

Relation of -55CT polymorphism of UCP3 gene with weight loss and metabolic changes after a high monounsaturated fat diet in obese non diabetic patients

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Abstract. – **AIMS:** The aim of our study was to investigate the influence of -55CT polymorphism of UCP3 gene on metabolic response, weight loss and serum adipokine levels to a high monounsaturated fat hypocaloric diet in obese patients.

PATIENTS AND METHODS: A sample of 128 obese patients was analyzed in a prospective way during 3 months.

RESULTS: Eighty eight patients (21 males/67 females) (68.8%) had the genotype 55CC (wild genotype group) and 40 patients (8 males/32 females) (31.3%) 55CT (mutant genotype group). In wild genotype group, BMI (-1.6 ± 1.3 kg/m²), weight (-4.3 ± 3.7 kg), fat mass (-3.5 ± 3.3 kg), waist circumference (-5.1 ± 2.9 cm), total cholesterol (-7.2 ± 10.6 mg/dl), LDL cholesterol (-5.3 ± 12.8 mg/dl) and leptin (-4.7 ± 10.1 ng/ml) decreased. In mutant genotype group, BMI (1.3 ± 2.2 kg/m²), weight (-3.0 ± 1.4 kg), fat mass (-2.5 ± 1.1 kg), waist circumference (-2.8 ± 3.1 cm) and leptin (-5.8 ± 10.7 decreased).

CONCLUSIONS: In patients with -55CC UCP3 genotype, a high mono-unsaturated hypocaloric diet reduced BMI, weight, waist circumference, waist to hip ratio, fat mass, LDL-cholesterol, total cholesterol and leptin levels. Carriers of T allele had a different response than -55CC patients, with a significant decrease of the same anthropometric parameters, but lower than in the wild genotype group, and without significant changes in cholesterol levels.

Key Words:

55CT polymorphism of UCP3 gene, Monounsaturated fatty acids, Obesity.

Abbreviations

CRP = C reactive protein; HDL = high density lipoprotein; HOMA = homeostasis model assessment; LDL = low density lipoprotein; PCR = polymerase chain reaction; Ucp = uncoupling protein WHR = waist-to hip ratio

Introduction

An accumulating body of evidence shows that modest weight loss (5%) through dietary changes and exercise is an effective means for managing obesity-associated disorders¹. The current view of adipose tissue is that of an active secretory organ, sending out and responding to signals that modulate appetite, insulin sensitivity and energy expenditure².

Obesity may result from interactions between different factors controlling the environment, eating behavior, and energy expenditure. The genetics behind common obesity is likely to be dominated by several polymorphisms each with moderate effect. Uncoupling protein 3 (UCP3) belongs to a family of mitochondrial transporters that could uncouple the oxidative phosphorylation by increasing the proton leak of the inner mitochondrial membrane³. Decreased expression or function of UCP3 could reduce energy expenditure and increase the storage of energy as fat⁴. Some studies have pointed to a role of UCP3 in the regulation of whole body energy homeostasis⁵, lipids as metabolic substrates diet induced obesity⁶, and regulation of lipids as metabolic substrates⁷. The C/C genotype of a polymorphism in the UCP3 promoter (-55C->T) is associated with increased BMI and interacts with physical activity⁸. It was shown that -55 T/T genotype is associated with an atherogenic lipid profile in French Caucasians and with a decreased risk of type 2 diabetes⁹. Our group has demonstrated that weight loss is associated with different changes depending of -55C/T UCP3 genotype. Carriers of T allele have a different response secondary to a standard hypocaloric diet than wild type obese^{10,11} and the distribution of macronutrient and type of dietary fat could be implied in this different metabolic response¹¹.

Another interesting topic area is the active metabolic role of adipose tissue in obese patients. The current view of adipose tissue is that of an active secretory organ, sending out and responding to signals that modulate appetite, insulin sensitivity, energy expenditure, inflammation and immunity^{5,11-13}.

Furthermore, in light of previous findings, the aim of our study was to investigate the influence of -55CT polymorphism of UCP3 gene on metabolic response, weight loss and serum adipokine levels to a high monounsaturated fat hypocaloric diet in obese patients.

Patients and Methods

Patients

A population of 128 obese non diabetic outpatients was analyzed in a prospective way. These patients were studied in a Nutrition Clinic Unit and signed an informed consent. Exclusion criteria included history of cardiovascular disease or stroke during the previous 36 months, total cholesterol > 300 mg/dl, triglycerides > 400 mg/dl, blood pressure > 140/90 mmHg, fasting plasma glucose > 110 mg/dl, as well as the use of sulphonylurea, thiazolidinediones, insulin, glucocorticoids, inhibitors of dipeptidyl peptidase IV, analogues of GLP-1, antineoplastic agents, angiotensin receptor blockers, angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitors, psychoactive medications, drinking and/or smoking habit.

Procedure

All patients with a 3 weeks weight-stabilization period before recruitment were enrolled. The high monounsaturated fat hypocaloric intervention consisted in a diet of 1342 kcal, 46.6% of carbohydrates, 34.1% of lipids and 19.2% of proteins). The distribution of fats was; a 21.7% of saturated fats, a 67.5% of monounsaturated fats and a 10.8% of polyunsaturated fats. Weight, blood pressure, basal glucose, C-reactive protein (CRP), insulin, total cholesterol, LDL-cholesterol, HDL-cholesterol, triglycerides blood and adipocytokines (leptin, adiponectin, resistin, TNF alpha, and interleukin 6) levels were measured at basal time and at three months, after life style modification. Genotype of UCP3 gene polymorphism was studied.

Genotyping of UCP3 Gene Polymorphism

Oligonucleotide primers and probes were designed with the Beacon Designer 4.0 (Premier

Biosoft International®, Los Angeles, CA, USA). The polymerase chain reaction (PCR) was carried out with 250 ng of genomic DNA, 0.5 µL of each oligonucleotide primer (primer forward: 5'-GAT CTG GAA CTC ACT CAC CTC-3'; primer reverse: 5'-CTG TTG TCT CTG CTG CTT CT-3'), and 0.25 µL of each probes (wild probe: 5'-Fam-TAT ACA CAC GGG CTG ACC TGA-Tamra-3') and (mutant probe: 5'-Hex-CTT ATA CAC ACA GGC TGA CCT GA-Tamra-3') in a 25 µL final volume (Termociclador iCycler IQ (Bio-Rad®), Hercules, CA, USA). DNA was denaturated at 95°C for 3 min; this was followed by 50 cycles of denaturation at 95°C for 15 sec, and annealing at 59.3° for 45 sec). The PCR were run in a 25 µL final volume containing 12.5 µL of IQTM Supermix (Bio-Rad®, Hercules, CA, USA) with hot start Taq DNA polymerase. The Hardy Weinberg equilibrium was examined with *p* value > 0.05.

Assays

Serum total cholesterol and triglyceride concentrations were determined by enzymatic colorimetric assay (Technicon Instruments, Ltd., New York, NY, USA), while HDL cholesterol was determined enzymatically in the supernatant after precipitation of other lipoproteins with dextran sulfate-magnesium. LDL cholesterol was calculated using Friedewald formula.

Plasma glucose levels were determined by using an automated glucose oxidase method (Glucose analyzer 2, Beckman Instruments, Fullerton, CA, USA). Insulin was measured by RIA (RIA Diagnostic Corporation, Los Angeles, CA, USA) with a sensitivity of 0.5 mUI/L (normal range 0.5-30 mUI/L)¹⁴ and the homeostasis model assessment for insulin sensitivity (HOMA-IR) was calculated using these values¹⁵. CRP was measured by immunoturbimetry (Roche Diagnostics GmbH, Mannheim, Germany), with a normal range of (0-7 mg/dl) and analytical sensitivity 0.5 mg/dl.

Resistin was measured by ELISA (Biovendor Laboratory, Inc., Brno, Czech Republic) with a sensitivity of 0.2 ng/ml with a normal range of 4-12 ng/ml¹⁶. Leptin was measured by ELISA (Diagnostic Systems Laboratories, Inc., Webster, TX, USA) with a sensitivity of 0.05 ng/ml and a normal range of 10-100 ng/ml¹⁷. Adiponectin was measured by ELISA (R&D Systems, Inc., Minneapolis, MN, USA) with a sensitivity of 0.246 ng/ml and a normal range of 8.65-21.43 ng/ml [18]. Interleukin 6 and TNF alpha were measured by ELISA (R&D systems, Inc., Minneapolis,

MN, USA) with a sensitivity of 0.7 pg/ml and 0.5 pg/ml, respectively. Normal values of IL6 was (1.12-12.5 pg/ml) and TNFalpha (0.5-15.6 pg/ml)¹⁹⁻²⁰.

Anthropometric Measurements

Body weight was measured to an accuracy of 0.5 kg and body mass index (BMI) computed as body weight/(height²). Waist (narrowest diameter between xiphoid process and iliac crest) and hip (widest diameter over greater trochanters) circumferences to derive waist-to hip ratio (WHR) were measured, too. Tetrapolar body electrical bioimpedance was used to determine body composition²¹ (Biodynamics Model 310e, Seattle, WA, USA). Blood pressure was measured twice after a 10 minutes rest with a random zero mercury sphygmomanometer, and averaged.

Dietary Intake and Habits

Patients received prospective serial assessment of nutritional intake with 3 days written food records. All enrolled subjects received instruction to record their daily dietary intake for three days including a weekend day. Handling of the dietary data was by means of a personal computer equipped with personal software, incorporating use of food scales and models to enhance portion size accuracy. Records were reviewed by a registered dietitian and analyzed with a computer-based data evaluation system. National composition food tables were used as reference²¹. Regular aerobic physical activity (walking was allowed, no other exercises) was maintained during the period study (3 hours per week).

Statistical Analysis

Sample size was calculated to detect differences over 3% in weight loss with 90% power

and 5% significance. The results were expressed as means \pm standard deviation. The distribution of variables was analyzed with Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Quantitative variables with normal distribution were analyzed with a two-tailed, paired Student's-*t* test. Non-parametric variables were analyzed with the W-Wilcoxon test. Qualitative variables were analyzed with the chi-square test, with Yates correction as necessary, and Fisher's test. The statistical analysis was performed for the combined -55CT and -55TT as a mutant group and wild type -55CC as second group. A *p*-value under 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Results

One hundred and twenty eight patients gave informed consent and were enrolled in the study. The mean age was 48.8 \pm 10.3 years and the mean BMI 36.9 \pm 6.4, with 29 males (22.7%) and 99 females (77.3%). All patients completed the follow up during 3 months, with a weight loss of 4.1 \pm 1.0 kg (3.9%). All patients reach dietary intake recommendations.

Eighty eight patients (21 males/67 females) (68.8%) had the genotype 55CC (wild group) and 40 patients (8 males/32 females) (31.3%) 55CT (mutant group). Sex distribution was similar in wild and mutant type groups (wild type: 23.9% males vs 76.1% females and mutant: 20.0% males vs 80.0% females)

Table I shows the differences in anthropometric variables. In wild group, BMI (-1.6 \pm 1.3 kg/m²), weight (-4.3 \pm 3.7 kg), fat mass (-3.5 \pm 3.3 kg) and waist circumference (-5.1 \pm 2.9 cm) decreased. In mutant group, BMI (1.3 \pm 2.2 kg/m²), weight (-3.0 \pm 1.4 kg), fat mass (-2.5 \pm 1.1 kg),

Table I. Changes in anthropometric variables.

Characteristics	55CC		55CT	
	Basal time at 3 months		Basal time at 3 months	
BMI	37.7 \pm 6.0	36.1 \pm 5.6*	37.3 \pm 6.7	36.1 \pm 5.9*
Weight (kg)	98.1 \pm 17.5	93.7 \pm 16.1*	93.4 \pm 20.4	90.5 \pm 19.6*
Fat free mass(kg)	56.4 \pm 13.9	55.7 \pm 13.6	51.0 \pm 6.6	50.3 \pm 9.8
Fat mass (kg)	42.5 \pm 11.9	38.8 \pm 10.3*	39.0 \pm 12.2	37.5 \pm 8.1*
WC (cm)	114.3 \pm 14.1	109.3 \pm 11.6*	108.1 \pm 13.2	105.2 \pm 12.1*
WHR	0.92 \pm 0.09	0.91 \pm 0.08	0.93 \pm 0.2	0.91 \pm 0.1
SBP (mmHg)	124.9 \pm 11.7	123.3 \pm 11.4	129.5 \pm 18.4	125.3 \pm 19.8
DBP (mmHg)	80.6 \pm 7.4	78.5 \pm 8.1	80.7 \pm 4.2	77.8 \pm 8.4

DBP: Diastolic blood pressure. SBP: Systolic blood pressure. WC: waist circumference. WHR: Waist to hip ratio. **p* < 0.05, in each group with basal values.

waist circumference (-2.8 ± 3.1 cm) decreased. No differences were detected between basal values of these values in both groups.

The decrease of BMI, weight, fat mass and waist circumference were higher in wild type group than mutant type group.

Table II shows the differences in classic cardiovascular risk factors. In wild group, total cholesterol (-7.2 ± 10.6 mg/dl) and LDL cholesterol (-5.3 ± 2.8 mg/dl) decreased. In mutant group, biochemical parameters did not change in a significant way.

Table III shows differences between basal and after treatment levels of adipokines. Only leptin levels had a significant decrease in wild group (-4.7 ± 10.1 ng/ml) and mutant group reach statistical differences (-5.8 ± 10.7 ng/ml), too. Il6, TNF alpha, resistin and adiponectin remained unchanged after weight loss.

No differences in basal parameters (biochemical, anthropometric and dietary) were detected between heterocygous patients $-55C/T$ and homozygous patients $-55C/C$.

Discussion

In wild group of $-55CC$ UCP3 gene patients, a high mono-unsaturated hypocaloric diet reduced BMI, weight, waist circumference, waist to hip ratio, fat mass, LDL-cholesterol, total cholesterol and leptin levels. Our study showed that carriers of T allele had a different response than wild type obese, with a significant decrease of the same anthropometric parameters, but lower than in the wild group, and without significant changes in cholesterol levels.

The ubiquitous expression of UCP2, the expression of UCP3 in skeletal muscle, and their

homology with UCP1 made UCP3 attractive targets for interventions aimed at manipulating energy expenditure²³. One remarkable finding was that caloric restriction for 5 days resulted in a 2 to 3 fold increase in UCP mRNA levels in lean and obese patients²⁴, this fasting induced increase in UCP3 mRNA was completely reversed within 2 hours of refeeding.

Genetic polymorphisms in UCP genes have been variably associated with metabolic and obesity-related phenotypes. For example, Dalgaard et al²⁵ tested whether variation of the UCP3 promoter is associated with juvenile or maturity onset obesity or body weight change over a 26 year follow up among Danish subjects, without a statistical association. In other studies, no difference in genotype frequencies was observed between obese and lean subjects in a French cohort⁹, too. However, other study²⁶ has demonstrated that UCP3 $-55CT$ polymorphism carriers have apparently a lower risk of obesity. Liu et al²⁷ found statistically association and linkage between $-55CT$ and BMI, and subjects carrying the T allele had an average of 3.5% lower BMI than those without it. Our study did not show statistical differences among basal anthropometric parameters in both genotype groups. As we can see, it is, therefore, unclear that the $-55C/T$ variant has an effect on basal BMI or body fat content.

Some studies have analyzed the effect of the variant $-55CT$ of UCP3 gene on weight loss with different hypocaloric diets. In a previous investigation¹⁰, weight, fat mass, LDL cholesterol, leptin and IL-6 decreased in the wild group with a hypocaloric diet with a 25% of dietary fat. Nevertheless, in the mutant group, only weight decreased without improvements in metabolic parameters. Other study¹¹, with two different hypocaloric diets (low fat vs low carbohydrate

Table II. Classical cardiovascular risk factors.

Characteristics	55CC		55CT	
	Basal time at 3 months		Basal time at 3 months	
Glucose (mg/dl)	98.1 ± 11.5	96.2 ± 10.2	99.1 ± 16.1	98.1 ± 12.2
Total ch. (mg/dl)	203.1 ± 35.1	196.8 ± 32.1*	216.5 ± 33.7	212.1 ± 29.9
LDL-ch. (mg/dl)	124.7 ± 51.6	118.4 ± 31.1*	138.5 ± 31.9	136.3 ± 22.2
HDL-ch. (mg/dl)	52.2 ± 12.6	50.5 ± 9.6	53.2 ± 11.8	52.6 ± 10.8
TG (mg/dl)	114.5 ± 51.4	116.7 ± 53.6	134.9 ± 51.2	130.4 ± 56.9
Insulin (mUI/L)	13.4 ± 7.6	12.4 ± 8.2	11.3 ± 8.2	11.4 ± 6.9
HOMA	3.3 ± 1.1	3.1 ± 2.4	2.9 ± 2.4	3.0 ± 1.4
CRP (mg/dl)	5.5 ± 6.9	5.5 ± 7.5	5.1 ± 4.1	4.8 ± 2.6

Chol: Cholesterol; CRP: C reactive protein; TG: Triglycerides. * $p < 0.05$, in each group with basal values.

Table III. Circulating adipocytokines.

Characteristics	55CC		55CT	
	Basal time at 3 months		Basal time at 3 months	
IL 6 (pg/ml)	1.07 ± 1.1	1.84 ± 1.6	1.22 ± 1.5	1.62 ± 0.9
TNF- α (pg/ml)	2.4 ± 1.2	2.3 ± 1.1	3.8 ± 2.6	3.3 ± 3.6
Adiponectin (ng/ml)	9.6 ± 3.5	9.2 ± 3.7	7.6 ± 3.6	8.6 ± 5.3
Resistin (ng/ml)	4.7 ± 2.2	4.1 ± 1.7	4.2 ± 1.1	4.5 ± 1.3
Leptin (ng/ml)	24.0 ± 15.8	19.2 ± 11.2*	33.8 ± 23.1	27.8 ± 16.1*

Chol: Cholesterol; CRP: C reactive protein; TG: Triglycerides. * $p < 0.05$, in each group with basal values.

diet), showed a significant decrease of weight and fat mass in carriers of the T variant without metabolic changes with both diets, the distribution of saturated and unsaturated dietary fat were similar in both diets. In carriers of -55CC genotype improved weight, fat mass, leptin and insulin levels with both diets¹¹. In this study, the weight loss was higher in CC patients than CT patients and the first group had a significant improvement in LDL-cholesterol levels. It is difficult to understand how a silent mutation could influence phenotypes such as fat mass loss or adipocytokines levels modifications. Perhaps, the genetic variation in the promotor of UCP3 gene is associated with the functionality of mitochondrial oxidation and, therefore, influences the LDL cholesterol response and weight loss secondary to energy restriction. Other hypothesis could be the type of intervention, for example the weight loss secondary to a biliopancreatic diversion was not affected by -55CT genotype²⁸ and the studies with restriction of calory and modifications in distribution of macronutrient have demonstrated different genotype's responses^{10,11}. Finally, the type of dietary fat could interact with the weight loss response and -55CT polymorphism and monounsaturated rich diets showed this type of metabolic response.

Two studies have confirmed this interesting interaction between this polymorphism and weight loss induced by caloric restriction²⁹⁻³⁰. For example, two intronic single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) of UCP3 gene, Int3-47G/A and Tyr210Tyr, both of them were significantly associated with changes in body weight secondary to a very low calory diet (VLCD), and no aminoacid changes have been described with these SNPs²⁹. Other study³⁰ revealed that two SNPs in UCP2-3 gene cluster were associated with the changes of BMI induced by VLCD. As we can see the heterogeneity of this complex family of uncoupling proteins (UCPs) and the potential interaction

with environment (diet) made difficult to explain the results of weight modification and variation of energy expenditure in subjects with genetic variations of UCP. However, this area of investigation has a huge interest in order to initiate treatments in obese subjects.

Conclusions

In patients with -55CC UCP3 genotype, a high mono-unsaturated hypocaloric diet reduced BMI, weight, waist circumference, waist to hip ratio, fat mass, LDL-cholesterol, total cholesterol and leptin levels. Carriers of T allele had a different response than wild type obese, with a significant decrease of the same antropometric parameters, but lower than in the wild group, and without significant changes in cholesterol levels. Additional studies will be needed to clarify this interesting interaction between environment intervention and genes.

Conflict of Interest

The Authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

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