Association between serum soluble ST2 level and right ventricle systolic function on pulmonary hypertension due to atrial septal defect

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ABSTRACT

Pulmonary hypertension (PH) due to atrial septal defect (ASD) may cause a decline in right ventricle (RV) function. Soluble ST2 iso prognostic biomarker for left ventricle dysfunction. However, its role in RV function has not been investigated. This study aimed to investigate the association between serum soluble ST2 with RV systolic function in patients with ASD-associated PH. This was a cross-sectional study. Subjects were patients participated in the COHARD-PH registry performed in Dr. Sardjito General Hospital, Yogyakarta Indonesia. The patients with ASD and PH confirmed by right heart catheterization (RHC) were enrolled in this study. The soluble ST2 level was measured in the serum collected from pulmonary artery during RHC. Right ventricle systolic function was determined by transthoracic echocardiography using peak systolic velocity of tricuspid annulus (S') parameter. This study was performed in 32 adults with uncorrected ASD. They predominantly females [n=29 (90.6%)] with median age of 31(22.5-44.0) years old. Mean ASD diameter was 2.69±0.53 cm. Median mean pulmonary artery pressure (mPAP) 45.0 (36.25-70.0) mmHg. Median soluble ST2 level was 23.28 ng/mL. There were no significant correlations between soluble ST2 level with S’ value (r=0.071; p=0.35), with mPAP (r=0.043; p=0.815), with pulmonary vascular resistance (PVR) (r=0.025; p=0.893) and with right ventricle (RV) diameter (r=0.200; p=0.273). Soluble ST2 level was found higher in subject with RV dysfunction but not statistically significant. In conclusion, serum soluble ST2 level did not associate with RV systolic function, measured by S’, in adult ASD-associated PH.

ABSTRAK

Hipertensi paru (HP) akibat defek septum atrium (DSA) dapat menyebabkan penurunan fungsi ventrikel kanan. ST2 terlarut adalah biomarka prognostik untuk disfungsi ventrikel kiri, namun perannya pada fungsi ventrikel kanan belum diteliti. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah meneliti hubungan antara DSA terlarut serum dengan fungsi sistolik ventrikel kanan pada pasien HP-terkait DSA. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian potong lintang. Subjek adalah partisipan register COHARD-PH yang dilakukan di RSUP Dr. Sardjito, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Pasien dengan DSA dan HP yang dikonfirmasi dengan penyadapan jantung kanan diketukukan dalam penelitian ini. Kadar ST2 terlarut diukur dari serum yang diambil dari arteri paru selama penyadapan jantung kanan. Fungsi sistolik ventrikel kanan ditentukan dengan pemeriksaan ekhokardiografi transthoraks menggunakan parameter kecepatan puncak sistolik dari anulus tricuspid (S’). Penelitian ini dilakukan pada 32 pasien DSA dewasa yang tidak dikoreksi. Sebagian subjek adalah wanita [n=29 (90,6%)] dengan median umurnya 31(22,5-44,0) tahun. Rerata diameter DSA adalah 2,69±0.53 cm. Median mean pulmonary artery pressure (mPAP) 45,0 (36.25-70.0) mmHg. Median kadar ST2 terlarut adalah 23,28 ng/mL. Tidak terdapat korelasi signifikan antara kadar ST2 terlarut dengan nilai S’ (r=0.071; p=0.35), dengan mPAP (r=0.043; p=0.815), dengan PVR (r=0.025; p=0.893) dan dengan diameter ventrikel kanan (RV) (r=0.020; p=0.273). Kadar ST2 terlarut lebih tinggi pada subjek dengan disfungsi RV, namun tidak bermakna secara statistik. Dapat disimpulkan, kadar ST2 terlarut serum tidak berhubungan dengan fungsi sistolik ventrikel kanan, yang diukur dengan S’, pada pasien HP-terkait DSA dewasa.

Keywords:
atrial septal defect; pulmonary artery hypertension; right ventricle systolic function; soluble ST2;

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INTRODUCTION

Atrial septal defect (ASD) is one of the most common adult congenital heart disease (CHD). It was estimated that the prevalence is about 1.6 per 1,000 birth.\(^1\) There are three types of ASDs, among them is secundum type ASD which occurs in 75% of overall ASD cases.\(^1\) In ASD, the chronic left-to-right shunt through septal defect gives rise to chronic volume overload in the right ventricle (RV) and blood overflow in pulmonary circulation. Eventually, pulmonary artery pressure elevates and pulmonary hypertension (PH) ensues.

Pulmonary hypertension is a vasculopathy disorder in which there is a progressive increase in pulmonary vascular resistance that lead to RV dysfunction.\(^2\) It is a frequent complication of CHD, especially CHD with left-to-right shunt, such as ASD. The prevalence of PH in uncorrected ASD patients is 5-10%.\(^3\) The RV function determines the prognosis in patients with ASD-associated PH. The structure and function of RV is not only an indicator of the severity and chronicity of PH but also an indicator of severity of underlying disease. The RV dysfunction decreased life expectancy of ASD-associated PH.\(^4\)

Several clinical conditions associated with myocardial strains, such as volume or pressure overload, dilatation of the heart chamber, valvular heart disease, or increased pulmonary artery pressure, increase soluble suppression of tumorigenicity-2 (ST2) levels.\(^5\) Recent studies have focused on the role of soluble ST2 on left heart failure. There is only a few studies investigate the soluble ST2 level in right heart failure induced by PH. A study found that circulating soluble ST2 level increased in PH patients and was associated with RV dilatation as well as systolic dysfunction.\(^6\) Soluble ST2 level not only reflects left ventricular function but also the degree of right heart failure, as occurs in patients with PH.\(^6,7\) However, the association of soluble ST2 level with RV systolic function in ASD-associated PH has not yet confirmed. This study aimed to investigate the association between soluble ST2 level from pulmonary artery and RV systolic function in adult ASD-associated PH patients.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Subject

The study design was cross sectional. The subjects were patients registered in the Congenital HeArT Disease in adult and Pulmonary Hypertension (COHARD-PH) registry, Yogyakarta, Indonesia whom recruited between January 2017 and April 2018 period.\(^8\) The inclusion criteria of this study were 1) adult (≥ 18 years old) uncorrected secundum ASD; 2) patients had been undergone right heart catheterization (RHC) and confirmed PAH, and 3) patients had sinus rhythm in electrocardiogram. The exclusion criteria of this study were 1) patients with history of myocardial infarction; 2) patients with impaired left ventricular systolic function; 3) patients have significant valve diseases; 4) patients have lung diseases (asthma bronchial, chronic obstructive and restrictive lung diseases, and post lung tuberculosis); 5) patients with diabetes mellitus; 6) patients with chronic renal disease, and 7) patients with a history of malignancy.

Protocol of study

The diagnosis of ASD and probability of PH was screened by transthoracic echocardiography (TTE) and/or transoesophageal echocardiography (TOE). The TTE and TEE were performed by experienced sonographers and the results were confirmed by cardiologist consultants using the VIVID7 Echo machine (G.E, USA). The echocardiographic data was stored digitally in the form of discs to be analyzed offline from workstation computers using Echo-Pac (G.E, USA).
software by cardiologist consultants. The parameters analyzed were ASD diameter, right atrium (RA) diameter, RV diameter, transvalvular gradient (TVG) and tricuspid regurgitation (TR) severity. The RV systolic function was measured from apical 4-chamber view with Tissue Doppler mode to analyze peak systolic velocity of tricuspid annulus (S’) parameter. The RV systolic dysfunction was determined if the S’ value <10cm/second.

The hemodynamic assessment was performed with RHC examination using right femoral vein access. The parameters assessed include mean pulmonary artery pressure (mPAP), pulmonary vascular resistance (PVR), flow ratio (FR), mean aortic pressure (mAoP) and right ventricle systolic pressure (RVSP). The diagnosis of PH was based on mPAP value ≥25 mmHg and pulmonary artery wedge pressure (PAWP) value ≤15 mmHg.

Blood samples for measurement of circulating ST2 level were with drawn by catheter placed in the pulmonary artery during RHC. The 2 mL blood volume were inserted into EDTA tube and centrifuged at 4,000 rpm for 10 min at 25°C. The supernatant was pipetted and aliquoted in a polypropylene tube. The tube was stored at -80°C freezer until analyzed. The sample was thawed once just before it was analyzed. The circulating ST2 levels were measured with a cassette-based immunofluorescence imaging method (cartridge) using the principle of lateral flow immunoassay technology. This test used ASPECT-PLUS™ ST2 Test tapes and analyzed with an ASPECT READER™ (Critical Diagnostics, USA) tool like previously described. The measured sST2 was expressed in concentration (ng/mL).

All participants in this study were given an informed consent. The ethics committee of Faculty of Medicine, Public Health and Nursing Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia had approved the study protocol.

Statistical analysis

Statistics analysis was performed with SPSS software version 16.0 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL). For continuous data, the data normality test was performed by Saphiro-Wilk test. Normally distributed data were presented as mean ± standard deviation (SD), not normally distributed data were presented in the median and interquartile range (Q1-Q3). Categorical variables were presented in proportion. Pearson correlation test was performed to determine the correlation coefficient between two normally distributed variables, while Spearman correlation test for data with not normal distribution. The mean difference between the two groups was analyzed using the student-t or Mann Whitney test. A p value <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

RESULTS

A total of 32 subjects were enrolled in this study. The characteristics of the subjects are presented in TABLE 1. The majority of the subjects were females (90.6%) with a median age of 31 (22.5-44.0) years old. From RHC examination, median mPAP was 45.0 (36.25-70.0) mmHg and mean mAoP equal to 102.0 ± 14.75 mmHg. The mean FR was 2.69±2.01, median PVR was 5.25 (1.88-12.68) Wood unit and mean RVSP was 80.63±29.32 mmHg. The median value of serum ST2 level from pulmonary artery was 23.28 (18.80-33.55)ng/mL.

From the echocardiography examination, the mean diameter of ASD defect was 2.69 ± 0.53 cm, the median RA diameter was 4.70 ± 0.55cm, the meanRV diameter was 4.74 ± 0.54 cm, and the mean TVG was 68.84 ± 32.45mmHg. The degree of TR varied in the subjects, with 10 subjects had mild degree (31.3%), moderate degree in 11 (34.4%) subjects, and severe degree in 11 (34.4%) subjects.
TABLE 1. The characteristics of adult secundum atrial septal defect-associated pulmonary hypertension

| Characteristics                                      | Total (n=32) |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Gender [n (%)]                                       |             |
| • Male                                               | 2 (9.4)     |
| • Females                                            | 29 (90.6)   |
| Age [media (Q1-Q3) year]                             | 31 (22.5-44.0) |
| Body Surface Are (mean ± SD year)                    | 1.40 ± 0.16 |
| Echocardiography parameter                           |             |
| • ASD defect diameter (mean ± SD cm)                 | 2.69 ± 0.53 |
| • RA diameter (mean ± SD cm)                         | 4.83 ± 0.55 |
| • RV diameter (mean ± SD cm)                         | 4.74 ± 0.50 |
| • S’ (mean ± SD cm/s)                                | 13.72 ± 3.69 |
| • TVG (mean ± SD mmHg)                               | 68.84 ± 32.45 |
| • TR severity [n (%)]                                |             |
| • Mild                                               | 10 (31.3)   |
| • Moderate                                           | 11 (34.4)   |
| • Severe                                             | 11 (34.4)   |
| • LV ejection fraction (mean ± SD %)                 | 73.94 ± 7.80 |
| Hemodynamic parameter by RHC                         |             |
| • mPAP [median (Q1-Q3) mmHg]                          | 45.0 (36.25-70.0) |
| • mAop(mean ± SD mmHg)                               | 102.0 ± 14.75 |
| • FR (mean ± SD)                                     | 2.69 ± 2.01 |
| • PVR [median (Q1-Q3) Woods unit]                    | 5.25 (1.88-12.68) |
| • RVSP (median ± SD mmHg)                            | 80.63 ± 29.32 |
| PH-targeted therapy                                  |             |
| • Seldenafil [n (%)]                                 | 11 (34.4)   |
| • Beraprost [n (%)]                                  | 5 (15.6)    |
| Serum sST2 (ng/mL); median (Q1-Q3)                   | 23.28 (18.80-33.55) |

ASD: atrial septal defect, RA: right atrium, RV: right ventricle, TVG: tricuspid valve gradient, LV: left ventricle, mPAP: mean pulmonary artery pressure, mAoP: mean aortic pressure, FR: flow ratio, PVR: pulmonary vascular resistance, RVSP: right ventricle systolic pressure, PH: pulmonary hypertension

From Spearman correlation test, it was found that serum ST2 level did not correlate with S’ value (r = 0.071; p = 0.35) (FIGURE1). In addition, the serum ST2 level did not correlate with age (r = 0.098; p = 0.054), defect diameter (r = 0.010; p = 0.955), RA diameter (r = 0.041; p = 0.823), RV diameter (r = 0.025; p = 0.893), FR (r = 0.025; p = 0.893), PVR (r = -0.025; p = 0.273), TVG (r = -0.041; p = 0.824), and RVSP (r = -0.024; p = 0.262).
The analysis was performed by categorizing subjects into 2 groups, i.e. subjects with RV dysfunction and subject with normal RV function. The RV dysfunction was defined by value $S' <10$cm/sec. There was significant difference between these 2 groups in term of mean RVSP (99.71±33.42 vs. 75.28±26.36 mmHg; p=0.050), median mPAP (72.0(34–91) vs. 43.0 (30–79) mmHg; p=0.032), and median PVR (30.19(3.1–56.28) vs. 5.31 (2.37–12.64) Wood unit; p=0.034), respectively. Serum ST2 level was higher in subjects with RV dysfunction as compared with subjects with normal RV function but statistically not significant (median: 24.97 (21.68-38.7) ng/mL vs. 21 (17.36-33.28) ng/mL; p=0.284) (TABLE 2).

TABLE 2. The comparison of characteristic of adult secundum atrial septal defect-associated pulmonary based on the presence of right ventricle systolic dysfunction

| Characteristics                          | Right ventricle dysfunction (n=7) | Normal right ventricle function (n=25) | p      |
|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------|
| Age (years)                              | 25 (21-41)                       | 34 (23-45.5)                          | 0.373' |
| Echocardiography Parameter               |                                  |                                       |        |
|  Defect diameter (mean ± SD cm)          | 2.64± 0.66                       | 2.67±0.50                            | 0.887  |
|  RV diameter (mean ± SD cm)              | 4.87± 0.54                       | 4.71±0.49                            | 0.466  |
| Hemodynamic parameter by RHC             |                                  |                                       |        |
|  RVSP (mean ± SD mmHg)                   | 99.71±33.42                      | 75.28±26.36                          | 0.050  |
|  mPAP (mean ± SD mmHg)                   | 72.0(34-91)                      | 43.0(30-79)                          | 0.032' |
|  PVR [median (Q1-Q3) Woods unit]         | 30.19 (3.1–56.28)                | 5.31 (2.37–12.64)                    | 0.034' |
|  FR (mean ± SD)                          | 1.54±0.50                        | 3.0±2.0                              | 0.088  |
| Serum sST2 (mean ± SD ng/mL)             | 24.97 (21.68-38.70)              | 21.0(17.36-33.28)                    | 0.284' |

*Nonparametric data and analyze with Mann-Whitney test; RV: right ventricle; RVSP: right ventricle systolic pressure; mPAP: mean pulmonary arterial pressure; PVR: pulmonary vascular resistance; FR: flow ratio
The correlation between parameters with S’ value was shown in TABLE 3. The mPAP and PVR had a significantly strong and negative correlation with S’ value (r =-0.661; p <0.001) and (r =-0.568; p =0.001), respectively.

| Parameters     | value   |
|----------------|---------|
| Age            | r 0.081 |
|                | p 0.330 |
| mPAP           | r -0.661|
|                | p 0.000 |
| PVR            | r -0.568|
|                | p 0.001 |
| Defect diameter| r 0.028 |
|                | p 0.439 |
| RV diameter    | r -0.271|
|                | p 0.066 |

**DISCUSSION**

In this study, the serum sST2 level from pulmonary artery did not associate with RV systolic function. There was a tendency toward increased serum sST2 level from pulmonary artery in subjects with RV systolic dysfunction. The mPAP and PVR value influenced the RV systolic dysfunction. There was an inverse correlation between mPAP and PVR value with S’ value, indicated the association between increased pulmonary artery pressure and resistance with reduced RV function.

In the secundum ASD population, females dominates as much as 65-75% of the population. This is similar to this study in which females predominates, 90.6%. According to the registers in Europe, the mean age of ASD patients was 36 years old. This was consistent with this study in which the median age of this study subjects was about 30 years. There is a timespan from asymptomatic to symptomatic phase of ASD due to complication PH. In the COHARD-PH registry, most patients with ASD did not diagnosed properly in childhood and consequently develop complication of PH, Eisenmenger syndrome and right heart failure.

This study was the first to assess the association between serum sST2 level, taken from pulmonary artery, with S’ parameter in ASD-associated PH. Previous research had shown a significant correlation between serum sST2 with RV systolic function parameters, i.e Tricuspid Annular Plane Systolic Excursion (TAPSE) and Right Ventricle Fractional Area Change (RVFAC), in the PH subjects population due to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Other studies with PH population due to various etiologies,
found that sST2 levels were associated with RV systolic function measured by cardiac magnetic resonance imaging.\textsuperscript{13} Our results differ from those previous studies, in which serum sST2 were not significantly correlated with RV systolic function parameters, by S’ value. The serum sST2 level also did not discriminate subjects with RV dysfunction.

The difference in the results of this study compared with previous studies may be due to different RV adaptation responses in two different populations. The RV adaptive response to shunt of CHD is quite good as compared to idiopathic PAH or PH due to other causes.\textsuperscript{4} One study found that RV dilatation and rapid decline in RV systolic function are more common in patients with idiopathic PAH or PH-associated with pulmonary disease or connective tissue disease. In contrast, the decrease in RV function occurs much more slowly in patients with ASD-associated PH.\textsuperscript{14,15}

This study has several limitations, i.e. the subjects sample size is small and the parameter of RV systolic dysfunction is only one parameter i.e. S’ by TTE. Further large study need to be performed to corroborate or contradict the result of this study. However, our result suggests that sST2 is not a good biomarker to detect RV function especially in ASD-associated PH patients. Our previous data indicated that other strained biomarker, i.e. N-terminal pro brain natriuretic peptide, is performed better in predicting PH severity, RV pressure overload and RV systolic function in adult patients with ASD.\textsuperscript{16} Future direction needs to be addressed is to test the other potential biomarkers for RV function in patients with PH.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there is no association between serum sST2 levels from pulmonary artery with systolic RV function in secundum ASD-associated PH patients.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Authors would like to thanks all research assistants of COHARD-PH registry. Authors express gratitude to Ms. Sri Mardilah Wuryani AMK for echocardiography examination, Mr. Farid Abdullah for blood sample analysis, and Dr. Kurniasari Endah from UBC Medical Indonesia for providing the Aspect plus ST2 reader and Aspect plus ST2 rapid test cassette.

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