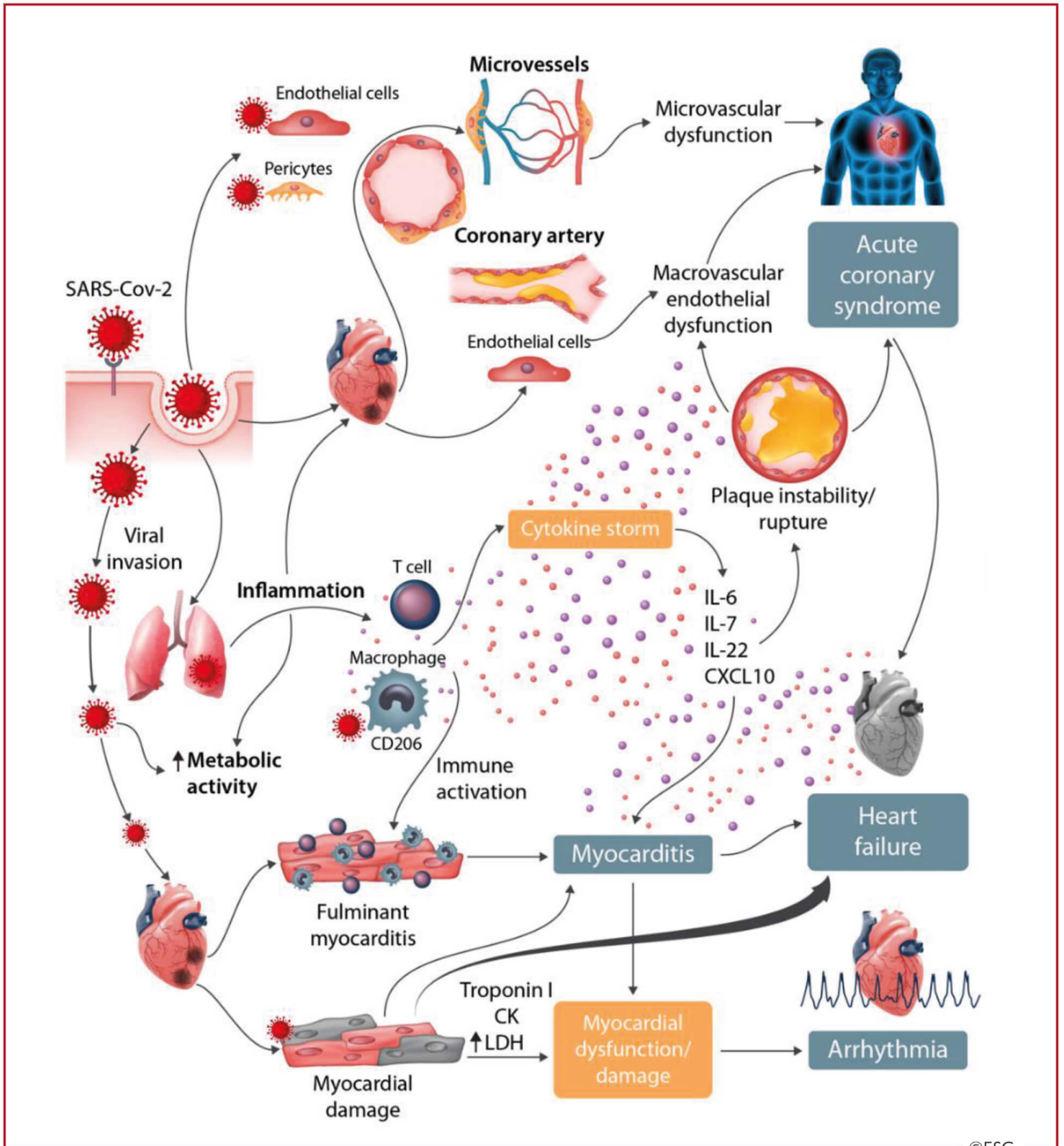


**Figure 3 Cardiovascular involvement in COVID-19 – key manifestations and hypothetical mechanisms**



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SARS-CoV-2 anchors on trans-membrane ACE2 to enter the host cells including type-2 pneumocytes, macrophages, endothelial cells, pericytes and cardiac myocytes leading to inflammation and multi-organ failure. Infection of endothelial cells or pericytes is of particular importance because this could lead to severe microvascular and macrovascular dysfunction. In addition, immune over-reactivity can potentially destabilize atherosclerotic plaques and explain the development of acute coronary syndromes. Infection of the respiratory tract, particularly type-2 pneumocytes, by SARS-CoV-2 is manifested by the progression of systemic inflammation and immune cell over-activation leading to "cytokine storm", resulting in increased levels of cytokines such as IL-6, IL-7, IL-22 and CXCL10. Subsequently, it is possible that activated T cell and macrophages may infiltrate infected myocardium resulting in the development of fulminant myocarditis and severe cardiac damage. This process may be further intensified by a cytokine storm. Similarly, the viral invasion may cause cardiac myocyte damage directly leading to myocardial dysfunction and contribute to the development of arrhythmias. From Guzik et al., COVID-19 and the cardiovascular system - implications for risk assessment, diagnosis and treatment options. Cardiovasc Res., 2020, doi: 10.1093/cvr/cvaa106.<sup>42</sup>