Obesity-related indicators and their relationship with serum antioxidant activity levels in Mexican adults

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Abstract

Introduction: Obesity has been associated with an oxidative process, however there are controversies regarding the potential role of circulating antioxidant activity attributed to non-protein compounds.

Objective: The purpose of the present study was to examine the relation between antioxidant activity levels and obesity related-indicators in Mexican young adults.

Methods: Anthropometric measures, serum lipids and uric acid were determined in 78 men and 90 women (a total of 168 individuals). Serum antioxidant activity in different fractions also was measured by using TEAC assay (TEACNP, TEACP and TEACTotal).

Results: TEACNP was positively correlated (p<0.05) BMI (r=0.307), WC (r=0.322), LDL (r=0.274), TC (r=0.293), TG (r=0.409) and UA (r=0.441). The antioxidant activity measured as TEACNP in individuals with obesity related-indicators was higher compared to those individuals without obesity-related indicators. When BMI, WC, HDL, LDL, TC, TG and UA were considered as obesity related-indicators, the higher the number of obesity related-indicators (p<0.05) the higher the TEACNP values. However, when TEACP values decreased, the number of obesity related-indicators (p<0.05) increased.

Conclusion: The positive association between TEACNP and obesity related-indicators suggests that apparently increase in TEACNP may not always indicate a healthier condition.

DOI:10.3305/nh.2015.31.5.8524

Key words: Obesity. atherosclerosis. antioxidant capacity.

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Recibido: 18-XII-2014.

INICADORES ASOCIADOS A OBESIDAD Y SU RELACIÓN CON NIVELES DE ACTIVIDAD ANTIOXIDANTE EN SUERO DE ADULTOS MEXICANOS

Resumen

Introducción: La obesidad ha sido asociada a un proceso oxidativo, no obstante existen controversias en relación al papel que pueda desempeñar la actividad antioxidante circulante atribuida a compuestos no proteicos.

Objetivo: El objetivo del presente estudio fue examinar la relación entre los niveles de actividad antioxidante e indicadores relacionados con obesidad en adultos jóvenes mexicanos.

Métodos: Se determinaron las medidas antropométricas y niveles séricos de lípidos y ácido úrico en 78 hombres y 90 mujeres (un total de 168 individuos). También se determinó la actividad antioxidante en distintas fracciones de suero mediante el ensayo de TEAC (TEACNP, TEACP y TEACTotal).

Resultados: TEACNP se correlacionó positivamente (p<0,05) BMI (r=0,307), WC (r=0,322), LDL (r=0,274), TC (r=0,293), TG (r=0,409) y UA (r=0,441). La actividad antioxidante medida como TEACNP en individuos con indicadores relacionados con obesidad fue más alta comparada con aquellos individuos sin indicadores relacionados con obesidad. Cuando BMI, WC, HDL, LDL, TC, TG y UA fueron considerados como indicadores relacionados con obesidad, el número de indicadores relacionados con obesidad (p<0,05) creció en individuos con TEACNP. No obstante, cuando disminuyeron los valores de TEACP, el número de indicadores relacionados con obesidad se incrementó (p<0,05).

Conclusión: La asociación positiva entre TEACNP e indicadores relacionados con obesidad sugiere que al parecer un incremento en TEACNP no siempre puede indicar una condición saludable.

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Obesity is a risk factor of atherosclerosis (AS), which is normally attributed in some extent to non-insulin dependent diabetes mellitus, arterial hypertension and hyperlipidemia. This atherogenic effect of obesity could be associated to several mechanisms which include inflammatory mechanisms, insulin resistance and stimulation renin–angiotensin system commonly related to atherosclerosis processes. Obesity and insulin resistance have some effect on the antioxidant activity of different groups of people under various metabolic disorders. Most of these studies have evaluated serum total antioxidant activity but not serum non proteic and proteic fractions that could have some effect on the antioxidant activity of different groups. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to evaluate the relationship between obesity related-indicators and serum total antioxidant activity and their non proteic and proteic fractions in Mexican young adults. To the best of our knowledge, it is the first time that this type of study is performed among Mexican population.

Methods

The study included 201 Mexican young men and women from Bachelor Public University in Sonora, México. The study’s protocol fulfilled the ethical standards for human experimentation according to the Ethics Committee of the Centre for Food Research and Development AC (CIAD, AC). After receiving detailed information about the conditions of the study, all participants agreed to participate in the experiment. Exclusion criteria were as follows: a) not having consumed vitamin supplements in the last three months prior to the study; b) not being in condition of underweight (Body mass index (BMI)<18.99 kg/m²), c) positive history for AS (the presence of 1st degree relatives with manifest AS (cardiovascular hearth disease and/or cerebrovascular disease and/or peripheral vascular disease) under the age of 55 years for males and 65 years for females was considered as a positive family history and d) being outside the selected age range (18-25 years).

Blood samples (5 mL) were taken from each study subjects voluntarily and collected in vacutainer tubes, after fasting for 12-14 h. Samples were centrifuged at 130 g for 15 min and serum was separated from whole blood. Total cholesterol (TC), low density lipoprotein (LDL), high density lipoprotein (HDL), trygllicerides (TG) and uric acid (UA) in serum were measured by enzymatic methods using commercial test kits (Randox Lab. Ltd., UK).

The values of lipids profile considered as obesity related-indicators were defined as TC (>200 mg/dl), LDL (>130 mg/dl), HDL (male <40 mg/dl, female <50 mg/dl) and TG (≥150 mg/dl) according to National Cholesterol Education Program Adult Treatment Panel III (2001). Hyperuricemia was considered as UA (men >7.0 mg/dl, women >5.7 mg/dl) according to National Cholesterol Education Program Adult Treatment Panel III (2001). Hyperuricemia was considered as UA (men >7.0 mg/dl, women >5.7 mg/dl) according to the standard established by the supplier.

TEAC assay is based on the ability of the antioxidants to scavenge the blue-green ABTS + radical cation relative to the scavenging capacity of the water soluble vitamin E analogue Trolox. The antioxidant capacity of the total serum and non-protein fraction was determined and labeled as TEAC_total and TEAC_non, respectively. In TEAC_np determination, the serum protein fraction was removed by precipitation, adding (1:1) 0.05 M of perchloric acid. Serum protein fraction (TEAC_protein) antioxidant capacity was calculated by the difference between the TEAC_total and TEAC_non.

The percentage of absorbance inhibition at 734 nm was calculated and plotted as a function of that ob-
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Height (h) and weight (W) were measured following internationally accepted techniques using a stadiometer (model 202, Seca Ltd, Birmingham, UK) and a digital scale (1631 solar scale, Tanita Corp, Tokyo, Japan), respectively. Obesity was determined by BMI and using the following equation: BMI=W/h² according to the World Health Organization (WHO). The cut-off points were: normal weight (18.5-24.9 kg/m²), overweight (25-29.9 kg/m²) and obesity (≥30 kg/m²). Waist circumference (WC) was measured at the mid-point between the highest part of the iliac crest and the lowest part of the ribs margin of the median axial line. If WC was ≥90 cm in men or ≥80 cm in women, the subject was classified as having central obesity based on the International Diabetes Federation²².

Statistical analyses were performed using a SAS version 8 software (SAS Institute Inc, Cary, NC). Means and standard deviation from data of all determinations were obtained. Pearson’s correlation coefficients were used to assess the relationship between antioxidant activity levels and obesity related indicators. The correlation between the number of obesity related-indicators and antioxidant activity levels was assessed by Spearman’s correlation coefficient by rank. In all analyses, p<0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Results

This study was achieved with the voluntary participation of 201 individuals; all active students were from the Central Campus of the University of Sonora, Mexico. From these initial number we excluded from the study those out of the age range (18-25 years), below normal weight (<18.5 kg/m²) and those that consumed some multivitamin. The final sample was 168 individuals (78 women and 90 men), corresponding to 46.4 and 53.5%, respectively. Previous studies used a similar number of subjects to evaluate prevalence of cardiovascular disorders in different groups of individuals²³-²⁵.

Anthropometric and biochemical measures of subjects are shown in table I. BMI and WC did not show statistical differences (p<0.05) by gender. From all biochemical determinations, the mean levels of LDL, TC, TG and UA were significantly higher in men than women (p<0.05), with the exception of HDL levels. Figure 1 shows the mean serum antioxidant capacity (TEACₜₒₜₜ, TEACₚ and TEACₙ) grouped by gender. The TEACₜₒₜₜ values were higher (3.11±0.06) in men than in women (3.06±0.06). However, the TEACₚ values were higher (2.69±0.06) in women than in men (2.62±0.06) while TEACₙ levels were higher (0.488±0.07) in men than in women (0.371±0.06).

Table II shows the Pearson’s correlation coefficient between antioxidant capacity (TEACₚ, TEACₜₒₜₜ and TEACₙ) and obesity-related indicators (BMI, WC, HDL, LDL, TC and UA). TEACₚ was significantly positively correlated with BMI (r=0.307, p<0.001), WC (r=0.322, p<0.001), LDL (r=0.274, p<0.001), TC (r=0.293, p<0.001), TG (r=0.409, p<0.001) and UA (r=0.441, r<0.001). In addition, TEACₚ was significantly negatively correlated with HDL (r=-0.283, p<0.001). TEACₜₒₜₜ only was significantly positively correlated with LDL (r=0.247, p<0.01), TC (r=0.295, p<0.001) and UA (r=0.152, r<0.05). TEACₚ was significantly positively correlated with HDL (r=0.272, p<0.001) and negatively correlated with BMI (r=-0.325, p<0.001), WC (r=-0.278, p<0.001), TG (r=-0.284, p<0.001) and UA (r=-0.288, p<0.001).

Table I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Total (n=168)</th>
<th>Women (n=78)</th>
<th>Men (n=90)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BMI (kg/m²)</td>
<td>25.00±4.3</td>
<td>24.9±4.8</td>
<td>25.0±3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WC (cm)</td>
<td>83.39±12.3</td>
<td>81.5±13.8</td>
<td>85.0±10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDL (mg/dl)</td>
<td>58.8±14.9</td>
<td>63.2±11.8</td>
<td>54.9±16.3 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDL (mg/dl)</td>
<td>79.05±45.0</td>
<td>60.2±33.7</td>
<td>95.3±47.3 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TC (mg/dl)</td>
<td>157.7±44.0</td>
<td>140.3±36.1</td>
<td>172.8±44.8 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TG (mg/dl)</td>
<td>99.3±58.5</td>
<td>83.9±47.3</td>
<td>112.2±63.9 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UA (mg/dl)</td>
<td>3.91±1.44</td>
<td>3.5±1.4</td>
<td>4.2±1.4 *</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<0.001, ** p<0.0001 significantly different from women by independent samples t-test.

Fig. 1.—Total trolox equivalent antioxidant capacity (TEACₜₒₜₜ), Protein trolox equivalent antioxidant capacity (TEACₚ) and Non protein trolox equivalent antioxidant capacity (TEACₙ) (mmol-TE/L) by gender. Bars with different letters within same assay are significantly different (p<0.05).
Table III shows the comparison of antioxidant capacity (TEAC_{NP}, TEAC_{Total}, TEAC_{P}) between groups with and without obesity-related indicators, such as obesity (BMI: ≥30 kg/m²), central obesity (WC: men ≥90 cm, women ≥80 cm), low HDL concentration (men <40 mg/dl, women <50 mg/dl), high LDL concentration (≥130 mg/dl), hypercholesterolemia (≥200 mg/dl), hypertriglyceridemia (≥150 mg/dl) and hyperuricemia (men >7.0 mg/dl, women >5.7 mg/dl).

Among the 168 subjects, mean of TEAC_{NP} of 30 subjects had obesity, 25 subjects had low HDL concentration, 24 subjects had high LDL concentration, 31 subjects had high TC concentration, 27 subjects had high TG concentration and 13 subjects had high UA concentration and were shown to be 3-19% higher than mean TEAC_{NP} of subjects without obesity related indicators. Contrary to this result, means TEAC_{P} of subjects with obesity related-indicators such as BMI, HDL, TC, TG and UA were significantly lower (p<0.05) than means TEAC_{P} of subjects without obesity related-indicators (Table III).

Figure 2 shows the distribution of TEAC_{NP} (F2a), TEAC_{Total} (F2b) TEAC_{P} (F2c) according to the number of obesity related-indicators. Mean TEAC_{NP} was elevated with increasing obesity related-indicators (r=0.409 p<0.001), while mean TEAC_{P} was diminished with increasing obesity related-indicators (r=0.305 p<0.001). Mean TEAC_{P} did not show significant (p>0.05) changes regarding obesity related-indicators number.

Discussion

According to Lavie et al.\textsuperscript{26}, obesity has reached global epidemic proportions in both adults and children and is associated with numerous comorbidities, including hypertension, type II diabetes mellitus, dyslipidemia, certain cancers and cardiovascular disease\textsuperscript{27}. AS, a major cardiovascular disease, is one of the chronic diseases most prevalent in the adult population, and coronary heart disease is the most frequent and lethal form. Despite the great contribution of established risk factors to AS, they fail to predict coronary heart disease revealing a clear need to explore other indicators more directed to atherosclerotic mechanism associated to obesity.

We studied the association between obesity related-indicators and serum antioxidant activity in young adults studying in a public University of Sonora, localized in Northwest of México. Among 168 individuals examined, 30 had obesity (BMI ≥30 kg/m²) and 63 had abdominal obesity (WC≥90 cm for men ≥80 cm for women) equivalent to 17.6 and 37% total sample, respectively. According to Barquera et al.\textsuperscript{28}, in México, 38 and 32% of adult Mexican population have overweight and obesity respectively, while 74% had abdominal obesity.

Regarding lipid profile values, in our study, 14.2, 18.4 and 16% of young individuals had increased LDL, TC and TG levels respectively, while 14.8% showed decreased HDL levels. A high prevalence of obesity related-indicators was observed in this sample in accordance with the international literature that revealed obesity related-indicators in young individuals were also high\textsuperscript{25,29-32}.

Dyslipidemia and obesity are changeable risk factors of AS. The increase in LDL levels especially in LDL modified by oxidation represents one of the main causes of endothelial damage/dysfunction, an initial event of atherogenic process\textsuperscript{33}. On the other hand, hyperuricemia has been associated with obesity and CVD\textsuperscript{34}, but it is also well known that UA in circulation is a potent antioxidant non-protein\textsuperscript{35}. Therefore, there is the controversy regarding beneficial effects of antioxidants in circulation on CDV reduction\textsuperscript{15,17}.

Table II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BMI</th>
<th>WC</th>
<th>HDL</th>
<th>LDL</th>
<th>TC</th>
<th>TG</th>
<th>UA</th>
<th>TEAC_{NP}</th>
<th>TEAC_{Total}</th>
<th>TEAC_{P}</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BMI</td>
<td>0.872***</td>
<td>-0.270***</td>
<td>0.212**</td>
<td>0.210**</td>
<td>0.319***</td>
<td>0.260***</td>
<td>0.307***</td>
<td>-0.079***</td>
<td>-0.325***</td>
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<tr>
<td>WC</td>
<td>-0.278***</td>
<td>0.264***</td>
<td>0.259***</td>
<td>0.314***</td>
<td>0.262***</td>
<td>0.322***</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>-0.278***</td>
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<td>HDL</td>
<td>-0.335***</td>
<td>-0.102</td>
<td>-0.374***</td>
<td>-0.148*</td>
<td>-0.282***</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>0.272***</td>
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<td>LDL</td>
<td>0.942***</td>
<td>0.130</td>
<td>0.132</td>
<td>0.274***</td>
<td>0.247**</td>
<td>-0.077</td>
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<td>TC</td>
<td>0.271***</td>
<td>0.203**</td>
<td>0.293***</td>
<td>0.295***</td>
<td>-0.061</td>
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<td>TG</td>
<td>0.446***</td>
<td>0.409***</td>
<td>0.115</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.284***</td>
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<td>UA</td>
<td>0.441***</td>
<td>0.152*</td>
<td>0.152</td>
<td>-0.288***</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEAC_{NP}</td>
<td>0.193*</td>
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<td>TEAC_{Total}</td>
<td>0.497***</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEAC_{P}</td>
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* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level. *** Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level.
We evaluated antioxidant activity status in serum of young adults with or without obesity related-indicators. Serum antioxidant activity levels measured as TEAC_{eq} tended to increase with all obesity related-indicators. An opposite behavior was observed for TEAC_{CP} which was decreased in obese subjects while that for TEAC_{P} did not show significant change (p>0.05) with respect to obesity related-indicators number. This correlation analysis makes it possible to assume that under obesity conditions at the same time both enzymatic antioxidants (proteic fraction) are utilized and non enzymatic antioxidants (non-proteic fraction) are synthesized in order to counteract the oxidative stress promoted by obesity development. These results suggest that total antioxidant activity of serum is part of tightly regulated homeostatic mechanism.

Evaluation of antioxidants capacity in body fluid has been used as one of the biological markers for monitoring oxidative stress in humans. Serums treated with perchloric acid allow evaluating antioxidant activity in non-protein fraction that preserves the water-soluble antioxidants within the sample. We have not analyzed individual antioxidants; however, several studies have shown that there is significant correlation between antioxidant activity, BMI, and serum UA levels. Cao & Prior (1998) measured antioxidant activity in non-proteic fraction and individuals antioxidants (ascorbic acid, bilirubin and UA) in serum of healthy individuals using ORAC (Oxygen radical absorption capacity) (non proteic fraction) and TEAC (total) assays and found that the contribution of UA to total antioxidant activity was 39 and 19.3% for ORAC and TEAC respectively. It is possible that in obese people this contribution could be higher than in normal weight people. It may be assumed that high values of serum antioxidant capacity of the non-protein fraction in individuals with obesity can be attributed in part to serum UA levels, particularly because this compound showed an increase in obese individuals.

Experimental evidence suggests that hyperuricemia may be a compensatory mechanism to counteract oxidative damage related to AS. However, other studies have shown the existence of mechanisms in which UA may be an important mediator of endothelial dysfunction and vascular function. This could show that antioxidant capacity in general is closely related to the physiological and metabolic changes related to CVD, especially AS coupled with a condition of obesity.

It is the first time that the antioxidant status is studied and correlated with obesity related indicators in Mexican young people. The findings are very interesting because it was traditionally thought that high serum antioxidant activity is associated with healthy status; however, we have confirmed that under conditions of obesity and dyslipidemia in young people, the antioxidant activity can be significantly increased.

**Conclusion**

We concluded that the antioxidant capacity of the non-protein fraction of the serum measured as TEAC is associated with BMI and with an increase of UA levels in the individuals studied. The antioxidant capacity of the protein fraction measured as TEAC is associated with a reduction in the BMI and a reduction in the levels of UA. An increase in serum antioxidant activity status in serum of young adults with or without obesity related-indicators. Serum antioxidant activity levels measured as TEAC_{eq} tended to increase with all obesity related-indicators. An opposite behavior was observed for TEAC_{CP} which was decreased in obese subjects while that for TEAC_{P} did not show significant change (p>0.05) with respect to obesity related-indicators number. This correlation analysis makes it possible to assume that under obesity conditions at the same time both enzymatic antioxidants (proteic fraction) are utilized and no enzymatic antioxidants (non-proteic fraction) are synthesized in order to counteract the oxidative stress promoted by obesity development. These results suggest that total antioxidant activity of serum is part of tightly regulated homeostatic mechanism.

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capacity could be considered as a biomarker of obesity when associated with high levels of UA.

Acknowledgements

This research was sponsored by CONACYT (Natl. Research and Technology Council, México). Amaya-Villalba F. received scholarships from PROMEP. The authors thank Monica Villegas, for her technical assistance, and the volunteers for their enthusiastic participation.

Authors of this manuscript are members of the National Network (ALFANUTRA).

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

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