Aerobic and Graduated Treadmill Exercise Decreases Blood Glucose Levels, Lipid Levels and Oxidative Stress in an Animal Model of Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus

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Purpose: Exercise has been shown to be a simple and economical therapeutic modality that may be considered as an effective aid for diabetic mellitus. For example, exercise training increases insulin sensitivity in type 2 diabetes. But we found no reported of how exercise affect type 1 diabetes. This study investigated the impact of aerobic and graduated treadmill exercise regimens on body weight, glucose and insulin concentrations, lipid profiles, and oxidative stress indicators in rats with streptozotocin (STZ) induced diabetes. Glycosylated hemoglobin (HbA1c) was determined as an indicator of glucose control during exercise.

Methods: In our study, a total of 40 rats were used. Three groups of 10 rats each were given STZ to induce diabetes. The remaining 10 rats became the normal group.

After 28 days we determined biochemical parameters such as glucose, glycosylated hemoglobin (HbA1c), insulin concentration, serum total cholesterol (TC), triglycrides (TG), and high-density lipoprotein (HDL). Superoxide dismutase (SOD) and catalase activities were also measured.

Results: Concentrations of blood glucose and HbA1c in the moderated exercise groups were significantly decreased after 28 days compared with the control group (p<0.05). There was a significant reduction in serum TC and TG in the experimental groups. The activity of SOD increased significantly by 17.70% and 48.25% respectively.

Conclusion: These results indicate that physical training and exercise training affects body weight, fasting blood glucose, HbA1c, insulin, lipid profiles, and antioxidant status in rats with streptozotocin-induced diabetes. We suggest that graduated treadmill exercise may have therapeutic, preventative, and protective effects against diabetes mellitusby improving glycemic control, oxidant defenses, and lipid metabolism.

Keywords: Cholesterol, Diabetic mellitus, Glycosylated hemoglobin, Graduated exercise, Oxidative stress

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I. Introduction

Diabetes mellitus (DM) is a chronic disease characterized by inappropriate glucose metabolism. It is characterized by an absolute or relative insulin deficiency (Type 1 DM) and insulin resistance (Type 2 DM).1 Type 1 DM results from the lack of insulin production by pancreatic cells. Its incidence is increasing rapidly, and it is estimated that by 2030, this number will reach 360 million.2 DM brings enormous health and socioeconomic implications due to medical costs and complications.

Oxidative stress induced by excess reactive oxygen species have the potential to cause damage to critical cellular targets, such as DNA, proteins, and lipids as a consequence of increased mitochondrial oxygen flux, which is generated by hyperglycaemia.3,4 Oxidative stress arises from an imbalance between the production of free radicals and the physiological system’s ability to detoxify reactive intermediates. Also, abnormal lipid profiles significantly contribute to the increased risk of cardiovascular disease and other complications in diabetics.5

Therefore, effective control of blood glucose levels is a key step in preventing or reversing diabetic complications in patients with both type 1 and type 2 diabetes. But, decreasing glucose concentrations or maintaining glycemic control is difficult in most diabetic patients. Moreover, the treatment of diabetes...
mellitus is complex and involves patient lifestyle modification
that involves physical activity, nutrition, and pharmacological
therapy to provide the needed support to counteract the
imbalance in insulin action.6

Physical activity decreases insulin resistance and can assist in
both preventing type 2 diabetes mellitus and promoting
glycemic control.7 Proper glycemic control and selection of
appropriate physical activity, such as brisk walking or swim-
ming, are essential for prevention of associated complications.
Both aerobic and resistance training has been found to be
associated with improved glycemic controls by reducing
glycosylated hemoglobin(HbA1c), inducing body fat loss, and
improving serum lipid profiles and cardiovascular status in
patients with type 2 diabetes.8 Exercise may reduce glycemic
levels, oxidative stress, HDL-cholesterol, insulin sensitivity, and
mitochondrial function in tissues.9,10 But, although physical
exercise has been reported to reduce blood glucose and
normalizelipid profiles of patients with diabetes mellitus, the
effect of exercise on aerobic and graduated exercise in type 1
diabetes has remained unknown.

In this study, we focused on glycosylated hemoglobin
(HbA1c) as an indicator of glucose control during exercise and in
rats with streptozotocin-induced diabetes. Additionally, we
decided to study the effects of exercise interventions on diabetic
rats in an attempt to understand the role of lipid profiles and
anti-oxidant enzymes in the hypoglycemic mechanisms of
exercise.

### II. Methods

#### 1. Animals

Forty health male Sprague-Dawley (Orient, Seoul, Korea) rats
(body weight 220±10 g, 6 weeks of age) were used in this study.
They were housed in clean cages with controlled temperature
(24~26°C, light (12 hr light/dark cycle) and relative air
humidity (40~60%). All rats had free access to standard rodent
pellet food (NIH #31M. Samtako, Korea), except when fasted
before experiments. Each of the four groups was weighed
immediately before the experiment and after the experiment.
The University of Dongshin institutional animal care and use
committee approved the experimental procedures which
followed the principles of laboratory animal care according to
National Institutes of Health (NIH) publications.

#### 2. Experimental design

Diabetes was induced in rats by a single intraperitoneal injection
of STZ (50 mg/kg body weight, Sigma, USA) freshly dissolved
in a 0.1 mol citrate buffer (pH 4.5). Control rats were injected
with citrate buffer. Diabetes was confirmed in the STZ-treated
rats by measuring fasting blood glucose concentrations 72 hour
post-injection. Rats with blood glucose levels above 250 mg/dL
were considered diabetic and were used in our experiments. The
diabetic rats (n=30) were randomly divided into three groups of
10 each (Table 1).

Normal group (n=10): Normal rats that received no STZ
treatment and no exercise program.

Diabetic group (n=30): receiver STZ to induce diabetes.

Control group 0 (n=10): Diabetic rat that received no
exercise program.

Experimental Group I (n=10): Aerobic treadmill exercise for 28 days and maintained in a diabetic state.

Experimental Group II (n=10): Aerobic graduated treadmill exercise for 28 days and maintained in a diabetic state.

3. Exercise program

Rats in the aerobic treadmill exercise groups followed a 4-week constant training period (20 m/min for 60 minutes). The exercise consisted of a 28 day accommodation phase with increasing exercise intensity (first week: 15 m/min for 30 minutes, second week: 15 m/min for 45 minutes, third week: 20 m/min for 30 minutes, fourth week: 20 m/min for 45 minutes). Each experimental group had a training session (5 times a week, between 8.00 a.m. and 9.00 a.m.), in which all running rats had a 5-minute warm-up phase with a slowly increasing speed.11

4. Measurement of blood glucose, insulin, HbA1c and serum lipid concentrations

After 28 days of exercise, rats were fasted (overnight for 12 h), sacrificed and blood samples obtained. The rats did not exercise during the 24 h prior to sample taking. About 1 ml blood was withdrawn from a prominent superficial vein using a clean venipuncture with minimal stasis; blood was collected in a tube containing EDTA, centrifuged, and frozen. Blood was allowed to clot and serum was separated by centrifugation at 3,500 rpm for 10 min. Serum glucose, insulin, HbA1c, total cholesterol, triglycerides, and HDL levels were determined. Fasting serum glucose concentrations were determined using Glucotrend plus glucose (Roche Diagnostick GmbH, Germany). Serum insulin was assayed using enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay kits (ELISA, Boehringer Mannheim, Germany). Hemoglobin A1c (HbA1c) levels were measured using a DCA2000 analyzer (Siemens, Munich, Germany). The serum total cholesterol, triglycerides, and high density lipoprotein cholesterol were estimated using commercial diagnostic reagents (Bayer, USA) on a biochemical analyzer (RM 2060-18, Eltec. Co., Italy).

5. Statistical analysis

All statistical analysis was performed using SPSS ver. 14.0 for windows (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). All values are expressed as mean ± standard deviation. Comparisons of body weight, glucose, HbA1c, insulin, TC, TG, HDL, and oxidative enzyme levels among the four groups were done using the Kruskal–Wallis test, a nonparametric counterpart to the ANOVA test. The relationship between the pre-experimental and post-experimental value was assessed by use of the Wilcoxon test, a nonparametric test. A P value of < 0.05 was considered to be statistically significant.

III. Result

1. Changes in body weight, glucose, HbA1c, and insulin levels

Table 1 shows the effect of aerobic and graduated treadmill exercise programs on body weight. Baseline weights of rats at the beginning of the study was similar for all experimental groups.
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Table 3. Effect of aerobic and aerobic graduated treadmill exercise on lipid profiles (Unit: mg/dL)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Normal group</th>
<th>Control group</th>
<th>Experimental group I</th>
<th>Experimental group II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total cholesterol</td>
<td>A 69.5±12.5a</td>
<td>96.4±11.1b</td>
<td>95.37±13.1b</td>
<td>94.25±10.5b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B 70.5±13.4a</td>
<td>97.8±13.2b</td>
<td>83.6±17.6c</td>
<td>72.5±18.1c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triglyceride</td>
<td>A 76.24±14.0a</td>
<td>104.8±12.2b</td>
<td>105.4±10.8b</td>
<td>103.2±10.2b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B 78.9±15.5a</td>
<td>108.3±25.4b</td>
<td>90.8±18.4c</td>
<td>84.0±16.5c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDL</td>
<td>A 49.7±5.4a</td>
<td>30.2±4.8b</td>
<td>31.8±5.0b</td>
<td>30.9±3.8b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B 50.4±9.2a</td>
<td>32.4±8.5b</td>
<td>39.8±8.4b</td>
<td>46.5±6.9c</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All values are shown as mean±SD

a Insignificant difference (p>0.05) between groups
b,c,d Significant difference (p<0.05) between groups
A: pre-experimental value
B: post-experimental value

At the end of the experimental period, the diabetic control group presented with weight loss. Treadmill exercised animals did not exhibit a marked change in body weight compared to the control group (F=100.09, p=0.01). Table 3 shows the effect of aerobic and graduated treadmill exercise on serum glucose, HbA1c, and insulin. In the aerobic exercise group, the glucose concentration decreased to 185.38±20.6 mg/dL, while in the graduated treadmill exercise group it decreased to 130.2±19.1 mg/dL (F=156.64, p=0.03). The activity of HbA1c, significantly increased by 24.0% and 39.2% in the aerobic and graduated treadmill exercise groups, respectively, (F=43.54, p=0.02). But the differences between exercise groups were not statistically significant. In the aerobic exercise group the insulin concentration decreased to 218.6±17.8 pg/mL, while in the graduated treadmill exercise group it decreased to 250.7±20.6 pg/mL (F=97.43, p=0.001) (Table 2).

2. Changes in total cholesterol and in triglyceride levels

Table 3 shows the effect of aerobic and graduated treadmill exercise programs on serum total cholesterol (TC), triglycerides (TG), and HDL. TC and TG significantly (TC; F=95.64, p=0.04, TG; F=93.52, p=0.03) decreased; HDL significantly (F=86.00, p=0.03) increased in the experimental groups. There was a significant reduction in serum TC and triglycerides in the aerobic and graduated treadmill exercise groups after 28 days (F=95.64, p<0.05). In the aerobic exercise group the TC concentration decreased to 83.6±17.6 mg/dL, while in the graduated treadmill exercise group it decreased to 72.5±18.1 mg/dL. The mean HDL concentrations significantly differed between the managed exercise group and the control group (F=86.00, p=0.01).

3. Changes in anti-oxidant enzymes

The activity of SOD significantly (F=92.82, p=0.01) increased by 17.70% and 48.25% in the aerobic and graduated treadmill exercise groups, respectively, while it decreased by 29.8% in the aerobic and graduated treadmill exercise groups, respectively.
control group after 28 days. There was no significant difference in the activity of SOD in the managed aerobic treadmill exercise compared to the graduated treadmill exercise group. The activity of catalase significantly (F=37.35, p=0.001) increased by 20.0% and 20.0% in the aerobic and graduated treadmill exercise groups, respectively, but differences with the control group were not statistically significant (Table 4).

IV. Discussion

Type 1 diabetes is responsible for approximately 10% of diabetes-related morbidity.13 Diabetes can also cause severe autonomic dysfunction that can be responsible for several disabling symptoms and even sudden cardiac death.14 Exercise or recreational physical activity has been used as a type of preventive or initial therapeutic approach for DM.15 The aims of the current work were to assess the hypoglycaemic effect of physical training exercise interventions (aerobic and aerobic graduated treadmill exercise) in rats with streptozotocin-induced diabetes. The mechanism of streptozotocin action has been described elsewhere.16 Diabetes induced in rats after a single high dose of STZ is one of the animal models of type 1 diabetes mellitus. In this model, diabetes arises from irreversible destruction of the β-cells of the pancreas, causing a reduction in insulin secretion.17,18 Our results show that that rats with streptozotocin-induced diabetes have significantly decreased blood glucose and increased plasma insulin. This could be due to potentiation of the insulin effect of plasma by increasing the pancreatic secretion of insulin from existing β-cells or its release from bound insulin. Hyperglycemia and dyslipidemia are two major biochemical markers of diabetes.

In the present study, aerobic and graduated treadmill exercise significantly decreased serum glucose, cholesterol, and triglycerides, and increased serum insulin and HDL levels in diabetic rats compared with controls. Furthermore, improved HbA1c and normalization of lipid profiles may also contribute to the prevention of vascular complications. Hyperglycemia is associated with an increase in the oxidation of lipoproteins. Experimental evidence indicates that type 1 diabetes mellitus patients are susceptible to increased blood levels of anti-oxidant enzymes, confirmed mainly indirectly by measuring the products of lipid peroxidation.19,20 Hyperglycemia and dyslipidemia are two major biochemical markers of diabetes. Dyslipidemia was defined as cholesterol >200 mg/dL, HDL-c <35 mg/dL, LDL-c >160 mg/dL, or triglycerides >150 mg/dL.21 Type 1 DM patients are exposed to increased basal as well as exercise-induced lipid peroxidation, while paradoxically, exercise is recommended in the management of patients with type 1 diabetes.22 A variety of derangements in metabolic systems and in regulatory mechanisms due to insulin deficiency are responsible for the observed accumulation of lipids.23 The increase in insulin secretion results in enhanced metabolism of lipids and movement of lipids from adipose tissue to plasma. Thus, aerobic graduated treadmill exercise has an insulin-like action due to its lower lipid levels and increased oxidative stress has been detected in diabetic patients.24

These results suggest that the hypoglycemic and hypolipidemic effects of exercise interventions (aerobic and aerobic graduated treadmill exercise) are likely due to, at least in part, decreases in glucose and HbA1c, or increases in insulin secretion, improved lipid profiles, and increased antioxidant activity. The major finding of this study is that graduated treadmill exercise training accentuates the decreases in indicators of glucose control and antioxidant enzymes. However, proof of this will require further studies. The hypoglycaemic mechanisms of aerobic and aerobic graduated treadmill exercise programs remain unclear and further studies are required to elucidate cellular and tissue mechanisms of therapeutic exercise interventions.

V. Conclusion

The study demonstrates the benefit of aerobic and graduated treadmill exercise on body weight, fasting blood glucose, HbA1c, insulin concentration, lipid profiles, and antioxidative enzyme activity in rats with streptozotocin-induced diabetes. The response observed using a graduated treadmill exercise program was similar to that using a conventional physical exercise program. These findings suggest that aerobic graduated treadmill exercise has therapeutic, preventative, and protective effects in type 1 diabetes by decreasing lipid profiles and oxidative stress.
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Analysis and interpretation of data: Kim EJ
Drafting of the manuscript: Kim GY, Kim EJ
Research supervision: Kim GY

References