Tumor necrosis factor alpha gene rs1799724 polymorphism in Alzheimer’s disease

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Abstract. Neurofibrillar tangles formed by the accumulation of hyperphosphorylated tau proteins in the intracellular space and the senile plaques formed by amyloid β (Aβ) accumulating in extracellular environment are shown as two main elements of Alzheimer’s disease (AD). In our study, the relationship between the risk of Alzheimer's disease and TNFα rs1799724 polymorphism in the Turkish population was investigated. Our study is the first report investigating the relationship between the risk of Alzheimer’s disease and TNFα rs1799724 gene polymorphism in Turkish population. No significant relation was found for rs1799724 polymorphism in AD patients. Since TNFα rs1799724 gene polymorphism was also associated with type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM), the polymorphism also was evaluated in T2DM within the AD patients group. According to our results rs1799724 polymorphism was found to be a significant relationship with T2DM within AD patients group. On the other hand, there was no significant difference between fasting blood glucose values of AD patients and -857C>T (rs1799724) polymorphism. According to our results, -857C>T rs1799724 polymorphism may have a relationship with T2DM as independent from AD.

Key words: TNFα — rs1799724 — Alzheimer’s disease — T2DM

Introduction

Neurodegenerative diseases are hereditary or age-related diseases associated with many pathological changes in the brain, including extracellular and intracellular protein deposits (Quinlan et al. 2017). Neurofibrillar tangles formed by the accumulation of hyperphosphorylated tau proteins in the intracellular space and the senile plaques formed by amyloid β (Aβ) accumulating in extracellular environment are shown as two main elements of Alzheimer’s disease (AD) (Hardy and Selkoe 2002; Uzunoglu and Atasever Arslan 2019). However, the mechanistic link between these two hallmarks as well as the role of Aβ plaques in the pathobiology of AD remains elusive (Ovsepian et al. 2019).

Inflammation is an immunological defense reaction to various foreign pathogens and systemic injuries. Not only activation of leukocytes, but also many inflammatory mediators secreted by various active cells play a role in this process (Arslan et al. 2019). Inhibition of peripheral TNFα synthesis by the efferent vagus nerve implicates a mechanism for signaling from the vagus nerve to TNFα producing cells. Nicotinic acetylcholine receptor alpha 7 subunit is an essential regulator of inflammation and is required for acetylcholine inhibition of macrophage TNFα release (Pavlov et al. 2003; Wang et al. 2003). Acetylcholine and cholinergic innervations play a role in regulation of amyloid precursor protein (APP) processing with production of Aβ and other
APP fragments and control of the phosphorylation of microtubule-associated protein (MAP) tau (Ovsepian et al. 2016). Regarding the apolipoprotein E epsilon-4 allele (APOE-ε4), inheritance of the rs1799724-T allele of the tumor necrosis factor α (TNFα) polymorphism, a proinflammatory cytokine, has been shown to increase the risk of AD in APOE-ε4 carriers (Albani et al. 2011). On the other hand, Pšemeneckienė et al. (2019) found that there is no a significant relationship rs1799724-T polymorphism with APOEε4 carriers in Lithuanian population. Also, it was demonstrated that there is higher TNFa expression in TNFa SNP-857T allele carriers (Kimura et al. 2016; Oki et al. 2017).

Overproduction of inflammatory factors can contribute to age-related diseases such as neurodegenerative disorders, autoimmunity and cancer (Caruso et al. 2004; Van Bodegom et al. 2007; Albani et al. 2012). Therefore, considering the effect of rs1799724-T on TNFα expression, it suggests that more detailed scans should be studied on this issue.

Diabetes mellitus (DM) is a chronic carbohydrate, fat and protein metabolism disorder characterized by high glucose levels in the blood due to insulin secretion or insulin insensitivity from β cells (Vardi et al. 2003; Altinoz et al. 2015). Several studies have shown that Type 2 DM (T2DM) is associated with increases in acute phase proteins such as C-reactive protein (CRP), fibrinogen, plasminogen activator inhibitor, cytokines, and chemokines (Pickup et al. 1997; Spranger et al. 2003; Herder et al. 2009; Salcini et al. 2016).

In our study, the relationship between the risk of Alzheimer’s disease and TNFa rs1799724 gene polymorphism in the Turkish population was investigated.

**Materials and Methods**

**Participants**

Twenty-one patients with Alzheimer’s disease, who were diagnosed as Alzheimer’s disease according to NINCDS-ADRDA criteria applied to the Umrajiye Education and Research Hospital, Department of Neurology, Istanbul.

Fifteen control participants who were admitted to the same hospital without any neurological, oncological and rheumatologic disease were included in this study. The study methods conformed to the ethical guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki and were approved by the Umrajiye Education and Research Hospital Ethics Committee and all patients and controls gave written informed consent to participate in the study.

**Genotyping**

The genotyping of TNFa gene rs1799724 polymorphism were performed by using TIB MolBiol LightCycler® FastStart DNA Master HybProbe PCR kit, according to the manufacturer’s instructions.

**Statistical evaluation**

IBM Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) Statistic 23 program was used for statistical analysis of results. T-test was used to compare the ages of the patients and controls. The relationship between genotype and allele distribution of TNFa rs1799724 polymorphism was obtained using Fisher’s Exact Test. Compliance of patient and control groups to the Hardy-Weinberg Balance (HWE) test Michael H. Court’s (2005–2008) Excel-based HWE online calculator was used. Logistic regression analysis of TNFα polymorphism in AD patients and controls was calculated from binary logistic regression. All p values < 0.05 were considered significant.

The mean of fasting blood glucose levels of AD patients and their TNFα rs1799724 genotypes were compared by Kruskal-Wallis test.

**Results**

The mean ages of Alzheimer patients and controls were 71.95 ± 6.05 and 67.07 ± 9.02, respectively. According to the t-test results, p value was calculated as 0.600 and there was no statistically significant difference between the patient and control groups as age.

Number of AD patients was 9 women and 12 men; control group consisted of 8 female and 7 men individuals. There was no a statistical difference between the patient and controls. The p value was found to be 0.535 for gender distribution in the study. The results were shown in Table 1.

The suitability and adequacy of controls and AD patients were tested by the Hardy-Weinberg Balance Test (HWE). Values of Hardy-Weinberg X² for AD patients was 2.378 (p = 0.0979) and for control 0.150 (p = 0.6985). According to the calculated results, genotype distribution in both patients and controls was in Hardy-Weinberg balance (p > 0.05). The distribution of genotype and allele frequencies

|                | AD patients n (%) | Control n (%) |
|----------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Female         | 9 (57.1)          | 8 (53.3)      |
| Male           | 12 (42.9)         | 7 (46.7)      |
| Total          | 21                | 15            |

chi-square (X²) test; p = 0.535 male vs. female.
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Table 2. Distribution of the TNFα rs1799724 genotypes and alleles in AD patients and Control group

| Genotype | AD patients n (%) | Control n (%) | p* |
|----------|------------------|---------------|----|
| CC       | 5 (23.8)         | 7 (46.7)      |    |
| CT       | 14 (66.7)        | 6 (40)        | 0.304 |
| TT       | 2 (9.5)          | 2 (13.3)      |    |

| Allele | AD patients n (%) | Control n (%) | p* |
|--------|-------------------|---------------|----|
| C      | 24 (57.1)         | 20 (66.7)     | 0.469 |
| T      | 18 (42.9)         | 10 (33.3)     |    |

* Fisher’s Exact Test.

Comparison of TNFα rs1799724 genotype with the presence of T2DM in AD patients

| T2DM | Genotype n (%) | p* |
|------|----------------|----|
| +    | 0 (100)        | 7 (50) | 2 (100) | 0.031 |
| -    | 5 (0)          | 7 (50) | 0 (0)   |    |

* Fisher’s Exact test.

Table 3. Logistic regression analysis of TNFα rs1799724 polymorphism in AD patients and Control group

| Model    | OR     | 95% CI            | p*   |
|----------|--------|------------------|------|
| Dominant | 2.975  | (0.717–12.338)   | 0.133|
| Recessive| 1.462  | (0.182–11.735)   | 0.721|
| Additive | 1.400  | (0.144–13.568)   | 0.772|

* value calculated from binary logistic regression.

of the genotyping study related to rs1799724 C/T polymorphism in the TNFα gene is shown in Table 2. Genotype frequencies of TNFα gene rs1799724 C/T for CC, CT and TT were compared statistically by using Fisher Exact test, there was no significant difference between the control and patient groups. When C and T allele frequencies were statistically compared using the Fisher Exact test, there was no significant difference between the control and patient groups (p > 0.05) (Table 2).

Multivariate logistic regression analysis was performed to evaluate effect of TNFα gene rs1799724 on Alzheimer’s disease. Dominant, recessive and additive models of rs1799724 were analyzed. In dominant model, AD patients with variant homozygous genotype (TT) and with heterozygous genotype (CT) were included in the same group and compared to wild genotype (CC) group. According to the model, there was no a significant difference between TT+CT genotypes and CC genotype for AD patients in the study (p = 0.133; OR = 2.975; 95%CI = 0.717–12.338) (Table 3).

On the other hand, when the patients with homozygous wild genotype CC and with heterozygous genotype CT were included in the same group and compared with individuals with variant homozygous genotype TT, there was no any significant difference. According to the results, it was shown that TT genotype did not increase AD risk (p = 0.721; OR = 1.462; 95%CI = 0.182–11.735).

In additive model, AD patients with variant homozygous genotype TT and with homozygous wild genotype CC were compared each other. It was found that T allele did not increase AD risk in the study (p = 0.772 OR = 1.400 %95CI = 0.144–13.568).

To understand whether there is a relationship between patients with Alzheimer’s disease and with Type 2 DM, their distributions of TNFα rs1799724 genotypes were analyzed by using Fisher’s Exact test. It was shown that there is a significant relationship between Type 2 DM and TNFα gene rs1799724 (p < 0.05) (Table 4).

The mean of fasting blood glucose levels of AD patients and their TNFα rs1799724 genotypes were compared by Kruskal-Wallis test. Although fasting blood glucose values of AD patients with variant homozygous genotype TT (18.50 mg/dl; n = 2) were higher than genotypes CC (8.20 mg/dl; n = 5) and CT (10.93 mg/dl; n = 14), the difference was not statistically significant (p > 0.05).

Discussion

The study is the first report investigating the relationship between the risk of Alzheimer’s disease and TNFα rs1799724 gene polymorphism in the Turkish population. Albani et al. (2011) found that the inheritance of the rs1799724-T allele of TNFα polymorphism increased the risk of AD in APOE-ε4 carriers. In addition, it was demonstrated that there was no significant relationship with rs1799724-T polymorphism in APOEε4 carriers in Lithuanian population (Pšemeneckienė et al. 2019). According to the studies, TNFα rs1799724 polymorphism is not independent but it can act on APOE-ε4 allele carriers or it is ineffective. No significant relation was found for rs1799724 polymorphism in Turkish population in our study.

Since TNFα rs1799724 gene polymorphism was also associated with T2DM, the polymorphism also was evaluated in T2DM within the AD patients group. According to our results rs1799724 polymorphism was found to be a significant relationship with T2DM within AD patients group. On the other hand, there was no significant difference between fasting blood glucose values of AD patients and -857C>T (rs1799724) polymorphism.

In Japanese population, -857C>T (rs1799724) polymorphism is associated with insulin resistance, T2DM, and
carotid plaque formation in T2DM patients (Kamizono et al. 2000; Buraczynska et al. 2004; Wang et al. 2005; Yamashina et al. 2007; Ohara et al. 2012). However, Sesti et al. (2015) found an independent association of the 308G>A polymorphism in the TNFa gene with proliferative diabetic retinopathy PDR in Caucasian Brazilians with T2DM, not -857C>T (rs1799724) polymorphism. According to the results, the relation of T2DM and -857C>T (rs1799724) polymorphism is controversial.

There were some limitations in the study. These are the sample size and also TNFa plasma levels could not be measured in plasma in the study group. According to our results, -857C>T rs1799724 polymorphism may have a relationship with T2DM as independent from AD. Although there is no significant relationship between AD and -857C>T (rs1799724), investigation of genetic variants of TNFa and other proinflammatory cytokines may contribute to understanding underlying mechanisms of neuroinflammation in the disease.

Conflict of interest. The authors have no conflict of interest.

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