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The role of vitamin D in metabolism and bone health

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

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Nutritional Science

at Massey University, Albany
New Zealand

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2009

Abstract

Background

Hypovitaminosis D is becoming recognised as an emerging threat to health, even in countries like New Zealand which enjoy plentiful sunshine. The evidence for a role for vitamin D deficiency in the aetiology of a plethora of diseases continues to accumulate, including type 2 diabetes, and the preceding insulin resistance.

Objectives

The primary objective of the Surya Study was to investigate the effect of improved vitamin D status (through supplementation) on insulin resistance. The secondary objectives were to investigate the vitamin D status and bone mineral density of South Asian women living in New Zealand, and to investigate the effect of vitamin D supplementation on bone turnover as measured by biochemical markers of bone resorption and formation.

Method

Women of South Asian origin, ≥ 20 years old, living in Auckland ($n = 235$) were recruited for the study. All were asked to complete a 4-day food diary, invited to have a bone scan, and were screened for entry into the intervention phase which required insulin resistance (HOMA-IR > 1.93) and serum 25(OH)D < 50 nmol/L.

Eighty-one completed a 6-month randomised controlled trial with 4000 IU vitamin D3 ($n = 42$) or placebo ($n = 39$). Primary endpoint measures included insulin resistance, insulin sensitivity (HOMA2%S), fasting C-peptide and markers of bone turnover, osteocalcin (OC) and collagen C-telopeptide (CTX). Ninety-one of the 239 had a bone scan and bone mineral density (BMD) was measured in the proximal femur and lumbar spine.

Results

Adequate serum 25(OH)D concentrations (> 50 nmol/L) were observed in only 16% of subjects screened. Median (25th, 75th percentile) serum 25(OH)D increased significantly from 21 (11,40) to 75 (55,84) nmol/L with supplementation. Significant improvements were seen in insulin sensitivity and insulin resistance ($P = 0.003$, $P = 0.02$ respectively), and circulating serum insulin decreased ($P = 0.02$) with supplementation compared to placebo. There was no change in C-peptide with supplementation. Insulin resistance was most improved when endpoint serum

25(OH)D \geq 80 nmol/L. In post-menopausal women OC and CTX levels increased in the placebo arm but CTX decreased from 0.39 ± 0.15 to 0.36 ± 0.17 ($P = 0.012$) with supplementation. Osteoporosis (T score < -2.5) was present in 32% of postmenopausal, and 3% of premenopausal women. Women 20 – 29 years ($n=10$) had very low BMD, calcium intake and serum 25(OH)D

Conclusions

Improving vitamin D status in insulin resistant women resulted in improved insulin resistance and sensitivity but no change in insulin secretion. Optimal 25(OH)D concentrations for reducing insulin resistance were shown to be ≥ 80 nmol/L. The prevalence of low 25(OH)D concentrations in this population was alarmingly high, especially in younger women. In post-menopausal women, vitamin D supplementation appeared to ameliorate increased bone turnover attributed to oestrogen deficiency.

Acknowledgements

They say that no man is an island, and never is that saying more applicable than to any woman (or man) pursuing a PhD. I have received so much physical, emotional and moral support whilst making this journey that mere words of thanks seem inadequate, but are at least a token of my appreciation.

Firstly I would like to thank my wonderful family: my ever-supportive husband, Dr Eric von Hurst who has cooked, cleaned, listened to rambling tirades and made sure that every triumph, no matter how small, was celebrated. My Mum, Margaret Jones and my Aunt, Joan Williams, who came to Mount Roskill every Saturday morning and made breakfast for participants, or made the first run back to the lab with the blood samples – I couldn't have done it without them.

I will be eternally grateful to my supervision team for guiding me through this process: Associate Professor Jane Coad, supervisor extraordinaire, who went along with my research idea, sat up with me till all hours of the night writing funding applications, and then had the faith in me to get the job done; My co-supervisors Professor Marlena Kruger and Associate Professor Welma Stonehouse for being such great exemplars of academic excellence and never losing their sense of humour. I am also very grateful for the support of the Nutrition Team at Massey University's Albany campus – working with such great people makes every task just a little bit easier.

A big thank you to the women of the Auckland South Asian community for their participation, encouragement and enthusiasm for the study. Also to Dr R Sood and staff of the Mount Roskill Medical Centre who so generously provided us with clinical space on Saturday mornings for nearly a year.

Thanks to Blackmores Pty Ltd, Australia, who supplied the vitamin D supplement and the placebo at no cost, and to Philip Duffy and Chris Oliver from Blackmores for having faith in the project, and for providing such undemanding support.

The Surya Study was made possible by the New Zealand Lottery Board (Lottery Health Grant), New Zealand Department of Internal Affairs.

Table of contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of contents	v
List of tables	vi
List of figures	vii
Abbreviations.....	viii
Chapter 1 Introduction and justification for study.....	1
Study objectives.....	5
Chapter 2 Review of the Literature	9
Vitamin D	10
Insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes.....	17
Hypovitaminosis D and type 2 diabetes.....	33
Vitamin D and bone	44
The South Asian population in New Zealand.....	59
References	64
Chapter 3 Study Protocol	83
Chapter 4 Vitamin D status and attitudes towards sun exposure	100
Chapter 5 Vitamin D supplementation and insulin resistance	114
Chapter 6 Vitamin D supplementation and markers of bone turnover.....	133
Chapter 7 Bone density, calcium intake and vitamin D status.....	148
Chapter 8 Discussion	165
Conclusions	171
Recommendations for future research.....	172
Appendices	
Papers (published or submitted).....	175
Conference presentations.....	176
Participants' information sheet.....	177
Medical History questionnaire.....	182
Osteoporosis knowledge and sun exposure questionnaire	185

List of tables

Chapter 2

1	Vitamin D content of food sources in the New Zealand diet	14
2	Examples of supplemental forms of vitamin D ₃ in New Zealand	14
3	Criteria for diagnosis of diabetes	24
4	Rate of progression from prediabetes to diabetes	25
5	Stages of glycaemic status	26
6	The 2005 IDF definition of the metabolic syndrome	30
7	Vitamin D intervention studies with metabolic disease outcomes	37
8	Biochemical markers of bone turnover	56
9	Studies of bone health in South Asian people	62

Chapter 3

1	Outcome measures and testing methods - screening phase	91
2	Outcome measures and testing methods - phase 2 (intervention)	92

Chapter 4

1	Sun exposure attitudes and behaviours	107
2	Health motivation questionnaire results	107

Chapter 5

1	Baseline characteristics of trial participants	121
2	Changes from baseline to endpoint in primary outcome measures	122
3	Changes from baseline to endpoint in secondary outcome measures ..	123

Chapter 6

1	Correlations between serum 25(OH)D, PTH and serum calcium	139
2	Change in serum 25(OH)D, PTH and bone markers	140

Chapter 7

1	Characteristics of participants	153
2	Bone scan results by menopausal status	154
3	Characteristics of 20 -29 year olds	155

List of figures

Chapter 2

1	Vitamin D structure	11
2	Metabolic activation of vitamin D	12
3	Glucose homeostasis	17
4	Insulin receptor and downstream signalling proteins	18
5	Glucose stimulated insulin secretion	20
6	Responses to oral glucose tolerance test.....	27
7	Genetic predisposition for β -cell dysfunction	31
8	Calcium absorption vs serum 25(OH)D concentrations.....	45
9	Transcellular transport of calcium.....	46
10	Bone remodelling cycle.....	48
11	Overview of calcium homeostasis	49
12	Role of calcitriol and PTH in bone resorption	51
13	Rickets in children.....	53

Chapter 3

1	Study design flow chart.....	89
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Chapter 4

1	Levels of vitamin D deficiency and adequacy	106
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Chapter 5

1	Participant status through duration of study	120
2	Change in HOMA%2S in total study population	124
3	Serum 25(OH)D and HOMA2%S relationship	124

Abbreviations

1 α OHase	1 α -hydroxylase
1,25(OH) ₂ D ₃	1 α ,25-dihydroxyvitamin D ₃ or calcitriol
24OHase	24-hydroxylase
25(OH)D ₃	25-hydroxyvitamin D ₃
25OHase	25-hydroxylase
ALP	Alkaline phosphatase
ATP	Adult Treatment Panel
BMD	Bone mineral density
BMI	Body mass index
BTM	Bone turnover markers
CaSR	Calcium sensing receptors
CMDHB	Counties Manukau District Health Board
CRP	C-reactive protein
CTX	Cross-linked telopeptide
CVD	Cardiovascular disease
DBP	Vitamin D-binding protein
DXA	Dual energy x-ray absorptiometry
EDTA	Ethylene diamine tetraacetic acid
ER	Endoplasmic reticulum
FPG	Fasting plasma glucose
FPI	Fasting plasma insulin
HDL	High-density lipoprotein
HGO	Hepatic Glucose Output
HOMA	Homeostasis assessment model
HOMA2-IR	HOMA2-Insulin Resistance
IDF	International Diabetes Institute
IFG	Impaired fasting glucose
IGT	Impaired glucose tolerance
IL-6	Interleukin 6
IR	Insulin receptor
IRS-proteins	Insulin receptor substrate proteins
IVGTT	Intra-venous glucose tolerance test

K _{ATP}	Potassium channels
KO	Knock out
MED	Minimal erythematous dose
MoH	Ministry of Health
NCEP	National Cholesterol Education Programme
NCX-1	Na ⁺ /Ca ²⁺ exchanger
NEFAs	Non-esterified fatty acids
NGT	Normal glucose tolerance
NHANES	National health and Nutrition Examination Survey
NIDDM	Non-insulin dependant diabetes
OC	Osteocalcin
OGIS	Oral glucose insulin sensitivity
OGTT	Oral glucose tolerance test
OPG	Osteoprotegerin
PI3-kinase	Phosphatidylinositol 3-kinase
PICP	Procollagen type 1 C-terminal
PMCA	Plasma membrane calcium ATPase
PTH	Parathyroid hormone
PTHR	PTH receptor
PTHrP	PTH related protein
RANK	Receptor activator nuclear factor- κ B
RANKL	Receptor activator nuclear factor- κ B ligand
RCT	Randomised controlled trial
RDI	Recommended daily intake
RXR	Retinoid X receptor
TNF	Tumour necrosis factor
TRP	Transient receptor potential
UV	Ultraviolet
UVB	Ultraviolet beta radiation
UVR	Ultraviolet radiation
VDR	Vitamin D receptor
VDRE	Vitamin D response element
WHO	World Health Organization