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Oxidative Stress's Causal Effects on Diabetes Mellitus and Micro vascular Complications: New Understandings Using DNA Methylation, Proteome and Genome-wide Mendelian Randomization

Sadashima Dillemans*

Department of Nephrology, Nanjing Medical University, Nanjing, China

Introduction

Diabetes mellitus, particularly type 2 diabetes (T2DM), is a chronic metabolic disorder characterized by insulin resistance, impaired insulin secretion, and persistent hyperglycemia. One of the significant contributors to the development of diabetes and its complications is oxidative stress. Oxidative stress arises when there is an imbalance between the production of Reactive Oxygen Species (ROS) and the body's ability to detoxify these reactive products. This imbalance can lead to cellular damage and has been implicated in various complications of diabetes, particularly microvascular complications such as diabetic retinopathy, nephropathy, and neuropathy. Recent advances in molecular biology and genetics, particularly in the fields of DNA methylation, proteomics, and Genome-wide Mendelian Randomization (GMR), have provided new insights into the causal relationships between oxidative stress, diabetes, and microvascular complications. Understanding these relationships is crucial for developing effective therapeutic interventions and preventive strategies [1].

Description

Oxidative stress plays a multifaceted role in the pathogenesis of diabetes. It can disrupt cellular signaling pathways, alter gene expression, and lead to inflammation, which in turn contributes to insulin resistance. Elevated levels of ROS can damage pancreatic beta cells, impairing insulin secretion. Additionally, oxidative stress is linked to various metabolic dysfunctions, including lipid peroxidation, protein oxidation, and mitochondrial dysfunction, which further exacerbate the diabetic state. Mitochondria are significant sources of ROS. In diabetes, metabolic dysregulation can lead to increased mitochondrial production of ROS, further perpetuating oxidative stress and impairing cellular functions. Diabetes is characterized by a chronic inflammatory state. Inflammatory cytokines, such as TNF-α and IL-6, can induce oxidative stress, creating a vicious cycle that worsens insulin resistance and tissue damage. Hyperglycemia leads to the formation of AGEs, which can increase oxidative stress and contribute to microvascular complications. AGEs activate various pathways that promote inflammation and oxidative damage [2].

Microvascular complications of diabetes encompass retinopathy, nephropathy, and neuropathy, each associated with significant morbidity and impaired quality of life. The underlying mechanisms connecting oxidative stress to these complications are complex and multifactorial. Diabetic Retinopathy (DR) is one of the leading causes of blindness in adults. The pathophysiology involves increased vascular permeability, retinal ischemia, and neovascularization, all of which are influenced by oxidative stress. ROS can cause damage to retinal endothelial cells and promote the expression of pro-inflammatory cytokines, leading to the development of DR [3]. Diabetic Nephropathy (DN) is characterized by albuminuria and progressive decline in renal function. Oxidative stress plays a critical role in glomerular damage and tubulointerstitial fibrosis. ROS contribute to endothelial dysfunction, inflammation, and apoptosis of renal cells, which can ultimately result in chronic kidney disease. Diabetic Neuropathy (DN) manifests as sensory and motor nerve dysfunction. Oxidative stress contributes to neuronal damage through mitochondrial dysfunction, altered neuronal signaling, and inflammatory responses. Elevated ROS levels can damage neuronal tissues and contribute to the development of neuropathic pain. [4].

Recent research has highlighted the role of epigenetic modifications, particularly DNA methylation, in mediating the effects of oxidative stress on diabetes and its complications. DNA methylation refers to the addition of a methyl group to DNA, which can influence gene expression without altering the underlying DNA sequence. This modification can be influenced by environmental factors, including oxidative stress. The interplay between oxidative stress and DNA methylation can significantly impact the development of microvascular complications. For instance, altered methylation of genes involved in angiogenesis and vascular permeability may contribute to the pathogenesis of DR. Similarly, changes in the methylation patterns of genes related to inflammation and fibrosis may play a role in DN and DN. Proteomics, the large-scale study of proteins, offers valuable insights into the molecular mechanisms underlying diabetes and its complications. By analyzing the protein expression profiles in diabetic patients, researchers can identify biomarkers and pathways associated with oxidative stress. Antioxidant therapies aim to neutralize ROS and restore the balance between oxidative and antioxidant systems. While some studies have shown promise, the efficacy of antioxidant supplements in clinical practice remains controversial. More research is needed to identify specific antioxidants that may be beneficial in diabetes management [5].

Conclusion

Oxidative stress is a critical factor in the development and progression of diabetes mellitus and its microvascular complications. Advances in DNA methylation studies, proteomics, and genome-wide Mendelian randomization have provided valuable insights into the causal relationships between oxidative stress, diabetes, and complications. Understanding these relationships can guide therapeutic interventions aimed at reducing oxidative stress and mitigating the risk of complications, ultimately improving the quality of life for individuals living with diabetes. Future research should continue to explore the complex interplay between oxidative stress, genetics, and epigenetics to develop more effective prevention and treatment strategies for diabetes and its associated complications.

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***Address for Correspondence:** Sadashima Dillemans, Department of Nephrology, Nanjing Medical University, Nanjing, China; E-mail: dileman@sad.edu.cn*

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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