TRIB3 Functional Q84R Polymorphism Is a Risk Factor for Metabolic Syndrome and Carotid Atherosclerosis

HUI-PING GONG, MD
ZHI-HAO WANG, MD
HAO JIANG, MD
NING-NING FANG, MD
JI-SHENG LI, PhD
YUAN-YUAN SHANG, MD
YUN ZHANG, MD
MING ZHONG, MD
WEI ZHANG, MD

OBJECTIVE — To determine the association of TRIB3 Q84R polymorphism with metabolic syndrome (MetS) and carotid atherosclerosis.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS — A case-control study enrolled 513 Chinese subjects in three groups: control, MetS, and obese. The functional TRIB3 Q84R polymorphism was genotyped among subjects undergoing carotid ultrasonography. The clinical and biochemical characteristics were determined.

RESULTS — For individuals with the TRIB3 R84 allele, the odds ratio for developing MetS was 2.349 (P = 0.018), abdominal obesity 2.351 (P = 0.012), hypertriglyceridemia 2.314 (P = 0.00003), and insulin resistance 1.697 (P = 0.023). Likewise, the odds ratio for individuals with the TRIB3 R84 allele to develop thickened intima-media thickness was 2.208 (P = 0.040).

CONCLUSIONS — Individuals with the functional TRIB3 Q84R polymorphism are at risk for MetS. The TRIB3 R84 allele especially predisposes to carotid atherosclerosis in part through the effects of abdominal obesity, hypertriglyceridemia, and insulin resistance.

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Metabolic syndrome (MetS) is a powerful and prevalent predictor of cardiovascular events (1,2). Insulin resistance is recognized as the triggering factor of MetS. The TRIB3 gene, located on chromosome 20p13, has been implicated in insulin resistance (3). A TRIB3 Q84R polymorphism has also recently been associated with early-onset type 2 diabetes (4). This polymorphism may identify individuals at risk for insulin resistance and related cardiovascular risk (5). Whether the TRIB3 Q84R polymorphism increases the risk for MetS and carotid atherosclerosis remains to be established.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS — A total of 513 unrelated Chinese subjects aged 24–85 years were recruited from the Qilu Hospital of Shandong University: 217 subjects with MetS, defined by the International Diabetes Federation (6); 200 subjects (control subjects) without any abnormality; and 96 obese-alone subjects. Written informed consent was obtained from all subjects, and procedures were approved by the institutional ethics committees.

The clinical and biochemical characteristics of the subjects were determined. Insulin resistance was assessed by the homeostasis model assessment equation (7). Genotyping of the TRIB3 R84 variant was as previously described (3).

B-mode ultrasonography of the carotid arteries was performed by one trained clinical technician. Both the right and left common carotid arteries were examined. Intima-media thickness (IMT) of the common and internal carotid arteries and bifurcations were measured according to the Asymptomatic Carotid Artery Plaque Study (ACAPS) protocol (8). (For details, see the online-only appendix available at http://care.diabetesjournals.org/cgi/content/full/dc09-0061/DC1.)

Statistical analysis
The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to test for normal distribution. Normally distributed data are presented as means ± SD. Continuous variables were compared among groups by one-way ANOVA with post hoc least-significant differences t test or Kruskal-Wallis H test. The χ² test was used to analyze the associations between categorical variables. Multivariate regression analysis of risk factors was performed, with odds ratios (ORs) (95% CIs) shown. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to evaluate the contribution of risk factors. The correlation between two variables was assessed by Pearson or Spearman correlation analysis. A P value <0.05 was considered significant. Analyses involved SPSS v. 13.0 (SPSS, Chicago, IL).

RESULTS — Genotyping was successful in 513 case subjects. The TRIB3 Q84R polymorphism genotypes were in Hardy-Weinberg equilibrium. The clinical and biochemical characteristics of the subjects by TRIB3 genotype in the MetS group are in Table 1. Subjects with the R84 genotype had higher waist-to-hip ratio and total cholesterol, triglyceride, and LDL cholesterol levels but lower HDL cholesterol levels than individuals with the

From the Key Laboratory of Cardiovascular Remodeling and Function Research Chinese Ministry of Education and Chinese Ministry of Public Health, Department of Cardiology, Qilu Hospital of Shandong University, Jinan, People’s Republic of China.
Corresponding authors’ Ming Zhong, zhongmingzm@gmail.com, and Wei Zhang, zhangweisdu@gmail.com.
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H.G. and Z.W. contributed equally to this study.
J.L. is currently with the Cancer Epigenetics Laboratory, State Key Laboratory in Oncology in South China, Department of Clinical Oncology, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, People’s Republic of China.
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TABLE 1—Clinical and biochemical characteristics of subjects by TRIB3 Q84R genotype in MetS group

|                        | QQ84 (n = 125) | QR84 (n = 79) | RR84 (n = 13) | P vs. QQ84 group | P vs. QR84 group | P* vs. QQ84 group | P* vs. QR84 group |
|------------------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Sex (male/female)      | 51/74          | 39/40        | 9/4          | 0.076           | 0.532           | 0.581           | 0.056           |
| Age (years)            | 55.15 ± 9.14   | 54.71 ± 9.84 | 56.85 ± 6.40 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| BMI (kg/m²)            | 28.95 ± 3.61   | 28.80 ± 3.90 | 29.61 ± 2.80 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Systolic blood pressure (mmHg) | 152.19 ± 22.12 | 148.10 ± 20.72 | 156.85 ± 28.47 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Diastolic blood pressure (mmHg) | 94.14 ± 14.00   | 93.35 ± 13.74 | 91.62 ± 16.05 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Waist circumference (cm) | 98.01 ± 9.73   | 97.37 ± 10.42 | 101.31 ± 8.81 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Waist-to-hip ratio     | 0.93 ± 0.06    | 0.93 ± 0.06  | 0.96 ± 0.04  | 0.041           | 0.041           | 0.041           | 0.056           |
| Total cholesterol (mg/dl) | 5.29 ± 1.29    | 5.48 ± 1.10  | 6.03 ± 0.87  | 0.038           | 0.130           | 0.047           | 0.0198          |
| Triglycerides (mg/dl)  | 2.04 ± 0.92    | 2.57 ± 1.64  | 2.77 ± 1.24  | 0.034           | 0.047           | 0.044           | 0.0847          |
| HDL cholesterol (mg/dl) | 1.25 ± 0.30    | 1.24 ± 0.42  | 1.04 ± 0.19  | 0.034           | 0.047           | 0.044           | 0.063           |
| LDL cholesterol (mg/dl) | 3.49 ± 0.94    | 3.58 ± 0.96  | 4.06 ± 1.07  | 0.044           | 0.098           | 0.033           | 0.088           |
| Fasting blood glucose (mg/dl) | 6.69 ± 2.41    | 6.64 ± 2.71  | 6.13 ± 2.47  | 0.446           | 0.501           | 0.000005        | 0.00002         |
| Insulin (µU/ml)        | 20.47 ± 10.76  | 20.04 ± 9.67 | 19.23 ± 14.68 | 0.694           | 0.802           | 0.000005        | 0.00002         |
| HOMA-IR                | 6.30 ± 4.71    | 5.84 ± 3.22  | 5.24 ± 4.50  | 0.389           | 0.639           | 0.000005        | 0.00002         |
| Normal IMT             | 80             | 41           | 2            | 0.001           | 0.017           | 0.000005        | 0.00002         |
| Mean IMT (mm)          | 0.75 ± 0.15    | 0.76 ± 0.18  | 0.95 ± 0.18  | 0.000007        | 0.0002          | 0.000005        | 0.00002         |
| Maximum IMT (mm)       | 1.07 ± 0.69    | 1.23 ± 0.88  | 2.44 ± 1.17  | 0.00000005      | 0.00002         | 0.00000005      | 0.00002         |

Data are means ± SD unless otherwise indicated. *P, adjusted for waist-to-hip ratio, sex, age, and smoking. HOMA-IR, homeostasis model assessment for insulin resistance.

TRIB3 functional Q84R polymorphism and MetS

QQ84 genotype (P < 0.05 for all). Subjects with different Q84R genotypes did not differ in age, sex, BMI, waist circumference, blood pressure, fasting blood glucose, insulin, and homeostasis model assessment of insulin resistance (Table 1) or medication for diabetes or hypertension. The genetic and biochemical results from MetS and control groups suggest an association of the TRIB3 Q84R variant with metabolism in humans (see supplemental Table A1 in the online appendix).

TRIB3 Q84R genotype was associated with MetS (P = 0.021), and stepwise regression analysis revealed the risk factors for MetS as being the TRIB3 R84 allele (OR 2.314 [95% CI 1.494–3.585]; P = 0.00003), waist-to-hip ratio (12.007.348 [18.463–7,808,726]; P = 0.004), systolic blood pressure (1.029 [1.007–1.051]; P = 0.008), fasting blood glucose (1.769 [1.276–2.453]; P = 0.001), and insulin level (1.205 [1.080–1.344]; P = 0.001). Unexpectedly, fasting blood glucose and fasting insulin level had no association because it is generally assumed that susceptibility loci of obesity and type 2 diabetes were on chromosome 20p (9,10). Based on that, it implies that susceptibility loci of obesity, hypertriglyceridemia, and insulin resistance.

Therefore, TRIB3 is speculated to contribute to MetS via alteration of glucose and insulin levels, with insulin playing a pivotal role. That TRIB3 R84 was also located on chromosome 20p1 further confirms the association because it is generally assumed that susceptibility loci of obesity and type 2 diabetes were on chromosome 20p (9,10). Based on that, it implies that TRIB3 contributes to MetS via alteration of glucose and fat. However, The TRIB3 Q84R polymorphism was not included in the gene chips used by recent type 2 diabetes genome-wide association studies to clarify its contribution (11).

Extensive evidence (1,2,12) shows that the presence of MetS increases the risk of atherosclerosis. Here, we showed that the TRIB3 Q84R genotype facilitates

CONCLUSIONS — This is the first large study that comprehensively identifies the TRIB3 Q84R polymorphism as a candidate single nucleotide polymorphism for MetS and carotid atherosclerosis. We demonstrated that TRIB3 R84 allele carriers are at increased risk for MetS and carotid atherosclerosis because they are more susceptible to abdominal obesity, hypertriglyceridemia, and insulin resistance.
the morbidity of carotid atherosclerosis. Because we have found that TRIB3 R84 allele carriers are at increased risk for abdominal obesity, hypertriglyceridemia, and insulin resistance, all of which have been validated as independent risk factors for carotid atherosclerosis (13–15), these features are the variant’s link to carotid atherosclerosis.

In summary, the current findings provide direct evidence that individuals with the RR84 are more susceptible to abdominal obesity, hypertriglyceridemia, and insulin resistance. Therefore, they are at risk for MetS and predisposed to carotid atherosclerosis.

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