ADENOSINE-INDUCED DILATION OF CORONARY RESISTANCE VESELS IS IMPAIRED IN RATS WITH TYPE 2 DIABETES MELLITUS: POSSIBLE ROLE OF ATP-SENSITIVE POTASSIUM CHANNELS AND NITRIC OXIDE

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Abstract Objectives The purpose of this study was to test the hypothesis that adenosine-induced coronary microvascular dilation is blunted in the animals with diabetes mellitus (DM) through the impairment of K_{ATP} channel function.

Background Adenosine-induced coronary vasodilation is demonstrated to be mediated by activation of ATP-sensitive potassium (K_{ATP}) channels and nitric oxide (NO).

Methods The hearts of Otsuka Long-Evans Tokushima fatty rats (OLETF, type 2 DM rats), and control Long-Evans Tokushima fatty rats (LETO) at the ages of 32 and 8 weeks were perfused using a Langendorff system with constant perfusion pressure (80 mmHg). Changes in coronary flow to adenosine, pinacidil and sodium nitroprusside (SNP) were examined before and after administration of glibenclamide (10^{-5} M), or N^6-nitro-L-arginine methyl ester (L-NAME, 10^{-5} M).

Results At the age of 32 weeks, adenosine- and pinacidil-induced increases in coronary flow were blunted in OLETF as compared with those in LETO (both p<0.05). Glibenclamide attenuated adenosine-induced increase in coronary flow in LETO (p<0.05), but not in OLETF. In contrast, L-NAME attenuated adenosine-induced increase in coronary flow in OLETF (p<0.05), but not in LETO. SNP-induced increases in coronary flow in LETO and OLETF were comparable and were not affected by glibenclamide. In 8-week-old OLETF and LETO, no difference was observed in adenosine-, pinacidil and SNP-induced increases in coronary flow between OLETF and LETO.

Conclusions In this type 2 DM model, K_{ATP} channel function in coronary microcirculation is impaired. Adenosine-induced increase in coronary flow is mediated mainly by NO mechanism.

Key words: adenosine; diabetes mellitus; microcirculation; nitric oxide.
Abbreviations and Acronyms

ATP = adenosine triphosphate  
CF = coronary flow  
DM = diabetes mellitus  
$\text{K}_{\text{ATP}}$ = ATP-sensitive potassium  
LETO = Long-Evans Tokushima Otsuka  
L-NAME = N\(^{\text{G}}\)-nitro-L-arginine methyl ester  
LVP = left ventricular pressure  
NO = nitric oxide  
OLETF = Otsuka Long-Evans Tokushima fatty rats  
SNP = sodium nitroprusside

Introduction

Diabetes mellitus (DM) is a devastating disease with a 2- to 4-fold increase in the risk of coronary heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, congestive heart failure, and other cardiovascular complications\(^{1}\). Impairment of vasodilator responses has been demonstrated in experimental DM models. It was shown that the coronary dilator response to adenosine is reduced in rats with alloxan-induced type 1 DM\(^{2}\). Recent observations have indicated that vasodilator response through nitric oxide (NO)\(^{3,4}\) or ATP-sensitive potassium ($\text{K}_{\text{ATP}}$) channels\(^{5}\) are impaired in animals with DM.

Coronary blood flow is primarily determined by coronary microvascular resistance\(^{6}\) and is closely matched to the metabolic demand of the heart\(^{7}\). Recent studies in the coronary circulation indicate that $\text{K}_{\text{ATP}}$ channels play an important role in the metabolic vasodilation. It has been demonstrated that glibenclamide, a selective inhibitor of $\text{K}_{\text{ATP}}$ channels\(^{8}\), attenuates vasodilation to metabolic factors including hypoxia\(^{9}\), acidosis\(^{10}\) and hyperosmolarity\(^{11}\). Adenosine is known to be a potent dilator of coronary arterioles and has been proposed as a factor responsible for the metabolic regulation of coronary blood flow\(^{12,13}\). Adenosine causes glibenclamide-sensitive hyperpolarization of coronary arteries\(^{14}\). Glibenclamide attenuates adenosine-induced vasodilation of large\(^{15}\) and small coronary vessels\(^{9,16}\), indicating that adenosine regulates coronary resistance via the activation of $\text{K}_{\text{ATP}}$ channels. Recently Hein and Kuo\(^{17}\) demonstrated that adenosine-induced coronary arteriolar dilation is partially mediated by NO released from the endothelium via the opening of endothelial $\text{K}_{\text{ATP}}$ channels.

Although $\text{K}_{\text{ATP}}$ channels are involved in the regulation of coronary blood flow\(^{19}\), the effect of chronic hyperglycemia on $\text{K}_{\text{ATP}}$ channel function in coronary circulation is poorly understood. The first goal of the present study was to examine the $\text{K}_{\text{ATP}}$ channel function in an animal model with type 2 DM. The second goal was to explore the role of the NO pathway in adenosine-induced dilation of coronary resistance vessels in animals with type II DM.

Methods

Preparation of DM and Control rats

Thirty-five male Otsuka Long-Evans Tokushima fatty (OLETF) rats aged 30 to 32 weeks (6-8 weeks after the onset of DM) and five male OLETF rats aged 8 to 10 weeks were used as the experimental animals. OLETF rats have been established as long-term hyperglycemic rats with type 2 DM\(^{18}\). Thirty-three male Long-Evans Tokushima Otsuka (LETO) rats aged 30 to 32 weeks and four LETO rats aged 8 to 10 weeks, which were developed from the same colony by selective mating but did not develop DM, were used as control animals. All rats were kept at the specific pathogen-free facility under controlled temperature (23±1°C) and humidity (60%) with a 12-hour artificial light and dark cycle in the Institute for Animal Experiments of our institution. Animals were given free access to standard laboratory rat chow and tap water. All procedures were carried out in accordance with the Guidelines for Animal Experiment in Hirosaki University.
Experimental protocols

The occurrence of DM in OLETF rats was confirmed by an oral glucose tolerance test at 24 weeks in age. Blood glucose level in tail capillary blood was measured after 16 hours of fasting with a glucose test meter (MediSense Precision Plus, Bedford, MA). Oral glucose tolerance test was performed by administering 2 g/kg body weight of glucose. Blood was drawn from a tail vein at baseline, 30, 60, and 120 minutes after glucose administration. The rats which showed the peak plasma glucose level > 300 mg/dl and plasma glucose level at 120 min > 200 mg/dl were diagnosed as DM. OLETF and LETO were anaesthetized with sodium pentobarbital (50 mg/kg, IP) and heparinized (2000 IU, IP). The hearts of OLETF and LETO were excised and promptly bathed in 4°C saline. The ascending aorta was cannulated for perfusion of the coronary arteries. The hearts were then perfused using a Langendorff system with Krebs-Henseleit solution containing (in mM) NaCl 118, KCl 4.7, CaCl₂ 1.2, MgSO₄ 1.2, NaHCO₃ 25, KH₂PO₄ 1.2 and D(+)glucose 11.5. Coronary perfusion pressure was maintained at 80 mmHg. Heart rate was kept constant (330 beats/min) by atrial pacing during the experiment. A thin fluid-filled high-density polyethylene balloon connected to a 1 mm caliber polyethylene tube was inserted in the left ventricle via the left atrium to monitor isovolumic left ventricular pressure (LVP) and its first derivative (dP/dt). Balloon volume was adjusted to set the left ventricular diastolic pressure at 10 mmHg at the beginning of the experiment. Once a stable LVP level was attained, no further volume change was made. Aortic pressure and coronary flow (CF) were continuously monitored. After the instrumentation, at least 20 minutes were allowed for stabilization of the monitored variables. All drugs were dissolved in the perfusate and were infused into the coronary arteries through the aortic perfusion cannula. Glibenclamide and N⁶-nitro-L-arginine methyl ester (L-NAME, 100 μM) were perfused for 20 minutes and their effects on vasodilators were examined. In the preliminary study, we confirmed that CF responses to the vasodilators used were reproducible in the absence of inhibitors.

Effects of adenosine and pinacidil on CF: Adenosine (10⁸ to 10⁻⁶ M in coronary perfusate) or pinacidil (10⁻⁸ to 10⁻⁶ M), a specific Kₐᵥ channel opener⁹, was infused into the coronary arteries and the peak changes in CF were observed. Glibenclamide (0.1 μM) was then administered to the perfusate and adenosine- and pinacidil-induced increases in CF were reexamined. To study the involvement of NO pathway in adenosine- and pinacidil-induced vasodilation, the change in CF in response to adenosine (10⁻⁸ to 10⁻⁶ M) or pinacidil (10⁻⁸ to 10⁻⁶ M) was examined before and after L-NAME (100 μM).

Effect of sodium nitroprusside: Sodium nitroprusside (10⁻⁸ to 10⁻⁶ M) was perfused and its effect on CF was studied in LETO and OLETF rats. To verify the specificity of glibenclamide as a Kₐᵥ channel blocker, sodium nitroprusside-induced change in CF was again examined after administration of glibenclamide (0.1 μM). This concentration of glibenclamide is enough to block Kₐᵥ channel without affecting cardiac function (3).

To determine the influence of the genetic factors of this animal model to adenosine-, pinacidil- and sodium nitroprusside-induced vasodilation, the changes in CF by adenosine (10⁻⁸ to 10⁻⁶ M), pinacidil (10⁻⁸ to 10⁻⁶ M) and sodium nitroprusside (10⁻⁸ to 10⁻⁶ M) were examined in LETO and OLETF rats at the age of 8-10 weeks.

Drug preparation

Drugs and chemicals were obtained from Sigma Chemical (St. Louis, MO), except for pinacidil which was purchased from Research Biochemicals International (Natick, MA). Glibenclamide and pinacidil were dissolved in
dimethyl sulfoxide. The final concentration of dimethyl sulfoxide in the perfusate was 0.05% or less and had no effect on hemodynamic parameters. Adenosine and sodium nitroprusside were dissolved in Krebs-Henseleit solution. pH of the solution was maintained at 7.4 by bubbling with a mixture of 95% oxygen and 5% carbon dioxide. The perfusate was maintained at 37 °C by a circulating water bath with an external heat exchanger.

**Measurements**

At the beginning of the experiment, body weight was measured in the conscious state. An electromagnetic flow probe (FF-O45F, Nihon Kohden, Tokyo, Japan) was attached to the middle portion of the tube connected to the aorta and CF was continuously measured with a flowmeter (Model MFV-3100, Nihon Kohden, Tokyo, Japan). Coronary perfusion pressure was measured with a pressure transducer connected to a side arm of the aortic perfusion cannula. All data including LVP and dP/dt were recorded continuously on a polygraph system (Model RMP-6008M, Nihon Kohden, Tokyo, Japan). At the end of the experiment, the left ventricle was separated from the right ventricular free wall, the atra and the great vessels, and wet weights were then measured.

**Statistics**

All data are shown as mean ± SEM. Body weight, blood glucose level and baseline hemodynamic parameters were compared between LETO and OLETF rats with an unpaired t-test. The changes in CF were quantified by computing percent changes from the baseline. Comparison of the changes in CF in response to various drugs between LETO and OLETF rats, and those in response to various drugs before and after glibenclamide or L-NAME were analyzed with two-way ANOVA. Significance was accepted at P<0.05.

**Results**

At the age of 30-32 weeks, the body weight in OLETF (665 ± 9 g) was greater than that in LETO (513 ± 4 g) (p<0.01). The heart weight in OLETF (1.66 ± 0.02 g) was greater than that in LETO (1.47 ± 0.02 g) (p<0.01). Blood glucose level measured in the conscious state before the experiment was higher in OLETF (208 ± 10 g/dl) than in LETO (108 ± 3 g/dl) (p<0.01). Under the constant perfusion pressure (80 mmHg) and heart rate (330 beats/minute), no hemodynamic parameter differed significantly between LETO and OLETF rats at baseline. The hemodynamic parameters before and after glibenclamide and L-NAME are summarized for LETO and OLETF in Table 1.

**Adenosine-induced vasodilation in LETO and OLETF rats**

A representative trace of the effects of adenosine on CF, LVP and dP/dt in LETO and OLETF is shown in Figure 1. Adenosine produced dose-dependent increases in CF in LETO (n=7) and OLETF (n=15) (Figure 2). The adenosine-induced increase in CF in OLETF was smaller than that in LETO (p<0.05). Glibenclamide attenuated adenosine-induced increase in CF in LETO, but did not attenuate it in OLETF (Figure 2). Adenosine did not affect either LVP or dP/dt in both LETO and OLETF rats.

**Pinacidil-induced vasodilation in LETO and OLETF rats**

Pinacidil produced dose-dependent increases in CF in LETO and OLETF rats. The pinacidil-induced change in CF in OLETF (n=7) was significantly smaller than that in LETO (n=6) (p<0.05) (Figure 3). Glibenclamide (0.1 μM) attenuated pinacidil-induced change in CF both in LETO (n=6) and OLETF (n=7) rats.
Role of NO pathway in adenosine- and pinacidil-induced vasodilation

L-NAME attenuated adenosine-induced increase in CF in OLETF, but did not attenuate in LETO (Figure 4). L-NAME did not affect pinacidil-induced increase in CF in LETO (n=3, data not shown)

Sodium nitroprusside-induced vasodilation in LETO and OLETF rats

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### Table 1: Comparison of hemodynamic parameters between LETO and OLETF at the age of 30-32 weeks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LETO (n=21)</th>
<th>OLETF (n=29)</th>
<th>LETO (n=12)</th>
<th>OLETF (n=6)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>+dP/dt (mmHg/sec)</td>
<td>912 ± 55</td>
<td>983 ± 66</td>
<td>981 ± 76</td>
<td>982 ± 99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-dP/dt (mmHg/sec)</td>
<td>-611 ± 34</td>
<td>-597 ± 33</td>
<td>-565 ± 29</td>
<td>-607 ± 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF (ml/min)</td>
<td>137 ± 0.6</td>
<td>136 ± 0.5</td>
<td>13.4 ± 0.3</td>
<td>14.2 ± 1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR (mmHg/ml/min)</td>
<td>6.1 ± 0.3</td>
<td>6.0 ± 0.2</td>
<td>6.0 ± 0.2</td>
<td>5.7 ± 0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After glibenclamide</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+dP/dt (mmHg/sec)</td>
<td>799 ± 82</td>
<td>746 ± 49*</td>
<td>869 ± 96*</td>
<td>645 ± 75*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-dP/dt (mmHg/sec)</td>
<td>-457 ± 31*</td>
<td>-426 ± 29*</td>
<td>-374 ± 35*</td>
<td>-328 ± 17*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF (ml/min)</td>
<td>10 ± 0.4*</td>
<td>9.9 ± 0.3*</td>
<td>8.8 ± 0.4*</td>
<td>9.0 ± 0.7*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR (mmHg/ml/min)</td>
<td>8.3 ± 0.3*</td>
<td>8.2 ± 0.2*</td>
<td>9.3 ± 0.5*</td>
<td>9.0 ± 0.8*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Values are mean ± SEM. *p<0.05 vs Baseline
sLVP: systolic left ventricular pressure, +dP/dt: maximum dP/dt, -dP/dt: minimum dP/dt, CF: coronary flow, CR: coronary resistance

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Fig. 1 A representative trace of the effect of adenosine on coronary flow, LV pressure and LV dP/dt in the presence and absence of glibenclamide in LETO (top panel) and OLETF (bottom panel).
Sodium nitroprusside produced dose-dependent increases in CF in LETO (n=7) and OLETF (n=6). The change in CF in OLETF was similar to that in LETO (p=NS) (Figure 5). Glibenclamide (0.1 μM) showed no effect on sodium nitroprusside-induced vasodilation in LETO and OLETF rats (Figure 5). Similarly, L-NAME showed no effect on sodium nitroprusside-induced change in CF (n=3, data not shown).

Vasodilation in LETO and OLETF rats before the onset of DM

The effects of adenosine, pinacilid and sodium nitroprusside on CF in LETO and OLETF rats before the onset of DM (at the age of 8-10 weeks) were examined. Blood glucose level was 108±
Fig. 4 Graphs showing the effect of L-NAME (100 µM) on adenosine-induced increase in coronary flow in LETO (left panel, n=6) and OLETF (right panel, n=6) rats.

Fig. 5 Graph showing the effect of sodium nitroprusside (10^4 to 10^6 M) on coronary flow and the effect of glibenclamide (0.1 µM) on sodium nitroprusside-induced increase in coronary flow in LETO (n=7) and OLETF (n=6) rats.

5 mg/dl in LETO and 125±3 mg/dl in OLETF (p<0.05). There was no significant difference between LETO and OLETF rats in the changes in CF in response to adenosine, pinacidil or sodium nitroprusside (Figure 6).

**Discussion**

The major findings of the present study were as follows. 1) Adenosine- and pinacidil-induced increases in CF were blunted in OLETF. 2) Glibenclamide attenuated adenosine-induced increase in CF in LETO but not in OLETF. 3)
L-NAME attenuated adenosine-induced increase in CF in OLETF but not in LETO. These findings indicate that adenosine-induced dilation of coronary resistance vessels is blunted through the impairment of K$_{ATP}$ channels in the rats with type II DM, and that adenosine-induced increase in CF in this DM model is mediated by a NO mechanism. To our best knowledge, this is the first report that evaluated the changes in the coronary microcirculation responses to vasodilators in genetically defined type 2 DM model.

**Methodological considerations**

Previous studies have shown that the coronary dilator effect of adenosine is reduced in animals with alloxan-induced DM, i.e., type I DM$^{20}$. Since little research on endothelial dysfunction has been conducted in animal models of type 2 diabetes, it is unknown whether hyperglycemia, in the presence of hyperinsulinemia and insulin resistance, has the same deleterious effects on endothelial cell metabolism as in type 1 diabetes. In the present study, we used OLETF as a type 2 DM model. The characteristic features of OLETF rats include 1) late onset of hyperglycemia (after the age of 18 weeks); 2) a chronic course of disease, 3) mild obesity, 4) hyperinsulinemia, 5) inheritance by males, 6) hyperplastic foci of pancreatic islets, and 7) renal complication$^{18}$. Histologically, the changes of pancreatic islets can be classified into three stages: 1) an early stage (6-20 weeks in age) of cellular infiltration and degeneration; 2) a hyperplastic stage (20-40 weeks); and 3) an end stage (at > 40 weeks). These clinical and pathological features of disease in OLETF rats are genetically defined and resemble those of human type 2 DM. It was shown that the elevation of blood glucose at oral glucose tolerance test became marked after 24 weeks in age. In the present study, the occurrence of DM was confirmed by oral glucose tolerance test at 24 weeks, and the study was performed at 30-32 weeks. Thus, the animals were exposed to hyperglycemia for 6-8 weeks after the onset of DM. Compared with the experiments using isolated vessels, studies on isolated perfused organs yield additional information, since vascular resistance and reactivity were determined by the whole circulation, including the smallest arterioles.

The period of experimental hyperglycemia
Impairment of adenosine-induced dilation and the role of $K_{\text{ATP}}$ channels in OLETF

Adenosine is known to depress cardiac contractility via the activation of cardiac $\alpha_1$ receptor\cite{12}. In the present study, adenosine depressed neither LVP nor dP/dt in both OLETF and LETO, indicating that the effect of adenosine on cardiac contractility was absent or minimum in the concentrations used. At these concentrations, adenosine produced a dose-dependent increase in CF in both OLETF and LETO. However, the increase in CF in OLETF was significantly blunted as compared with that in LETO. On the other hand, sodium nitroprusside-induced coronary dilation in OLETF did not differ from that in LETO. These results suggest that attenuation of adenosine-induced dilation in OLETF is not caused by the impairment of vascular smooth muscle cells due to long-term state of type 2 DM. Since adenosine-induced dilation has been demonstrated to be mediated by $K_{\text{ATP}}$ channels\cite{9,11,15-17,25,26} , we examined the function of $K_{\text{ATP}}$ channels in OLETF and LETO. As shown in Figure 3, the vasodilator effect of pinacidil in OLETF was smaller than that in LETO, suggesting that $K_{\text{ATP}}$ channel-mediated coronary dilation is impaired in OLETF. Glibenclamide attenuated the vasodilator response of coronary resistance vessels to pinacidil but not to sodium nitroprusside, indicating that the present dose of glibenclamide selectively inhibited vasodilation via $K_{\text{ATP}}$ channels in our preparation. This concentration of glibenclamide attenuated adenosine-induced increase in CF in LETO but not in OLETF. These results suggest that adenosine-induced dilation mediated by $K_{\text{ATP}}$ channels is impaired in OLETF. After inhibition of $K_{\text{ATP}}$ channel by glibenclamide, adenosine produced a comparable increase in CF in LETO and OLETF rats.

The role of NO pathway in OLETF

Most studies examining the impairment of endothelial vasodilator function associated with diabetes have focused on the role of NO\cite{27}. Recent observations indicate that NO production is reduced and NO-dependent coronary vasodilation is impaired in animals with DM\cite{4,128,30} . Hein and Kuo\cite{27} recently reported that porcine coronary arteriolar dilation to adenosine is mediated by the opening of endothelial $K_{\text{ATP}}$ channels followed by NO production/secletion (NO-dependent) and the opening of smooth muscle $K_{\text{ATP}}$ channels (NO-independent). In the present study, L-NAME attenuated the adenosine-induced increase in CF in OLETF, suggesting that the adenosine-induced increase in CF is partially mediated by a NO mechanism in the animals with DM. In contrast, L-NAME did not attenuate the adenosine-induced increase in CF in LETO, suggesting that NO mechanism is absent or minimum in the adenosine-induced increase in CF in healthy animals. In the mesenteric arteries, L-NAME
showed greater reduction of both maximum relaxation and maximum hyperpolarization in diabetic rats compared with those in control rats. This suggests that NO has a greater contribution to vasodilation in diabetic rats or that adenosine can activate both NO-dependent and -independent pathways in LETO. Inhibition of the NO-dependent pathway by L-NAME may be compensated by the NO-independent pathway when \( K_{\text{ATP}} \) channels are intact. In OLETF, the impairment of the NO-dependent mechanism is unmasked since the NO-independent mechanism is diminished as a result of \( K_{\text{ATP}} \) channel dysfunction. This interpretation appears to be supported by the previous evidence that there is a cross-talk between NO and \( K_{\text{ATP}} \) channels.

It has been shown that endogenous adenosine is involved in the coronary vasodilation during reactive and functional hyperemia, hypoxia, and ischemia. In these conditions, the activation of \( K_{\text{ATP}} \) channels is important for vasodilation since adenosine causes vasodilation via the activation of \( K_{\text{ATP}} \) channels. In addition, \( K_{\text{ATP}} \) channels play an important role in coronary microvascular autoregulation and coronary microvascular dilation to hypoxia, acidosis and hyperosmolarity. Since these play crucial roles in the regulation of coronary blood flow, the dysfunction of \( K_{\text{ATP}} \) channels in DM would result in an inadequate oxygen supply during ischemia, hypoxia and intense metabolic demand of the heart. Thus, it is conceivable that myocardial ischemia is produced during exercise or emotional changes through the impairment of metabolic regulation in DM. In light of the current findings, it appears that \( K_{\text{ATP}} \) channel opener may be beneficial to patients with DM even though they do not show any significant stenotic lesion in the large epicardial coronary arteries.

Acknowledgment

The authors thank Otsuka Pharmaceutical Research Laboratory for its providing LETO and OLETF.

References


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