

Liver Enzymes and Inflammation - Sensitive Biomarkers. Relevance for Apparently Healthy Individuals and Those with Atherothrombotic Risk

Itzhak Shapira^{1,3}, Ori Rogowski¹, Ran Oren^{2,3}, Shlomo Berliner^{1,3}

¹ *Medicine "D", Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center,* ² *Gastroenterology, Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center,* ³ *Sackler Faculty of Medicine, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel*

Objective: Recent studies have pointed to the association of cholestatic liver enzymes with the presence of low grade inflammation and thus to atherothrombosis. We have presently explored the possibility that the above mentioned associations be an early event, before clinically overt atherothrombosis.

Methods: Included were 3,422 men and 1,622 apparently healthy women who attended a routine health screening program and in whom there was no evidence for diabetes mellitus, history of an atherothrombotic event or intake of hepatotoxic medications.

Results: A significant age and body mass index (BMI) was noted between most of the different liver enzymes including alkaline phosphates (ALP), gamma glutamyl transferase, alanine aminotransferase and aspartate aminotransferase and the four inflammation-sensitive biomarkers that have proven relevance for atherothrombosis and include the white blood cell count (WBCC), high sensitivity C-reactive protein (hs-CRP) quantitative fibrinogen and the Westergren's erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR). The best correlations were noted between ALP and the respective above mentioned inflammation-sensitive biomarkers being $r=0.166$ $p<0.001$, $r=0.198$ $r<0.001$, $r=0.224$ $p<0.001$ and $r=0.088$ $p<0.0001$ in men and $r=0.06$ $p=0.018$, $r=0.247$ $p<0.001$, $r=0.255$ $p<0.001$ and $r=0.156$ $p<0.001$ in women. The correlations for GGT were similar although somewhat lower.

Conclusions: An association between several enzymes that are used in daily practice as markers of liver damage and low grade inflammation exists in this population. The finding of these associations in the range that is currently considered "normal" is new and paves the way for the potential detection of liver disorders and eventual atherothrombosis at a relatively early stage.

Exploring the Usefulness of Inflammation-sensitive Biomarkers to Reveal Potential Gender Differences in Relation to Low Grade Inflammation in Individuals with the Metabolic Syndrome

Itzhak Shapira, Ori Rogowski, Shlomo Berliner

Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center, affiliated to Sackler Faculty of Medicine, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel

Objective: Gender differences exist in the expression of different inflammation-sensitive biomarkers in relation to the metabolic syndrome (MetS). We have presently explored these differences in relation to commonly used inflammation-sensitive biomarkers including the high sensitivity C-reactive protein (hs-CRP), quantitative fibrinogen, erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR), white blood cell count (WBCC) and the absolute number of polymorphonuclear leukocytes.

Methods: A cross sectional analysis of a group of apparently healthy men (n=5,560) and women (n=3,049) in whom the results of the above mentioned inflammation-sensitive biomarkers were analyzed in relation to the different components of MetS.

Results: The concentration of hs-CRP increased pari-pasu with the number of components of the MetS, the differences between the genders being significant regarding any number of components of the MetS. Regarding fibrinogen, the influence of gender turned significant for waist only, similarly to the results of the ESR. None of these interactions was found to be significant for both the WBCC and the absolute number of polymorphonuclears.

Conclusions: Quantitative fibrinogen, the ESR, WBCC as well as the absolute number of polymorphonuclear leukocytes are not sensitive enough to reveal the potential gender differences in relation to the various components of the MetS and the expression of the low grade inflammation. High sensitivity CRP does have the capability to reveal these differences.

Low Grade Inflammation in Individuals with the Hypertriglyceridemic Waist Phenotype. Another Feature of this Atherogenic Dysmetabolism

Itzhak Shapira^{1,4}, Ori Rogowski¹, Sharon Toker², Samuel Melamed^{3,4}, Arie Shirom², Shlomo Berliner^{1,4}

¹ *Medicine "D", Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center*, ² *Faculty of Management, Tel Aviv University*, ³ *National Institute of Occupational & Environmental Health, Raanana*, ⁴ *Sackler Faculty of Medicine, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel*

Objective: We explored the possibility that the recently described "hypertriglyceridemic waist" (HTGW) phenotype, a risk for future coronary artery disease (CAD), is associated with the presence of low grade inflammation.

Methods: This is a cross sectional study in a cohort of apparently healthy non-diabetic employed individuals in whom the presence of low grade inflammation was determined by using the high sensitivity C-reactive protein (hs-CRP) assay. We have presently analyzed the results obtained in 7,186 apparently healthy individuals, at a mean+SD age of 44+11 years.

Results: We identified 406 individuals (90.6% men) with the HTGW phenotype according to the cut-off points of waist girth of ≥ 90 cm for men and ≥ 85 cm for women and triglycerides levels of ≥ 177 mg/dl. In addition, we identified 473 individuals (64.3% men) with the metabolic syndrome (MetS) according to the updated ATP III criteria. The mean+SD of hs-CRP was 1.3+2.9 mg/l for the 5,879 individuals who had neither the HTGW phenotype nor the MetS, 2.0+2.5 mg/l for those who had the HTGW phenotype and no MetS, 2.7+2.6 for 473 individuals with the MetS and no HTGW phenotype while those who had both atherogenic disorders presented a hs-CRP concentration of 2.8+2.3 mg/l.

Conclusions: In this cohort of apparently healthy non-diabetic employed individuals, the HTGW phenotype had a similar prevalence as the MetS and was associated with the presence of low grade inflammation and the HTGW phenotype is relatively prevalent and could be a simple and inexpensive way to single out individuals at risk for future CAD.

Is there a Relationship between Lipid Profile and the Presence of Coronary Plaques as Assessed by Multislice Computerized Tomography

Alon Marmor¹, Zipora Avraham¹, Lital Kenan- Boker²

¹ Cardiology, Rivka Ziv Medical Center, Safed, ² Haifa University, Haifa, Israel

Multislice Computed Tomography(MSCT) is an excellent noninvasive visualization tool for detection of coronary plaques(CP).There are little data available about whether there is a direct relationship between blood lipid levels and presence of coronary plaques and their morphology .In the present study we evaluated the relationship between total cholesterol and LDL levels and the presence of CP in general and soft plaques(SP) in special. Using a 64 slice MSCT Philips we included 170 consecutive asymptomatic or oligo symptomatic patients undergoing routine MSCT All patients had lipid profile prior to the CT and the image processing and plaque evaluation was done by an independent specialist unaware of the lipid profile. From the 170 patients studied 107 had CP and 77 had SP

The following results were obtained for total cholesterol values:

P values	Normal coronaries	Plaques present	
	63	107	N
P<0.001	20.6%) 13 (61 (57%)	Total cholesterol >200mg/L
P<0.001	50 (79.4%)	46 (43%)	Total cholesterol <200mg/L

When LDL cholesterol was evaluated similar findings were obtained:

	Normal coronaries	Plaques present	
	63	107	N
P<0.011	35 (56.%)	(74.8%) 80	LDL cholesterol> 100mg/L
P<0.011	(56%) 28	27 (25%)	LDL< cholesterol 100mg/L

When patients with SP alone were evaluated similar results were found:

	Rest of the pts	Soft plaques	
	93	77	N
P<0.001	50 (53.8%)	65 (84.4%)	LDL cholesterol>100mg/L
P<0.001	43 (46.2%)	12 (15.6%)	LDL cholesterol100< mg/L

Thus it appears from our data that there is a strong relationship between the hyperlipidemia and presence of CP and especially SP in an asymptomatic population.

Brachial Artery Endothelial Function Predicts Platelet Function in Healthy Subjects and in Patients with Coronary Artery Disease

Michael Shechter¹, Alon Shechter¹, Paul Fefer¹, Nira Koren-Morag⁴, Hanoch Hod¹,
Micha Feinberg¹, Dror Haratz², Ben Ami Sela³, Shlomi Matetzky¹

¹ Heart Institute, ² Weiss Institute of Lipid and Atherosclerosis Research, ³ Institute of Chemical Pathology, Chaim Sheba Medical Center and the Sackler Faculty of Medicine, Tel Aviv University, Tel Hashomer, Ramat Gan, ⁴ The Sackler Faculty of Medicine, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel

Background: Platelets play a key role in acute vascular thrombosis, while platelet activation occurs in conditions associated with impairment of endothelium-dependent flow-mediated vasodilation (FMD). Nitric oxide (NO), a key product of the endothelium, is antithrombotic via potent antiaggregating and antiadhesive properties. Endothelial dysfunction is a systemic disorder and a key variable in the pathogenesis and complications of atherosclerosis.

Methods: To explore the association between platelet function and endothelial function, we prospectively assessed FMD in 122 consecutive subjects, 41 (34%) with coronary artery disease (CAD) and 81 (59%) healthy controls. Following overnight fasting and discontinuation of all medications for ≥ 12 hours, percent improvement in endothelium-dependent brachial artery FMD (%FMD) and endothelium-independent, nitroglycerin-mediated vasodilation (%NTG) were assessed using high resolution (15 MHz) linear array ultrasound. Platelet function tests were assessed immediately at the end of endothelial function testing.

Results: Both groups were comparable regarding CAD risk factors, BMI, lipid panel, homocysteine, platelet number, heart rate, and diastolic blood pressure, while systolic blood pressure was significantly higher in controls compared to CAD patients (136 ± 18 vs 126 ± 19 mmHg, $p=0.02$, respectively). The use of aspirin, plavix and beta blocker agents was significantly more common in CAD patients compared to controls (81% vs 11%, $p<0.01$; 58% vs 0%, $p<0.01$; and 58% vs 7%, $p<0.05$, respectively). %FMD, but not %NTG, was significantly lower in CAD patients compared to controls ($15\pm 7\%$ vs $11\pm 6\%$, $p<0.01$ and $17\pm 8\%$ vs $16\pm 8\%$, $p=0.27$, respectively). %FMD was significantly associated with ADP-induced platelet aggregation by conventional aggregometry ($r=-0.38$, $p<0.001$), platelet adhesion ($r=-0.42$, $p<0.01$) and aggregation under flow condition ($r=-0.56$, $p<0.01$), even after controlling for age, aspirin and plavix use. ADP- and arachidonic acid-induced platelet aggregation were significantly lower in CAD patients compared to controls (43 ± 25 vs $84\pm 14\%$, $p<0.01$ and 45 ± 32 vs 84 ± 24 , $p<0.01$, respectively), most probably due to the common use of anti-platelet therapy.

Conclusion: Endothelial function assessed by brachial artery %FMD is inversely associated with platelet function in healthy subjects and CAD patients, suggesting that endothelial function may play a major role in determining platelet reactivity.

Correlates Of QT Interval in an Ethnically Diverse Population

Itsik Ben-Dor¹, Michal Gilon², Ahmed Atama³, Gershon Alpert³, Daphna Gofer⁴,
Alexander Battler¹, Ofra Kalter-Leibovici²

¹ Cardiology, Rabin Medical Center, Petach Tikva, ² Gertner Institute, Cardiovascular Epidemiology, Tel-Hashomer, Ramat Gan, ³ Clalit Health Services, Hadera, ⁴ Gertner Institute, Information and Computer Unit, Tel-Hashomer, Ramat Gan, Israel

Background: Long QT syndrome (LQTS) is a disorder of myocardial repolarization characterized by a prolonged QT interval on the electrocardiogram (ECG). This syndrome is associated with an increased risk of a characteristic life-threatening cardiac arrhythmia, known as Torsade de Pointes. LQTS may be either genetic or acquired.

Aim: To describe the correlates associated with corrected QT interval (QTc) in a multi-ethnic population, diverse by cardiovascular disease risk.

Subjects and Methods: Participants were derived from a random sample of the general population of Hadera District in Israel, stratified by ethnicity (Arabs and Jews), gender and age (range: 25-64). Information on demographic and lifestyle characteristics was obtained by personal interviews, and blood pressure and anthropometric measurements, fasting blood samples and resting ECG records were subsequently obtained. ECG records were coded using the Minnesota coding system. QTc was calculated by dividing the QT interval by the square root of the RR interval (in seconds). **Results:** ECG recodes were obtained in 587 participants; Mean age (SD):48.5 (11.1) years, 51% males. On multivariate linear regression analysis, variables positively associated with QTc were: female gender (p<0.001), Arab ethnicity (p<0.001), systolic blood pressure (p<0.001), body mass index (BMI) (p=0.002), and triglycerides levels (p=0.044). Other characteristics (e.g. NSAIDs drug therapy and CRP levels) found to be significantly associated with QTc on univariate analyses were no longer significantly associated with QTc after adjusting for the effects of gender, ethnicity and BMI.

Conclusion: Our findings show that in the general population, the QTc interval is associated with female gender, Arab ethnicity, and some characteristics of the metabolic syndrome (i.e. increase BMI, hypertension and hypertriglyceridemia). The clinical significance of these findings should be further studied in longitudinal studies.

Compliance with Clopidogrel Treatment after Implantation of Drug Eluting Stents in the Bedouin Population of the Negev

Carlos Cafri, Sergei Yaroslavslev, Akram Abu-ful, Jean Mark Weinstein, Sergei Bereza,
Gabriel Rosenstein, Harel Gilutz, Doron Zahger, Reuben Ilia

Cardiology, Cardiology, Soroka Medical Center, Beer Sheva, Israel

Background: Long term dual antiplatelet therapy is essential after implantation of drug eluting stents (DES). Compliance with antiplatelet therapy has been associated with social, economic and cultural factors. This association has not been previously examined in the Israeli population.

Aim: To investigate the characteristics and compliance with antiplatelet treatment after DES implantation in the Bedouin population of the Negev.

Methods: A retrospective comparison of 54 Bedouin (age: 59±13) and 615 Jewish patients (age: 63±12, p=0.018) residents of Negev who underwent DES implantation between 4/04 and 10/06. Data were prospectively collected in computerized databases. Clinical, angiographic and angioplasty characteristics, medical treatment as well long term clinical outcome were studied. The duration of treatment with aspirin and clopidogrel after DES as a marker of compliance was analyzed.

Results: Bedouins treated with DES less often had dyslipidemia (67% vs. 81%, p<0.05) and more often had diabetes mellitus (55% vs 34%, p<0.01) and moderate to severe left ventricular dysfunction (58% vs. 36%, p=0.03) . No differences were seen in other risk factors, angiographic findings and angioplasty characteristics. During a median follow up period of 618 days a higher frequency of myocardial infarction (13% vs. 5%, p=0.02) was seen in the Bedouins. No significant differences were seen in all cause mortality (13% vs. 7%), stroke (2% vs. 3%), revascularization (21% vs.16%) or the combined end point of death, MI, stroke and revascularization (33% vs. 25%,). During the first year of follow up Bedouin took clopidogrel for 148 days±105 as compared to 256±122 days in Jews (p=0.01). Clopidogrel was used without interruption during 108±105 days in Bedouins and during 225±108 in Jews (p<0.01). Aspirin was used without interruption for 420± 315 days in Bedouins and for 549± 302 days in Jews (p<0.01).

Conclusions: Bedouins treated with DES have a shorter period of treatment with clopidogrel in comparison with Jews. The reasons of this finding and its relationship with the higher frequency of myocardial infarction observed in the Bedouin population require further investigation

Novel Instrumented Retractor to Monitor Tissue Disruptive Forces During Median Sternotomy

Gregory Buckner², Nicholas Jardine², Aaron Kiefer², Nigel Campbell², Masha Kocherginsky²,
Gil Bolotin¹

¹ *Cardiac Surgery, Rambam Medical Center, Haifa, Israel,* ² *Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC, USA*

Objectives: Acute and chronic pain after median sternotomy is common and often underestimated. The mechanical retractors used for the median sternotomy exert significant forces on the skeletal cage. Our hypothesis is that instrumented retractors can be developed to enable real-time monitoring and control of retraction forces. This may provide equivalent exposure with significantly reduced forces and tissue damage, and thus less post-operative pain.

Methods: A novel instrumented retractor was designed and fabricated to enable real-time force monitoring during surgical retraction. Sixteen mature sheep underwent median sternotomy. Eight median sternotomies were retracted at a standard “clinical pace” of 7.25 ± 0.97 minutes to 7.5 cm without real-time monitoring of retraction forces. The other eight median sternotomies were retracted to the same exposure using real-time visual force feedback and, consequently, a more deliberate pace of 12.05 ± 1.73 minutes ($p < 0.001$). Retraction forces, blood pressure, and heart rate were monitored throughout the procedure.

Results: Full retraction resulted in an average force of 102.99 ± 40.68 N at the standard clinical pace as compared to 64.68 N with force feedback (a 37.2% reduction, $p = 0.023$). Standard retraction produced peak forces of 368.79 ± 133.61 N, whereas force feedback yielded peak forces of 254.84 ± 75.77 N (a 30.9% reduction, $p = 0.084$). Heart rate was significantly higher during standard clinical retraction ($p = 0.024$).

Conclusions: Using the novel instrumented retractor resulted in lower average and peak retraction forces during median sternotomy. Moreover, these reduced retraction forces correlated with a reduction in animal stress as documented by lower heart rate.

Long Term Experience of Wrapping the Ascending Aorta with Dacron Mesh as Definitive Treatment for Aneurysmal Dilatation

Oved Cohen^{1,2}, Jonah Odum¹, David De La Zerda¹, Gil Bolotin², Hillel Laks¹

¹ Division of Cardiac Surgery, Surgery, David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, Los Angeles CA, USA, ² Cardiac Surgery, Surgery, Rambam Medical Center and the Rappaport Family Faculty of Medicine, Technion Medical School, Haifa, Israel

Background: The management of the mildly to moderately dilated ascending aorta in cardiac surgery remains controversial. Therapeutic options have included radical aortic resection with synthetic graft substitution, external aortic reinforcement or wrap with or without partial aortic wall excision, and a watch and wait approach.

Methods: Over the last 20 years, 102 patients with aneurysmal dilatation of the ascending aorta underwent wrapping of the ascending aorta with a fine Dacron mesh from the ventricular-aortic junction to the origin of the innominate artery. For the last ten years, the wrap was anchored to the aortic annulus with pledgeted sutures. Aortic diameters up to 6 cm, without focal areas of thinning, were wrapped. Aortic diameters > 6 cm, or with focal thinning, underwent tailored aortic wall resection and wrapping. Primary endpoints of the study included mortality, aortic diameter growth, dissection and/or rupture.

Results: The mean age of the group was 54.7 ± 19.54 yr (range, 12 to 90). A single patient underwent aortic wrapping without cardiopulmonary bypass. Sixty-six patients (65%) required additional aortic valve surgery. Five patients (5%) had reinforcement of dilated sinuses with glutaraldehyde-treated pericardial patches combined with wrapping. Twenty-seven patients (26%) had combined coronary and valve surgery, and two patients had coronary revascularization alone. There was neither early nor hospital mortality. Among the 81 patients (79%) we were able to contact, there were 7 (7%) late deaths at 0.5, 1, 3 and 9 years after operation, unrelated to aortic pathology. Various levels of follow up were obtained in the 88 patients (86.2%). In 78 patients, echocardiograms, CT angiograms or MR angiograms were obtained. Two of these patients had developed aneurysmal dilatation of the sinuses below the wrap and required reoperation. No patient in whom the mesh wrap was anchored to the aortic annulus required reoperation. All eighty-one patients that were contacted by us, and followed by referring physicians, were asymptomatic and free of problems related to the aorta. The mean preoperative diameter of the ascending aorta was 49.2 ± 7.8 mm (mean \pm SD) (range: 35 to 87). The mean post-wrap intraoperative diameter was 32.8 ± 3.5 mm (range: 20 to 45). The mean follow-up postoperative aortic diameter was 35.3 ± 5.7 mm. The average change in the aortic diameter during the follow up period was 2.77 ± 2 mm (mean \pm SD), a mean of 8%. The mean follow-up period was 5.7 years, median: 4.77 years; range: 9 days – 21 years. There were no infections or other early complications related to the wrap.

Conclusions: Dacron mesh support of the moderately dilated aneurysmal ascending aorta, alone or in conjunction with coronary revascularization, aortic root surgery and/or valvular operations, is safe and durable. Dacron mesh is transparent and stretchable, permitting tight girdling of the aorta. These properties prevent hematoma formation, facilitate proximal vein graft anastomoses, and provide visualization and access to aortic suture lines. Finally, this technique retards further aortic dilation, altering the natural history of aortic aneurysms.

Can LIMA-RIMA 'T-Graft' Supply the Right Coronary System?

Leonid Ruderman, Dan Abrahamov, Menachem Matsa, Amir Ganiel, David Mozalbat,
Jaffer Assala, Yaron Ishai, Gideon sahar

Cardiothoracic Surgery, Soroka University Medical Center, Beer Sheva, Israel

Study objectives:

In the current literature, there is uncertainty whether RIMA 'T-GRAFT' can safely supply multiple coronary bypasses, and whether it can provide the RCA system. In the present study, we evaluate the outcome of patients who underwent CABG surgery using LIMA-RIMA 'T-graft' of more than 4 bypasses and the distal anastomosis of the RIMA was to the RCA system.

Methods:

Between 6.2005 and 11.2006, 30 consecutive patients underwent the above mentioned surgery. Average age was 56.2, female gender was 13.3 % ,the incidence of diabetes- 26.7%, moderate + left ventricular dysfunction -13.3%, left main disease - 26.7%, unstable angina- 53.3%, average number of bypasses was 4.63, average EUROSCORE -3.41%.

Results:

There was no mortality in our series; all patients were weaned from mechanical ventilation in less than 24 hours. Postoperative course was uneventful and patients were discharged in less than 7 days. One patient had a superficial wound infection that did not necessitate surgical intervention.

In mid term follow up (1.5 year) – there was no mortality, no admissions due to ischemic heart disease, and no complaints of angina pectoris. All patients had an up to date echocardiography study. LV function was unchanged in 20 patients and improved in ten patients.

Conclusion:

LIMA RIMA 'T'-graft can safely be used for multiple bypasses. With proper technique, The RIMA can supply the RCA territory with good mid term results. By that, we can avoid harvesting other conduits and use the best conduit for all the heart.