

Treatment of Hypertensive Diabetic Patients

This article briefly reviews the literature on the incidence of hypertension in the diabetic population, the risks associated with this combination of conditions, and the nonpharmacologic and other therapies available to lower blood pressure in these patients. Although several studies of nonpharmacologic therapies and diuretics are considered, the emphasis is on the reported advantages and disadvantages of β -blockers, centrally acting agents, α -adrenergic-blocking agents, calcium-channel blockers, and angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors. *Diabetes Care* 11:828-32, 1988

Although the incidence of high blood pressure in the diabetic population is not precisely known, it appears to be considerably higher than that in the nondiabetic population (1-4). When adjustments are made for the effect of age, the prevalence of hypertension is relatively higher in those with type I (insulin-dependent) than in those with type II (non-insulin-dependent) diabetes (5). Coexisting hypertension and diabetes act as additive risk factors to accelerate vascular complications. The Framingham study found that the risk of cardiovascular disease is higher in diabetic patients, especially diabetic women; the impact was greatest for intermittent claudication and congestive heart failure and less noticeable in coronary artery disease. The Whitehall study, however, demonstrated that the risk for coronary artery disease is higher in hypertensive than in normotensive diabetic patients (6).

From the Department of Medicine, UCLA Medical School, Los Angeles; and the Endocrinology Section, Veterans Administration Medical Center, Sepulveda, California.

Address correspondence and reprint requests to Michael Tuck, MD, Endocrinology Section, Department of Medicine, Veterans Administration Medical Center, 16111 Plummer Street, Sepulveda, CA 91343.

According to DuPree and Meyer (7), the mortality rate of diabetic patients with systolic pressure >160 mmHg is four times that of other diabetic patients. The incidence of cerebral vascular disease is twice as high in hypertensive as in normotensive diabetic patients (8). High blood pressure also accelerates the decline in renal function in patients with diabetic nephropathy (9,10). Epidemiologic studies have also found an association between blood pressure levels and diabetic retinopathy (11,12).

The most predictable form of hypertension in diabetic patients is that developing with the onset of diabetic nephropathy and renal insufficiency. This form is noted frequently in patients with type I diabetes. In patients with type II diabetes, the onset of hypertension is associated with obesity, advancing age, and the coexistence of essential hypertension. Isolated systolic hypertension is common in older diabetic patients. Although renal failure, obesity, age, and essential hypertension account for much of the hypertension in diabetes, other factors related to primary metabolic alterations and secondary complications may contribute to abnormal blood pressure regulation. Changes in the cardiovascular control systems, such as the renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system (13-27), the sympathetic nervous system (28-31), vascular reactivity (30,32-35), and sodium and volume homeostasis (36-42), that have been reported in diabetes mellitus may contribute to abnormal blood pressure regulation.

SELECTION OF THERAPY

Because the risks associated with hypertension and diabetes are additive with respect to cardiovascular disease, and because blood pressure reduction slows the

progression of diabetic nephropathy, early intervention is warranted in diabetic hypertension. Antihypertensive agents can introduce new risks in diabetic patients, which necessitate a systematic comparison of the various classes of antihypertensive agents in diabetic patients.

Nonpharmacologic therapy. Nonpharmacologic therapy of hypertension, such as sodium restriction and weight reduction, would seem to be the logical first step to treatment of the diabetic hypertensive patient. Although obese patients can experience considerable reductions in blood pressure during weight reduction (43), long-term maintenance of normal weight and blood pressure has not been documented for this group.

Moderate sodium restriction, to ~2 g of sodium daily, can reduce elevated blood pressure. It seems reasonable to stress sodium restriction as part of the overall dietary program in diabetic patients, who usually have ongoing interactions with physicians and dietitians. The advantages of sodium restriction over diuretic therapy in blood pressure control include maintenance of normal body potassium stores and avoidance of the metabolic complications associated with administration of diuretics.

Diuretic agents. Diuretic therapy is a logical choice in hypertensive diabetic patients, because volume dependence is a component of hypertension in many of these patients. Thiazide diuretics are recommended when renal function is normal; when the serum creatinine level is $>176.8 \mu\text{M}$ (conversion factor 88.4), loop diuretics should be used.

Unfortunately, diuretic therapy is associated with a range of metabolic abnormalities that may have an adverse impact in diabetic patients. In patients with type II diabetes, diuretic-induced hypokalemia that is dose related can impair insulin release and worsen glucose tolerance (44). In addition, hypokalemia could be an independent risk for ventricular ectopia in diabetic patients who have coronary artery disease and cardiomyopathy. A potassium-sparing diuretic should be used to prevent diuretic-induced hypokalemia in diabetic patients with normal renal function but not in patients with renal failure, who may have hypoaldosteronism and a tendency for potassium retention.

Diuretic agents produce elevations in low-density lipoproteins and very-low-density lipoproteins. These diuretic-induced lipoprotein abnormalities with modest elevations in cholesterol levels may be transient, and their long-term significance has not yet been established (45). However, in the diabetic patient with hypertension and accelerated atherosclerotic disease, even small diuretic-induced lipid alterations could be significant.

In the elderly diabetic patient receiving diuretic therapy, the risk of hyperosmolar coma is increased, requiring close monitoring of glucose and electrolytes.

β -Blockers. Because cardiac output and the activity of the renin-angiotensin system are reduced in diabetic hypertensive patients, β -blockers, which lower blood pressure by decreasing cardiac output and acting on the renin-angiotensin system, may be less effective antihypertensive agents in this population. Several studies,

however, have indicated that these agents do lower blood pressure in diabetic patients (46). β -Blocker therapy may be useful in younger diabetic patients with hypertension who have high pulse rates and in diabetic patients with coronary artery disease and tachyarrhythmias. In patients with coronary artery disease or cardiomyopathy, however, β -blockade, which leads to decreased myocardial contractility, can produce congestive heart failure (47).

Because β -blockade inhibits β -adrenergic-mediated insulin secretion, these agents can impair insulin release and worsen glucose tolerance in type II diabetic patients, although actual glycemic excursions are usually moderate (48). The opposite can occur in patients with type I diabetes, in whom β -blockers accentuate insulin-induced hypoglycemia. These agents also mask some (e.g., anxiety, tachycardia, tremor) but not all (e.g., sweating) of the symptoms of hypoglycemia. Use of cardioselective β -blockers may obviate this effect on insulin-induced hypoglycemia in type I diabetic patients (49, 50).

A less appreciated complication of β -blocker therapies is their elevation of total peripheral resistance, causing vasoconstriction and reduced regional blood flow to most peripheral vascular beds. Because there is an increased incidence of peripheral vascular disease in the diabetic population, the vasoconstrictive effect of β -blockade could severely impair exercise tolerance and intensify intermittent claudication. Another concern with vascular disease in diabetic patients is that both cardioselective and nonselective β -blocking agents elevate very-low-density lipoprotein triglyceride levels and reduce high-density lipoprotein levels. These agents should be used with caution in diabetic patients with hyperlipidemia.

Centrally acting agents. The centrally acting agents methyldopa, clonidine, and guanabenz are effective in lowering blood pressure in diabetic patients with hypertension but have the predictable side effects of sedation and dry mouth. The new transdermal delivery system for clonidine may offer increased compliance and reduced side effects in this population (51).

Because these agents are α -agonists, and because α_2 -stimulation can inhibit insulin secretion, centrally acting agents can decrease insulin release and worsen glucose tolerance. Both clonidine and guanabenz cause mild impairment of glucose-stimulated insulin release, but this has little effect on long-term glycemic control in diabetic patients (52,53). Methyldopa does not alter glucose control, but it should be used cautiously in diabetic patients because its use, as with other α -agonists, can be associated with orthostatic hypotension, sexual dysfunction, dry mouth, and lethargy.

α -Adrenergic-blocking agents. Prazosin, the peripheral α_1 -receptor antagonist, effectively reduces blood pressure in diabetic hypertensive patients without altering metabolic control or sexual function (54). However, the side effect of first-dose orthostatic hypertension may be a problem in diabetic patients with clinical or sub-

clinical autonomic neuropathy. Reactive sodium and volume retention may render these agents less effective with long-term administration.

Calcium-channel-blocking agents. The efficacy and safety of several calcium-channel-blocking agents have been tested in clinical trials in hypertensive diabetic patients. These agents have several potential advantages as first-line therapy in this population. They do not impair central or peripheral nervous system activity, cause sodium retention, or aggravate vascular disease and may have minimal effects on sexual function.

Studies in animals show that these agents reduce insulin secretion (55,56); however, the vast majority of studies in humans have shown that therapeutic doses of verapamil, diltiazem, and nifedipine do not affect fasting or postprandial glucose levels in diabetic and nondiabetic patients (57–59). It remains to be established whether calcium antagonists have the beneficial effects on renal hemodynamics and protein excretion in diabetic patients as reported with angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors.

ACE inhibitors. The ACE inhibitors have several potential benefits in the treatment of diabetic hypertension, especially in the presence of renal disease. Several studies have demonstrated the efficacy and safety of captopril in the treatment of diabetic hypertension (60–63). Captopril also has favorable effects on carbohydrate homeostasis. As glucose-clamp experiments show, captopril increases insulin sensitivity for skeletal muscle glucose uptake, which could improve glycemic control (64). Captopril inhibition of kinin degradation may mediate this effect.

In diabetes mellitus, the kidney undergoes several early adaptive hemodynamic changes, including hyperfiltration and increased intraglomerular pressure (65). Evidence from animal models indicates that glomerular capillary hyperperfusion and hypertension can initiate glomerular structural injury (66). In addition, a family history of hypertension and an elevated lithium-sodium countertransport in erythrocytes may be markers for diabetic patients with a susceptibility to develop renal disease (67). Reduction in systemic arterial pressure retards the development of renal failure and reduces proteinuria (9,10). However, all antihypertensive agents may not be equally effective in retarding renal damage in diabetes, because the reduction in systemic blood pressure may not alter intraglomerular pressure. In diabetic rats, triple-drug antihypertensive therapy did not reduce intraglomerular pressure and proteinuria, whereas the ACE inhibitor captopril lowered these parameters (68).

ACE inhibitors have been shown to improve the glomerular filtration rate and decrease albuminuria in diabetic patients with renal disease (69–71). ACE inhibition may have a role in treating diabetic nephropathy by reducing intraglomerular arterial pressure. ACE inhibitors may improve renal function even in normotensive diabetic patients with nephropathy. In a 6-mo study of normotensive diabetic patients with mild nephropathy and persistent microalbuminuria, it was found that

enalapril decreased the albumin excretion rate without major changes in systemic blood pressure (72). In a long-term study in diabetic hypertensive patients, captopril administration over a 2-yr period decreased the rate of renal deterioration, as indicated by the glomerular filtration rate (71). These findings underscore the importance of arterial pressure in the progression of diabetic nephropathy. ACE inhibitors may be considered as first-line antihypertensive agents in diabetic patients with hypertension.

CONCLUSIONS

Although dietary and other nonpharmacologic approaches are promising, they need to be studied more thoroughly in the long-term control of blood pressure in the diabetic hypertensive population. In monotherapy, the Working Group on Hypertension in Diabetes recommends that the first choice of antihypertensive agents be either a diuretic β -blocker, calcium antagonist, or ACE inhibitor (47). If a diuretic alone is inadequate, an ACE inhibitor or the other agents might be used in conjunction with diuretic therapy.

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