Comparison of antithrombin III levels in type 2 diabetes mellitus patients with and without ulcers at Haji Adam Malik Hospital Medan Indonesia from May to July 2017

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: People with diabetes mellitus (DM) have an increased risk for thrombosis compared with non-diabetic patients. Several studies showed contradicting data in levels of antithrombin III (AT-III) in people with type 2 DM and diabetic ulcers.

Methods: This is a descriptive and analytical cross-sectional study on AT-III concentrations of patients with type 2 DM with and without foot ulcers. A total of 40 subjects are divided equally into the control group, which consist of type 2 DM patients without foot ulcers, and the case group of type 2 DM patients with a diabetic foot ulcer based on the Wagner criteria. Blood samples are then taken after 8 to 10 hours of fasting to check for AT-III concentration and hemostasis examination including platelet count, prothrombin time (PT), activated partial thromboplastin time (aPTT), thrombin time (TT), fibrinogen levels, and D-dimers.

Results: The mean AT-III level of diabetic foot ulcers group was 216.02 ± 71.23 pg/mL, which was lower than the mean AT-III level of the group without diabetic foot ulcers, i.e. 243.05 ± 48.05 pg/mL. The mean AT-III concentration in the diabetic foot ulcers group with hypercoagulation state was 221.52 ± 64.25 pg/mL, which was slightly higher than the mean AT-III concentration of the diabetic foot ulcers group with hypocoagulation state of 203.18 ± 90.92 pg/mL.

Conclusion: No statistically significant difference was found in the levels of AT-III between the diabetic foot ulcers group and the non-diabetic foot ulcers group (p > 0.05). There was no statistically significant difference in AT-III levels of diabetic foot ulcers with hypercoagulation compared with no diabetic foot ulcers with hypocoagulation and no statistically significant relationship between grade diabetic foot ulcers and AT-III concentration.

Keywords: Antithrombin III, AT-III, type-2 diabetes mellitus, diabetic foot, diabetic ulcer


INTRODUCTION

The blood physiological condition can be obtained by a balanced hemostasis between coagulation and fibrinolysis activity involving vascular endothelial, platelets, clotting proteins, anticoagulant proteins, and fibrinolytic enzymes. Any defects in one or more of these components will cause disturbance of hemostasis balance and cause complications of bleeding or thrombosis.

Evidence from various studies revealed that people with diabetes mellitus (DM) are in a state of hypercoagulation. The condition of hyperglycaemia, hyperinsulinaemia, and insulin resistance can trigger changes in the components of hemostasis that cause increased tendency to experience thrombosis compared with the non-DM patient.

In a chronic diabetic foot ulcers with peripheral arterial disease (PAD) study in Sweden, it was found that elevated levels of several hemostasis parameters suggesting hypercoagulation and a correlation between the density of fibrin gel structures formed by hemostatin. According to a study, people with type 2 DM and ulcers in the lower extremities have a lower total plasma protein C level when compared with type 2 DM patients without ulcers in the extremities. A study obtained decreased protein C, protein S, and antithrombin III (AT-III) and increased fibrinogen concentration in patients with type 2 DM in Turkey.

The condition of hyperglycaemia, hyperinsulinaemia, and insulin resistance in patients with type 2 DM may trigger a change in the components of hemostasis that may lead to increased coagulation activity and decreased fibrinolysis activity. This explains why diabetics patients have hypercoagulatory states. A study found 33% patients in hypocoagulation state and 67% patients in normocoagulation or hypercoagulation state.
Antithrombin (AT) is a serine protease inhibitor (serpin), a specific type of enzyme inhibitor that acts as a natural anticoagulant that inhibits thrombin (IIa), factor Xa, factor IXa, factor Xla, factor XIa, kallikrein, and plasmin. Deficiency of AT will increase the risk of thromboembolism. AT deficiency can occur as a hereditary or acquired disorder. Decreased synthesis and excretion, drugs, or increased coagulation activity due to endothelial damage may be the causes of acquired AT deficiency.14,15 In contrast to the above results, other studies showed increased levels of AT-III in patients with type 2 DM.16,17

The contradicting results of the previous studies on the levels of AT-III and the limitation of the available data about AT-III disorders are the reasons that intrigue the authors to conduct this study. This study assessed the changes in levels of AT-III in people with type 2 DM with diabetic foot ulcers and without.

METHODS

This is a descriptive and analytical cross-sectional study conducted between May and July 2017 at RSUP Haji Adam Malik, Medan, Indonesia. The inclusion criteria were patients with type 2 DM who underwent treatment at RSUP Haji Adam Malik, Medan, and were willing to participate in the study. The diabetic foot ulcers were graded based on Wagner’s criteria. The control group was type 2 DM patients without foot ulcers. The minimum sample size obtained from the sample size estimation formula was calculated to be 17 for each group. A total of 40 subjects were included in this study, 20 subjects in each group. Type 2 DM patients with other hematologic disorders such as heart failure, kidney failure, liver failure, pregnancy, malignancy, and ulcers due to major surgery or immobilization, are excluded. All basic information about age, gender, and comorbid diseases are collected. Blood samples were tested after 8 to 10 hours of fasting for AT-III concentration and hemostasis examination including platelet count, prothrombin time (PT), activated partial thromboplastin time (aPTT), thrombin time (TT), fibrinogen, and D-dimers. Quantitative data is shown in mean ± SD. Categorical data is displayed in terms of numbers and percentages. Data processing is done by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program. Chi-Square test is used for comparison of categorical data. Unpaired t-test is used for comparison of parametric data. Pearson test is used for correlation. The result of any statistical analysis is considered to have significance if the value of p is less than 0.05.

RESULTS

Characteristics of Research Subjects

In the diabetic foot ulcers group, 13 patients (65%) were male and 7 patients (35%) were female. In the non-diabetic foot ulcers group, the samples consisted of 10 male and 10 female participants. There was no statistically significant difference in gender between the two study groups (p>0.05).

The majority of the diabetic foot ulcers subjects were 50 - 59 year-old (11 patients (55%)) and the least frequent age group was 60 - 69 year-old with only 4 patients (20%) in this category. While in the non-diabetic foot ulcers subjects, 50 percent of the subjects were in the 50 - 59 year-old age group. Only 3 patients (15%) fell into the 40 - 49 year-old group.

With Fisher exact test, no statistically significant difference in the age between the two study groups (p> 0.05) was found. The most commonly found grade of diabetic foot ulcers was grade 4, which were constituted from 10 patients (50%), 3 patients (15%) were grade 5, and only 7% patients with a grade 3 ulcer.

The results of this study showed that the mean hemoglobin (Hb) level of diabetic foot ulcers was 10.70 ± 1.66 g/dL, which was lower than the mean Hb of the non-ulcer group level of 13.05 ± 1.74 g/ dL. A significant difference was found between the concentration of Hb in the diabetic ulcer groups and the non-ulcer group using t-test (p <0.05).

The mean platelet level of the diabetic foot ulcers group was 381 ± 122 mm³, which was higher than the mean platelet level of the non-ulcer group of 303 ± 110 mm³. Statistically, there was a significant difference in the platelet value between the diabetic foot ulcers group and the non-diabetic foot ulcers group using t-test (p <0.05).

The mean fibrinogen level of the diabetic foot ulcers group was 445 ± 214 mg/dL, which was higher than the mean fibrinogen level of the group without diabetic foot ulcers of 290 ± 90 mg/dL. There was a statistically significant difference in the fibrinogen level of diabetic foot ulcers and the non-diabetic foot ulcers group using t-test (p <0.05).

The mean D-dimer concentration of the diabetic foot ulcer group was 647 ± 313 (ng / mL), which was higher than that of the non-diabetic foot ulcer group, i.e. 404 ± 301 (ng/mL). Using t-test, there was a statistically significant difference between the diabetic foot ulcers group and the group without diabetic foot ulcers (p <0.05).

The coagulation status in patients with diabetic foot ulcer revealed that there were six people with hypocoagulation (30%) and fourteen people with hypercoagulation (70%).
Differences of AT-III Levels between Diabetic Foot Ulcers and Non-Diabetic Foot Ulcers

Based on Table 2 below, the mean AT-III level of diabetic foot ulcers group was 216.02 ± 71.23 pg/mL, which was lower than the mean AT-III level of the group without diabetic foot ulcers, i.e. 243.05 ± 48.05 pg/mL. Using Mann-Whitney test, no statistically significant difference were found in the levels of AT-III between the diabetic foot ulcers group and the non-diabetic foot ulcers group (p> 0.05). The mean AT-III concentration in the diabetic foot ulcers group with hypercoagulation state was 221.52 ± 64.25 pg/mL, which was slightly higher than the mean AT-III concentration of the diabetic foot ulcers group with hypocoagulation state of 203.18 ± 90.92 pg/mL. However, statistical test with Mann-Whitney test showed no significant difference in AT-III levels in diabetic foot ulcers between the hypercoagulation and hypocoagulation state group (p> 0.05).

Table 1. Characteristics of research samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Diabetic foot ulcers (n=20) Mean ± SD</th>
<th>Non-diabetic foot ulcers (n=20) Mean ± SD</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (year-old)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>5 (25)</td>
<td>3 (15)</td>
<td>0.493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>11 (55)</td>
<td>10 (50)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>4 (20)</td>
<td>7 (35)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13 (65)</td>
<td>10 (50)</td>
<td>0.337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7 (35)</td>
<td>10 (50)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulcer grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7 (35)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10 (50)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3 (15)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete Blood Count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hb (g/dl)</td>
<td>10.7 ± 1.6</td>
<td>13 ± 1.7</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platelet (mm$^3$)</td>
<td>381 ± 122</td>
<td>303 ± 110</td>
<td>0.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hemositasis test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fibrinogen (mg/dL)</td>
<td>445 ± 214</td>
<td>290 ± 90</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-Dimer (ng/mL)</td>
<td>647 ± 313</td>
<td>404 ± 301</td>
<td>0.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coagulation state</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypercoagulate</td>
<td>14 (70)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypocoagulate</td>
<td>6 (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^a$Fisher exact test  $^b$ Chi-square test  $^c$ Mann-Whitney test  $^d$ t-test

Table 2. Differences in the Levels of AT-III in patients with and without Diabetic Foot Ulcers and its Relationship with the Coagulation Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>With ulcers n=20</th>
<th>Without ulcers n=20</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>With hypercoagulation and ulcers n=14</th>
<th>With hypocoagulation and ulcers n=6</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AT-III (pg/mL)</td>
<td>216.02 ± 71.23</td>
<td>243.05 ± 48.05</td>
<td>0.093</td>
<td>221.52 ± 64.25</td>
<td>203.15 ± 90.92</td>
<td>0.509</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DISCUSSION

The results which showed no significant differences between the lifespan of patients with type 2 DM with diabetic foot ulcers and patients without diabetic foot ulcers, in accordance with a previous research where no significant differences were found between the lifespan of patients with type 2 DM and diabetic foot ulcers or patients without diabetic foot ulcers.$^8$ However, another study found a significant difference between the lifespan of patients with type 2 DM and diabetic foot ulcers or patients without diabetic foot ulcers.$^8$ However, another study found a significant difference between the lifespan of patients with type 2 DM and diabetic foot ulcers with those without diabetic foot ulcers.$^8$ However, another study concluded that diabetic foot ulcers are significantly more likely to

The Relationship between AT-III Concentration and Gender in Patients With and Without Diabetic Foot Ulcers

Based on Table 3 below, the AT-III concentration of male participants was lower than that of female, with 215 ± 76.9 pg/ml and 217.4 ± 65 pg/ml, respectively. However, this result was also not statistically significant.

The Correlation between AT-III Concentration and Diabetic Foot Ulcers Grade

Pearson test was used to assess the correlation between diabetic foot ulcer grade and AT-III level. No significant correlation between the diabetic foot ulcer grade and AT-III level was found (r = 0.16; p = 0.509, (p>0.05)).
The statistically significant higher mean fibrinogen concentration in the diabetic foot ulcer group than the non-ulcer group is consistent with a research, in which fibrinogen levels in patients with DM with microvascular complications is increased. Another research also found elevated fibrinogen levels in 152 patients with diabetic foot ulcers where fibrinogen were associated with severity of diabetic foot ulcers and amputation.

The lower yet not statistically significant mean level of AT-III of the diabetic foot ulcer group obtained in this study might due to the thrombosis of DM patients with diabetic foot ulcers which triggered the use of AT-III that acts as a natural anticoagulant. The not-statistically significant difference between the two groups may be because the AT-III examination was not immediately done when the patient is admitted to the hospital. The initial DM treatment has been given prior to the examination because RSUP Haji Adam Malik is a regional referral hospital.

A previous study obtained a significantly lower plasma AT-III (26.6 ± 0.4 mg/100 ml) in 116 type 2 DM patients with vascular complications, compared with the plasma AT-III of 64 control patients (31.0 ± 0.3 mg/100 ml, p<0.01). Another research examined the association of hyperglycaemia with AT-III, in 20 DM patients (76.5 ± 2.2 unit?) and 20 controls (96.3 ± 1.8 unit?), a significant reduction in AT-III levels was found in patients with hyperglycaemia.

A research in Brazil revealed AT-III deficiency in 48 patients with chronic ulcers. Similar results are reported by another study where natural anticoagulant activity (AT-III, protein C, and protein S) were lower in as many as 132 patients with type 2 DM compared with healthy individuals.

A study found a decrease in levels of AT-III in patients with type 2 DM with angiopathy complications compared with no angiopathy complications. This study was in contrast with another study where elevated AT-III levels were detected in type 2 DM patients, but the AT-III levels were not related to the duration of DM and diabetes complications. (This comparison should not be drawn because the two studies had a very different design.) Another study found increased AT-III levels in 92 patients with type 2 DM compared with control patients. However, no statistically significant decrease of AT-III levels between DM patients with or without complications.

The lower AT-III concentration in male subjects as compared with the female in this study could be explained with a type of compensation reaction toward coagulation status. This results were consistent with a study where there was no

### Table 3 Relationship between AT-III Concentration and Gender in Patients With and Without Diabetic Foot Ulcers and Without Diabetic Foot Ulcers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>With ulcers</th>
<th></th>
<th>Without ulcers</th>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th></th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male (n=13)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female (n=7)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male (n=10)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female (n=10)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AT-III (pg/mL)</td>
<td>215.2±76.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>217.4±65</td>
<td></td>
<td>231.2±58.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>254.8±34.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4 The Correlation between AT-III levels with Diabetic Foot Ulcers Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>AT-III (pg/mL)</th>
<th></th>
<th>P</th>
<th>R</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>214.5±65.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.509</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>227.1±54.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>182.3±140.3</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
significant difference in thrombin-antithrombin levels between the two genders in patients with type 2 DM.\(^2\) (Consider to relocate the above paragraph to the discussion about the characteristics of the subjects which discuss whether gender affect AT-III or not)

In this study, no significant correlation between the grade of ulcers with levels of AT-III, \(r = 0.16, p = 0.509\) \((p> 0.05)\). Currently, there is no previous research that studied the relationship between the grades of diabetic foot ulcers with AT III concentration to compare with. (Consider removing this as this paragraph is irrelevant)

**Limitations**

The limitations of this study were the fact that all subjects were coming from only one hospital, the absence of data on how long the patient had suffered type-2 DM, and lack of examination of other factors that could affect coagulation such as hypoalbumin.

(This confounder variable should be identified early in the methods section)

**CONCLUSION**

There was no statistically significant difference in levels of AT-III between the diabetic foot ulcers patients with the non-diabetic foot ulcers group. Besides, there was also no statistically significant difference between the AT-III concentration and grade of diabetic foot ulcers. Further research with a broader population from several health care centers can be done. Additionally, other researches that look into finding a relationship between the degrees of diabetic foot ulcers and other factors that may affect coagulation could be pursued in the future.

**REFERENCES**

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