

Original Communication

Vitamin D Supplementation and Serum Levels of Magnesium and Selenium in Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus Patients: Gender Dimorphic Changes

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Received: December 22, 2013; Accepted: May 5, 2014

Abstract: The aim of our study was to evaluate the effects of vitamin D supplementation on circulating levels of magnesium and selenium in patients with type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM). A total of 126 adult Saudi patients (55 men and 71 women, mean age 53.6 ± 10.7 years) with controlled T2DM were randomly recruited for the study. All subjects were given vitamin D3 tablets (2000 IU/day) for six months. Follow-up mean concentrations of serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D [25-(OH) vitamin D] significantly increased in both men (34.1 ± 12.4 to 57.8 ± 17.0 nmol/L) and women (35.7 ± 13.5 to 60.1 ± 18.5 nmol/L, $p < 0.001$), while levels of parathyroid hormone (PTH) decreased significantly in both men (1.6 ± 0.17 to 0.96 ± 0.10 pmol/L, $p = 0.003$) and women (1.6 ± 0.17 to 1.0 ± 0.14 pmol/L, $p = 0.02$). In addition, there was a significant increase in serum levels of selenium and magnesium in men and women (p -values < 0.001 and 0.04 , respectively) after follow-up. In women, a significant correlation was observed between delta change (variables at six months-variable at baseline) of serum magnesium versus high-density lipoprotein (HDL)-cholesterol ($r = 0.36$, $p = 0.006$) and fasting glucose ($r = -0.33$, $p = 0.01$). In men, there was a significant correlation between serum selenium and triglycerides ($r = 0.32$, $p = 0.04$). Vitamin D supplementation improves serum concentrations of magnesium and selenium in a gender-dependent manner, which in turn could affect several cardiometabolic parameters such as glucose and lipids.

Key words: hypovitaminosis D, magnesium, selenium, diabetes, Saudi Arabia

Introduction

The high prevalence of vitamin D deficiency in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia is ironically exacerbated by summer season in that geographical region [1]. This hypovitaminosis D predisposes the general Saudi population to risk factors associated with osteoporosis, type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM), obesity, metabolic syndrome, and cardiovascular diseases [2, 3].

The measurement of 25-(OH) vitamin D concentration in the serum or plasma is considered the best indicator of vitamin D nutritional status [4]. Circulating vitamin D is regulated through the interaction of various factors, including intestinal absorption and renal function, as well as serum calcium and parathyroid hormone (PTH) levels [5, 6], although the latter may not be true for the Saudi population [7].

Serum magnesium has well-established actions in the modulation of calcium transport; sub-optimum levels have been speculated to have a causal link to pathological conditions such as obesity [8], osteoporosis [9], atherosclerosis, hypertension [10], and T2DM [11]. However, controversial results have been reported in showing a positive dose-response [12], as well as an inverse relation [13] between magnesium intake and risk of T2DM, respectively. It has been postulated that vitamin D may play a major role in the regulation of magnesium absorption [14].

Farhanghi and colleagues demonstrated that vitamin D supplementation in obese individuals improved low serum magnesium levels [15], while Rude and colleagues showed that low serum 1,25-(OH)₂D concentrations are associated with magnesium deficiency [16]. On the contrary, Wilz and colleagues reported no association between plasma 1,25-(OH)₂D concentrations and magnesium absorption [17].

Selenium has known roles in thyroid and immune function [18], while serum levels have been associated with cardiovascular risk [19] and hypertension [20]. Like magnesium, the relation between circulating levels of selenium and T2DM is controversial with mixed findings [21–23]. Mykkanen and colleagues demonstrated an increase in selenite (inorganic form of selenium) uptake by cholecalciferol treatment [24].

We previously demonstrated that oral vitamin D₃ supplementation (2000 IU/day) significantly improved the metabolic profile with favorable changes in high-density lipoprotein/low-density lipoprotein (HDL/LDL) ratio in T2DM patients, particularly in women [25], with changes modestly affected by the type of T2DM regimen [26]. Taken from the same cohort, the objective of this present study was to investigate the relation between oral vitamin D supplementation and

serum levels of magnesium and selenium and other biochemical variables in men and women with T2DM.

Materials and methods

Study population

A total of 126 adult Saudi patients (55 men and 71 women) with controlled T2DM (HbA_{1c} < 7.0 or T2DM duration < 1 year), were randomly selected from an existing Vitamin D Study database of the Prince Mutaib Chair for Biomarkers of Osteoporosis (PMCO) in King Saud University, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia [25, 26]. In brief, subjects were recruited from several primary health care centers across Riyadh, KSA. Subjects using mineral oil products, taking antacids regularly, receiving glucocorticoids or other steroids, diuretics, weight-loss drugs, phenobarbital and phenytoin, having liver problems, gallbladder disease, or gastrointestinal disorders, and taking vitamin D supplements or multivitamins were excluded from the study. A general questionnaire, including past and present medical history, was administered to subjects followed by a physical examination. All subjects were given a six-month supply of 2000 IU Vitamin D₃ tablets (Vigantolethen; Merck Pharma, Germany) to be taken daily, and were instructed to return to their assigned primary care center for repeat assessments. Written and informed consents were taken before inclusion. Ethics approval was obtained from the ethics committee of the College of Medicine Research Center at King Saud University, Riyadh, KSA.

Anthropometry was also measured at baseline and after 6 months and included height (to the nearest 0.5 cm), weight (to the nearest 0.1 kg), waist and hip circumference utilizing a standardized measuring tape in cm, and systolic and diastolic blood pressure measurements. Body mass index (BMI) was calculated as weight in kg divided by height in square meters.

Biochemical analysis

Fasting blood samples were collected at baseline and after 6 months of vitamin D supplementation for quantification of different metabolic parameters. Fasting blood glucose, lipid profile, inorganic phosphate (Pi), and magnesium concentrations were measured routinely using a chemical analyzer (Konelab, Espoo, Finland). Intact PTH and 25(OH)D were measured by specific ELISAs in accordance with the instructions

Table I: General characteristics of the subjects at baseline and after six months of vitamin D supplementation.

	Baseline	6 Months	P
N	126		
Age (years)	53.6 ± 10.7		
BMI (kg/m ²)	30.8 ± 4.8	30.8 ± 4.6	0.81
Hips (cm)	109.5 ± 8.0	111.5 ± 12.8	0.34
Waist (cm)	107.5 ± 10.6	105.4 ± 8.8	0.18
Systolic BP (mmHg)	126.7 ± 14.1	124.8 ± 16.4	0.22
Diastolic BP (mmHg)	80.5 ± 8.3	78.6 ± 8.8	0.05
Total Cholesterol (mmol/L)	5.2 ± 1.0	5.1 ± 1.2	0.41
LDL-cholesterol (mmol/L)	4.1 ± 0.93	3.9 ± 0.96	0.39
HDL-cholesterol (mmol)	1.0 ± 0.29	0.96 ± 0.26	0.28
Triglycerides (mmol/L)	2.1 ± 0.96	1.9 ± 0.96	0.11
Glucose (mmol/L)	10.8 ± 4.1	11.1 ± 4.8	0.48
25 (OH) vitamin D (nmol/L)	35.4 ± 13.0	59.5 ± 17.8	<0.001
PTH (pmol/L)	1.62 ± 0.11	1.0 ± 0.10	<0.001
Ca (mmol/L)	2.4 ± 0.30	2.5 ± 0.28	0.22
Corrected Calcium (mmol/L)	2.3 ± 0.23	2.4 ± 0.19	0.01
Pi (mmol/L)	1.16 ± 0.21	1.15 ± 0.23	0.73
Magnesium (mmol/L)	0.71 ± 0.10	0.74 ± 0.11	0.03
Selenium (ng/mL)	100.8 ± 35.1	102.6 ± 36.2	0.68

Data represented as Mean ± standard deviation. Level of significance is given by $P \leq 0.05$.

BMI – body mass index, BP – blood pressure, LDL – low-density lipoprotein, HDL – high-density lipoprotein, PTH – parathyroid hormone, Pi – inorganic phosphate.

provided by the manufacturer (IDS, Tyne & Wear, UK). The inter- and intra-assay variabilities were 5.8 % and 3.4 % for the intact PTH, and 5.3 % and 4.6 % for the 25(OH)D, respectively. For the purpose of this study, a serum 25(OH)D levels of >40 nm for women and >35 nm for men are considered normal [27].

Determination of Selenium in serum samples

Serum Se level was determined using Shimadzu graphite furnace atomic absorption spectrometry (Shimadzu, Model: AA- 7000 series) equipped with auto sampler [28]. Pyrolytically coated tubes were used as atomizers. The conditions for selenium were: A Shimadzu selenium hollow cathode lamp with wavelength of 196.0 nm, lamp current: 290 mA, slit width: 2.0 nm, matrix modifier was palladium [28]. The detection limit of the method was less than 5 µg/L, precision < 11 %, and inaccuracy < 1 %. Samples were diluted in proportion 1:10 with a special reducing reagent containing ascorbic acid, Triton X-100, and Antifoam B Emulsion in deionized water to improve the sample viscosity and reproducibility of the results. Stock standard solutions

for selenium were prepared from the commercial Se standard (1000 mg/L) purchased from Solution Acros Organics (USA). The working standard solutions were prepared weekly by appropriate dilution and kept refrigerated at 4°C. Argon was applied as a protective gas and 10 µL samples were injected into the graphite furnace (GF). All samples were analyzed in duplicate. Human reference serum (Seronorm™ Trace Elements in Serum) from Sero AS (Billingstad, Norway) was used to check the entire proposed analytical method reliability. This reference material was supplied in lyophilized form and reconstituted by dissolving the vial total content using high purity deionized water. The results for the reference sample agreed with the certified acceptable range of selenium concentration.

Statistical analyses

Data was analyzed using SSPS for Windows version 16.0 (Chicago, IL, USA). Variables exhibiting non-Gaussian distribution were logarithmically transformed. Paired Student's *t*-tests were performed to compare the baseline and follow-up period variables.

Pearson's correlation was used to compare the delta change of variables (at six months – baseline variables). A two-tailed probability value of 0.05 was considered significant.

Results

The basic characteristics of the subjects are shown in Table I. The mean age was 53.6 ± 10.7 years. The level of 25(OH)D, serum magnesium, and corrected calcium was significantly higher after six months of follow-up, than at baseline (p-values <0.001, 0.03, <0.001, and 0.01, respectively). After stratifying by gender, the mean serum 25(OH)D (p<0.001) and magnesium (p=0.04) significantly increased while PTH concentrations (p=0.02) decreased significantly in women after 6 months of vitamin D supplementation. In men, PTH levels significantly decreased (p=0.003)

after 6 months, and a significant increase in serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D, corrected calcium, phosphorus, and selenium (p-values <0.001, 0.01, 0.04, <0.001, respectively) were also observed (Table II).

Correlation between the changes in magnesium, selenium and biochemical variables

A significant correlation was observed between delta changes of serum magnesium levels with HDL-cholesterol ($r=0.36$, $p=0.006$) and fasting glucose ($r=-0.33$, $p=0.01$) in women. In men, there was a significant correlation between delta changes of serum selenium and triglyceride levels ($r=0.32$, $p=0.04$) (Table III). Moreover, a significant correlation between delta changes of serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D and PTH ($r=-0.28$, $p=0.03$ and $r=-0.26$, $p=0.03$) were observed for all subjects.

Table II: Gender-based stratification of anthropometric and biochemical variables, and trace elements (magnesium and selenium) at baseline and after six months of oral vitamin D supplementation.

	Women			Men		
	Baseline	6 Months	P	Baseline	6 Months	P
N	71			55		
Age (years)	52.1 ± 10.1			54.2 ± 10.6		
BMI (kg/m ²)	33.1 ± 6.7	33.8 ± 5.7	0.12	30.6 ± 4.9	30.7 ± 5.4	0.60
Hips (cm)	108.4 ± 8.0	112.0 ± 14.3	0.38	110.5 ± 8.3	111.1 ± 12.6	0.43
Waist (cm)	105.8 ± 11.8	104.4 ± 8.9	0.53	109.9 ± 8.7	106.6 ± 9.2	0.19
Systolic BP (mmHg)	129.0 ± 14.5	127.2 ± 16.5	0.42	124.2 ± 13.5	122.3 ± 16.2	0.30
Diastolic BP (mmHg)	81.5 ± 7.7	79.8 ± 9.5	0.17	79.6 ± 9.0	77.3 ± 8.1	0.14
Total Cholesterol (mmol/L)	4.9 ± 1.2	4.5 ± 0.92	0.52	5.2 ± 1.1	5.1 ± 1.3	0.71
LDL-cholesterol (mmol/L)	4.1 ± 0.89	4.1 ± 1.0	0.98	4.0 ± 1.2	3.7 ± 1.0	0.17
HDL-cholesterol (mmol)	1.0 ± 0.26	1.0 ± 0.26	0.52	1.0 ± 0.35	0.97 ± 0.22	0.36
Triglycerides (mmol/L)	1.9 ± 0.13	2.1 ± 0.11	0.19	1.9 ± 0.12	2.1 ± 0.13	0.21
Glucose (mmol/L)	10.8 ± 3.8	11.6 ± 4.3	0.18	10.3 ± 4.5	10.3 ± 4.3	0.93
25 (OH) vitamin D (nmol/L)	35.7 ± 13.5	60.1 ± 18.5	<0.001	34.1 ± 12.4	57.8 ± 17.0	<0.001
PTH (pmol/L)	1.6 ± 0.17	1.0 ± 0.14	0.02	1.6 ± 0.17	0.96 ± 0.10	0.003
Ca (mmol/L)	2.4 ± 0.33	2.5 ± 0.23	0.21	2.5 ± 0.26	2.5 ± 0.34	0.50
Corrected Calcium (mmol/L)	2.4 ± 0.23	2.4 ± 0.17	0.10	2.3 ± 0.19	2.4 ± 0.21	0.01
Pi (mmol/L)	1.17 ± 0.15	1.18 ± 0.23	0.59	1.18 ± 0.22	1.09 ± 0.21	0.04
Magnesium (mmol/L)	0.70 ± 0.06	0.74 ± 0.10	0.04	0.74 ± 0.11	0.75 ± 0.11	0.85
Selenium (ng/mL)	75 ± 41.2	87.9 ± 33.0	0.42	86.6 ± 35.0	112.2 ± 37.3	<0.001

Data represented as mean \pm standard deviation. Level of significance is given by $p \leq 0.05$.

Table III: Gender-based Correlations between Delta Change in Trace Elements and Anthropometric and Biochemical Variables.

	Women				Men			
	Δ 25 (OH) vitamin D	Δ Mg	Δ Pi	Δ Se	Δ 25 (OH) vitamin D	Δ Mg	Δ Pi	Δ Se
	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r
Δ BMI	-0.31*	-0.22	0.12	0.09	-0.28*	-0.16	0.13	-0.18
Δ Hips (cm)	-0.41**	-0.18	0.11	0.14	-0.24	-0.29	0.19	0.13
Δ Waist (cm)	-0.26*	-0.17	0.15	0.05	-0.29*	-0.12	0.12	0.10
Δ Systolic BP (mmHg)	-0.07	-0.13	0.08	0.15	-0.08	-0.20	-0.10	0.23
Δ Diastolic BP (mmHg)	-0.21	-0.08	0.07	0.07	-0.09	-0.21	-0.21	0.11
Δ Cholesterol (mmol/L)	-0.15	0.16	0.05	-0.13	-0.29*	0.08	0.43**	-0.13
Δ LDL-cholesterol (mmol/L)	-0.11	0.07	-0.23	0.21	-0.18	-0.10	0.28	0.27
Δ HDL-cholesterol (mmol)	0.09	0.36**	0.14	0.17	0.10	0.13	0.38*	-0.24
Δ Triglycerides (mmol/L)	-0.15	-0.13	0.31*	0.22	-0.22	-0.06	0.13	0.32*
Δ Glucose (mmol/L)	-0.11	-0.33*	-0.19	0.27	-0.23	-0.02	-0.22	0.14
Δ PTH (pmol/L)	-0.26*	-0.18	-0.30*	-0.13	-0.28	-0.06	-0.16	-0.12

Δ change: (variables at six months- variables at baseline), *: $p < 0.05$; **: $p < 0.001$.

Discussion

The data collected from this study revealed that serum 25(OH)D and magnesium levels significantly improved in women, and a significant increase in serum 25(OH)D and selenium were observed in men after six months of vitamin D supplementation. Differences between genders were seen in serum magnesium, selenium, HDL-cholesterol, fasting glucose, and triglyceride levels. In addition, increased levels of vitamin D and decreased serum PTH levels were observed for all subjects. The gender differences observed are not in accordance with most of the previous studies that showed contradictory and inconsistent results regarding the role of magnesium and selenium levels in the risk of T2DM [10, 29–31].

In this study, a significant increase in serum magnesium was observed with vitamin D supplementation only in women. Earlier studies, however, did not observe gender-specific differences in serum magnesium in patients with either diabetes type 1 or 2 [11, 32]. Our results do support the findings of Farhangi and colleagues, which showed an increase in the level of serum magnesium in women after vitamin D supplementation [15].

There are controversies regarding the intake of magnesium and risk of T2DM [11, 32, 33]. Patients with unstable T2DM tend to have abnormal lipid profiles that can further decompensate glycemia. Studies have shown that low HDL-cholesterol is directly cor-

related to serum Mg even in pre-diabetic states, and dietary Mg intake is inversely associated with fasting serum insulin, HDL-cholesterol, systolic and diastolic blood pressure, suggesting that oral magnesium supplementation may be effective in reducing plasma fasting glucose levels and raising HDL cholesterol in patients with T2DM [35, 36]. In the present study, the improved levels of serum magnesium were an after-effect of vitamin D supplementation and were not associated with dietary magnesium intake. Our results showed a negative and positive correlation of serum magnesium levels with fasting plasma glucose and HDL-cholesterol levels, respectively. These findings partially support the study of Song et al., showing that an increase in magnesium supplementation could lead to a decrease in fasting glucose levels and an increase in HDL-cholesterol in patients with T2DM [36].

In men, a significant increase in the serum selenium level was observed after six months of vitamin D supplementation. The relationship between circulating vitamin D and selenium has not been well studied, but low selenium intake has been associated with an increased risk of bone-related diseases [37, 38]. Moreover, it has been shown that a single intravenous dose of 100 IU cholecalciferol, 100 IU ergocalciferol, or 0.1 μ g 1,25 dihydroxycholecalciferol could increase selenite uptake, exhibiting an important association with different vitamin D compounds [24].

There are contradictory results regarding serum selenium levels in men and women [39, 40]. A study

performed by Lee et al. demonstrated decreasing selenium levels with age (>40 years) and concluded that the association of selenium status with blood lipid levels is applicable only in young-adult women [41]. The analysis of men and women in NHANES III studies exhibited significantly higher mean serum selenium concentrations in men than with the same age group in women [42].

Apart from gender differences, the level of selenium intake is also influenced by several confounding factors like health-related behaviors and dietary intake of other nutrients. For instance, alcohol consumption was in direct association with serum selenium in women, but not in the men of NHANES III [42], while, an inverse relation was demonstrated between selenium concentration and smoking, which was stronger in men than in women [43]. The present study supports the NHANES III results showing a significant increase in serum selenium concentration in men, but the gender difference regarding selenium increase after vitamin D supplementation is still not clear and needs to be studied further.

Observational studies have shown a positive association of serum selenium levels with triglyceride concentrations in different populations [44, 45]. Yang and colleagues showed a significant increase in the levels of triglycerides with increased serum selenium concentrations in the Taiwanese elderly [46]. Gender-specific analysis of the same study demonstrated that triglycerides increased significantly across the highest selenium quartiles in men, while total HDL- and LDL-cholesterol concentrations increased significantly across the highest selenium quartiles in women [46]. Our findings confirm the study performed by Yang et al. [46], showing a positive correlation of triglycerides with the level of serum selenium in men.

The authors acknowledge some limitations. Several confounders were not included in the study such as dietary information and medications, which can influence magnesium and selenium. Furthermore, the serum levels of the trace elements studied do not reflect the overall magnesium and selenium status of patients and as such, results should be interpreted with caution.

In conclusion, the supplementation of vitamin D for up to six months in T2DM patients favorably modulated the serum levels of magnesium and selenium in a gender-dimorphic manner. These changes in magnesium levels were associated with an increased HDL-cholesterol and decreased fasting glucose level, while selenium levels were associated with increased triglyceride levels. Overall, the vitamin D influence in

physiologically important circulating trace elements such as magnesium and selenium could possibly explain how the different risk factors associated with T2DM can be corrected through vitamin D supplementation.

Conflict of interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to disclose related to this study.

Acknowledgements

The present study was financially supported by King Saud University, vice deanship of scientific research chair. We also thank Benjamin Vinodson for the statistical analysis of the data.

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