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Original Research Article

Atherogenic index as a predictor of atherosclerosis in subjects with familial Mediterranean fever

Akif Acay [a,*], Memnune Sena Ulu [b], Ahmet Ahsen [a], Gulay Ozkececi [c], Kasim Demir [d], Ufuk Ozuguz [e], Seref Yuksel [b], Gursel Acarturk [d]

[a] Department of Internal Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, Afyon Kocatepe University, Afyonkarahisar, Turkey
[b] Department of Nephrology, Faculty of Medicine, Afyon Kocatepe University, Afyonkarahisar, Turkey
[c] Department of Cardiology, Faculty of Medicine, Afyon Kocatepe University, Afyonkarahisar, Turkey
[d] Department of Endocrinology, Faculty of Medicine, Afyon Kocatepe University, Afyonkarahisar, Turkey
[e] Department of Gastroenterology, Faculty of Medicine, Afyon Kocatepe University, Afyonkarahisar, Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Background and objective: Numerous inflammatory and innate immune pathways are involved in atherogenesis. We aimed to investigate the atherogenic index and other lipid parameters in individuals with familial Mediterranean fever (FMF), as a predictor of atherosclerosis.

Materials and methods: A total of 60 patients with FMF and 60 healthy age- and sex-matched controls were included in this study. The patients with acute infection, chronic metabolic and rheumatic diseases, use of drugs other than colchicine and smoking history were excluded. CRP, ESR, total cholesterol, triglycerides, LDL-C, and HDL-C levels of patients and the control group were measured. Atherogenic index (TG/HDL-C) was calculated.

Results: We found that the atherogenic index values of the patients were significantly higher than those of the control group. HDL-C levels were lower and ESR and TG levels were higher in patients. Total cholesterol, LDL-C and CRP levels did not differ significantly between the two groups. There was no significant difference in the values of total cholesterol, LDL-C, triglycerides (TG), HDL-C, and atherogenic indexes between the groups of patients with and without M694V mutation.

Conclusions: Elaboration of clinical models of inflammation-induced atherogenesis may further advance our knowledge of multiple inflammatory pathways implicated in atherogenesis

* *Corresponding author at*: Department of Internal Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, Afyon Kocatepe University, Ali Cetinkaya Kampusu, Izmir Karayolu 7 Km., 03200 Afyon, Turkey.
E-mail address: drakifacay@gmail.com (A. Acay).

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and provide a useful tool for cardiovascular prevention. We believe that the atherogenic index also be used as a preliminary indication of accelerated atherosclerosis in FMF. However, large-scale prospective studies on this issue are needed.

1. Introduction

Familial Mediterranean fever (FMF) which is an autoinflammatory disorder characterized by brief recurrent attacks of pleuritis, peritonitis, arthritis and fever. FMF is an autosomal recessive hereditary disease [1]. The disease most commonly occurs in Jews, Turks, Armenians and Arabs. FMF takes place among the genetic causes of monogenic hereditary recurrent fevers (HRF) which exhibits monogenic genetic transition. The prevalence of FMF varies between 1/200 and 1/1000. Recent studies have shown that subclinical inflammation may continue in FMF cases, even in symptom-free periods [2]. Some investigators have observed more severe inflammation and disease in patients with a specific MEFV mutation [3–5].

Atherosclerosis is the main contributor to the global morbidity and mortality. It starts early in life, progresses slowly and asymptomatically with aging, eventually resulting in atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease, adverse vascular events and death. Staggering amount of evidence derived from clinical studies suggests that multiple immune and inflammatory agents orchestrate atherosclerotic vasculopathy throughout the whole course of atherogenesis [6,7]. Various algorithms for predicting coronary atherosclerosis have been established, most of which are based on large epidemiologic and cohort studies. Atherogenic index in recent years has started to gain importance as an indicator of atherosclerosis [8,9]. Cardiovascular (CV) diseases are a serious concern in chronic inflammatory diseases. Atherogenic index has been suggested to be less susceptible to disease activity variation during large periods of time. This makes it more attractive to be used in CV risk prediction in this group of patients as compared with lipids concentrations. We aimed to investigate the atherogenic index and other lipid parameters in individuals with FMF as a predictor of atherosclerosis.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Patients and controls

The present study was conducted between August 2012 and October 2013 in the Departments of Internal Medicine and Medical Genetics, Faculty of Medicine, Afyon Kocatepe University Hospital. The study was conducted retrospectively using hospital records and included 68 patients diagnosed with FMF. The control group included 60 age- and sex-matched healthy subjects. Five FMF patients of whom all laboratory data were not obtained were excluded from the study. Patients and control group were recalled to the hospital, and those who agreed to be included in the study were questioned for any chronic disease, any risk factors, used drugs, age, sex, hyperlipidemia, smoking, dietary compliance and family history.

Exclusion criteria were as follows: the presence of any acute infection, coronary artery disease, peripheral artery disease, cerebrovascular diseases, pneumonia, diabetes mellitus, systemic hypertension, acute or chronic renal failure, nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, chronic liver disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, obstructive sleep apnea, connective tissue disease, inflammatory bowel disease, allergic rhinitis, asthma and smoking history. Because of the presence of renal failure in three patients, we included 60 (91.2%) patients in this study. Our study was approved by the local ethics committee and conducted in accordance with the ethical principles described by the Declaration of Helsinki. Informed consent form was obtained from all participants before the study. The knowledge of the study participants were received from the recorded data of the patients' files.

2.2. Biochemical analysis

Laboratory data of biochemical analyses and inflammatory markers were obtained from hospital records of the patients when they were in symptom-free period. C-reactive protein (CRP), erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR), the total cholesterol (TC), low density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-C), high density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL-C) and triglycerides (TG) levels were measured and atherogenic index (TG/HDL-C) was calculated.

2.3. Mutation analysis

All data of genetic analyses of patients were obtained from hospital records in the Medical Genetic Department of our university hospital. All molecular examinations of patients who have FMF or possible FMF were performed in the laboratory of the Medical Genetics Department. Each patient had given 2 mL of blood sample in order to obtain genomic DNA; for this process, a Puregene DNA Isolation Kit (Gentra Systems, Minneapolis, MN, USA) was used. Spectrophotometric analysis of DNA molecules (Nanodrop ND-1000) was done to detect the amount and purity of the molecule. The MEFV mutations (M694V, M694I, M680I and V726 located in the tenth exon, and E148Q located in the second exon) in patients were determined with the PCR-ELISA method using PRONTO FMF Kit (Pronto Diagnostics, Rehovot, Israel), while P369S, K695R, A744S, R202Q and R761H mutations were determined with an FV-PTH-MTHFR Strip Assay Kit (Vienna, Austria). The patients were divided into two groups according to the presence or absence of the M694V mutation to determine the relationship between genetic structure and atherogenic index, and two