



Regulation of Zinc Status, Carbohydrate Metabolism and Antioxidants Levels by Vitamin C of Alloxan-Induced Diabetic Rats Fed Zinc Deficiency Diet

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the beneficial effect of vitamin C supplementation on biochemical parameters, antioxidant status, and zinc status in diabetic rats fed zinc-deficient diet. Forty male albino Wistar rats were divided into 5 groups. The first group was non-diabetic rats. The second and third groups were diabetic given a zinc-adequate diet (ZA); and zinc-deficient diet (ZD) respectively. The fourth and the fifth groups received also a zinc adequate diet and zinc-deficient diet with supplementation of vitamin (ZA+VitC and ZD+VitC). Diabetes was induced with alloxan. Body weight and food intake were measured regularly. After four weeks of dietary manipulation, the fasting animals were killed. The results revealed that dietary zinc intake significantly increased glucose, lipids, triglycerides, urea, AST, ALT, liver GST and TBARS levels in ZD rats. In contrast, the levels of zinc, total proteins, ALP, LDH, liver glycogen, GSH, GSH-Px and CAT were decreased. Interestingly, vitamin C seems to be effective in restoring the previous parameters to their normal levels. It can be assumed that vitamin C supplementation acted as an antioxidant, which significantly reduced the severity of zinc-deficiency metabolic perturbations in diabetic rats.

Keywords: Alloxan Antioxidant; Diabetes; Zinc Deficiency; Vitamin C

Abbreviations: ZA: Zinc-Adequate; ZD: Zinc-Deficient; ALT: Alanine Aminotransferase; AST: Aspartate Aminotransferase; ALP: Alkaline Phosphatase; LDH: Lactate Dehydrogenase.

Introduction

Diabetes mellitus is one of the major health problem and a common metabolic illness, which is characterized by high blood glucose concentration as a result of insulin lack or the presence of insulin resistance in peripheral tissues, or both. Many scientific reports mentioned that oxidative stress is associated with the pathogenesis of diabetes. Zinc is an essential trace element within cells and is necessary for a

broad range of physiological processes. The mineral is an integral part of cell membranes, and functions to maintain the structural integrity of cells as well as playing a role in the functions of insulin and carbohydrate metabolism. It may have important antioxidant properties, as it acts as a cofactor of the superoxide dismutase, which regulates the detoxification of reactive oxygen species, regulating the expression of genes and protecting against the oxidative stress induced by chronic hyperglycemia. Zinc deficiency occurs commonly in diabetic patients. Aside from inadequate dietary zinc intake, zinc deficiency typically results from impaired absorption, desorption or increased excretion of zinc. Diabetes leads also to an increase of oxidative stress, which in turn, is thought to be closely associated with the

pathogenesis of diabetes. As it was mentioned previously, that zinc is a structural part of key anti-oxidant enzymes such as superoxide dismutase, zinc deficiency results in increased oxidative stress by impairing their synthesis. Vitamin C is a water-soluble antioxidant, which efficiently scavenges free radicals and protecting cell membranes from oxidative damage. Studies have shown that supplementation of vitamin C can decrease the level of lipid peroxidation, because it is an electron donor, suggesting a direct role for the protection against oxidative damage. Moreover, the antioxidant potential of ascorbic acid is not only attributed to its capacity to quench reactive oxygen species, but also to its ability to regenerate other small antioxidant molecules, such as α -tocopherol, reduced glutathione and β -carotene [1-12]. Thus, the aim of this study was to examine the modulator effects of vitamin C administration for the prevention of the development of diabetic pathology observed in zinc deficient rats by evaluating zinc status, carbohydrate metabolism, enzymes activities and liver antioxidant parameters.

Materials and Methods

Chemicals

Alloxan, 5, 5'-dithiobis-2-nitrobenzoic acid (DTNB), amyloglucosidase and vitamin C (L-ascorbic acid) were purchased from Sigma Chemical Co (St Louis, France). All other reagents were of analytical grade.

Animals

All experiments were performed with Wistar male rats weighing 200-250 g and aged 10-12 weeks. Animals were housed in individual plastic cages and were provided standard food and water ad libitum. The temperature was maintained at 22 ± 2 °C with a standard daily photoperiod. The study protocol was approved by the Ethical Committee of our institution.

Induction of Diabetes and Diet

Fresh alloxan monohydrate solution was prepared to induce diabetes as described previously. Alloxan was dissolved in citrate buffer (0.01 M, pH 4.5, and then it intraperitoneally (i.p.) administered at a dose of 150 mg/kg body weight). Blood glucose was measured 7 days after induction of diabetes on samples taken from tail vein. The diabetic state was confirmed by a glucose-meter (ACCU-CHEK, Roche Diagnostics, Paris, France) when the glucose concentration exceeded 14 mmol/l. The diet for rats consisted of adequately (54 mg/kg) or deficient (1.2 mg/kg) quantities of Zn, as determined by atomic absorption spectroscopy. The mineral mixture supplied (in grams per kilogram diet) was calcium hydrogen orthophosphate 13; disodium hydrogen orthophosphate 7.4; calcium carbonate 8.2; potassium chloride 7.03; magnesium sulphate 4; ferrous sulphate 0.144; copper sulphate 0.023;

potassium iodide 0.001, manganese sulphate 0.180 and zinc carbonate 0.1. The low Zn diet contained no additional zinc carbonate.

Groups

The diabetic animals were equally divided into four groups. The first group received a diet containing 54 mg Zn/kg diet (zinc-adequate, ZA). The second group received a diet containing 1.2 mg Zn/kg diet (zinc-deficient, ZD). Vitamin C (1 g/l) [13-15] was given in drinking water to the third (ZA + VitC) and the fourth (ZD + VitC) groups.

Sample Collections

After 27 days, rats were sacrificed by cervical cut under ether anesthesia. The obtained serum was used for the determination of zinc, triglycerides, total lipids, total proteins, urea, alanine aminotransferase (ALT), aspartate aminotransferase (AST), alkaline phosphatase (ALP) and lactate dehydrogenase (LDH). The pancreas, testes and a fragment of liver were excised, washed with isotonic saline and blotted to dry. The right femur, the connective tissues and muscles were removed. Pancreas, kidney, femur, and one fragment of liver were weighed and dried at 80°C for 16 h and zinc concentration in each tissue was determined. The second fragment of liver was processed immediately for assaying the oxidative stress parameters.

Measurement of Biochemical Parameters

The activities of ALT, AST, ALP and LDH were estimated using commercial kits from Spinreact, Spain (refs: AST-1001161, ALT-1001171, ALP-1001131 and LDH-1001260). Total proteins, urea, total lipids and triglycerides were also measured utilizing commercial kits (Spinreact, refs: glucose-41011, total proteins-1001291 urea-1001329, total lipids-1001270 and triglycerides-1001311).

Zinc Estimation

Dried pancreas, liver and femur were heated in silica crucibles at 480°C for 48 h and the ash was dissolved in hot 12 M hydrochloric acid for zinc analysis in a flame atomic absorption spectrophotometer (Shimadzu AA-6200; Somerset, New Jersey, USA). Standard reference materials of bovine liver and wheat flour were used to check the accuracy of zinc recovery, which exceeded 96% in the reference materials. Serum zinc was measured by flame atomic absorption spectrophotometer after 20 folds dilution. Zinc standards were prepared from a 1mg/ml zinc nitrate standard solution using 5% glycerol to approximate the viscosity characteristics.

Estimation of Oxidative Stress Parameters

Tissue preparation: Approximately 1 gram of liver was

homogenized in 2 ml of buffer solution of phosphate buffer saline 1:2 (w/v; 1g tissue 2ml TBS, pH = 7.4). Homogenate was then centrifuged at 10000x g for 15 minutes at 4°C, and then the resultant supernatant was used for the determination of TBARS, GSH, proteins, GST, GSH-Px and CAT.

TBA Reactive Substances: The lipid peroxidation level in liver homogenate was measured as malondialdehyde (MDA), which reacts with thiobarbituric acid (TBA) as a TBA reactive substance (TBARS) to produce a red colored complex with a peak absorbance at 530 nm [1984].

Reduced Glutathione (GSH): Liver GSH content was estimated using a colorimetric technique, as mentioned by Ellman modified by Jollow, et al. based on the development of yellow color when DTNB [5, 5' dithiobis-(2-nitrobenzoic acid)] is added to compounds containing sulfhydryl groups. In brief, 0.8 ml of liver supernatant was added to 0.3 ml of 0.25 % sulfosalicylic acid and then tubes were centrifuged at 2500xg for 15 minutes. 0.5 ml supernatant was mixed with 0.025 ml of 0.01 M DTNB and 1 ml phosphate buffer (0.1 M, pH=7.4). The absorbance at 412 nm was recorded. Finally, total GSH content was expressed as nmol GSH/mg proteins.

Glutathione Peroxidase (GSH-Px): Glutathione peroxidase (GSH-Px) (E.C.1.11.1.9) activity was measured by the procedure of Flohe and Gunzler.

Glutathione-S-transferase (GST): Glutathione-S-transferase (GST) (EC.2.5.1.18) catalysis the conjugation reaction with glutathione in the first step of mercapturic acid synthesis. The activity of GST was measured according to the method of Habig et al. The P-nitro benzyl chloride was used as substrate and the absorbance was measured at 340 nm at 30-second intervals for 3 min.

Catalase: Catalase (EC.1.11.1.6) activity was measured

according to the method of Claiborne. The reaction mixture (3 ml) that contained 2.9 ml of 19 mmol/L H₂O₂ prepared in potassium phosphate buffer (0.1 M, pH = 7.4), and 0.1 ml of liver supernatant. The reaction was started by adding H₂O₂ and the decomposition of the later was monitored following the decrease in the absorbance at 240 nm for 2 min.

Proteins: The protein content of tissue samples were estimated by the method of Bradford using bovine serum albumin as a standard.

Liver glycogen: Determination of total liver glycogen was as that of glucose following an enzymatic hydrolysis with amyloglucosidase (EC.3.2.1.3) obtained from aspergillus Niger [16-23].

Statistical analysis: Data are given as means ± SEM. Statistical significance of the results obtained for various comparisons was estimated by applying one way Analysis of one way variance (ANOVA) followed by Student's t-test and the level of significance was set at p<0.05.

Results

Body Weight and Food Intake

Daily body weight gain and food intake are shown in table 1. Both parameters were significantly lower in the ZD group than in the ZA group. However, there is a significant increase in both body weight and food intake in the ZA+VitC compared to the ZA group. On the other hand, body weight gain and food intake values were significantly high in ZD+VitC group as compared to ZD.

Tissues and Serum Zinc

Zinc level in tissues and serum is presented in table 1.

Paramètres	Expérimental groups				
	ND(8)	ZA(8)	ZD(8)	ZA+VitC(8)	ZD+VitC(8)
Initial body weight (g)	215.75±14.43	225.00±28.04 ^a	224.83±37.39	223.00±16.19	223.00±29.20
Final body weight (g)	350.12±16.56	286.87±12.14 ^a	215.12±3.8 ^b	304.62 ± 13.33 ^b	239.5±6.61 ^c
Food intake (g/day/rat)	12.25±0.11	15.50±1.10 ^a	12.61±1.20 ^b	17.67 ± 1.55 ^b	15.21±0.40 ^c
Sérum Zn (µg/dl)	154.91±2.88	77. 5±0.018 ^a	68.4±0.002 ^b	101.1± 0.029 ^b	75.25±0.019 ^c
Femur Zn (µg/g dry wt)	159.31±3.11	82. 25±3.23 ^a	68.4±0.002 ^b	219.2 ± 21.40 ^b	193.1±17.40 ^c
Liver Zn (µg/g dry wt)	83.18±2.28	67.30±2.82 ^a	44. 00±3.26 ^b	75.38± 0.82 ^b	64.92±3.17 ^c
Pancreas Zn (µg/g dry wt)	111.21±1.87	55.76±2.03 ^a	40. 85±0.81 ^b	63.05± 3.20 ^b	50.19±1.49 ^c

Table 1: Initial body weight, final body weight, food intake, serum and tissues zinc of non-diabetic rats (ND), diabetic rats fed zinc adequate diet (ZA), diabetic rats fed zinc deficient diet (ZD), diabetic rats fed zinc adequate diet and given vitamin C (ZA+VitC) and diabetic rats fed zinc deficient diet and given vitamin C (ZD+VitC) at the end of experimental period.

(8): Number of Animals.

Mean ± SEM.

a: Significantly different from ND group; b: Significantly different from ZA group; c: Significantly different from ZD group.

Zinc concentration in organs was generally lower in ZD group than in the ZA group except in femur, which was significantly

high in ZD. Meanwhile, zinc concentration was significantly high in the ZA+VitC as compared to ZA group and in the

ZD+VitC group as compared to the ZD group.

Blood Biochemical Parameters

Glucose, total lipids, triglycerides, total proteins, urea, ALT,

AST, ALP, LDH and liver glycogen values are indicated in Table 2.

Parameter	Experimental groups				
	ND(8)	ZA(8)	ZD(8)	ZA+VitC (8)	ZD+VitC (8)
Glucose (mg/dl)	89.75±3.19	220.79±0.07 ^a	312.50±0.19 ^b	200.46± 0.03 ^b	265.8± 0.13 ^c
Liver glycogen(mg/g fresh weight)	56.71±1.28	37.57±1.91 ^a	27.861±0.54 ^b	52.04± 2.11 ^b	43.51±2.47 ^c
Total lipids (mg/dl)	264.5±11.2	411.8±25.8 ^a	892.0±12.0 ^b	344.0 ± 10.5 ^b	433.40±8.4 ^c
Triglycerides(mg/dl)	73.75±2.86	110.88±2.18 ^a	347.10±20.50 ^b	91.19± 6.14 ^b	102.5± 21.70 ^c
Total proteins (g/dl)	8.71±0.21	6.13±0.31 ^a	4.85±0.11 ^b	8.10 ± 0.52 ^b	5.69 ± 0.11 ^c
Urea (mg/dl)	31.62±1.16	54.68±1.20 ^a	59.04±1.51 ^b	43.5± 2.21 ^b	49.41±1.78 ^c
AST (IU/L)	51.37±1.13	71.12±0.55 ^a	101.56±4.30 ^b	61.46±2.35 ^b	83.69±6.99 ^c
ALT (IU/L)	35.25±1.82	72.69±1.55 ^a	100.40±5.67 ^b	48.31± 1.74 ^b	81.13±0.69 ^c
ALP (IU/L)	228.87±9.15	171.39±5.75 ^a	66.51±4.59 ^b	191.46 ± 5.65 ^b	100.4±16 ^c

Table 2: Glucose, total lipids, triglycerides, total proteins and urea, AST, ALT, ALP and liver glycogen of non-diabetic rats (ND), diabetic rats fed zinc adequate diet (ZA), diabetic rats fed zinc deficient diet (ZD), diabetic rats fed zinc adequate diet and given vitamin C (ZA+VitC) and diabetic rats fed zinc deficient diet and given vitamin C (ZD+VitC) at the end of experimental period. (8): Number of Animals.

Mean ± SEM.

a: Significantly different from ND group; b: Significantly different from ZA group; c: Significantly different from ZD group.

Blood glucose, total lipids, triglycerides, urea, GOT, GPT levels were higher in ZD group than in ZA group. In contrast, serum total proteins, ALP, LDH and liver glycogen levels of ZD were lower than those of ZA rats. The serum glucose, total lipids, triglycerides, urea, ALT, AST levels were significantly low in the ZA+VitC group when compared to ZA group. Meanwhile, serum glucose, total lipids, triglycerides and urea, AST, ALT levels were significantly low in the ZD+VitC group in

comparison with ZD group. Whereas, the concentrations of serum total proteins, liver glycogen, LDH and ALP were high in the two groups supplemented with vitamin C compared to the two non-supplemented groups.

Oxidative Stress Parameters

The GSH, TBARS, GSH-Px, GST and catalase values are shown in Table 3.

Parameter	Experimental groups				
	ND(8)	AZ(8)	ZD(8)	AZ+VitC(8)	ZD+VitC(8)
GSH (nmol/mg prot)	22.75±1.85	15.861 ± 0.190 ^a	13.776± .290 ^b	18.307± 0.291 ^b	16.821 ± 0.372 ^c
TBARS (nmol/mg prot)	0.321±0.02	0.504 ± 0.05 ^a	0.732± 0.03 ^b	0.400 ± 0.02 ^b	0.592 ± 0.03 ^c
(µmol GSH/min/mg prot)	0.203±0.01	0.176 ± 0.03 ^a	0.156 ± 0.03 ^b	0.198 ^b ± 0.06 ^b	0.171± 0.07 ^c
GST (µmol GSH-CDNB/min/mg prot)	1.27± 0.03	1.642 ± 0.09 ^a	2.542 ± 0.11 ^b	1.131± 0.14 ^b	1.749± 0.09 ^c
CAT(µmolH ₂ O ₂ /min/mg prot)	44.91±1.98	29.19 ± 2.40 ^a	18.42 ± 0.32 ^b	35.37 ± 1.09 ^b	24.07± 1.19 ^c

Table 3: GSH, TBARS, GSH-Px, GST and CAT in liver of non-diabetic rats (ND), diabetic rats fed zinc adequate diet (ZA), diabetic rats fed zinc deficient diet (ZD), diabetic rats fed zinc adequate diet and given vitamin C (ZA+VitC) and diabetic rats fed zinc deficient diet and given vitamin C (ZD+VitC) at the end of experimental period.

(8): Number of Animals.

Mean ± SEM.

a: Significantly different from ND group; b: Significantly different from ZA group; c: Significantly different from ZD group.

Diabetic rats fed on zinc deficient diet had higher TBARS concentration and GST activity. However, the activity of GSH-Px and catalase, as well as that of GSH concentration were lower than ZA group. The administration of vitamin C produced improvement of the above mentioned hepatic oxidative stress parameters. TBARS, GST values were lower in vitamin C supplemented animals than those of the non-supplemented groups. The GSH, GSH-Px and CAT values were high in the vitamin C supplemented groups.

Discussion

The findings from this study revealed that rats fed with zinc-deficient diet showed lower body weight gain and reduced dietary food intake compared to rats fed a zinc adequate diet. These results are in agreement with the previously published report. It was mentioned that zinc is an essential nutrient and has an interesting vital role in normal growth, protein metabolism, gene expression, immune system and in the prevention of apoptosis. However, body weight gain of diabetic rats fed on low zinc diet supplemented with Vitamin C (ZD + VitC) was higher than that of zinc deficient diet (ZD) group; this finding corroborate with those obtained by Badr, et al. who noticed a significant increase in the body weight of vitamin C treated diabetic group compared to diabetic group. Dahdouh, et al. indicated also that supplementation of vitamin C could improve the growth performance and food utilization in mice exposed to nickel. It is worth noting that rats given adequate zinc diet showed higher concentrations of serum zinc, pancreas, femur and liver when compared to zinc deficient animals. This result was in agreement with other findings [24-28]. The presence of hyperzincuria and low intestinal absorption of zinc in diabetes has prompted speculation that diabetics are more susceptible to zinc deficiency. The treatment of rats with Vitamin C increased zinc concentration of serum and tissues of both ZA and ZD rats, which might be due to high zinc bioavailability due to vitamin C supplementation. This coincides with the results of Ayinde, et al. who found that vitamin C significantly restored the level of zinc in the rat testes intoxicated by lead. The investigation results indicated that rats consumed low zinc diet presented higher concentration of blood glucose than those receiving adequate dietary zinc. It has been pointed out that zinc alteration may have an impact on glucose transporters inside the cells, which consequently affect peripheral glucose metabolism. Meanwhile, animals fed with low zinc diet showed significantly lower hepatic glycogen content than animals receiving adequate dietary zinc, this result agrees with that of Baltaci, et al. It has been reported that zinc enhance hepatic glycogenesis through its actions on the insulin signaling pathway and thus improves glucose utilization, increases hepatic glucose uptake and inhibits intestinal glucose absorption. Moreover, it has been reported that zinc inhibit glucagon secretion as well as it enhances the

structural integrity of insulin by reducing glycogenolysis. In this study blood glucose was reduced in the zinc deficient animals that were treated with vitamin C in comparison to the non-treated zinc deficient rats. This finding corroborates with that of Narra, et al. [29-35].

Vitamin C might alter insulin receptors in muscles or adipose tissue by increasing membrane motility and secondary enhances glucose uptake by the diaphragm. Simultaneously, the results indicated that the treatment with vitamin C has increased hepatic glycogen concentration. This result is similar to the investigation of Bulduk, et al. who reported an increase of muscle glycogen level of diabetic rats given ascorbic acid. Therefore, it has been suggested that acerbate might inhibit glycolysis, and thus enhances storing glycogen [36-38]. The total lipids, triglycerides and urea levels of zinc deficient animals were higher than those fed sufficient zinc. Such results perhaps are due to the catabolism of lipids and proteins because of increased energy demand [24]. In this experiment; there are an increase in serum ALT and AST activities of zinc deficient rats relative to those given adequate zinc diet. This finding is similar to the reported earlier studies [24,28]. Similarly, Reiterer, et al. [39] also stated that mice fed with zinc deficient diet showed elevated concentrations of cholesterol and triglycerides in the VLDL and HDL fractions, while zinc supplementation caused an important decrease of lipids.

The reduction in serum ALP of rats given low zinc diet could be attributed to the decrease of serum zinc. Similarly, Cho et al. confirmed that zinc is present in several metalloenzymes such as ALP, because it is needed for their activities. Moreover, serum total proteins level was significantly lower of rats that received zinc deficient diet compared with the zinc adequate group. These results are in total agreement with the previous findings of Derouiche and Kechrid. Undoubtedly, zinc was reported as an essential element for the synthesis of coenzymes that mediate biogenic amine synthesis and metabolism. In addition, Oteiza, et al. [40-43] demonstrated that zinc deficiency could be associated with high rates of oxidative damage of DNA and proteins. The decreased antioxidant capacity of diabetes is the result of increased production of oxygen metabolites, which curbs the activity of the antioxidant defense system. In other words, the reduced GSH concentration in low zinc diabetic rats might be attributed to oxidative stress [44]. In agreement with previous investigations, the significant increase of TBARS level was also found in the diabetic animals fed zinc deficient diet [28]. In addition, it has been shown that hyperglycemia promotes the production of free radicals, which may possibly inhibits the antioxidant enzyme activities [45]. Moreover, the hyperglycemia induces glucose autoxidation and protein glycation, which could explain the observed decrease of GSH-Px activity. The observed increase of GST activity in

diabetic rats fed on zinc deficient diet is in agreement with the findings of Youcef, et al. [46] It can be assumed that the variations associated with zinc deficiency in diabetic rats can be prevented by vitamin C supplementation; the latter seems to be effective in restoring some biochemical parameters to their normal levels. There are noticeable augmentations in serum total proteins, as well as a remarkable reduction in serum urea, total lipids and triglycerides concentrations of animals fed low zinc diet and given vitamin C compared with the zinc deficient group. This finding is in line with the results of Badr, et al. [26] Vitamin C supplementation improves lipid profile in alloxan diabetic rats by acting through cholesterol 7 α -hydroxylase to direct cholesterol into bile synthesis. Furthermore, vitamin C scavenges free radicals and decreases oxidative damage of LDL-cholesterol.

On the other hand; aminotransferases activities were decreased in animals fed inadequate zinc diet and supplemented with vitamin C when compared to the zinc-deficient group. This is in line with those of Ahna et al. who found that vitamin C prevent the increasing activities of hepatic enzymes. However, the increased activity of serum alkaline phosphatase is possibly a consequence of elevated zinc concentration. The administration of vitamin C had increased the level of GSH, but it reduced MDA concentration. Such result is likely explained on the basis that adequate ascorbic acid has radical-scavenging activity, which can regenerate other antioxidants such as GSH and α -tocopherol. The augmentation of GSH-Px activity is in good agreement with previous reports. The ascorbic acid-induced GSH-Px activity was probably due to the scavenging of oxidants such as HOCl, hydroxyl radical and reactive nitrogen species. The results of this experiment are in agreement with the literature, where the addition of vitamin C has increased catalase activity. The free-radical scavenging ability of the vitamin, results in the reduction of O $_2^{\cdot-}$, which prevents the damage of catalase haem group, thereby restoring the enzyme activity [47-51].

Conclusion

To conclude, both zinc deficiency and diabetes have disturbed growth rate, zinc status, carbohydrate metabolism, antioxidant enzymes activities and the levels of GSH and MDA [52]. However, the supplementation of vitamin C has alleviated some of these perturbations, suggesting that vitamin C had a therapeutic benefit for the reduction of diabetic complications under zinc deficiency and that by its antioxidant activity.

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