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**Effect of Highbush blueberry consumption
on markers of metabolic syndrome**

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the requirements for the degree of

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in
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Abstract

Background :

Metabolic syndrome (MS) is becoming a major public health challenge worldwide, and is associated with a higher risk of the development of several chronic diseases including type II diabetes. Being physically active would provide the most effective management for metabolic disorders; however, the use of dietary bioactive compounds from various plants has also been proposed as an alternative approach. A number of experimental studies indicate that Lowbush blueberries may be able to reduce symptoms of MS but the evidence for Highbush blueberries, which are commonly consumed, is scarce and their benefits remain doubtful. Therefore, the primary objective of this thesis was to investigate the effect of selected Highbush blueberries grown in New Zealand on their potential for managing metabolic-related disorders in order to provide further knowledge of the role for bioactive compounds from Highbush blueberries.

Method :

The selected eight Highbush blueberry cultivars were initially characterised by measuring total phenolic content using a Folin-Ciocalteu procedure; anthocyanin profiles and chlorogenic acid concentration by HPLC; and antioxidant capacity by the ferric reducing antioxidant power (FRAP) and by 2,2, diphenyl-picrylhydrazyl (DPPH) assays (Chapter 3). Further experiments were then carried out to investigate whether these Highbush blueberries possess any activity against measures of MS *in vitro*. The ability of Highbush blueberries to inhibit α -amylase and α -glucosidase, the enzymes involved in breaking down starch, and their abilities to enhance the growth of beneficial probiotic bacteria, another mechanism associated with improving insulin resistance, were tested in Chapter 4. Finally, the physiological effects of Highbush blueberry consumption on metabolic syndrome biomarkers were assessed *in vivo* using animal models of diet-induced metabolic syndrome (Chapter 5-7).

Results :

Our results demonstrated that selected Highbush blueberries grown in New Zealand contained considerable amounts of polyphenolics and total anthocyanins, and exhibited high antioxidant activities, with 'Burlington' and 'Elliott' cultivars exhibiting the highest total phenolic content (> 3.4 mg GAE/g frozen berries (FB)), total anthocyanins (> 2.2 mg/g FB) and antioxidant capacities (FRAP; > 3.0 mg FeSO₄/g FB, DPPH; > 65% inhibition at 5 mg FB). Further *in vitro* experiments

supported the ability of these blueberries to inhibit α -amylase (10-40% inhibition at 20 mg FB) and α -glucosidase (10-50% inhibition at 25 mg FB); additionally, some blueberry cultivars possessed the ability to increase the growth of the probiotic bacteria *Lactobacillus acidophilus* by more than 0.5 log₁₀ CFU/mL. However, the extent of these benefits was not closely correlated with total phenolic content ($R^2 < 0.27$), total anthocyanins ($R^2 < 0.23$), or antioxidant capacities (FRAP; $R^2 < 0.42$, DPPH; $R^2 < 0.24$) across all genotypes, indicating that these anti-metabolic syndrome abilities were not simply due to the total bioactives or antioxidant capacities presented in the berries. 'Burlington' and 'Bluecrop', which exhibited strong enzyme inhibition as well as enhanced beneficial probiotic bacterial growth but contained different components of individual anthocyanins, were chosen for further testing *in vivo*. Rats fed a high-fat-high-sugar diet plus 1% freeze-dried whole blueberries (both cultivars) for 8 weeks showed signs of improvement of glucose tolerance and exhibited between 30 and 36% decrease in the degree of insulin resistance (HOMA-IR) as compared to the controls. The blueberries also showed a trend to increase the growth of beneficial bacteria, *Lactobacillus* spp. ($P = 0.20$) and *Bifidobacterium* spp. ($P = 0.15$), in the rats' caecal content. However, no reduction in body weight or fat accumulation was observed with blueberry supplementation. There were no significant differences ($P > 0.05$) in the abilities of 'Burlington' and 'Bluecrop' to modulate any metabolic biomarkers assessed *in vivo*.

Conclusion :

Inclusion of the blueberries into the diet showed promise for management of some markers of metabolic syndrome, in particular the improvement of insulin sensitivity and glucose tolerance. The results of these studies shed some light on the beneficial effect of selected NZ Highbush blueberries against insulin resistance associated with metabolic syndrome.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of contents	v
List of tables	vii
List of figures	ix
Abbreviations	xii
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Chapter 2 Literature review	3
2.1 Metabolic syndrome	3
2.1.1 Definitions of metabolic syndrome	3
2.1.2 Prevalence of metabolic syndrome	4
2.1.3 Conditions contributing to the pathogenesis of metabolic syndrome	8
2.1.4 Type II diabetes	17
2.1.5 Management of metabolic syndrome	19
2.2 Blueberries: composition, bioactive compounds and antioxidant capacities	19
2.2.1 Nutrient composition of blueberries	20
2.2.2 Total polyphenolic content	21
2.2.3 Anthocyanins	23
2.2.4 Other bioactive compounds	27
2.2.5 Antioxidant capacity	29
2.3 Possible mechanisms of action of dietary polyphenols on metabolic syndrome-related pathologies	31
2.3.1 Impact on starch hydrolysis enzymes	31
2.3.2 Impact on cellular function and gene expression	32
2.3.3 Impact on intestinal microbiota	36
2.4 Health benefits of blueberry on metabolic syndrome	40
2.4.1 Evidence from animal studies	40
2.4.2 Evidence from human studies	44
2.5 Aim and research objectives	45

Chapter 3	Phenolic composition and antioxidant activity of Highbush blueberries ..	61
Chapter 4	Effects of blueberry extracts on starch hydrolysis enzyme inhibition and beneficial probiotic bacterial growth <i>in vitro</i>	89
Chapter 5	Effect of Highbush blueberry intake on markers of metabolic syndrome and oxidative stress in rats fed a high-fructose diet	113
Chapter 6	Short-term and long-term effects of excessive consumption of saturated fats and/or sucrose on metabolic variables in Sprague Dawley rats: a pilot study	129
Chapter 7	Effect of Highbush blueberry intake on markers of metabolic syndrome in rats fed a high-fat-high-sugar diet	155
Chapter 8	General discussion	183
	Conclusions	194
	Recommendations for future research	195
Appendix I	205
Appendix II	222
Appendix III	224

List of Tables

Chapter 2

Table 2.1	Definition of metabolic syndrome based on different criteria used	5
Table 2.2	Criteria for the diagnosis of diabetes	18
Table 2.3	Nutrient composition of frozen and freeze-dried blueberries	21
Table 2.4	Total phenolic content in different varieties of blueberries	22
Table 2.5	Individual anthocyanins presented in Highbush blueberries quantified by HPLC	25
Table 2.6	Total concentration of various bioactive compounds in blueberries	29

Chapter 3

Table 3.1	Individual anthocyanin components of the eight Highbush blueberry cultivars	71
Table 3.2	Least squares means for the effect of different cultivars and extraction methods on the total phenolic content and antioxidant activity	77

Chapter 4

Table 4.1	Inhibitory effect on α -amylase of water extracts from eight Highbush blueberry genotypes using starch-iodine test	98
Table 4.2	Correlation coefficients (R^2) between the concentration of total phenolics, anthocyanins, antioxidant activity (FRAP and DPPH) and enzymatic inhibition activity (α -amylase and α -glucosidase) across all eight genotypes	101
Table 4.3	Least squares means for the effect of different cultivars and concentrations of blueberry on growth of lactic acid bacteria (<i>L. acidophilus</i> and <i>L. rhamnosus</i>) at 48 hours	103
Table 4.4	Correlation coefficients (R^2) between the concentration of total phenolics, anthocyanins, antioxidant activity (FRAP and DPPH) and the ability to enhance the growth of lactic acid bacteria (<i>L. acidophilus</i> and <i>L. rhamnosus</i>) across all eight genotypes	104

Chapter 5

Table 5.1	Composition of the experimental diets	116
Table 5.2	Effect of experimental diets on whole body composition, adipose tissue weights and organ weights in rats at the end of study	120
Table 5.3	Effect of experimental diets on blood measurements of the overnight fasting rats at the end of the experiment	121
Table 5.4	Effect of experimental diets on blood glucose concentration at week 2, 4, 6 and 8	122

Chapter 6

Table 6.1	Composition and nutritive values of the experimental diets	132
Table 6.2	Average dietary consumption, average energy intake and body weight in rats during the adaptation period (week 0), and over the short-term (week 1-4) and long-term (week 1-8) periods	135
Table 6.3	Body composition by DEXA scan in rats at week 4 and week 8	137
Table 6.4	Adipose tissue and organ weights in rats at week 4 and week 8	139
Table 6.5	Least squares means for the effect of diet and duration of study on fasting plasma glucose and insulin concentrations	143

Chapter 7

Table 7.1	Composition of the experimental diets	159
Table 7.2	Average dietary and energy consumption in rats	164
Table 7.3	Effect of starch-based (CONT) diet and high-fat-high-sugar (HFHS) diet on selected metabolic biomarkers	165
Table 7.4	Comparison of the effect of different cultivars of blueberry ('Burlington' and 'Bluecrop') on selected metabolic biomarkers	168
Table 7.5	Effect of freeze-dried blueberry supplementation on selected metabolic biomarkers	169
Table 7.6	Effect of freeze-dried blueberry supplementation added into HFHS diets on the growth of probiotic bacteria	171
Table 7.7	Effect of freeze-dried blueberry supplementation added into CONT diets on the growth of probiotic bacteria	172

List of Figures

Chapter 2

Figure 2.1	Prevalence of metabolic syndrome according to the NCEP-ATP III definition	6
Figure 2.2	Regulation of blood glucose levels by insulin and glucagon from the pancreas	9
Figure 2.3	Insulin regulation of glucose transport into cells	10
Figure 2.4	Energy metabolism during fasting condition	13
Figure 2.5	Structures of anthocyanidins commonly found in berry fruits	23
Figure 2.6	Structures of chlorogenic acid	27
Figure 2.7	Structures of flavonols in blueberries	28
Figure 2.8	Possible site of action of polyphenols on carbohydrate and glucose metabolism	33

Chapter 3

Figure 3.1	Structure of common anthocyanins in blueberries	63
Figure 3.2	Total anthocyanin concentrations and average berry weight of the eight Highbush blueberry varieties, and the correlation between the total anthocyanin concentrations and berry weights	68
Figure 3.3	Representative chromatograms of eight cultivars of blueberries at 520 nm	70
Figure 3.4	Principal component analysis of the anthocyanin composition of the eight Highbush blueberry varieties	73
Figure 3.5	Scatter plot for principle components 1 and 2 showing the contribution of each anthocyanin to the observed PCA pattern	74
Figure 3.6	Chlorogenic acid concentration of the eight Highbush blueberry varieties	75
Figure 3.7	Total polyphenolic content in blueberry extracts with mixed solvents, 5% formic acid and water	76
Figure 3.8	Ferric reducing antioxidant power and scavenging of diphenyl-picrylhydrazyl (DPPH)-radical in blueberry extracts with mixed solvents, 5% formic acid and water	78
Figure 3.9	Total polyphenolic content, ferric reducing antioxidant power and scavenging of diphenyl-picrylhydrazyl (DPPH)-radical in freeze-dried whole blueberries and berry pomace	80
Figure 3.10	Linear correlation between the concentration of total phenolics or total anthocyanins and antioxidant activity in the eight water plus 5% formic acid blueberry extracts	81

Figure 3.11	Ferric reducing antioxidant power and scavenging of diphenyl-picrylhydrazyl (DPPH)-radical of ‘Elliott’ and ‘Brigitta’ cultivars of freeze-dried whole blueberry sample at different concentrations	83
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Chapter 4

Figure 4.1	Schematic diagram of serial dilutions used for bacterial growth assessment	96
Figure 4.2	Inhibitory effect of water extracts from eight Highbush blueberry genotypes on α -amylase	98
Figure 4.3	Inhibitory effect on α -glucosidase of water extracts from eight Highbush blueberry genotypes	99
Figure 4.4	Inhibitory effect on α -glucosidase of water extracts of ‘Bluecrop’, ‘Elliott’ and ‘Brigitta’ cultivars at different amounts of extract assayed	100

Chapter 5

Figure 5.1	Average diet consumption, average total energy intake, and weekly body weight change in rats	119
Figure 5.2	Oral glucose tolerance test responses in rats fed a control diet, a high-fructose diet, or a high-fructose diet supplemented with 1% or 4% freeze-dried blueberry for 8 weeks	122

Chapter 6

Figure 6.1	Weekly body weight change in rats fed a HF diet, a HFHS diet, a HS diet, and a CONT diet	136
Figure 6.2	Linear correlations between the rat’s body weight and either total mass, percentage of fat, or total fat pad weights; and between percentage of fat and total fat pad weights	141
Figure 6.3	Effect of different diets on fasting plasma glucose levels, serum insulin concentrations and homeostasis model assessment of insulin resistance (HOMA-IR) index in rats at week 4 and week 8	142
Figure 6.4	Oral glucose tolerance test responses in rats fed with different diets for 4 weeks and 8 weeks, and oral glucose tolerance test responses at week 8 in individual rats	144

Chapter 7

Figure 7.1	Schematic diagram of the experiments	161
Figure 7.2	Oral glucose tolerance test responses in rats fed either CONT or HFHS diet for short term (4 weeks) or long term (8 weeks)	166
Figure 7.3	Oral glucose tolerance test responses in rats fed different diets	170

Abbreviations

2DG	2-deoxyglucose
2-h PG	2 hours plasma glucose
A1C	hemoglobin A1C or glycated hemoglobin
AACE	American Association of Clinical Endocrinology
ACNs	anthocyanins
ACP	acepromazine
AHA/NHLBI	American Heart Association/Nation Heart, Lung and Blood Institute
AMPK	adenosine monophosphate-activated protein kinase
ANOVA	analysis of variance
AOA	antioxidant activity
ATPIII	National Cholesterol Education Program Adult Treatment Panel III
AUC	area under the curve
BB	blueberry
BMI	body mass index
BW	body weight
CFU	colony forming unit
C _{max}	maximum concentration
CONT	starch-based control diet
CRP	C-reactive protein
CVD	cardiovascular disease
<i>db/db</i>	mouse model of diabetes and obesity where leptin receptor is deficient
DEXA	dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry
DNS	3,5-dinitrosalicylic acid
DP	degree of polymerization
DPPH	2,2-diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl
DSF	defatted soybean flour
EGCG	epigallocatechin gallate
EGIR	European Group for the study of Insulin Resistance
ER	endoplasmic reticulum
ESR	Environmental Science and Research
FB	frozen berries
FeCl ₃	ferric chloride

FeSO ₄	ferrous sulphate
FFA	free fatty acids
FFM	fat-free mass
FISH	fluorescent in situ hybridization
FPG	fasting plasma glucose
FPI	fasting plasma insulin
FRAP	ferric reducing antioxidant power
FW	fresh weight
G6Pase	glucose-6-phosphatase
GAE	gallic acid equivalent
GIT	gastrointestinal tract
GLUT	glucose transporter
HDL-C	high density lipoprotein cholesterol
HF	high-fat
HFD+BB	high fat diet plus blueberry
HFHS	high-fat-high-sugar
HFR	high-fructose
HFR1B	high-fructose diet containing 1% freeze-dried blueberry powder
HFR4B	high-fructose diet containing 4% freeze-dried blueberry powder
HOMA-IR	homeostasis model assessment of insulin resistance
HPLC	High Performance Liquid Chromatography
HS	high-sugar (sucrose)
iBAT	interscapular brown adipose tissue
IC ₅₀	inhibitory concentration of 50%
IDF	International Diabetes Federation
IFG	impaired fasting glucose
IGT	impaired glucose tolerance
IL-6	interleukin-6
IL-10	interleukin-10
IRS	insulin receptor substrate
ITT	insulin tolerance test
LFD	low fat diet
LPS	lipopolysaccharide
MRS	Man-Rogaso-Sharpe

MS	metabolic syndrome
Na ₂ CO ₃	sodium carbonate
NAFLD	non-alcoholic fatty acid liver disease
NCEP-ATP III	National Cholesterol Education Program Adult Treatment Panel III
NGSP	National Glycohemoglobin Standardization Program
NHANES	National Health and Examination Survey
NIDDK	National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases
<i>ob/ob</i>	leptin-deficient obese mouse model
OD	optical density
OGTT	oral glucose tolerance test
ORAC	oxygen radical absorbance capacity
PAs	proanthocyanidins
PCA	principal component analysis
PEPCK	phosphoenolpyruvate carboxykinase
PI3K	phosphatidylinositol 3-kinase
PKB/Akt	protein kinase B
<i>p</i> NPG	<i>p</i> -nitrophenyl α -D-glucopyranoside
PPAR- γ	peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor gamma
QUICKI	quantitative insulin sensitivity check index
ROS	reactive oxygen species
SAPU	Small Animal Production Unit
SD	Sprague-Dawley
T2DM	type II diabetes mellitus
TG	triglycerides
TNF- α	tumour necrosis factor α
TPC	total polyphenolic content
TPTZ	2,4,6-tripyridyl-s-triazine
VHFD	very high fat diet
WAT	white adipose tissue
WC	waist circumference
WHO	World Health Organization
WHR	waist-hip ratio