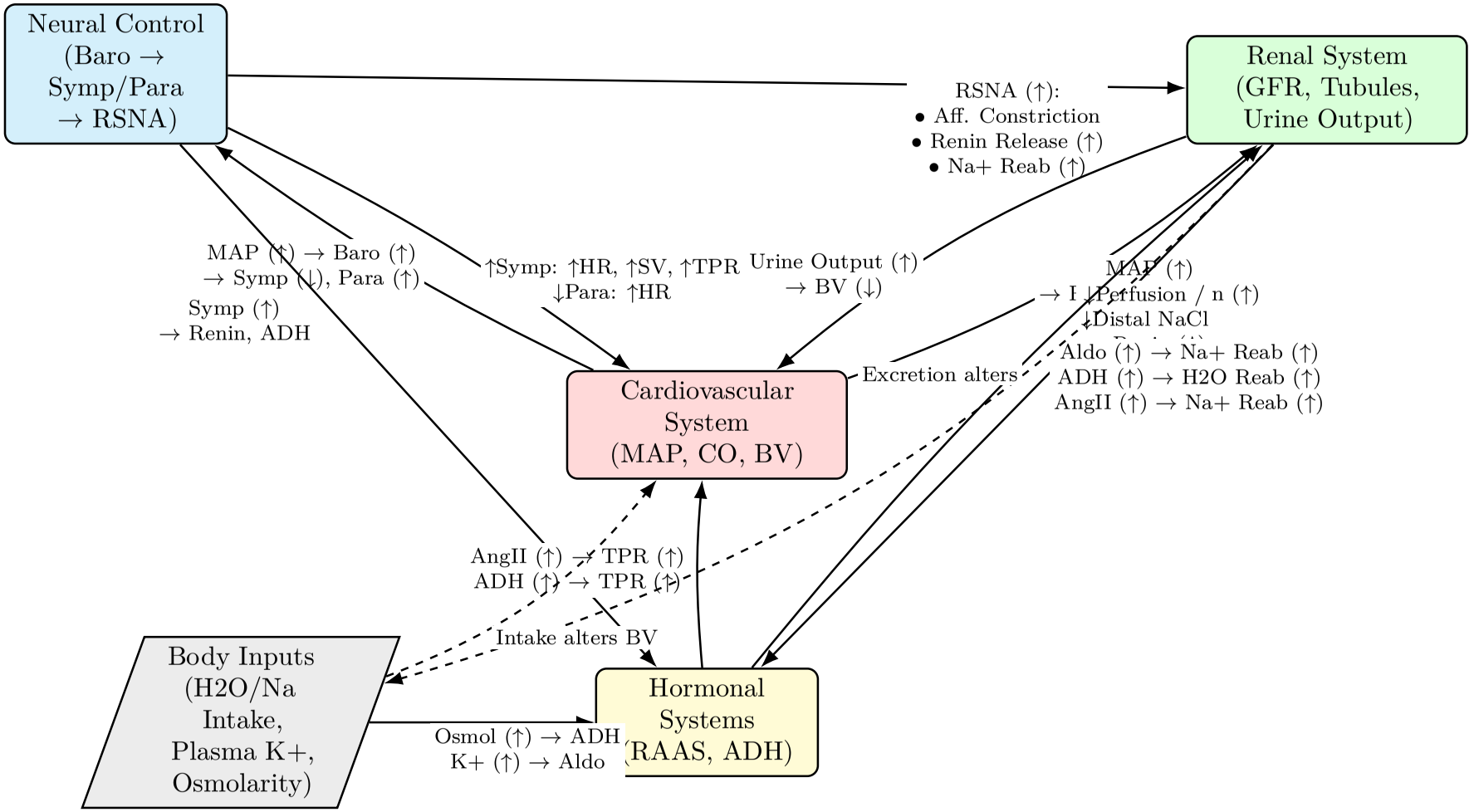

Figure 8: Detailed overview of the integrated model components and their primary interactions, highlighting key feedback pathways (Displayed in landscape for clarity). Solid arrows indicate direct influence or stimulation. Dashed arrows indicate slower effects on body state. Up/down arrows indicate the direction of change in response to a stimulus or the effect. Abbreviations: Aff. (Afferent Arteriole), Reab. (Reabsorption), Osmol (Osmolarity).

2.3.2 Hormonal Dynamics

Hormone concentrations follow first-order kinetics (production/release vs. degradation/clearance):

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}[\mathrm{Renin}]}{\mathrm{d}t} = \frac{1}{\tau_{\mathrm{Renin}}}(\mathrm{ReninReleaseRate} \cdot \mathrm{NeuralStim} \cdot \mathrm{CircadianFactor} - [\mathrm{Renin}]) \tag{5}$$

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}[\mathrm{AngI}]}{\mathrm{d}t} = \frac{1}{\tau_{\mathrm{AngI}}}(k_{\mathrm{AngI}}[\mathrm{Renin}] - [\mathrm{AngI}]) \tag{6}$$

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}[\mathrm{AngII}]}{\mathrm{d}t} = \frac{1}{\tau_{\mathrm{AngII}}}(k_{\mathrm{AngII}}[\mathrm{AngI}][\mathrm{ACE}_{\mathrm{activity}}] - [\mathrm{AngII}]) \tag{7}$$

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}[\mathrm{Aldo}]}{\mathrm{d}t} = \frac{1}{\tau_{\mathrm{Aldo}}}(\mathrm{AldoReleaseRate}(\mathrm{AngII}, \mathrm{K+}, \mathrm{Circadian}) - [\mathrm{Aldo}]) \tag{8}$$

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}[\mathrm{ADH}]}{\mathrm{d}t} \approx \frac{1}{\tau_{\mathrm{ADH}}}(\mathrm{ADHReleaseRate}(\mathrm{Osm}, \mathrm{MAP}, \mathrm{Symp}) - [\mathrm{ADH}]) \tag{9}$$

The release rates (e.g., `ReninReleaseRate`, `AldoReleaseRate`, `ADHReleaseRate`) are calculated within the `RenalTubular` and `NeuralControl` modules based on the respective stimuli (MAP, distal Na^+, plasma K^+, osmolarity, neural signals, circadian phase).

2.3.3 Neural Dynamics

Autonomic tones and related variables adjust towards target levels:

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}[\mathrm{SympTone}]}{\mathrm{d}t} = \frac{1}{\tau_{\mathrm{Symp}}}(\mathrm{TargetSympTone}(\mathrm{BaroFiring}) - [\mathrm{SympTone}]) \tag{10}$$

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}[\mathrm{ParaTone}]}{\mathrm{d}t} = \frac{1}{\tau_{\mathrm{Para}}}(\mathrm{TargetParaTone}(\mathrm{BaroFiring}) - [\mathrm{ParaTone}]) \tag{11}$$

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}[\mathrm{RSNA}]}{\mathrm{d}t} = \frac{1}{\tau_{\mathrm{RSNA}}}(k_{\mathrm{RSNA}}[\mathrm{SympTone}] - [\mathrm{RSNA}]) \tag{12}$$

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}[\mathrm{HR}]}{\mathrm{d}t} = \frac{1}{\tau_{\mathrm{HR}}}(\mathrm{TargetHR}([\mathrm{SympTone}], [\mathrm{ParaTone}]) - [\mathrm{HR}]) \tag{13}$$

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}[\mathrm{SV}]}{\mathrm{d}t} = \frac{1}{\tau_{\mathrm{SV}}}(\mathrm{TargetSV}([\mathrm{SympTone}]) - [\mathrm{SV}]) \tag{14}$$

The baroreceptor firing rate (BaroFiring) is an algebraic function of MAP, exhibiting a sigmoidal relationship. Target levels for tones, HR, and SV are calculated in the `NeuralControl` module.

2.3.4 Renal Vasculature and Pressures

Resistances and pressures adjust dynamically:

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}[\mathrm{AffRes}]}{\mathrm{d}t} \approx \frac{1}{\tau_{\mathrm{Res}}}(\mathrm{TargetAffRes(MAP,\ AngII,\ RSNA,\ AutoRegSig)} - [\mathrm{AffRes}]) \tag{15}$$

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}[\mathrm{EffRes}]}{\mathrm{d}t} \approx \frac{1}{\tau_{\mathrm{Res}}}(\mathrm{TargetEffRes(AngII,\ RSNA)} - [\mathrm{EffRes}]) \tag{16}$$

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}[P_{\mathrm{glom}}]}{\mathrm{d}t} \approx \frac{1}{\tau_P}(\mathrm{TargetP_{glom}(MAP,\ AffRes,\ EffRes)} - [P_{\mathrm{glom}}]) \tag{17}$$

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}[P_{\mathrm{Bowman}}]}{\mathrm{d}t} \approx \frac{1}{\tau_P}(P_{\mathrm{Bowman,nom}} - [P_{\mathrm{Bowman}}]) \tag{18}$$

These represent the tendency of vascular resistances and pressures to adapt towards values determined by the current physiological state, governed by effective time constants ($\tau_{\mathrm{Res}}, \tau_P$).

2.3.5 Fluid and Electrolytes

Concentrations change based on intake, excretion, and volume changes:

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}[\mathrm{PlasmaNa}]}{\mathrm{d}t} = \frac{1}{[\mathrm{BV}]}\left(\mathrm{NaIntakeRate} - \mathrm{NaExcretionRate}\cdot\mathrm{NeuralEffect}_{\mathrm{Na}} - [\mathrm{PlasmaNa}]\frac{\mathrm{d}[\mathrm{BV}]}{\mathrm{d}t}\right) \tag{19}$$

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}[\mathrm{PlasmaK}]}{\mathrm{d}t} \approx \frac{1}{[\mathrm{BV}]}\left(\mathrm{KIntakeRate} - \mathrm{KExcretionRate}([\mathrm{PlasmaK}],[\mathrm{Aldo}]) - [\mathrm{PlasmaK}]\frac{\mathrm{d}[\mathrm{BV}]}{\mathrm{d}t}\right) \tag{20}$$

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}[\mathrm{Osmolarity}]}{\mathrm{d}t} \approx \frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}t}\left(\frac{2[\mathrm{PlasmaNa}] + \mathrm{OtherSolutes}}{[\mathrm{WaterVolume}]}\right) \tag{21}$$

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}[\mathrm{DistalNaDelivery}]}{\mathrm{d}t} = \frac{1}{\tau_{\mathrm{NaTransport}}}(\mathrm{CurrentDistalDelivery} - [\mathrm{DistalNaDelivery}]) \tag{22}$$

Excretion rates (NaExcretionRate, KExcretionRate) are determined by the detailed tubular function calculations performed in the `RenalTubular` module.

2.4 Numerical Solution Methods

The system of 26 coupled ODEs was solved numerically using the `odeint` function from the `scipy.integrate` library in Python [7]. This function interfaces with the robust LSODA solver from the ODEPACK library. LSODA is particularly well-suited for potentially "stiff" systems, where different processes occur on vastly different timescales (like the rapid baroreflex vs. slow hormonal changes). It adaptively switches between methods optimized for non-stiff (Adams methods) and stiff (Backward Differentiation Formulas - BDF) problems, ensuring both accuracy and computational efficiency. The solver uses adaptive step-sizing internally to meet specified error tolerances, although the output in this simulation was requested at 1000 fixed time points over the 24 h interval.

3 Simulation Setup

The simulation was designed to observe the model's behavior under baseline physiological conditions over a full day-night cycle.

- **Model Initialization:** The main script, `run_renal_simulation.py`, first creates instances of the core classes: `RenalModelParameters`, `RenalModel`, `RenalTubular`, and `NeuralControl`. The parameters object holds all the default physiological constants. The tubular and neural control objects are then linked to the main `RenalModel` instance.
- **Parameters:** All physiological parameters (nominal values, time constants, gains, sensitivities, transport fractions, etc.) are sourced from the `RenalModelParameters` class, defined in `renal_model.py`. These values are intended to represent a typical healthy adult.
- **Initial Conditions:** The simulation starts from a state defined in the `initial_state` dictionary within `run_renal_simulation.py`. This state sets initial values for all 26 ODE variables, aiming to approximate a stable baseline (e.g., MAP = 93 mmHg, BV = 5.0 L, Plasma Na = 140 mEq/L, HR = 72 bpm, baseline autonomic/hormonal tones = 1.0). Some minor initial transients are expected as the interconnected system fully equilibrates.
- **Simulation Duration:** The simulation spans $T = 1440$ minutes (24 h).
- **Output Time Points:** The solver returns the state vector at 1000 evenly spaced time points between $t = 0$ and $t = 1440$ minutes.

- **Solver Execution:** The `odeint` function is called with the `derivatives` method, the initial state vector, and the time vector.
- **Post-processing:** Certain variables (like ADH level, baroreceptor firing rate) that are calculated algebraically within the model's functions are re-computed at each output time point using the solved state variables for plotting purposes.
- **Visualization:** Results are plotted using Matplotlib. Two figures are generated and saved:
  - `renal_simulation_results.png`: Shows 10 panels covering major hemodynamic, renal, hormonal, and basic neural variables.
  - `neural_mechanisms_results.png`: Shows 4 panels focusing specifically on detailed neural control dynamics.

4 Results and Detailed Discussion

The simulation generated time-course data for 26 state variables and several derived variables over a 24 h period. Key results are visualized in the output PNG figures, 'renal$_s imulation_r esults.png$'($hence forth$"$Ma$

4.1 Hemodynamic Variables (Main Figure, Panels 1-3)

- **Mean Arterial Pressure (MAP):** (Main Figure, Panel 1) *Observation:* MAP starts at 93 mmHg, undergoes a slight initial dip to ∼92.5 mmHg within the first 30 min, recovers rapidly to peak slightly above 94 mmHg around hour 2-3, and then stabilizes with very minor oscillations around 93 mmHg to 94 mmHg. *Interpretation:* This demonstrates effective blood pressure homeostasis. The initial dip might be due to system initialization, triggering the baroreflex (rapid recovery) and RAAS (slower, sustained effect contributing to the overshoot). The subsequent stability showcases the long-term control exerted primarily by renal volume regulation (pressure natriuresis) balancing the system near its setpoint. The model successfully integrates fast neural and slower hormonal/renal control.
- **Cardiac Output (CO):** (Main Figure, Panel 2, shows `cardiac_output_delayed`) *Observation:* CO increases sharply from the initial 5.0 L/min in the first hour, peaking around 5.0 L/min (estimated from plot, value is slightly above 5), coinciding with the MAP recovery phase. It then gradually decreases, settling slightly below the initial value (∼4.98 L/min) with subtle oscillations. *Interpretation:* This is a classic compensatory response. The initial MAP dip triggers the baroreflex, increasing sympathetic drive which boosts HR and SV (see Neural Figure), thus increasing CO to restore pressure. As MAP stabilizes and RAAS activation potentially increases TPR slightly, CO can settle at a slightly lower level while maintaining the target MAP (MAP ≈ CO × TPR).
- **Blood Volume (BV):** (Main Figure, Panel 3) *Observation:* BV starts at 5.0 L, shows a small initial decrease to a nadir of ∼4.97 L around hour 3-4, and then slowly recovers to stabilize very close to 5.0 L. *Interpretation:* This reflects the interplay between fluid shifts, hormonal actions, and renal excretion. The initial dip might be linked to RAAS activation effects or initial imbalances. The slow recovery and stabilization demonstrate the kidney's powerful long-term volume control, adjusting water/sodium output (based on pressure natriuresis and hormonal signals like Aldo/ADH) to return BV to the level required for long-term MAP stability. This is crucial for the observed MAP stabilization.

4.2 Electrolytes and Osmolarity (Main Figure, Panels 4 & 8)

- **Plasma Sodium (Plasma Na):** (Main Figure, Panel 4) *Observation:* Appears virtually flat at 140 mEq/L throughout the simulation. *Interpretation:* This highlights extremely

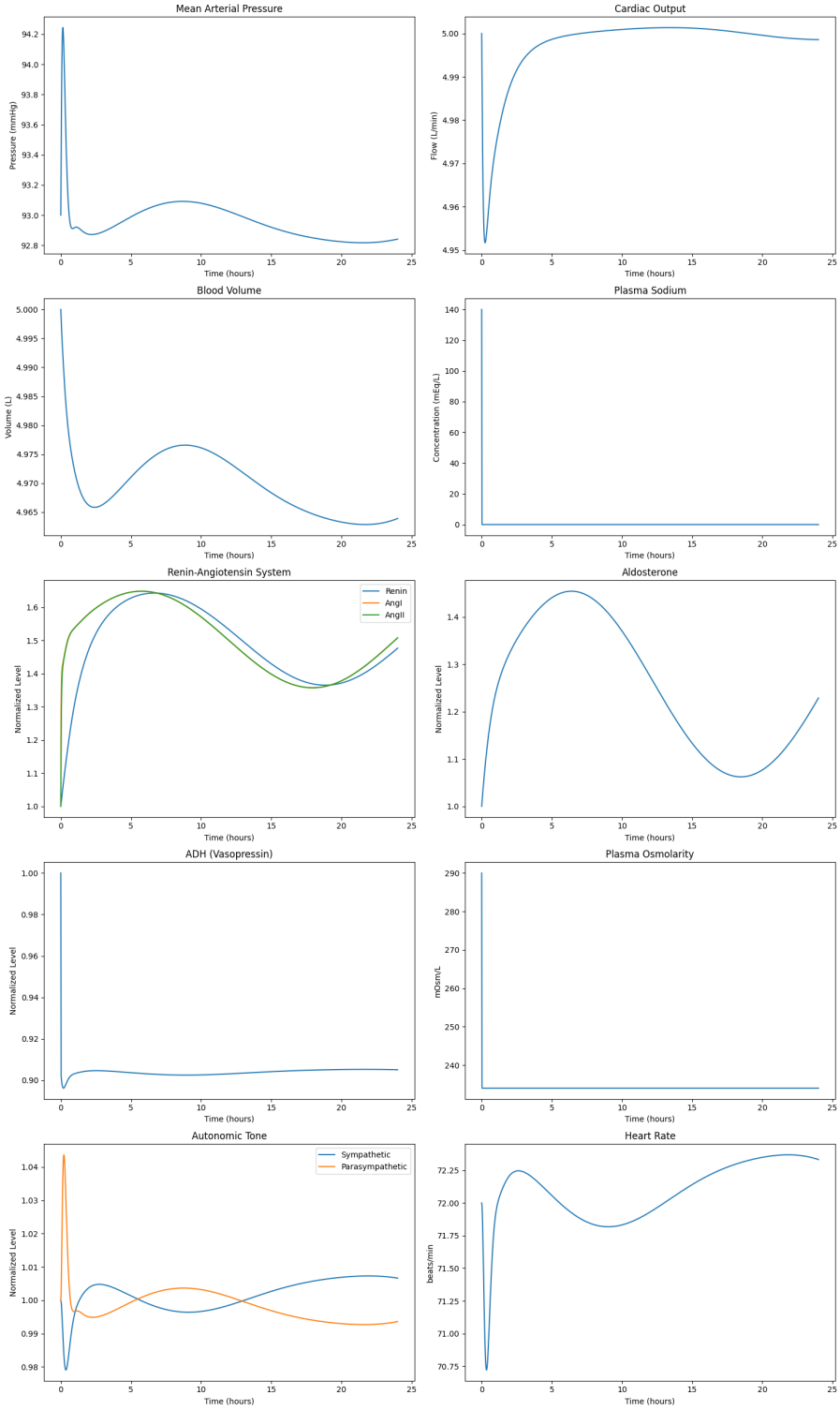

Figure 9: main fig

effective osmoregulation. The ADH system and thirst mechanisms (though thirst isn't explicitly modeled, intake is constant) work efficiently to adjust water balance precisely to match sodium balance, keeping the concentration stable. This physiological priority is well-captured.

- **Plasma Osmolarity:** (Main Figure, Panel 8) *Observation:* Similarly, remains extremely stable around 290 mOsm/L. *Interpretation:* Directly reflects the stable plasma sodium and indicates that the ADH system is effectively regulating water balance to maintain osmotic homeostasis, responding primarily to osmotic signals in this baseline state.

4.3 Hormonal Systems (Main Figure, Panels 5-7)

- **Renin-Angiotensin System (RAS):** (Main Figure, Panel 5) *Observation:* Renin, AngI, and AngII levels all show a similar pattern. There is a sharp initial spike peaking around 2-3 hours. This is likely triggered by the initial MAP dip and possibly by signals from the macula densa related to initial GFR/flow changes, as well as the initial spike in sympathetic activity (RSNA). Following this peak, the levels gradually decline throughout the middle part of the simulation, potentially reflecting the normalization of MAP and distal delivery, as well as negative feedback from AngII itself. A slight upward trend might be visible towards the end, possibly indicating the beginning of a circadian rise. AngII closely follows Renin/AngI, showing the rapid conversion by ACE. *Interpretation:* This captures the dynamic responsiveness of the RAAS. The initial activation is appropriate compensation for the perceived pressure drop. The subsequent decline shows the system regulating itself as homeostasis is restored. The profile suggests the interplay of multiple inputs (pressure, NaCl, neural) and feedback.

- **Aldosterone:** (Main Figure, Panel 6) *Observation:* Aldosterone follows the AngII trend but is clearly delayed and smoother, peaking later (around 4-6 hours) at about 1.5 times baseline and showing a more gradual decline, reaching a trough potentially slightly below baseline later in the simulation. *Interpretation:* This correctly reflects the slower dynamics of aldosterone secretion and clearance compared to AngII. The delay is physiologically realistic. The shape also incorporates the influence of AngII (primary stimulus here, assuming K+ is stable) and the underlying circadian rhythm parameter.

- **ADH (Vasopressin):** (Main Figure, Panel 7) *Observation:* ADH shows a small, brief initial dip below baseline (normalized 1.0) around hour 1, quickly recovering to a stable level slightly below 1.0 for the remainder of the simulation. *Interpretation:* Since osmolarity is stable, the ADH level primarily reflects the balance point needed to maintain water homeostasis under baseline conditions, with perhaps minor modulation from the stable MAP and autonomic tone after the initial phase. Its relative stability is consistent with the primary role of maintaining osmolarity.

4.4 Neural Control Mechanisms (Main Figure Panel 9 & 10, Neural Figure)

- **Autonomic Tone:** (Main Fig Panel 9; Neural Fig Top-Left) *Observation:* Clear reciprocal changes are seen. Initial MAP dip $\rightarrow$ Sympathetic spikes to $\sim$1.04, Parasympathetic drops to $\sim$0.995. MAP recovery/overshoot $\rightarrow$ Sympathetic drops sharply to $\sim$0.98, Parasympathetic peaks at $\sim$1.015 (around hour 2-3). Both then oscillate gently around 1.0. *Interpretation:* This is the signature of the baroreflex in action, demonstrating rapid, inverse modulation of the two autonomic branches to buffer pressure changes. The magnitude and timing of the shifts appear physiologically plausible.

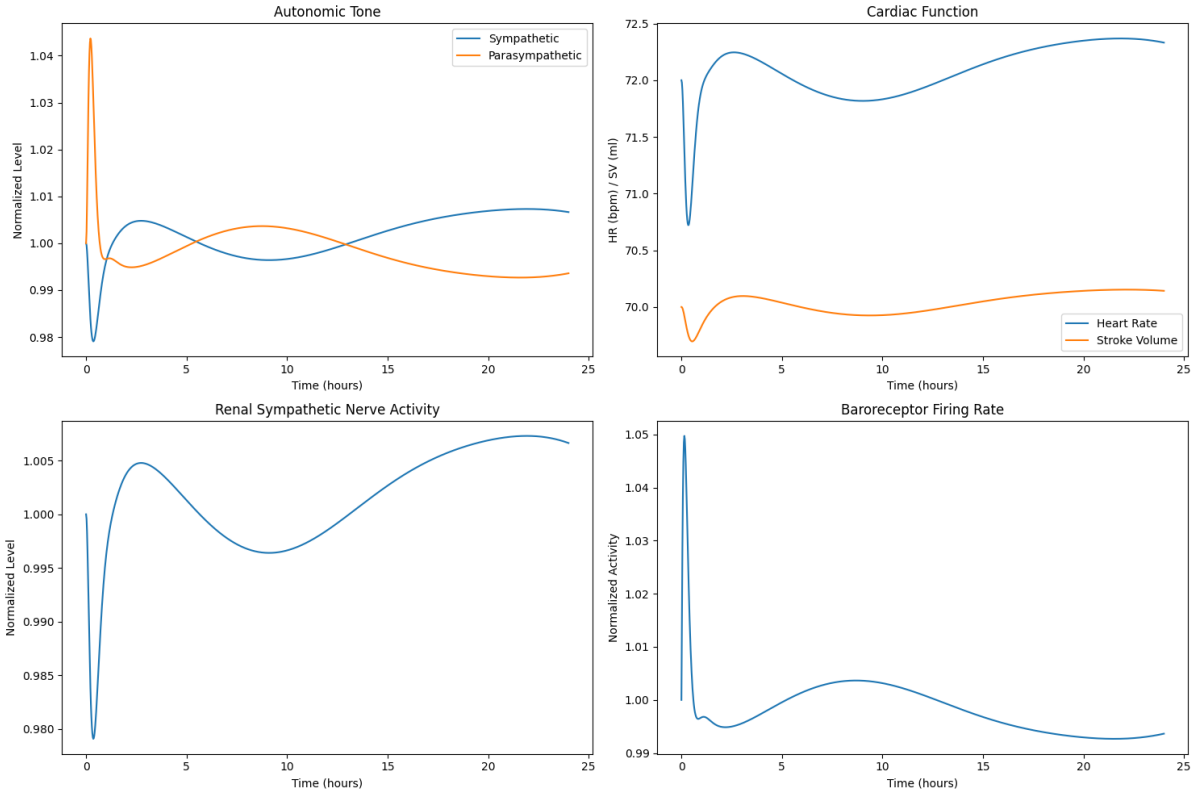

Figure 10: neural-fig

- **Heart Rate (HR):** (Main Fig Panel 10; Neural Fig Top-Right) *Observation:* HR starts at 72 bpm. It increases rapidly to ∼72.5 bpm during the sympathetic spike, then decreases to ∼71.7 bpm during the parasympathetic peak/sympathetic withdrawal phase, before stabilizing around 72.2 bpm. *Interpretation:* Directly reflects the net effect of the changing autonomic tones on the heart's pacemaker. The changes, while small in magnitude here due to the small MAP perturbation, contribute to the initial CO increase and subsequent adjustments.

- **Stroke Volume (SV):** (Neural Fig Top-Right) *Observation:* SV increases from 70 mL to nearly 71 mL during the initial sympathetic spike, then decreases below 70 mL as sympathetic tone falls, eventually stabilizing near 70 mL. *Interpretation:* Shows the effect of sympathetic tone on cardiac contractility. This change, along with HR, drives the initial CO increase.

- **Renal Sympathetic Nerve Activity (RSNA):** (Neural Fig Bottom-Left) *Observation:* RSNA closely follows the pattern of overall sympathetic tone – the initial spike to ∼1.005, dip to ∼0.98, stabilization near 1.0. *Interpretation:* Confirms that systemic autonomic changes are effectively translated into specific neural signals directed at the kidney. This RSNA increase directly contributes to the initial renin spike (stimulation) and transiently increases renal vascular resistance and sodium reabsorption.

- **Baroreceptor Firing Rate:** (Neural Fig Bottom-Right) *Observation:* Starts at normalized 1.0. Dips sharply to ∼0.99 when MAP falls, overshoots to ∼1.05 when MAP recovers/peaks, then stabilizes near its baseline normalized activity level of 1.0. *Interpretation:* This is the input signal driving the reflex. It accurately reflects the MAP changes, showing decreased firing with decreased pressure and increased firing with increased pressure, triggering the appropriate autonomic responses in autonomic tone, HR, SV, and RSNA. The sensitivity

and dynamic range appear appropriate for buffering the observed MAP fluctuations.

4.5 Overall Synthesis

The detailed analysis confirms that the model successfully integrates multiple physiological systems to achieve blood pressure homeostasis. The results show appropriate temporal sequencing and magnitude of responses across neural, hormonal, and renal components. The fast baroreflex handles immediate perturbations, while the RAAS and renal volume adjustments provide intermediate and long-term stability. The tight regulation of volume, sodium, and osmolarity underlies the stable MAP. The model provides a physiologically plausible representation of this complex regulatory network.

5 Model Validation (Qualitative)

While this project focused on model development and baseline simulation, a qualitative assessment suggests the model behaves reasonably well compared to known physiology:

- **Physiological Ranges Achieved:** As discussed in the results, key variables like MAP, BV, GFR (implied by stable function), plasma electrolytes, osmolarity, and heart rate settle within or very close to their expected normal physiological ranges for a healthy adult under resting conditions.
- **Response Directions and Timescales:** The directions of responses align with physiology (e.g., low pressure stimulates RAAS and sympathetic drive). The timescales also appear appropriate: baroreflex responses are rapid (minutes), RAAS/Aldo responses evolve over hours, and volume balance provides long-term stability.
- **Feedback Loop Operation:** The simulations clearly demonstrate the functioning of the major negative feedback loops. For instance, the baroreflex counters the initial MAP dip, and the RAAS activation contributes to recovery, with subsequent down-regulation as pressure normalizes. The stable osmolarity points to effective ADH feedback. The individual loop diagrams (Figs 2-7) illustrate these mechanisms conceptually.
- **Baseline Stability:** After initial transients related to starting conditions, the model finds a stable operating point, indicating that the complex interactions are balanced under the chosen parameter set.

However, rigorous validation requires simulating specific physiological challenges (e.g., salt loading, hemorrhage, exercise, pharmacological blockade) and comparing the model's quantitative predictions against published experimental data from human or animal studies. This remains an important area for future work.

6 Conclusion

This project successfully developed and simulated an integrated computational model of human blood pressure regulation. By incorporating essential components of the cardiovascular, renal, endocrine (RAAS, ADH), and autonomic nervous systems, the model captures their dynamic interactions through a system of 26 ordinary differential equations.

The 24 h baseline simulation demonstrated the model's capability to:

- Maintain stable mean arterial pressure, blood volume, plasma sodium, and osmolarity within physiological ranges.

- Simulate the dynamic, time-dependent responses of key hormones (Renin, AngII, Aldosterone, ADH) and neural variables (Sympathetic/Parasympathetic Tone, RSNA, HR, SV).
- Capture the interplay between rapid neural control (baroreflex) and slower hormonal/renal mechanisms in achieving overall homeostasis, as illustrated conceptually in the feedback loop diagrams.
- Reproduce the expected reciprocal relationship between sympathetic and parasympathetic activity driven by baroreceptor input.
- Include the influence of circadian rhythms on system variables.

The detailed analysis of the simulation results confirms that the model behaves in a physiologically plausible manner, reflecting the complex, multi-layered control system responsible for blood pressure regulation. This work provides a solid foundation and a valuable computational tool for further exploration of cardiovascular and renal physiology, pathophysiology, and pharmacology.

7 Future Work

The current model, while comprehensive, offers several avenues for future development and refinement:

- **Quantitative Validation:** Systematically compare simulation results against experimental data for specific perturbations (e.g., response to salt load, volume depletion, exercise, ACE inhibitor administration).
- **Parameter Estimation & Sensitivity Analysis:** Use experimental data to refine parameter values. Conduct sensitivity analyses to identify which parameters most critically influence model behavior.
- **Disease Modeling:** Develop parameter sets or structural changes to simulate specific pathological conditions like different forms of hypertension, chronic kidney disease, heart failure, or diabetic nephropathy.

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