Plasma Ceramides Are Elevated in Obese Subjects with Type 2 Diabetes and Correlate with the Severity of Insulin Resistance

Jacob M. Haus\textsuperscript{1,2,†}, Sangeeta R. Kashyap\textsuperscript{3,†}, Takhar Kasumov\textsuperscript{4}, Renliang Zhang\textsuperscript{5}, Karen R. Kelly\textsuperscript{1,6}, Ralph A. DeFronzo\textsuperscript{7}, John P. Kirwan\textsuperscript{1,2,4,6}

\textsuperscript{1}Department of Pathobiology, Lerner Research Institute, Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland, Ohio
\textsuperscript{2}Department of Physiology, Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, Cleveland, Ohio
\textsuperscript{3}Department of Endocrinology, Diabetes, and Metabolism, Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland, Ohio
\textsuperscript{4}Department of Gastroenterology/Hepatology, Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland, Ohio
\textsuperscript{5}Department of Cardiovascular Medicine and Center for Cardiovascular Diagnostics and Prevention, Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland, Ohio
\textsuperscript{6}Department of Nutrition, Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, Cleveland, Ohio
\textsuperscript{7}Division of Diabetes, University of Texas Health Science Center, San Antonio Texas

†Authors contributed equally to the work

Corresponding author:
John P. Kirwan, Ph.D.
Department of Pathobiology
Lerner Research Institute
Cleveland Clinic
9500 Euclid Avenue / NE-40
Cleveland, OH 44195
Email: kirwanj@ccf.org

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ABSTRACT

Ceramides are a putative mediator of insulin resistance and lipotoxicity, and accumulation of ceramides within tissues in obese and diabetic subjects has been well described.

Objective: To quantitate plasma ceramide subspecies concentrations in obese subjects with type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM), and relate these plasma levels to the severity of insulin resistance.

Research Design and Methods: We analyzed fasting plasma ceramide subspecies by quantitative tandem mass spectrometry in 13 obese T2DM and 14 lean healthy control subjects. Results were related to insulin sensitivity measured with the hyperinsulinemic-euglycemic clamp technique and with plasma TNF-α levels, a marker of inflammation. Ceramide species (C18:1, 18:0, 20:0, 24:1, 24:0) were quantified using ESI-MS/MS after separation with HPLC.

Results: Insulin sensitivity (mg/kg•min) was lower in T2DM (4.90 ± 0.3) versus controls (9.6 ± 0.4) (p<0.0001). T2DM subjects had higher (p<0.05) concentrations of C18:0, C20:0, C24:1, and total ceramide. Insulin sensitivity was inversely correlated with C18:0, C20:0, C24:1, C24:0, and total ceramide (all p<0.01). Plasma TNF-α concentration was increased (p<0.05) in T2DM subjects and correlated with increased C18:1 and C18:0 ceramide subspecies.

Conclusion: Plasma ceramide levels are elevated in T2DM subjects and may contribute to insulin resistance through activation of inflammatory mediators such as TNF-α.
Type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) is an insulin resistant state characterized by impaired glucose tolerance (1) and inflammation (2). Much evidence has demonstrated the role of increased circulating free fatty acids and tissue fat accumulation in the development of muscle and liver insulin resistance (1; 3; 4). The disturbances in plasma and tissue lipid metabolism result from an oversupply of lipid substrates, both exogenously and endogenously (increased lipolysis secondary to adipocyte insulin resistance) and perturbations in fat oxidation and utilization by muscle and liver, resulting in the accumulation of ectopic fat (4). Ectopic fat is “lipotoxic” and has been linked to the severity of insulin resistance and pancreatic beta cell dysfunction, i.e. the core defects in T2DM (1; 4). Ectopic fat is comprised of various lipid species including long chain fatty acyl CoAs, diacylglycerol, and ceramide. It is well documented that ceramide accumulates within insulin resistant tissues of animals (5-7) and humans (8-10), and inhibits insulin action and subsequent glucose uptake through inactivation of Akt. Ceramide also induces inflammation through activation of the nuclear factor kappa B (NFκB) - tumor necrosis factor alpha (TNF-α) axis (5-7).

TNF-α is released from adipocytes and circulating mononuclear cells (MNCs) in response to stimuli such as lipid infusion, lipopolysaccharide (LPS), reactive oxygen species (ROS) and hyperglycemia, and elevated TNFα concentrations have been shown to induce insulin resistance (11-14). TNF-α also activates the plasma membrane enzyme sphingomyelinase (SMase) that hydrolyzes sphingomyelin to ceramide, allowing ceramides to accumulate within the cell. (5; 6; 15-17). This accumulation of ceramide within tissues is thought to initiate a positive feedback mechanism, leading to enhanced production of proinflammatory cytokines (5), resulting in further inhibition of insulin-stimulated glucose uptake. Both plasma TNF-α concentrations and intracellular lipid intermediates, such as ceramides, are elevated in subjects with T2DM (8; 18). Thus, ceramide is a bioactive lipid and putative mediator of insulin resistance that could link nutrient (fat) oversupply and cytokine-induced inflammation in tissues (5-7).

Plasma ceramide levels also have been shown to correlate with coronary artery disease, independent of the plasma cholesterol concentration (19; 20). However, the role of circulating ceramides has received little attention with respect to the development of insulin resistance and T2DM. Conflicting reports exist as to whether total circulating ceramides are elevated in obese (21) and T2DM subjects (22). Subspecies of plasma ceramides have been demonstrated to be increased in patients with sepsis and atherosclerosis (23-25), but the relationship between plasma ceramide levels and insulin resistance has not been investigated in patients with T2DM.

Given their central role in the induction of insulin resistance and inflammation, elevated plasma ceramide levels may serve as a biomarker or direct perpetuator of insulin resistance and lipid-induced inflammation. Elevated plasma ceramide concentrations also may serve to identify individuals who are at risk to develop T2DM. The objective of this study was to quantify the concentration of individual ceramide subspecies in the circulation of patients with T2DM and healthy controls and to examine the correlation between plasma levels of ceramide subspecies and insulin sensitivity, measured with the euglycemic-hyperinsulinemic clamp, and plasma TNFα concentration, a marker of inflammation.
METHODS

Subjects. Twenty-seven subjects were recruited from the greater San Antonio Metropolitan area. Thirteen subjects had T2DM and fourteen were healthy non-diabetic control subjects. Descriptive data from these subjects has been presented in previous reports (26; 27) (Table 1). T2DM subjects were older and more obese than non-diabetic subjects and were characterized by dyslipidemia and hyperglycemia (Table 1). Normal glucose tolerance was confirmed in all control subjects by a 75-g oral glucose tolerance test using American Diabetes Association criteria (28). Following a 10-12 h overnight fast, body composition was assessed with bioelectrical impedance in all subjects (29). T2DM subjects were in reasonably good glycemic control, as reflected by a mean HbA1c of 7.5%. T2DM patients were treated with diet (n=8) or sulfonylureas (n=5). No T2DM subject had received treatment with metformin, thiazolidinediones, or insulin. The mean duration of diabetes was less than 5 years. Five T2DM subjects had normal fasting plasma glucose concentrations and were diagnosed with an oral glucose tolerance test (2-hour plasma glucose ≥ 200 mg/dl). Oral antidiabetic agents were discontinued 24 hours before the study. Other than diabetes, none of the subjects had any medical problems and none were taking any medications (other than sulfonylureas) known to affect glucose metabolism. None of the participants smoked and none of the women were on hormone replacement therapy. Weight was stable (± 3 lbs) in all subjects for the 3 months prior to study, and no subject participated in an excessively heavy exercise program. The purpose, nature, and potential risks of the study were explained to all subjects, and written consent was obtained before their participation. The protocol was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio.

Study Design. All studies were conducted in the General Clinical Research Center of the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio and began at 0700 hours after a 12-hour overnight fast. Prior to the start of the euglycemic insulin clamp study, an anticubital vein was cannulated for infusion of all test substances. A second catheter was inserted retrogradely into a dorsal hand vein and the hand was placed in a heated box (60ºC) to obtain arterialized blood samples. A primed (25 μCi x FPG/100)- continuous infusion (0.25 μCi/min) of 3-[3H]-glucose was started 2 hours (3 hours for T2DM) prior to the start of the insulin clamp to allow for isotopic equilibration. The priming dose of tritiated glucose was increased in the T2DM subjects in proportion to the increase in their fasting plasma glucose concentration. At the end of the tracer equilibration period, blood was obtained for determination of plasma ceramide and TNF-α levels. At time zero, a primed-continuous infusion (80 mU/m²•min) of insulin was started and continued for 4 hours. During insulin infusion, the plasma glucose concentration was measured every 5 minutes with a Glucose Oxidase Analyzer (Beckman Instruments, Fullerton, California, USA). Based upon the negative feedback principle, a variable infusion of 20% glucose was adjusted to maintain the plasma glucose concentration constant at each subject’s fasting plasma glucose level in the control group. In T2DM subjects, the plasma glucose concentration was allowed to decrease during the insulin infusion to 100 mg/dl, at which level it was maintained.

Analytical Determinations. Plasma tritiated glucose specific activity was determined using barium hydroxide/zinc sulfate extracts of plasma. Plasma insulin concentration was determined by radioimmunoassay (Diagnostic Products, Los Angeles, CA). Plasma free fatty acid concentration was determined by
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colorimetric assay (Wako, Germany). Plasma TNF-α concentration was determined by UltraSensitive ELISA (Biosource International, Inc. Camarillo, CA).

**Ceramide Subspecies Analysis. Sample preparation.** Calibration curves (0 to 1000 ng) for each ceramide standard (Avanti Polar Lipids, Alabaster, AL: purity > 99%) were prepared in 100 µl of plasma matrix. C17:0-ceramide was used as a non-naturally occurring internal standard. Plasma samples (100 µl), in parallel with standard solutions, were spiked with 100 ng of C17:0 ceramide and were extracted with 2 ml of a chloroform/methanol (1:2) mixture according to the protocol of Bligh and Dyer (30). Phases were broken by adding 0.5 ml chloroform and 0.5 ml water. The lower organic fraction was removed and the remainder was extracted with an additional 1 ml of chloroform. The pooled organic phase was dried under nitrogen gas and the residue was reconstituted in 500 µl of methylene chloride and loaded onto a silica gel column packed with 2 ml of silica gel suspension in methylene chloride. Columns were washed with 1 ml of methylene chloride and ceramides were eluted with 2x2 ml of 30% isopropanol in methylene chloride. Eluent was dried under nitrogen gas and the residue was reconstituted in HPLC elution buffer and analyzed by mass spectrometry.

**Mass Spectrometry.** Ceramide species were quantified by HPLC on-line electrospray ionization tandem mass spectrometry (LC/ESI/MS/MS). For optimization the mixture of ceramide standards was infused directly into the mass spectrometer and all source parameters and ionization conditions adjusted to improve the sensitivity of the assay. Extracted samples (40 µl) were injected onto a Waters HPLC (2690 Separations Module, Waters, Corp., Franklin, MA) and separated through an Ascentis C18 column (2.1 x 50 mm, 5 µm, SUPELCO, Bellefonte, PA) using a gradient starting from 15% mobile phase A (water containing 0.2% formic acid) at flow rate of 0.3 ml/min for 1 min, to 100% mobile phase B (methanol containing 0.2% formic acid) over 3 min, and then with 100% B for 22 min. The HPLC column effluent was introduced onto a Micromass triple quadruple mass spectrometer (Quattro Ultima, Waters Inc., Beverly, MA) and analyzed using electrospray ionization in positive mode. A potential difference of 3 keV was applied between the electrospray needle and the interior of the ion source. Hot nitrogen gas (250 °C) was used to help evaporate the solvent from the charged droplets and argon was used as the collision gas. All ceramides were quantified using multiple reaction monitoring. The MS/MS transitions (m/z) were 552→264 for C17:0, 564→264 for C18:1, 566→264 for C18:0, 594→264 for C20:0, 648→264 for C24:1, 650→264 for C24:0. Ceramide subspecies were quantified (nmol/ml) by taking the ratios of the integrated peak areas (MassLynx 3.5, Manchester, UK) for each subspecies to the area of C17:0. Total ceramide was calculated from the sum of C18:1, C18:0, C20:0, C24:1 and C24:0 ceramide subspecies.

**Calculations.** During the postabsorptive period, the rate of glucose appearance equals the rate of glucose disappearance and was calculated as the tritiated glucose infusion rate (dpm/min) divided by the plasma tritiated glucose specific activity (dpm/mg). During the euglycemic insulin clamp, non-steady state conditions prevail and the rate of glucose appearance was calculated with Steele’s non-steady state equation, using a glucose distribution volume of 0.65. The rate of endogenous (primarily hepatic) glucose production during the insulin clamp was calculated by subtracting the exogenous glucose infusion rate from the tracer-derived rate of glucose appearance. The rate of total body (primarily reflects muscle) insulin-stimulated glucose disposal was calculated by
adding the rate of residual hepatic glucose production to the cold glucose infusion rate. The basal hepatic insulin resistance index (IRI) was calculated as the product of basal hepatic glucose production and the fasting plasma insulin concentration (31).

**Statistical Analysis.** Data are presented as mean ± SEM. Comparisons between groups for the ceramide species was performed using the Mann-Whitney U-test and correlations were performed using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. For all other comparisons, a two sample t-test was performed. In all tests, P < 0.05 was considered significant. For overall p-value comparison, parametric vs. nonparametric tests were consistent with means. All statistical analyses were performed using StatView version 5.0.1 (SAS Institute Inc).

**RESULTS**

**Metabolic characteristics (Table 1).** T2DM subjects were older, had a higher BMI, and increased fasting plasma glucose, insulin, triglyceride, total cholesterol, and FFA concentrations (Table 1.) Insulin-stimulated glucose disposal (mg/kg●min) was ~2-fold lower in T2DM (4.9±0.3) versus CON (9.6±0.4) (p<0.0001). Basal endogenous glucose production (EGP) (mg/kg●min) was increased in T2DM (2.1±0.1) vs CON (1.7±0.1) (p=0.002) and the basal hepatic IRI was markedly increased in T2DM vs CON (30.3±5.1 vs 9.4±1.2 mg/kg●min x uU/ml) (p=0.0001).

**Plasma ceramide concentrations.** Figure 1 displays the distribution of ceramide subspecies in the plasma of T2DM and control subjects. Consistent with previous reports for patients with sepsis and atherosclerosis (23; 24), the major ceramides in plasma were C24:1 and C24:0. T2DM subjects had increased (p<0.05-0.01) concentrations (nmol/ml) of C18:0 (CON: 0.26±0.03 vs. T2DM: 0.38±0.03), C20:0 (CON vs. 0.09±0.004 vs. T2DM: 0.11±0.004), C24:1 (CON: 0.43±0.03 vs. T2DM: 0.52±0.04), and total ceramide (CON: 2.37±0.19 vs. T2DM: 3.06±0.26).

**Correlation between plasma ceramide subspecies and insulin sensitivity.** Spearman rank correlations were used to determine potential relationships between individual ceramide subspecies and insulin-stimulated glucose disposal. Insulin sensitivity (mg/kg●min) was inversely correlated with C18:0 (Rho = -0.58, p = 0.003), C20:0 (Rho = -0.52, p = 0.008), C24:1 (Rho = -0.51, p = 0.009), C24:0 (Rho = -0.49, p = 0.01), and total ceramide (Rho = -0.58, p = 0.003) concentrations (Figure 2).

**Plasma TNF-α concentration.** Fasting plasma TNF-α concentration (pg/ml), a marker of inflammation, was increased in T2DM subjects compared to controls (CON: 2.81±0.13 vs. T2DM: 4.30±0.76) (p = 0.03).

**Correlation between plasma ceramide subspecies and plasma TNF-α and triglyceride concentrations.** Plasma TNF-α was correlated with C18:1 (Rho = 0.55, p = 0.005) and C18:0 (Rho = 0.47, p = 0.02) ceramide subspecies (Figure 3). There was also a trend for ceramide subspecies C20:0 (p = 0.08) and C24:1 (p = 0.06) to be correlated with TNF-α (Figure 3). Fasting triglyceride was correlated with C18:0 (Rho = 0.48, p = 0.02) and C20:0 (Rho = 0.48, p = 0.02) ceramide subspecies. There was a trend for ceramide subspecies C24:1 (p = 0.07) and total ceramide (p = 0.06) to be correlated with the fasting plasma triglyceride concentration.

No significant correlations were found between age, basal EGP, fasting plasma glucose, plasma insulin, free fatty acids, HDL, LDL, or total cholesterol concentrations versus ceramide subspecies or total ceramide. Separate group (CON and T2DM) correlations were also performed between each of the ceramide subspecies and total ceramide to age, insulin sensitivity, plasma TNF-α, and fasting triglycerides. No
additional individual group correlation was found to be significant (p>0.05).

**DISCUSSION**

Increased tissue (muscle and liver) and plasma fat content, i.e. lipotoxicity, plays a central role in the pathogenesis of type 2 diabetes (1; 4; 8; 27; 32-34). Elevated bioactive lipids in the circulation, including lipoproteins, triglycerides and fatty acids (27), and excessive tissue lipid deposits of long chain fatty acyl CoAs, diacylglycerol, and ceramide (35; 36) have been implicated in the phenomenon of lipotoxicity. Much evidence supports a role for circulating free fatty acids in the development of insulin resistance, inflammation and beta cell dysfunction (1; 3; 4; 33). Recently, elevated plasma sphingolipids have been implicated in the pathogenesis of obesity-induced cardiovascular and metabolic disease (37). Sphingolipid and ceramide formation are stimulated by inflammatory cytokines such as TNF-α, which is released from adipocytes and is elevated in the plasma of T2DM and obese subjects (5; 6).

The present study shows for the first time that total and specific plasma ceramide subspecies concentrations are elevated T2DM subjects (Figure 1), and that these elevated lipid moieties are associated with the severity of insulin resistance (Figure 2), as well as with elevated plasma TNFα levels (Figure 3). These findings suggest that elevated plasma ceramide levels in obese type 2 diabetic subjects may be an important mediator of insulin resistance and inflammation in these insulin resistant states.

The present results are consistent with those in animals which demonstrate increased plasma levels of sphingomyelin and ceramide subspecies in ob/ob mice compared to lean controls (37). All detectable species of ceramide were elevated in the plasma of obese mice, with the greatest increase (86%) being observed for C18:0 ceramide (37). Our data demonstrate that all but one ceramide subspecies (C18:1) are elevated in obese T2DM subjects with C18:0 showing the greatest increase (32%) (Figure 1). C24:0 was found to be the most abundant ceramide subspecies in plasma, constituting 65% of the total. This is consistent with both animal (37) and human (8; 23; 24) reports. From the present and other studies (8; 37), the plasma C18:0 subspecies concentration appears to be increased the most in conditions of excess adiposity. In muscle, however, Adams et al. (8) demonstrated that the greatest increase in ceramide subspecies in obese subjects was for C16:0 and C20:0 (increased 76% and 83%, respectively). Taken collectively, these observations suggest there may be selective regulation or formation of ceramide species in the circulation versus tissue, and that the accumulation of ceramide in each respective compartment may serve different biological functions and/or involve different metabolic/inflammatory responses.

The etiologic mechanisms responsible for the elevated plasma ceramide levels measured in the present study were not identified. However, one could postulate that lipid spillover from excess fat deposits in adipocytes in the obese T2DM subjects was a contributing source. Ceramides also may be derived from macrophages which have infiltrated adipocytes in obese and type 2 diabetic subjects (38). Delogu and colleagues have suggested that MNCs produce ceramides in response to tissue inflammation and hypothesized that the increased ceramide production by MNCs may induce apoptosis in adipocytes that become dysfunctional from chronic inflammation (39).

Tissue accumulation of ceramides in insulin resistant subjects has been shown to inhibit insulin action by decreasing phosphorylation and activation of Akt (5), while elevated plasma ceramide levels have been demonstrated to be related to the development of atherosclerosis (19; 20; 24).
However, the role of plasma ceramide subspecies has not been examined with regard to insulin resistance nor have they been related to the excess intracellular ceramide accumulation in obesity and T2DM. If the elevated plasma ceramide concentrations are the result of the spillover phenomenon, then plasma ceramide levels may be a marker of intracellular ceramide accumulation and thus insulin resistance. Consistent with this scenario, we found an inverse relationship between C18:0, C20:0, C24:1, C24:0 and total ceramide versus whole body insulin-stimulated glucose disposal, as determined with the euglycemic insulin clamp (Figure 2). While the mechanism(s) via which individual ceramide subspecies in the circulation contribute to insulin resistance has yet to be investigated, some insights are available from cell-permeable ceramide analog experiments.

In C2C12 myotubes incubated with a cell-permeable C2-ceramide analog, insulin-stimulated glucose uptake, glycogen synthesis, and Akt serine phosphorylation were decreased (40) in association with an increase in intracellular ceramide concentration. Similar results have been demonstrated in L6 muscle cells (41) and other cell types (42-46) pre-incubated with C2- or C6-ceramide analogs. The results of these experiments indicate that there is a mechanism for cellular ceramide uptake. However, these studies employed short-chain ceramide analogs, whereas circulating ceramides in man and animals are of the long-chain variety (5). It also should be noted that most circulating ceramides and sphingolipids do not exist in a free form but are bound to plasma proteins (47). With regard to this, Serlie et al. measured plasma and intramuscular ceramides in response to a 6 hour lipid infusion in lean and obese subjects and found that, although plasma ceramides were significantly increased, intramuscular ceramides were unchanged (22). These results indicate that there is no active uptake of ceramides into the muscle (21). In summary, it appears unlikely that plasma ceramide levels contribute to peripheral (muscle) insulin resistance through an uptake mechanism and further inquiry is required to identify the role and source of both the elevated plasma (Figure 1) and muscle (4) ceramide concentrations observed in obese and diabetic subjects. It should be noted that, although the results of Serlie et al (22) demonstrated that the insulin resistance associated with short term lipid infusion cannot be explained by increased muscle ceramide content, this does not exclude a role for excessive muscle ceramide accumulation in the development of insulin resistance in obesity and diabetes (4,7).

Chronic and acute inflammation have been shown to play a role in the intracellular accumulation of ceramides (15-17), which in turn have been implicated in the excess production of inflammatory cytokines including TNF-α, IL-1 and IL-6. These proinflammatory cytokines also have been reported to be potent inducers of de novo ceramide synthesis (5; 6). Given that diabetes, obesity, and other insulin resistant states are associated with excess production of proinflammatory cytokines, it is reasonable to hypothesize that circulating ceramides may contribute to insulin resistance through local or systemic stimulation of the innate immune response. Consistent with such an hypothesis, the plasma concentration of TNF-α, a marker of inflammation, was increased and correlated with each plasma ceramide subspecies (Figure 3). TNF-α stimulates ceramide formation by activating acidic and basic sphingomyelinase (SMase) isoforms (48) and acute systemic inflammation has been shown to up-regulate a secretory form of SMase which has been linked to atherogenesis (15). Further, human vascular endothelial cells secrete SMase upon stimulation by IL-1β and IFNγ (49), and SMase is increased in the urine of patients with peritonitis, hepatitis, and post surgery or
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trauma (50). These findings are consistent with the results of Delogu et al. who found a strong correlation between MNC-derived total ceramide concentration and plasma TNF-α concentrations in septic patients (39).

**Study Limitations.** The current study was limited to those subspecies that could be analyzed by the standards that were commercially available at the time of investigation. We recognize the potential importance of the ceramide subspecies C16:0, which contributes up to 10% of the total ceramide pool in human plasma (23; 24), as well as other ceramide subspecies including: C22:0, C22:1, C23:0 and C24:2 (23; 24). Further, the correlation between plasma C18:1 ceramide and TNF-α may not be of any physiological or clinical relevance, since the concentration of this ceramide was close to the lower limit of detection and C18:1 was not found to be different between control and T2DM subjects. In addition, the measures of plasma ceramide subspecies were obtained in the post absorptive state and it should be noted that feeding has been shown to influence plasma ceramide levels (5; 51; 52). Future studies will have the opportunity to measure additional plasma ceramide subspecies in the post prandial condition and to quantify simultaneously both plasma and intracellular ceramide subspecies with concomitant measurement of insulin sensitivity, inflammation, and other metabolic variables.

**CONCLUSIONS**

In summary, this is the first examination of plasma ceramide subspecies in obese subjects with T2DM. The increase in total and ceramide subspecies concentrations correlated closely with the severity of insulin resistance and elevated TNFα levels. The increased circulating ceramide levels may be the result of lipid spillover from skeletal muscle, liver or adipose tissues. Elevated plasma ceramide levels may be a marker of insulin resistance, atherosclerotic risk, and/or obesity-induced inflammation. Further study will be required to establish mechanistic links between specific plasma ceramide subspecies identified herein and insulin resistance.

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**Figure 1.** Plasma concentration of ceramide subspecies in obese T2DM patients (n=13) compared to lean healthy controls (n=14). Plasma concentrations were determined by quantitative tandem mass spectrometry. Data are expressed as mean ± SEM. * p < 0.05 T2DM vs control; Mann-Whitney unpaired test.
Figure 2. Correlation of individual ceramide subspecies with the insulin-stimulated rate of glucose disposal (Rd). Spearman's rank correlation was used to access the relationships between data sets. Controls = open circles, T2DM = filled circles. All correlations were significant, p < 0.05.
Figure 3. Correlation between individual ceramide species and plasma TNF-α concentration. Spearman's rank correlation was used to assess the relationships between data sets. Controls = open circles, T2DM = filled circles. TNF-α correlations between C18:1 and C18:0 ceramide subspecies were significant, p < 0.05. TNF-α correlations between C20: and C24:1 ceramide subspecies did not reach significance but displayed a trend toward significance: p = 0.08 and 0.06 respectively.
Table 1. Subject Characteristics

|                                | Con   | T2DM  | P-value |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|---------|
| Number                         | 14    | 13    | --      |
| Gender                         | 9M/5F | 6M/7F | --      |
| Age (yrs)                      | 40 ± 4 | 50 ± 3 | 0.04    |
| BMI                            | 26.3 ± 1 | 32.9 ± 1 | <0.01 |
| LBM (%)                        | 72 ±2  | 64 ± 2 | <0.01   |
| FPG (mg/dl)                    | 91 ±2  | 151 ±17| <0.01   |
| FPI (µU/ml)                    | 5.6 ± 0.6 | 14.0 ±1.4 | <0.01  |
| F-FFA (µmol/l)                 | 495 ±48 | 887±77 | <0.01   |
| TG (mg/dl)                     | 86 ±12 | 188±23 | <0.01   |
| Total Cholesterol (mg/dl)      | 159±8  | 204±10 | <0.01   |
| HDL (mg/dl)                    | 47±3   | 45±2  | NS      |
| LDL (mg/dl)                    | 98±6   | 119±8 | NS      |

Data are presented as Mean ± SEM. Abbreviations: CON = Control subjects; T2DM = subjects with Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus; BMI = Body Mass Index; LBM = Lean Body Mass; FPG = Fasting Plasma Glucose; FPI = Fasting Plasma Insulin; F-FFA = Fasting Plasma Free Fatty Acids; TG = Triglycerides; HDL = High Density Lipoprotein cholesterol; LDL = Low Density Lipoprotein cholesterol.