

ALCOHOL EXACERBATES DYSLIPIDEMIA IN THE PREFRONTAL CORTEX OF DIABETIC RATS

ABSTRACT

Aim: To investigate the potential importance of the association between alcohol consumption, diabetes and increased dyslipidemia in the prefrontal cortex.

Study Design: Twenty-four adult rats were randomly divided into four groups of six rats each viz; Group 1- Control, given rat pellets and water *ad libitum*; Group 2- Diabetic, diabetes was induced with multiple dosage (120g/kg body weight) of alloxan. Group 3- Diabetic and low alcohol intake (9% w/w). Group 4- Diabetic and high alcohol intake (20% w/w).

Place and Duration of Study: This work was carried out in the Department of Anatomy; Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Nigeria between February and April, 2012.

Methodology: The skull was dissected and the brain removed and the prefrontal cortex excised, homogenized, centrifuged and the supernatant analyzed for lipid profile.

Results: The levels of ALT and AST are higher in diabetes group compared to the normal control group (67.33 $\pm$ 0.15 & 59.25 $\pm$ 0.25 and 135.50 $\pm$ 0.50 & 75.50 $\pm$ 0.50) respectively. The TG levels are higher in diabetes group compared to the normal control group (92.01 $\pm$ 0.18 versus 72.62 $\pm$ 0.52) whereas the total cholesterol and HDL levels are found to be lower in the diabetes group compared to normal control group (34.99 $\pm$ 0.40 & 37.28 $\pm$ 0.23 and 150.90 $\pm$ 0.33 & 103.29 $\pm$ 0.23 respectively). Alcohol intake on the other hand lowered the levels of all parameters significantly at $P=0.05$.

Conclusion: Our findings showed that, both low and high chronic alcohol intake in diabetes lead to dyslipidemia in the prefrontal cortex, probably by lowering ALT and AST levels or via the mechanism that suppresses the enzymes of lipid syntheses in the prefrontal cortex.

Keywords: Diabetes; Alcohol; Lipids; Prefrontal cortex

1.0 Introduction

Numerous studies have demonstrated a J-shaped relationship between alcohol consumption and diabetes [1, 2]. Moderate consumption of alcohol is medically beneficial and socially acceptable [3], as moderate alcohol consumption also beneficially affects insulin sensitivity and glucose metabolism [4]. However, excessive consumption of alcohol leads to complex health problems, because alcohol may alter glycemic regulation and potentially aggravate the cardiovascular, neurological, and immunosuppressive changes in patients with diabetes mellitus. Because alcohol use, at least on a social level, is widespread among diabetics as well as non-diabetics, clinicians and researchers must understand effects of alcohol on the progression and complications of diabetes [5]. It is known that chronic alcoholics and type 2 diabetics show hyperlipidemia, characterized by hypertriglyceridemia and in a minor degree by hypercholesterolemia [6]. The most typical lipoprotein pattern in diabetes, also known as diabetic dyslipidemia or atherogenic dyslipidemia, consists of moderate elevation in triglyceride and low HDL cholesterol values, and increase in small dense LDL particles. This lipoprotein pattern is associated with insulin resistance and is present even before the onset of diabetes. LDL cholesterol levels in type 2 diabetic subjects are generally similar to those found in the general population. Small dense LDL particles are highly atherogenic because of their enhanced susceptibility to oxidative modification and increased uptake by the arterial wall [7]. The mechanisms underlying the effect of ethanol and carbohydrates on plasma lipids seem to be

different; therefore in diabetic subjects chronic alcohol consumption could produce a more severe hyperlipidemia and so accelerate atherosclerotic events [6]. There are limited reports on the effect of alcohol during diabetic condition with reference to total cholesterol, triglycerides, high density lipoprotein in brain tissue. Hence this study investigated the potential importance of the association between alcohol consumption, diabetes and dyslipidemia in the prefrontal cortex of the brain.

2.0 Materials and Methods

2.1 Experimental Animals

Twenty-four wistar rats, weighing (150g-170) were used for this study. The animals were housed in clean plastic cages, well ventilated environment with temperature ranging between 24-28°C in 12 hours light and 12 hours dark cycle. The animals were given standard rat pellets and water *ad libitum*, and were allowed to acclimatize for four weeks before commencing the experimental protocols. The institutional committee on Animal Care and Use in Research, Education and Testing (ACURET) approval was sort for and the animal experiments were conducted according to the NIH Guide on Laboratory Animals for Biomedical Research (NIH, 1978) and ethical guidelines for investigation of experimental pain in conscious animals (11).

2.2 Experimental Design

A total of twenty-four rats were randomly divided into four groups of six rats viz;

Group 1- Control, given normal rat pellets *ad libitum* and water

Group 2-Diabetic, diabetes was induced with multiple dosages of 150mg/kg body weight of alloxan for a start and subsequently 50mg/kg body weight weekly till the end of the experiment.

Group3- Diabetic and low alcohol consumption, the rats in this group received multiple dosages of alloxan (as in group 2). After establishing diabetes, they were given 9% w/w alcohol daily.

Group 4- Diabetic and high alcohol consumption, the rats received multiple dosages of alcohol (as in group 2), they were given 20% w/w alcohol.

Fasting blood glucose level and body weight of the animals were monitored regularly throughout the duration of the experiment which lasted four weeks.

2.3 Tissue sample preparation

At the end of four weeks the rats were euthanized by administering 10g/kg body weight of pentobarbital. The rats were then dissected and blood sample collected directly from the heart, while the skull was cut open and the brain excised and a portion of the prefrontal cortex taken homogenized and centrifuge at 3500rpm for 15minutes. The supernatant was collected for biochemical analyses.

2.4 Biochemical Analyses

2.4.1 Analyses of Lipid Parameters

The Biochemical Parameters were assayed using the Randox kits

2.4.1.1 High density lipoprotein (HDL)

Procedure

The samples were pipetted into test tubes as outlined below:

	Reagent Blank	Standard	Sample
Distilled Water	100 μ l	-	-
Supernatant	-	-	100 μ l
Standard Supernatant	-	100	-
Reagent	1000 μ l	1000 μ l	1000 μ l

The mixture was incubated for 5 mins at 37°C. The absorbance of the sample and standard were measured against the reagent blank within 60 mins, at a wavelength of 500nm and expressed as USP units/ml

2.4.1.2 Triglycerides

Procedure

The samples were pipetted into test tubes as outlined below:

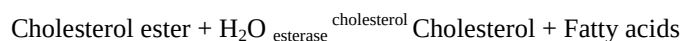
	Reagent Blank S0	Standard S1	Sample
ddH ₂ O	-	-	-
Standard	-	10 µl	-
Sample	-	-	10 µl
Reagent	1000µl	1000 µl	1.00 ml

The mixture was incubated for 5 mins at 37°C. The absorbance of the sample and standard were measured against the reagent blank within 60 mins, at a wavelength of 500nm.

2.4.1.3 Cholesterol

Principle

The cholesterol is determined after enzymatic hydrolysis and oxidation. The indicator quinoneimine is formed from hydrogen peroxide and 4-aminoantipyrine in the presence of phenol and peroxidase.



2.3.2 Procedure

The samples were pipetted into test tubes as outlined below:

	Reagent Blank S0	Standard S1	Sample
ddH ₂ O	10µl	-	-
Standard	-	10 µl	-
Sample	-	-	10 µl
Reagent	1000 µl	1000 µl	1.00ml

The mixture was incubated for 5 mins at 37°C. The absorbance of the sample and standard were measured against the reagent blank within 60 mins, at a wavelength of 500nm.

2.4.1.4 Alanine Aminotransferase (ALT)

ALT was assayed using the Randox kits

Principle

α -oxoglutarate + L-alanine ^{GPT} L-glutamate + pyruvate

Alanine Aminotransferase is measured by monitoring the concentration of pyruvate hydrazone formed with 2, 4-dinitrophenylhydrazine.

Reagent Composition

Contents	Initial Concentrations Of Solutions
R1. Buffer	
Phosphate buffer	100mmol/l, pH 7.4
L-alanine	200mmol/l
α -oxoglutarate	2.0mmol/l
R2. 2,4-dinitrophenylhydrazine	2.0mmol/l

Stability And Preparation Of Reagents

R1. Buffer

Contents ready for use. Stable up to expiry date when stored at +2 to +8°C.

R2. 2, 4-dinitrophenylhydrazine

Contents ready for use. Stable up to expiry date when stored at +2 to +8°C.

Procedure

Measurement against Reagent Blank

Pipette into test tubes:

	Reagent Blank	Sample
Sample	-	0.1ml
Solution R1	0.5ml	0.5ml
Distilled water	0.1ml	-

Mixed and incubated for exactly 30mins at 37°C

Solution R2	0.5ml	0.5ml
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Mixed and allowed to stand for exactly 20mins at 20 to 25°C

Sodium Hydroxide	5.0ml	5.0ml
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Mixed, the absorbance of sample was read against the reagent blank after 5mins.

Measurement against Sample Blank

Pipetted into test tubes

	Sample blank	Sample
Sample	-	0.1ml
Solution R1	0.5ml	0.5ml

Mixed and incubated for exactly 30mins at 37°C

Solution R2	0.5ml	0.5ml
Sample	0.1ml	-

Mixed and allowed to stand for exactly 20mins at 20 to 25°C

Sodium Hydroxide	5.0ml	5.0ml
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Mixed, the absorbance of the sample was read against the sample blank after 5mins.

2.4.1.5 Aspartate Transaminase(AST)

AST was assayed using the Randox kits

Principle

α -oxoglutarate + L-aspartate $\xrightarrow{\text{GOT}}$ L-glutamate + oxaloacetate

AST is measured by monitoring the concentration of oxaloacetate hydrazone formed with 2,4-dinitrophenylhydrazine.

Reagent Composition

Contents	Initial Concentrations Of Solutions
R1. Buffer Phosphate buffer L-aspartate α -oxoglutarate	100mmol/l, pH 7.4 100mmol/l 2.0mmol/l
R2. 2,4-dinitrophenylhydrazine	2.0mmol/l

Stability And Preparation Of Reagents

R1. Buffer

Contents ready for use. Stable up to expiry date when stored at +2 to +8°C.

R2. 2,4-dinitrophenylhydrazine

Contents ready for use. Stable up to expiry date when stored at +2 to +8°C.

Procedure

Measurement against Reagent Blank

Pipette into test tubes:

	Reagent Blank	Sample
Sample	-	0.1ml
Reagent 1	0.5ml	0.5ml
Distilled water	0.1ml	-

Mixed and incubated for exactly 30mins at 37°C

Reagent 2	0.5ml	0.5ml
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Mixed and allowed to stand for exactly 20mins at 20 to 25°C

Sodium Hydroxide	5.0ml	5.0ml
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Mixed, the absorbance of sample was read against the reagent blank after 5mins.

Measurement against Sample Blank

Pipetted into test tubes

	Sample blank	Sample
Sample	-	0.1ml
Reagent1	0.5ml	0.5ml

Mixed and incubated for exactly 30mins at 37°C

Reagent 2	0.5ml	0.5ml
Sample	0.1ml	-

Mixed and allowed to stand for exactly 20mins at 20 to 25°C

Sodium Hydroxide	5.0ml	5.0ml
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Mixed, and the absorbance of the sample was read against the sample blank after 5mins.

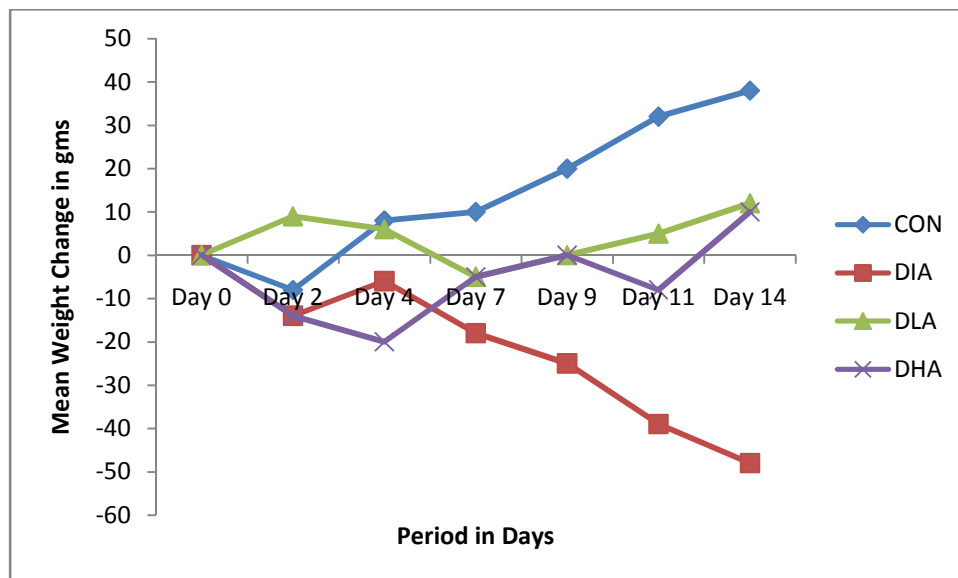
Wavelength: 546nm

3.0 Results

3.1 Mean body weight in the experimental group

The body weights of control group dropped initially and then increase steadily, while the diabetic group witnessed a consistent drop. Both high and low chronic alcohol intakes improve body weight in diabetic rats. (Figure 1)

Figure 1: mean weight change in experimental groups (CON=Control; DIA=Diabetic; DLA=Diabetic and Low Alcohol; DHA=Diabetes and High Alcohol)

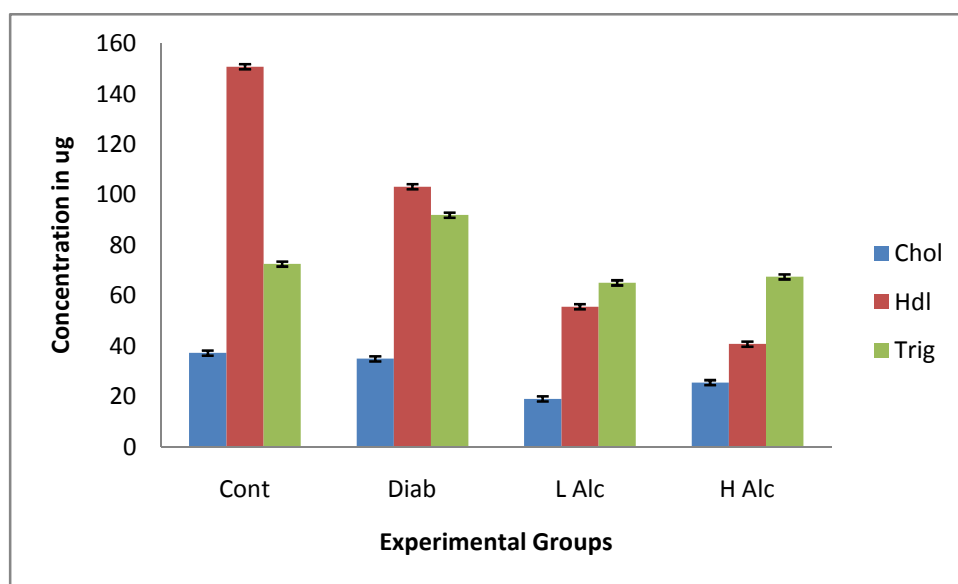


3.2 Mean level of Triglycerides, total cholesterol and high density lipoprotein in the prefrontal cortex

Both diabetes and alcohol lowered high density lipoprotein (HDL) total cholesterol significantly at ($P= 0.05$), while triglycerides level was significantly increased by diabetes. Alcohol intake exacerbates the effect of diabetes. (Figure 2)

Figure 2: lipid concentration in the prefrontal cortex of CON=Control; DIA=Diabetic;

DLA=Diabetic and Low Alcohol; DHA=Diabetes and High Alcohol



Diabetes increased significantly ($P < 0.05$) the level of triglycerides in the prefrontal cortex; while alcohol lowered the level with more significantly in the low alcohol intake group. (Table 1)

Table 1: Mean level of triglycerides in the prefrontal cortex

GROUP	Mean $\pm$ SE	<i>p</i> -Value
NORMAL CONTROL	72.62 $\pm$ 0.52	0.002
UNTREATED DIABETIC	92.01 $\pm$ 0.18	
NORMAL CONTROL	72.62 $\pm$ 0.52	0.059
DIABETIC + LOW ALCOHOL	65.14 $\pm$ 0.43	
NORMAL CONTROL	72.62 $\pm$ 0.52	0.014
DIABETIC + HIGH ALCOHOL	67.53 $\pm$ 0.22	
UNTREATED DIABETIC	92.01 $\pm$ 0.18	0.015
DIABETIC + LOW ALCOHOL	65.14 $\pm$ 0.43	
UNTREATED DIABETIC	92.01 $\pm$ 0.18	0.001
DIABETIC + HIGH ALCOHOL	67.53 $\pm$ 0.22	
DIABETIC + LOW ALCOHOL	65.14 $\pm$ 0.43	0.152
DIABETIC + HIGH ALCOHOL	67.53 $\pm$ 0.22	

P value is significant at $p=0.05$

Diabetes significantly ($P < 0.05$) lowered the total cholesterol level in the prefrontal cortex; while low alcohol intake lowered the cholesterol level more than in high alcohol intake group. (Table 2)

Table 2: Mean level of cholesterol in the prefrontal cortex

GROUP	Mean $\pm$ SE	p-value
NORMAL CONTROL	37.28 $\pm$ 0.23	0.169
UNTREATED DIABETIC	34.99 $\pm$ 0.40	
NORMAL CONTROL	37.28 $\pm$ 0.23	0.003
DIABETIC + LOW ALCOHOL	19.10 $\pm$ 0.30	
NORMAL CONTROL	37.28 $\pm$ 0.23	0.006
DIABETIC + HIGH ALCOHOL	25.56 $\pm$ 0.32	
UNTREATED DIABETIC	34.99 $\pm$ 0.40	0.028
DIABETIC + LOW ALCOHOL	19.10 $\pm$ 0.30	
UNTREATED DIABETIC	34.99 $\pm$ 0.40	0.034
DIABETIC + HIGH ALCOHOL	25.56 $\pm$ 0.32	
DIABETIC + LOW ALCOHOL	19.10 $\pm$ 0.30	0.018
DIABETIC + HIGH ALCOHOL	25.56 $\pm$ 0.32	

P value is significant at $p=0.05$

Diabetes significantly ($P < 0.05$) lowered the high density lipoprotein level in the prefrontal cortex; high alcohol intake lowered the high density lipoprotein level more than in low alcohol intake group. (Table 3)

Table 3: Mean level of high density lipoprotein in the prefrontal cortex

GROUP	Mean $\pm$ SE	<i>p</i> -value
NORMAL CONTROL	150.90 $\pm$ 0.33	0.008
UNTREATED DIABETIC	103.29 $\pm$ 0.26	
NORMAL CONTROL	150.90 $\pm$ 0.33	0.002
DIABETIC + LOW ALCOHOL	55.66 $\pm$ 0.27	
NORMAL CONTROL	150.90 $\pm$ 0.33	0.001
DIABETIC + HIGH ALCOHOL	40.83 $\pm$ 0.30	
UNTREATED DIABETIC	103.29 $\pm$ 0.26	0.003
DIABETIC + LOW ALCOHOL	55.66 $\pm$ 0.27	
UNTREATED DIABETIC	103.29 $\pm$ 0.26	0.008
DIABETIC + HIGH ALCOHOL	40.83 $\pm$ 0.30	
DIABETIC + LOW ALCOHOL	55.66 $\pm$ 0.27	0.021
DIABETIC + HIGH ALCOHOL	40.83 $\pm$ 0.30	

P value is significant at $p=0.05$

Diabetes increased significantly ($P < 0.05$) the level ALT; in the same vein alcohol intake in diabetics also lowered the level with more significantly decrease in the low alcohol intake.(Table 4)

Table 4: Mean level of Alanine aminotransferase (ALT) Levels

GROUP	Mean±SE	<i>p</i> -value
NORMAL CONTROL	59.25± 0.25	0.008
UNTREATED DIABETIC	67.33±0.15	
NORMAL CONTROL	59.25±0.25	0.002
DIABETIC + LOW ALCOHOL	24.48±0.28	
NORMAL CONTROL	59.25±0.25	0.005
DIABETIC + HIGH ALCOHOL	26.63±0.18	
UNTREATED DIABETIC	67.33±0.15	0.001
DIABETIC + LOW ALCOHOL	24.48±0.28	
UNTREATED DIABETIC	67.33±0.15	0.008
DIABETIC + HIGH ALCOHOL	26.63±0.18	
DIABETIC + LOW ALCOHOL	24.48±0.28	0.133
DIABETIC + HIGH ALCOHOL	26.63±0.18	

P value is significant at $p=0.05$

Diabetes increased significantly ($P < 0.05$) the level AST; in the same vein alcohol intake in diabetics also lowered the level with more significantly decrease in the high alcohol intake. (Table 5)

Table 5: Mean activities of Aspartate transaminase (AST) levels

GROUP	Mean±SE	<i>p-value</i>
NORMAL CONTROL	75.50± 0.50	0.011
UNTREATED DIABETIC	135.50±0.50	
NORMAL CONTROL	75.50±0.50	0.019
DIABETIC + LOW ALCOHOL	73.85±1.35	
NORMAL CONTROL	75.50±0.50	0.006
DIABETIC + HIGH ALCOHOL	60.25±0.25	
UNTREATED DIABETIC	135.50±0.50	0.013
DIABETIC + LOW ALCOHOL	73.85±1.35	
UNTREATED DIABETIC	135.50±0.50	0.010
DIABETIC + HIGH ALCOHOL	60.25±0.25	
DIABETIC + LOW ALCOHOL	73.85±1.35	0.051
DIABETIC + HIGH ALCOHOL	60.25±0.25	

P value is significant at p=0.05

4.0 Discussion

Diabetes mellitus is characterized by hyperglycemia together with biochemical alterations of glucose and lipid peroxidation [9] [10]. The mechanisms underlying the effect of ethanol and carbohydrates on plasma lipids seem to be different. In the present study diabetes was characterized by significant hypertriglycerides and hypocholesterol in the prefrontal cortex while alcohol ingestion in diabetic rats significantly lowered brain tissue triglycerides and cholesterol. In hyperglycemic states, there will be intracellular glycogen accumulation in the hepatocytes due to increased glycogen synthesis, causing typical biochemical findings of mild to moderately elevated aminotransferases as reported in this study by the significant elevation in the levels of ALT and AST in diabetic rats due to tissue compromise and increased physiological needs. ALT, produced mainly in the liver, catalyzes the transfer of amino groups between L-alanine and glutamate to meet physiological needs. AST catalyzes the transfer of amino and keto groups between alpha-amino acids and alpha-keto acids thereby acquiring the term transferase [11]. Alcohol seems to not only reverse this effect but lower the levels below the control level probably by immuno-depletion of ALT1 which decreases majority of the serum ALT activity in healthy humans [12].

The finding of hypertriglyceridemia in the diabetic group is consistent with the previous reports [13,14,15]. The increase could be due to the increase in lipid peroxidation, a free radical-related process which is an uncontrolled, self-enhancing process causing disruption of membranes, lipids and other cell components. Unlimited lipid peroxidation (LP) could be one of the main factors in the pathogenesis of diabetic complications. This pathology is often related to the release of free radicals which cause oxidative stress [16]. During reoxygenation, hypoxanthine-xanthine oxidase and arachidonic acid pathways are important sources of free oxygen radicals,

which damage lipid membranes, and lead to cytolysis and cell death [17]. Accumulation of lipids in diabetes is mediated through a variety of derangements in metabolic and regulatory processes, especially insulin deficiency, thereby rendering the diabetic patient more prone to hypertriglyceridemia.

Our results also showed that the total cholesterol level was significantly decreased in the prefrontal cortex. The brain being the most cholesterol-rich organ in the body, most of which comes from in situ synthesis [18]. Brain cholesterol turnover is increased in Alzheimer's and other neurodegenerative diseases, and has been suggested to play a role in pathogenesis of these disorders [19]. Diabetes mellitus is associated with a variety of neurologic and cerebral complications, including cognitive dysfunction, depression, and increased risk of Alzheimer's disease [20, 21, and 22]. The hypocholesterolemia reported in this study could be explained by the high insulin levels caused by diabetes which impair insulin signaling in the brain and affect lipid metabolism [23]. It is also characterized by decreased sensitivity and resistance to insulin [24]. Previous report indicates that chronic alcohol abuse causes a Type 2 diabetes effect in certain brain regions. Investigations on human tissue show that high levels of chronic alcohol consumption lowers the levels of genes needed to respond to insulin and insulin growth factor (IGF) resulting in brain damage [24]. Apart from effects on lipid metabolism, haemostatic balance and blood pressure, alcohol improves insulin sensitivity. This improvement of insulin sensitivity may also be responsible for the lower incidence of type 2 diabetes mellitus reported to be associated with light-to-moderate drinking [25]. Ethanol-induced perturbations in membrane lipid composition contribute to insulin/IGF resistance in brain. One possible explanation is that, besides cholesterol, ethanol depletes a variety of membrane lipids. In this study, diabetes and

alcohol seemed to have a common pathway for the down regulation lipid biosynthesis pathway in the prefrontal cortex of treated rats. These have been associated with a change in gene expression which leads to a decrease in cholesterol synthesis in brain and a decrease in cholesterol content in synaptosomal membranes. Mimicking the reduction in cholesterologenic genes in cultured neurons by knockdown of SREBP-2 results in reduced markers of synapse formation, and knockdown of SREBP-2 in the hypothalamus in vivo causes altered feeding behavior and dysregulation of counter insulin hormones [26]. Over the past decade there have been important advances in defining the mechanisms that cells use to regulate cholesterol levels and lipid metabolism [27]. In liver and kidney, insulin has been shown to activate both SREBP-1 and SREBP-2 [28,29], which in turn control both fatty acid and cholesterol biosynthesis. This same system may play an important role in control of brain cholesterol and triglycerides levels with direct regulation by insulin of SREBP-2 and down-stream cholesterologenic genes at the transcriptional level leading to altered rates of cholesterol biosynthesis. There is a strong feedback system in which cholesterol and sterol intermediates regulate the activation of the SREBP family of transcription factors through mechanisms involving ER-to-Golgi transport and production of the active transcription factor through limited proteolysis [27]. While it is likely that this feedback system is active in brain, in the brain of diabetic animals, there is a failure to compensate for reduced cholesterol synthesis and reduced synaptosomal cholesterol with up-regulation of cholesterologenic genes. This might be due to morphological complexity of neurons and astrocytes that have long processes spatially distant from the endoplasmic reticulum, where SREBP cleavage-activating protein (SCAP) works as a sensor, or might represent a fundamental difference in regulation of cholesterol synthesis in brain and liver.

CONCLUSION

Our findings showed that, both low and high chronic alcohol intake in diabetes lead to dyslipidemia in the prefrontal cortex, probably by lowering ALT and AST levels or via the mechanism that suppresses the enzymes of lipid syntheses in the prefrontal cortex, leading to reduction in synaptosomal membrane cholesterol, and altered neuronal and physiological function.

CONSENT

Not applicable.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist

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