



Original Research

The Relationship Between Gestational Diabetes Mellitus and Adipocytokine Levels

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Abstract

Objectives: The aim of this study was to compare adiponectin, resistin, visfatin, and irisin levels between pregnant women diagnosed gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM) and healthy pregnant women and to evaluate the role of these parameters in GDM pathophysiology and early diagnosis.

Methods: Fifty GDM and 50 healthy pregnant women were included in the study. Anthropometric measurements of pregnant women were performed. Fasting blood glucose, hemoglobin A1c, 75 gr OGTT, low density lipoprotein, triglyceride, and complete blood count results were recorded. Adiponectin, irisin, visfatin, resistin, and C-reactive protein (CRP) levels were evaluated.

Results: Serum adiponectin levels were significantly lower ($p<0.001$) and serum resistin and CRP levels were significantly higher ($p=0.000$ and $p=0.027$, respectively) in pregnant women with GDM compared to healthy pregnant women. There was no significant difference between groups according to serum irisin and visfatin levels ($p=0.942$ and $p=0.332$, respectively). There was a negative correlation between adiponectin level and FPG, visfatin, and resistin, while a positive correlation was found between irisin level. While there was a positive correlation between resistin and CRP levels, there was a negative correlation between adiponectin level. While there was a positive correlation between irisin and adiponectin levels, there was a negative correlation between weight and body mass index.

Conclusion: In this study, we think that elevated serum resistin and CRP levels and decreased adiponectin levels in GDM patients may play a role in glucose metabolism changes. Further studies are needed on this subject.

Keywords: Adiponectin, gestational diabetes mellitus, irisin, resistin, visfatin

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Gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM) is a carbohydrate intolerance that appears first during pregnancy. During pregnancy, increased glucose levels can affect both fetus and mother adversely.^[1] In GDM pathogenesis, insulin resistance and beta-cell dysfunction take an important role. In addition, adipose tissue has major effect in the pathophysiology of

GDM. Today, adipose tissue dysfunction shows that there is a pathophysiological link between obesity and diabetes, characterized by the abnormal production of adipokines.^[2] The role of various adipokines in the pathogenesis of this condition has been widely discussed recently in diabetes, but studies with adipocytokines in gestational diabetes are limited.

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Adiponectin is a collagen structured plasma protein produced by adipose tissue. In cases with diabetes and hypertension, adiponectin levels were found to be lower than healthy individuals.^[3] The molecule of the irisin can stimulate the growth of some parts in adipose tissue as brown adipose tissue, relieve glucose metabolism disorder, and make some reduction in body weight.^[4] Visfatin inhibits hepatic glucose production on glucose transport in muscle and adipose tissue. It shows insulinomimetic effect and is not affected by plasma insulin levels.^[5] Resistin is an adipokine in the protein structure defined as a peripheral signal molecule that is thought to be associated with diabetes mellitus and obesity. Resistin has important effects in humans; first, it causes insulin resistance in abdominal adipose tissue, and second, it contributes to the development of diabetes by preventing differentiation in fat cells.^[6]

The role of adiponectin, irisin, visfatin, and resistin levels in GDM pathogenesis has not been fully clarified. Therefore, in this study, we aimed to observe serum adiponectin, irisin, visfatin, and resistin levels in pregnant women diagnosed with GDM with the same age healthy pregnant group.

Methods

This study is a cross-sectional study conducted in the department of endocrinology and metabolic diseases. The study was approved by the decision of Ethics Committee dated January 17, 2018 and numbered 10 and a written consent form was obtained from all participants. All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the Institutional and/or National Research Committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Study Design and Inclusion Criteria

In our study, 50 pregnant women with GDM and 50 healthy women who were followed-up and treated between 2018 and 2019 at the endocrinology and metabolic diseases and obstetrics and clinic of obstetrics department were included in the study. Age, height, weight of pregnant women, and gestational week were questioned. From patient files, complete blood count, glucose, triglyceride TG, low-density lipoprotein (LDL), and hemoglobin A1c (HbA1C) were evaluated in routine examinations. Adiponectin, irisin, visfatin, resistin, and C-reactive protein (CRP) were studied in plasma samples obtained by centrifugation of parameters of blood samples that were stored at -80°C until the working moment.

Admissions and Exclusion Criteria

As a patient group, patients between 18 and 45 years old who were diagnosed with GDM in the 24–28th gestational week and as the control group pregnant women whose OGTT results were within normal limits were included in the study. Patients with kidney or liver failure, those with thyroid dysfunction, previously diagnosed with type 2 or type 1 diabetes, and smoking ones were not participated in the study.

Laboratory Analysis

LDL, TG, hemogram, and HbA1c were recorded from the routine hospital data system. Blood for routine biochemical and hormonal examinations was taken into tubes without anticoagulation after 8–10 h of fasting, in the morning. After standing a little at room temperature, it was centrifuged at 4000 rpm (revolutions per minute) for 5 min. Serums formed after centrifugation were used for routine biochemical and hormonal tests. The lipid profile was studied in biochemistry laboratory by spectrophotometric method using the Advia 1800 device. LDL and TG were measured by spectrophotometric method using biochemistry analyzer and commercial kit (Siemens, Advia1800 Chemistry System, Germany). HbA1c was measured by high liquid pressure chromatography (HPLC) method using HPLC device and commercial kit (BioRad D–10 Hemoglobin testing system, France). The blood samples taken to the tube were brought to the laboratory and the serum was separated by centrifugation for 15 min at 2500 rpm. Separated serums were stored at -80°C until working time. Serum samples thawed at the time of study and studied manually using the Elisa method. The Elisa reader was the Thermo Scientific (USA). Boster Biologica Technology Philadelphia (USA) kits were used for the measurement of serum fibronectin (irisin) (CV: 10.0%) and Visfatin (CV: 10.1%); while Wuhan USCN Business Co. Ltd. Zhenhua (China) kits were used for measurement of serum resistin (CV: 7.8%) and adipokine (CV: 7.6%) levels: 10.1%. The results of the cases were calculated by comparing unknown samples with the standard curve created from the standards in the kit.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 25.0 packet program (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL). While evaluating the study data, mean standard deviation (mean \pm SD) of the descriptive statistical methods, Student t-test was used for the comparison of parameters with normal distribution in the comparison of quantitative data. Pearson correlation test was used to examine the relationships between parameters. $p \leq 0.05$ was accepted statistically significant.

Results

Fifty GDM and 50 healthy volunteer pregnant control group were participated in our study. There was no statistically significant difference between the two groups in terms of age ($p=0.062$). Body mass index (BMI) of GDM group was 32.71 ± 5.42 , while BMI of control group was 27.82 ± 4.12 . BMI of GDM group was statistically higher than control group ($p<0.001$). Demographic characteristics of cases are given in Table 1.

When the hemograms of GDM and control group were compared, the difference was not statistically significant when compared in terms of hemoglobin, mean corpuscular hemoglobin (MCH) level, red blood cell distribution width (RDW), and platelet (PLT) number values (Table 2). The white blood cell (WBC) level in the patient group was significantly higher than the control group ($p<0.000$). When the

Table 1. Comparison of the demographic characteristics and hemograms of the cases

Variables	Cases (n=50)	Control (n=50)	P
Age (year)	31.88±5.81	29.36±5.71	0.062
Height (cm)	158.88±5.38	162.23±6.18	0.012*
Weight (kg)	82.56±13.37	73.36±12.03	0.003*
BMI (kg/m ²)	32.71±5.42	27.82±4.12	0.000*
HGB (g/dL)	11.70±1.13	11.99±1.24	0.274
MCV (fL)	83.61±6.12	86.61±5.49	0.030*
MCH (pg)	29.17±7.02	29.47±2.52	0.828
RDW (fL)	45.35±6.98	43.80±3.78	0.264
PLT (x10 ³ /μL)	219.53±61.48	227.60±77.69	0.606
WBC (x10 ³ /μL)	9.97±2.08	8.09±1.19	0.000*

BMI: Body mass index; n: Number; HGB: Hemoglobin; MCV: Mean erythrocyte volume; MCH: Mean corpuscular hemoglobin; RDW: Red cell distribution width; PLT: Platelet; WBC: White blood count; * Statistically significant.

Table 2. Comparison of the biochemical and hormonal parameters

Variables	Cases (n=50)	Control (n=50)	P
FBG (mg/dL)	101.76±30.25	78.03±10.72	0.000*
LDL (mg/dL)	127.24±42.25	109.12±27.09	0.038*
TG (mg/dL)	248.127±87.16	192.08±74.11	0.004*
HbA1c (%)	5.68±0.82	5.17±0.36	0.002*
CRP (mg/dL)	8.28±5.91	5.44±4.71	0.027*
İrisin (μg/mL)	344.55±103.26	346.55±78.98	0.942
Visfatin (ng/mL)	6.98±0.60	6.86±0.41	0.324
Resistin (ng/mL)	6.98±0.60	3.39±0.51	0.000*
Adiponectin (μg/mL)	9.77±5.01	16.57±5.47	0.000*

FBG: Fasting blood glucose; LDL: Low density lipoprotein; TG: Triglyceride; HbA1c: Hemoglobin A1c; CRP: C reactive protein; n: Number; * Statistically significant.

two groups were compared in terms of mean corpuscular volume (MCV) level, the MCV level was statistically significantly lower in the patient group ($p=0.030$) (Table 1).

When the patients were compared in terms of biochemical and hormonal data, FBG, HbA1c, LDL, and TG levels were statistically significantly higher in the patients with GDM than control group (Table 2). The level of CRP and resistin was statistically significantly higher in the GDM patients than the control group. When the two groups were compared in terms of irisin and visfatin levels, the difference was not statistically significant. While the adiponectin level was 9.77 ± 5.01 μg/mL in the GDM group, it was 16.57 ± 5.47 μg/mL in the control group. Adiponectin level was statistically significantly lower in the patient group compared to the control group ($p=0.000$) (Table 2).

In the correlation analysis, a statistically significant positive correlation was found between CRP and resistin and weight ($r=0.223$, $p=0.033$; $r=0.222$, $p=0.039$, respectively). Furthermore, there was a statistically significant correlation between serum irisin level and adiponectin ($r=0.270$, $p=0.014$). A statistically significant negative correlation was found between serum irisin level and weight and BMI ($r=-0.248$, $p=0.025$; $r=-0.230$, $p=0.037$, respectively). There was a statistically significant negative correlation between irisin level and BMI ($r=-0.230$, $p=0.037$). A statistically significant negative correlation was detected between serum visfatin level and adiponectin ($r=-0.245$, $p=0.027$). A statistically significant negative correlation was found between serum adiponectin level and BMI ($r=-0.277$, $p=0.012$) (Table 3).

Discussion

The diagnosis of GDM is very important for mother and fetus. It has been shown that mediators called adipocytokines secreted from adipose tissue can play a role in any physiological processes such as energy metabolism, nutrition, inflammation, and lipid metabolism. Various studies have examined the relationship between adipocytokines and diabetes. There are very few studies on adipocytokines in GDM.^[7,8] Adiponectin is a hormone primarily secreted by adipocytes, with anti-inflammatory, anti-atherogenic, and insulin-sensitizing effects. Adiponectin reduces hepatic glucose production and increases fatty acid oxidation and potentiates the effects of insulin in the liver, thereby increasing insulin sensitivity.^[3] There are studies showing the decrease in adiponectin levels in patients with GDM^[9-13] and do not change^[14,15] compared to normal pregnant. In our study, we found lower serum adiponectin levels in the GDM patients compared to the control group. Some studies found a negative correlation between BMI and adiponectin levels both before pregnancy and at 24–28

Table 3. Correlation of cases with adipocytokine and CRP levels and anthropometric measurements

Variables	CRP (mg/dL)	Irisin (µg/ml)	Visfatin (ng/mL)	Resistin (ng/mL)	Adiponectin (µg/mL)	Height (cm)	Weight (kg)	BMI (kg/m ²)
CRP (mg/dL)								
r	1	0.065	0.021	0.239*	0.069	0.099	0.229*	0.193
p		0.562	0.851	0.033	0.536	0.377	0.039	0.082
Irisin (µg/mL)								
r	0.065	1	-0.181	-0.162	0.270*	-0.036	-0.248*	-0.230*
p	0.562		0.105	0.152	0.014	0.750	0.025	0.037
Visfatin (ng/mL)								
r	0.021	-0.181	1	-0.120	-0.245*	-0.004	0.113	0.100
p	0.851	0.105		0.291	0.027	0.975	0.310	0.370
Resistin (ng/mL)								
r	0.239*	-0.162	-0.120	1	-0.284*	-0.207	0.056	0.108
p	0.033	0.152	0.291		0.011	0.066	0.621	0.340
Adiponectin (µg/mL)								
r	0.069	0.270*	-0.245*	-0.284*	1	0.178	-0.196	-0.277*
p	0.536	0.014	0.027	0.011		0.109	0.078	0.012
Height (cm)								
r	0.099	-0.36	-0.004	-0.207	0.178	1	0.214	-0.190
p	0.377	0.750	0.975	0.066	0.109		0.053	0.088
Weight (kg)								
r	0.229*	-0.248*	0.113	0.056	-0.196	0.214	1	0.893*
p	0.039	0.025	0.310	0.621	0.078	0.053		0.000
BMI (kg/m ²)								
r	0.193	-0.230*	0.100	0.108	-0.277*	-0.190	0.893*	1
p	0.082	0.037	0.370	0.340	0.012	0.88	0.000	

CRP: C reactive protein; BMI: Body mass index; * Statistically significant.

weeks,^[13,16] while Goymen et al.^[17] found maternal serum adiponectin levels do not correlate with maternal body weight and BMI. In our study, we found a significant negative correlation between BMI and adiponectin. Worda et al. and Ott et al.^[12, 18] showed negative correlation between adiponectin and glucose levels in women while screening for gestational diabetes. In our study, we found statistically significant negative correlation between serum adiponectin level and glucose levels.

Irisin is released from skeletal muscle and adipose tissue, transforms white adipose tissue cells into brown ones, and helps regulate glucose homeostasis by providing energy expenditure. It is an indicator molecule in the regulation of BMI and promising in the treatment of metabolic diseases.^[4] Ural et al.^[19] determined lower serum irisin levels in GDM pregnant women compared to healthy pregnant controls while Bostrom et al.^[4] showed higher irisin levels. Garces et al.^[20] showed increased placental expression of irisin precursor protein compared to the control group. There are contradictory results in previous studies on this subject. Kuzmicki et al.^[21] reported that irisin concentra-

tions in pregnant patients were negatively correlated with 2nd h glucose levels. However, Ebert et al.^[22] reported that fasting insulin was positively associated with serum irisin in pregnancy compared with non pregnant group. In our study, there was no statistically significant difference between groups in terms of irisin levels. We found no significant relationship between the serum level of irisin and FPG and HbA1c and a negative relationship between serum irisin level and BMI. Irisin may play an important role in the development of gestational diabetes, but needs more research to show this. It will be useful to understand the mechanism of action of irisin to develop new therapeutic strategies for diabetes and obesity, whose incidence is increasing day by day, and to reduce the prevalence of these diseases.

Resistin is an adipokine, decreases glucose uptake into adipose tissue, and so increases plasma glucose concentration and decreases insulin sensitivity. The physiological role of resistin in pregnancy has not been sufficiently determined in humans yet. Studies on levels of resistin during pregnancy with GDM have yielded conflicting results; in-

creased,^[23-25] decreased^[26] or even unchanged values^[27] are reported. Insulin has a two phase effect on the release of resistin, while lower insulin concentrations increase resistin secretion, higher insulin concentrations decrease resistin levels.^[28] There is a positive relationship between resistin and obesity. Resistin levels are increasing during pregnancy, possibly due to weight gain.^[29] In our study, we found significantly higher levels of resistin in GDM patients. The change in the level of resistin in different study groups may be due to heterogeneity in patient selection, genetic diversity of study groups.

Irisin is anovel adipokine, myokine, and neurokine which are mainly secreted by skeletal muscle.^[4] Tabak et al.^[30] found that higher irisin concentrations and lower adiponectin levels in patients with metabolic syndrome compared to the control group. Kulhan et al.^[31] showed that levels of serum irisin were lower in pregnant women with GDM compared to women with uncomplicated pregnancies. Crujeiras et al.^[32] found that risk factors for insulin resistance are directly related to circulating irisin levels and inversely proportional to adiponectin. We found positive relationship between serum adiponectin levels and irisin. We think that further studies are needed to clarify the relationship between the levels of adiponectin and irisin in GDM development. In our study, negative relationship was detected between serum adiponectin level and visfatin. This relationship has led us to think that we need to work on this topic with more examples and more comprehensively. Shang et al.^[33] showed negative correlation between adiponectin and resistin levels, while Siddiqui et al.^[34] found lower adiponectin and higher resistin levels in women with GDM. Guelfi et al.^[35] showed decrease in maternal adiponectin concentrations an increase in leptin and resistin levels with the progression of pregnancy. We found a negative correlation between serum adiponectin and resistin levels. This results will assist in determining the cumulative effect of circulating adiponectin and resistin on GDM development, together with traditional risk factors.

Visfatin, an adipokine, expressed in adipose tissue, secreted from amniotic epithelium, and has antiapoptotic effects on fibroblasts and amniotic epithelial cells and reduces plasma glucose levels.^[36] Filippatos et al.^[37] observed no relationship between visfatin and visceral fat mass or BMI. There are conflicting results in plasma visfatin levels in GDM because both increased^[38] and decreased^[39] that concentrations have been reported. In our study, difference in visfatin levels was not statistically significant. The results obtained so far visfatin in GDM potential biomarkers indicate that, further, investigations between GDM and visfatin are definitely needed.

Conclusion

Our study is the first study conducted in Turkish society comparing serum adiponectin, resistin, visfatin, and irisin levels in pregnant women with GDM diagnosis and healthy ones. In our study, serum adiponectin levels were statistically significantly lower in GDM group compared to the control group, while resistin and CRP levels were higher in the GDM group than the control group. No significant difference was detected between GDM and control group in terms of visfatin and irisin. There was a negative relationship between adiponectin levels and BMI. Our results suggest that elevated serum resistin levels, decreased adiponectin levels play a role in glucose metabolism changes in GDM patients. In this study, contrary to the thought of gestational diabetes pathophysiology, it has been shown that it is not only simple insulin resistance but a more complex pathophysiology that has not been clarified yet. Further studies are needed to clarify the pathophysiology of the relationship between gestational diabetes and serum adiponectin, resistin, visfatin, irisin, and CRP levels. Studies with larger patient groups are needed to use these changes in serum markers detected in GDM patients in the diagnosis and screening of GDM. In order for these investigated markers to be used in the prediction of GDM, it is recommended to evaluate them with prospective studies to be done in early gestational weeks.

Study Limitations

A number of limitations should be noted for the study. This was a single-center and prospective study with a small sample size. The case and control groups were not of similar weight and age. The case group is older and has higher BMI values than control group. Large, prospective, and randomized clinical studies are needed to evaluate the clinical applicability of our results.

Disclosures

Ethics Committee Approval: This study is a cross-sectional study conducted in Department of Endocrinology and Metabolic Diseases. The study was approved by the decision of Ethics Committee dated 17.01.2018 and numbered 10 and a written consent form was obtained from all participants.

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