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An investigation of risk factors for the later development of
Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus, using HbA1c as a measure of
glycaemia in a group of Auckland school children.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science
in
Nutrition and Dietetics

Massey University, Albany
Auckland, New Zealand.

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2017

Abstract

Background: A glycated haemoglobin (HbA1c) test is recommended in diagnosing type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) and to identify prediabetics. This test is advocated over other methods due to ease of application and processing. Few studies have examined associations between HbA1c levels and T2DM risk factors (RFs) in children.

Aim and hypotheses: To investigate the relationship between HbA1c levels and selected RFs associated with T2DM risk in a group of Auckland children. It is hypothesized that ethnicity and waist circumference (WC) will be reliable indicators of later T2DM risk. Body fat percentage (%BF) will likely be positively correlated with HbA1c level.

Study design: A cross-sectional study involving children aged 8-11 years from six Auckland primary schools. Physical measures included weight, height, WC and %BF. A finger-prick blood test was collected for HbA1c levels. Ethnicity, gender, age, usual beverage intake and physical activity (PA) behaviours were assessed by self-completed questionnaires. Stepwise multiple linear regression analysis was used to explore which independent variables best predicted variance in HbA1c level.

Results: When children ($n=451$, 10.4 ± 0.6 years) were classified by glycaemic status, 71 children (15.7%) had HbA1c levels indicative of prediabetes. This was greatest in Pacific ($n=29$) and South Asian ($n=13$) children. Maori and Pacific children had higher BMI than European children ($p<0.0001$). For HbA1c, Pacific and South Asian children had higher levels than European ($p<0.0001$), as did Maori children ($p<0.05$). Asian children exhibited high %BF for a low BMI. In regression analysis to explain the variance in HbA1c, WC was the most significant predictor for South Asian, Pacific and Asian children.

Conclusion: Ethnicity and adiposity (both central and overall) are key RF for T2DM risk. Waist circumference, waist-to-height ratio (WtHR) and BMI may all be used as measures in screening for T2DM risk. Glycated haemoglobin was a useful screening tool alongside RFs and not dependent on obesity.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the school children who took part in the study. Your enthusiasm and willingness to take part in the assessments has helped towards further understanding of some of the risk factors for type 2 diabetes mellitus in the younger population.

Thank you to the wider study team who gave up their time to help collect all the data whilst also ensuring the children were at ease and enjoying the experience and those who assisted with data input.

I would also like to thank my academic supervisors Dr Pam von Hurst and Dr Cheryl Gammon for their continued input and contributions throughout the study.

Finally, thanks to my family and friends for your ongoing encouragement, support and interest throughout the study.

Table of contents

Abstract	1
Acknowledgements	2
Table of contents	3
List of Figures	5
List of Tables	6
List of Appendices	7
List of Abbreviations	8
Chapter One	9
1.0 Introduction	9
1.1 Purpose of the study	11
1.2 Aim	11
1.2.1 Objectives	11
1.2.2 Hypotheses	12
1.3 Thesis structure	12
1.4 Researcher's contributions	13
Chapter Two	14
2.0 Literature review	14
2.1 Diabetes prevalence	14
2.2 Type 2 diabetes mellitus	15
2.2.1 Definition and aetiology	15
2.2.2 Comorbidities and implications arising from early-onset T2DM	16
2.3 A public health issue	17
2.4 Risk factors for the development of type 2 diabetes mellitus	17
2.4.1 Obesity	19
2.4.2 Puberty	30
2.4.3 Ethnic or minority population bias	31
2.4.4 Socioeconomic status	32
2.4.5 Genetics, heredity and environmental factors	33
2.4.5.1 Risk from intrauterine exposure	34
2.4.6 Physical activity	34
2.4.7 Dietary factors	35
2.4.7.1 Dietary sugars from sugar sweetened beverages	37
2.5 Glycated haemoglobin as a screening indicator	38
2.5.1 Importance of early detection and diagnosis	38
2.5.2 Use of glycated haemoglobin in diagnosis or screening for T2DM	38
2.6 Limitations and areas requiring further investigation	41
2.7 Conclusions	41
Chapter Three	43
3.0 Research study manuscript prepared for Pediatrics Journal	43
3.1 Abstract	43
3.2 Introduction	43
3.2 Methods	45
3.2.1 Participants	45
3.2.2 Measures	46
3.2.3 Questionnaires	46
3.2.4 Statistical analysis	48

3.3 Results.....	49
3.4 Discussion.....	55
3.5 Conclusion	60
3.6 References	62
Supplementary Tables.....	69
Chapter Four	71
4 Conclusions	71
4.1 Research problem and aims of the research study.....	71
4.2 The main findings of the research study.....	71
4.3 Strengths.....	72
4.4 Limitations.....	73
4.5 Application/implications of the research findings.....	74
4.6 Recommendations for future research	74
References	76

List of Figures

Figure 2.1. Public health impact of obesity.....	20
Figure 3.1. Diagram showing study characteristics from recruitment stage to final study group.....	48

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Differentiation of type 1 and 2 diabetes mellitus in young people	15
Table 2.2. Criteria for testing for T2DM or prediabetes in asymptomatic children ^a	18
Table 2.3. Type 2 diabetes mellitus screening recommendations for children and young people in NZ.....	19
Table 2.4. The international classification of adult underweight, overweight and obesity according to BMI	22
Table 2.5. BMI classifications for thinness, overweight and obesity according to different definitions	23
Table 2.6. Summary of studies investigating the accuracy of BMI and body fat measures across different races/ethnicities.	25
Table 2.7. Reporting and interpreting glycated haemoglobin (HbA1c) results ..	39
Table 3.1. Participant demographic, anthropometric, HbA1c and physical activity levels for total group and stratified by glycaemic status.	51
Table 3.2. Anthropometric characteristics, HbA1c levels and physical activity stratified by ethnic group.....	53
Table 3.3. Proportion of participants with HbA1c level in prediabetic range (>39mmol/mol [$>5.7\%$]) by ethnicity and anthropometric risk variable with cut-offs.....	54
Table 3.4. Stepwise multiple regression analysis models for explaining the variance of HbA1c. Independent variables were waist circumference, physical activity (PA) and all ethnic groups. (n=402)	55

List of Appendices

Appendices	91
Appendix A Study information sheet.....	91
Appendix B Parent and child consent forms	95
Appendix C Ethnicity, fracture history and physical activity questionnaire	96
Appendix D Data collection form	100
Appendix E Supplementary data.....	101
Appendix F Supplementary regression analysis models.....	102

List of Abbreviations

2hPG:	2-hour plasma glucose
ADA:	American Diabetes Association
BIA:	Bioelectrical impedance analysis
BF:	Body fat
BP:	Blood pressure
BMI:	Body mass index
CHD:	Coronary heart disease
CVD:	Cardiovascular disease
FPG:	Fasting plasma glucose
GI:	Glycaemic index
HbA1c:	Glycated haemoglobin
HDL-C:	High-density lipoprotein cholesterol
IGT:	Impaired glucose tolerance
IR:	Insulin resistance
LDL-C:	Low-density lipoprotein cholesterol
MetS:	Metabolic Syndrome
NHS:	Nurse's Health Study
NZ:	New Zealand
NZSSD:	New Zealand Society for the Study of Diabetes
OGTT:	Oral glucose tolerance test
PA:	Physical activity
PoC	Point of care
RF:	Risk factor
SES:	Socioeconomic status
SSB:	Sugar-sweetened beverage
T1DM:	Type 1 diabetes mellitus
T2DM:	Type 2 diabetes mellitus
WC:	Waist circumference
WHO:	World Health Organisation
WHtR:	Waist-to-height ratio
WHR:	Waist-to-hip ratio