Body composition and serum levels of matrix metalloproteinase-9, adiponectin and AMP-activated protein kinase in breast cancer survivors

Zeinab Babaei1, Hadi Parsian2, Bahare Korani3, Amrollah Mostafazadeh2, Dariush Moslemi4

1Department of Clinical Biochemistry, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Isfahan, Iran, 2Cellular and Molecular Biology Research Center, Health Research Institute, Babol University of Medical Sciences, Babol, Iran, 3Department of Clinical Biochemistry, School of Medical Science, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran, 4Department of Radiooncology, Babol University of Medical Sciences, Babol, Iran

INTRODUCTION

Available data suggest that obesity is related to changes in the several adipocyte-derived proteins levels, which are involved in cancer recurrence. The purpose of this work was to investigate the correlation between obesity with metalloproteinase-9 (MMP-9), adiponectin and adiponectin and AMP-activated protein kinase (AMPK) levels by comparing serum levels of MMP-9, AMPK in normal weight and obese breast cancer survivors. Materials and Methods: In this cross-sectional study, 30 normal weight breast cancer survivors (body mass index [BMI] 18.5-25 kg/m²) and 30 obese breast cancer survivors (BMI ≥30 kg/m²) were investigated. Anthropometric parameters and serum levels of MMP-9, adiponectin, and AMPK were compared between the two groups. Results: No differences were detected in the serum levels of MMP-9, adiponectin, and AMPK in obese patients and normal weight patients (P > 0.05). There were no correlations between MMP-9, adiponectin, and AMPK levels in two groups (P > 0.05). Conclusion: We found that there was a lack of correlation between obesity measures and serum levels of MMP-9, adiponectin, and AMPK. In breast cancer survivors, it seems that circulating levels of adiponectin, AMPK, and MMP-9 do not change in obesity state.

Key words: Adiponectin, AMP-activated protein kinase, breast cancer, matrix metalloproteinase-9, obesity

How to cite this article: Babaei Z, Parsian H, Korani B, Mostafazadeh A, Moslemi D. Body composition and serum levels of matrix metalloproteinase-9, adiponectin and AMP-activated protein kinase in breast cancer survivors. J Res Med Sci 2022;27:48.
adiponectin has also been clarified. In breast cancer cells, report has shown that adiponectin can hinder the malignant biological behavior of tumor cell and promote apoptosis. Increased AMP-activated protein kinase (AMPK) activity remains an important mechanism of actions of adiponectin in cancer prevention. AMPK, a serine/threonine kinase, is regarded as the major regulator of cellular energy that exerts an important function in the glucose and lipid metabolism. However, reports on the correlation between obesity and serum levels of adipocyte-derived proteins have yielded conflicting results. Because the identification of high-risk breast cancer patients is important for health management, the aim of our study was to investigate the correlation between obesity with MMP-9, adiponectin, and AMPK levels by comparing serum levels of MMP-9, adiponectin, and AMPK in normal weight and obese breast cancer survivors.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study population
The Ethical Committee of Babol University of Medical Sciences (MUBABOL.REC.1394.34) allowed this cross-sectional study, and informed consents were provided by each patient before the study. The study population consisted of 30 normal weight breast cancer survivors [body mass index (BMI) 18.5–25 kg/m²] and 30 obese breast cancer survivors (BMI ≥30 kg/m²). These patients were selected from an initial sample of 208 breast cancer survivors who referred for routine follow-up to Shahid Rajaee Oncology Hospital (Babolsar, Iran), between January 2013 and July 2013. The details of the study population for anthropometric parameters, demographics, and clinical data have been described previously. Breast cancer survivors were enrolled in this investigation if breast cancer (Stages II-III) was identified within the past 5 years and primary treatment was completed (except hormone therapy) at least 6 months before to enrolment. Patients with a history of endocrine abnormality, diabetes mellitus, known cardiac disease, uncontrolled thyroid disease, and uncontrolled hypertension were excluded in our investigation.

Anthropometric measurements and biochemical tests
Body weight of patients was weighed with a digital weight scale (Seca, GmbH, Germany) with a precision of 0.1 kg. Standing height was evaluated up to 0.1 cm precision. BMI of the patients was computed as the weight (kg) divided by height (m²). Waist circumference (WC) was obtained at 2.5 cm above the umbilicus and hip circumference (HC) was performed in the region of maximum width of the buttocks. Waist-to-hip ratio (WHR) was calculated by dividing the WC by the HC. For analysis of MMP-9, adiponectin, and AMPK, 10 ml of venous blood were collected from each participant after an overnight fast (12 h) and the serum samples gained after centrifugation was kept at −80°C before use. Concentrations of MMP-9, adiponectin, and AMPK were determined in serum with commercially available ELISA kits (Crystal Day Biotech Co., Shanghai, China) according to the manufacturer’s protocol. The sensitivities of the kits were 0.11 mg/l for adiponectin; 15.12 ng/L for MMP-9, and 0.025 ng/ml for AMPK. The intra- and inter-assay variation coefficients were 8% or less for adiponectin; 10% or less for MMP-9 as well as 10% and 12% for AMPK.

Statistical analysis
SPSS version 18.0 software (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) was employed for statistical evaluation. The results were reported as mean ± standard deviation the normal distribution of data was estimated by the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test. The Student’s t-test and Mann–Whitney U-test were employed to compare normally and nonnormally distributed variables, respectively. The relationship between adiponectin, MMP-9, and AMPK with anthropometric measurements were analyzed with Pearson test. P < 0.05 was classified as statistical significant.

RESULTS
A total of 60 breast cancer survivors with a mean age of 49.23 ± 10.3 years, in two group 30 normal weight patients (BMI 18.5–25 kg/m²) and 30 obese patients (BMI ≥30 kg/m²) were included in this investigation. Mean follow-up time in two groups was 3.2 ± 2 years. No significant differences were detected in the mean age of obese patients (50.8 ± 7.5 years) and normal weight patients (47.6 ± 12.4 years) [Table 1; P > 0.05]. Sixty percent of obese patients were diagnosed with Stage II, while 40% had Stage III [Table 1]. Stage of breast cancer and menopausal status did not differ between obese patients and normal weight patients [Table 1; P > 0.05].

Weight, WC, HC, and WHR were significantly higher among obese patients than normal weight patients [Table 1; P < 0.05]. Mean of BMI in obese patients was 35.4 ± 4.2 kg/m² and mean of BMI in normal weight patients was 22.9 ± 2 kg/m², which was higher in obese than in normal weight patients [Table 1; P < 0.05]. We observed no important change in the concentrations of MMP-9, adiponectin, and AMPK in obese patients than in normal weight patients [Figure 1; P > 0.05].

To explore the correlations between anthropometric characteristics and serum levels of MMP-9, adiponectin, and AMPK, Pearson correlation test was employed. As shown in Table 2, no significant correlations were detected between MMP-9, adiponectin, and AMPK with anthropometric measurements in two groups [Table 2; P > 0.05]. Adiponectin was positively correlated with the AMPK and MMP-9 [Table 2; P < 0.05].
DISCUSSION

The present study on breast cancer survivors showed that serum levels of adiponectin, AMPK, and MMP-9 were not significant differences between obese and normal weight breast cancer survivors [Figure 1; $P > 0.05$]. We found no significant correlations between adiponectin, AMPK, and MMP-9 with anthropometric parameters [Table 2; $P > 0.05$].

Weight gain after breast cancer diagnosis has been described as a risk factor for cancer recurrence.\(^{[11]}\) Meanwhile, available data suggest that obesity is related to changes in the several adipocyte-derived proteins levels such as leptin, MMPs, and adiponectin, which are involved in cancer development and recurrence.\(^{[12,13]}\) Our previous study on breast cancer survivors showed that obesity was positively related to levels of leptin and acute phase proteins in obese patients.\(^{[14]}\) However, reports on the correlations between anthropometric measurements and serum adiponectin levels have yielded conflicting results.\(^{[14,15]}\) We have shown here that serum adiponectin was not significant differences between normal weight and obese patients [Figure 1; $P > 0.05$]. Moreover, we found no correlations between adiponectin with anthropometric measurements [Table 2; $P > 0.05$]. Our findings regarding adiponectin are in line with previous results showing that there is no significant relationship between increase adiposity and levels of adiponectin.\(^{[7]}\) Interestingly, Yasui \textit{et al.} indicated that circulating adiponectin levels were not related to BMI.\(^{[14]}\) Another study conducted by Aguilar-Salinas \textit{et al.} on obese subjects also showed that serum adiponectin concentrations were not significantly different in obese subjects than in normal body weight individuals.\(^{[15]}\) According to our results, this suggests a diminished relationship between serum levels of adiponectin with adiposity in breast cancer survivors. In contrast, other studies revealed that serum adiponectin concentration was significantly decreased in obesity.\(^{[8,16-19]}\) We have no reason for the differences between our study findings with other previously reported results.\(^{[8,16-19]}\) It is possible that several other parameters, in addition to quantity of fat, may affect circulating adiponectin level.\(^{[22]}\)

Recent data have shown that AMPK is emerging as a target for cancer treatment.\(^{[23]}\) In addition, AMPK activity is one of the potential mechanisms of adiponectin’s action.\(^{[5]}\) As

| Table 1: Clinicopathological and anthropometric characteristics |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Characteristics                                               | Normal weight patients ($n=30$) | Obese patients ($n=30$) | $P$   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|------|
| Age (years)                                                   | 47.6±12.4                       | 50.8±7.5               | 0.231|
| Follow-up time (years)                                       | 3.3±2.0                         | 3.0±2.1                | 0.527|
| Clinical stage, $n$ (%)                                       |                                 |                        |      |
| Stage II                                                     | 20 (66.7)                       | 18 (60)                | 0.595|
| Stage III                                                    | 10 (33.3)                       | 12 (40)                |      |
| Menopausal status, $n$ (%)                                    |                                 |                        |      |
| Premenopause                                                 | 21 (70)                         | 19 (63.3)              | 0.587|
| Postmenopause                                                | 9 (30)                          | 11 (36.7)              |      |
| Weight (kg)                                                   | 56.8±6.8                        | 84.9±11.2              | $<0.001$** |
| Height (m)                                                    | 1.57±0.06                       | 1.55±0.06              | 0.110|
| BMI (kg/m$^2$)                                                | 22.9±2.0                        | 35.4±4.2               | $<0.001$** |
| Waist (cm)                                                    | 86.0±7.6                        | 110.7±9.6              | $<0.001$** |
| Hip (cm)                                                      | 95.8±7.2                        | 117.8±9.6              | $<0.001$** |
| WHR                                                          | 0.9±0.07                        | 0.94±0.06              | $<0.05$* |

\(^{*}P<0.05\) and \(^{**}P<0.01\) were performed by Student’s $t$-test, aMenopausal status at diagnosis, Results were reported as mean±SD or n (%), BMI=Body mass index; WHR=Waist-to-hip ratio; SD=Standard deviation

| Table 2: Correlations between anthropometric measurements and biochemical variables |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| BMI                                   | Weight      | Waist     | Hip       | WHR       | MMP-9     | Adiponectin |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| MMP-9                                 | -0.089      | -0.170    | 0.071     | 0.186     | 0.178     | 1           | 0.725**     |
| Adiponectin                           | -0.140      | -0.211    | -0.101    | -0.176    | 0.101     | 0.725**     | 1           |
| AMPK                                  | -0.059      | -0.130    | 0.028     | -0.116    | 0.151     | 0.619**     | 0.730**     |

\(^{**}P<0.01\) were performed by Pearson test, WHR=Waist-to-hip ratio; BMI=Body mass index; AMPK=AMP-activated protein kinase; MMP-9=Matrix metalloproteinase-9

![Figure 1: Comparison of adiponectin (a), metalloproteinase-9 (b), and AMPK-activated protein kinase (c) serum levels for each individual among obese patients than normal weight patients. Significance evaluation was analyzed by Mann–Whitney test](image-url)
far as the authors know, serum levels of AMPK have not been studied during obesity state. Accordingly, in this investigation, we compared serum levels of AMPK between obese and normal weight breast cancer survivors. We found no significant correlations between serum levels of AMPK and anthropometric parameters [Table 2; \( P > 0.05 \)]. However, a positive relationship was detected between serum levels of AMPK and adiponectin [Table 2; \( P < 0.01 \)].

Circulating MMP-9 levels has appeared as an effective biomarker for predicting axillary node metastasis.\(^{[31]}\) Meanwhile, several authors have demonstrated that circulating MMPs levels could be abnormal in obesity.\(^{[9,24,25]}\) Previous studies revealed that MMP-9 and their tissue inhibitors (TIMP-1) plasma levels were increased and MMP-2 plasma levels were decreased in premenopausal obese women.\(^{[25]}\) Derosa et al. also detected that the levels of MMP-9 and MMP-2 were increased in obese patients.\(^{[26]}\) In another study, scientists demonstrated that MMP-9 and TIMP-1 plasma levels were elevated in obese children and adolescents.\(^{[26]}\) However, in accordance with previous observations,\(^{[24,26]}\) the question is whether serum concentration of MMP-9 may be a good biomarker in breast cancer survivors in obesity status. Our findings showed no differences in serum levels of MMP-9 in obese patients compared to normal weight breast cancer survivors [Figure 1; \( P > 0.05 \)]. On the other hand, no relationship was detected between serum concentration of MMP-9 and anthropometric measurements [Table 2; \( P > 0.05 \)]. The results of our investigation are in agreement with previous findings indicating that no differences in total levels of MMP-9 in obese subjects than in nonobese controls.\(^{[27,28]}\) The lack of consistency in findings about correlation between serum concentration of MMP-9 and obesity might probably be due to the different effects of obesity-related conditions, including inflammation and metabolic syndrome.\(^{[28]}\) Interestingly, Gummesson et al. indicated that circulating MMP-9 level was not related to WC and BMI, however, there were significant correlations with blood pressure, fasting glucose, acute-phase protein, and insulin.\(^{[28]}\) Besides, there were different metabolic situations may influence circulating levels of MMP-9.\(^{[28]}\) Taken together, the lack of association between anthropometric measurements and serum levels of MMP-9 shows that this marker may not be sensitive factor in obese breast cancer survivors.

**CONCLUSION**

Taken together, our study demonstrated that there was a lack of correlation between obesity measures and circulating serum levels of MMP-9, adiponectin, and AMPK. In breast cancer survivors, it seems serum levels of adiponectin, AMPK, and MMP-9 not be an effective marker in obesity state.

**Financial support and sponsorship**

The present study was supported by a grant from the Babol University of Medical Sciences (No. 2414).

**Conflicts of interest**

There are no conflicts of interest.

**REFERENCES**

1. Heo DS, Choi H, Yeom MY, Song BJ, Oh SJ. Serum levels of matrix metalloproteinase-9 predict lymph node metastasis in breast cancer patients. Oncol Rep 2014;31:1567-72.
2. Fan SQ, Wei QY, Li MR, Zhang LQ, Liang QC. Expression and clinical significance of MMP-2, MMP-9, TIMP-1, and TIMP-2 in breast carcinoma. Ai Zhong 2003;22:968-73.
3. Grossmann ME, Ray A, Nkhati KJ, Malakhov DA, Rogozina OP, Dogan S, et al. Obesity and breast cancer: Status of leptin and adiponectin in pathological processes. Cancer Metastasis Rev 2010;29:641-53.
4. Babaei Z, Moslemi D, Parsian H, Khafri S, Pouramir M, Mosapour A. Relationship of obesity with serum concentrations of leptin, CRP and IL-6 in breast cancer survivors. J Egypt Natl Canc Instr 2015;27:223-9.
5. Saxena NK, Sharma D. Metastasis suppression by adiponectin: LKB1 rises up to the challenge. Cell Adh Migr 2010;4:358-62.
6. Korani B, Mirzapour A, Moghadamnia AA, Khafri S, Neamati N, Parsian H. The effect of Urtica dioica hydro alcoholic extract on glycemic index and AMP activated protein kinase levels in diabetic patients: A randomized single blind clinical trial. IROMJ 2017;19(3).
7. Onat A, Hergen G, Dursunolu D, Kucukdurmaz Z, Bulur S, Can G. Relatively high levels of serum adiponectin in obese women, a potential indicator of anti-inflammatory dysfunction: Relation to sex hormone-binding globulin. Int J Biol Sci 2008;4:208-14.
8. Mamaghani F, Zarghami N, Maleki MJ, Pourhassan-Moghaddam M, Hosseinpanah F. Variation of adiponectin levels in normal and obese subjects: Possible correlation with lipid profiles. Int J Endocrinol Metab 2009;7:170-8.
9. Andrade VL, Petrucci E, Belo VA, Andrade-Fernandes CM, Caetano Russi CV, Bosco AA, et al. Evaluation of plasmatic MMP-8, MMP-9, TIMP-1 and MPO levels in obese and lean women. Clin Biochem 2012;45:412-5.
10. Iraji Z, Jafari Koshki T, Dolatkhab R, Asghari Jafarabadi M. Parametric survival model to identify the predictors of breast cancer mortality: An accelerated failure time approach. J Res Med Sci 2020;25:38.
11. Kroenke CH, Chen WY, Rosner B, Holmes MD. Weight, weight gain, and survival after breast cancer diagnosis. J Clin Oncol 2005;23:1370-8.
12. Nigro E, Scudiero O, Monoac ML, Palmieri A, Mazzarella G, Costagliola C, et al. New insight into adiponectin role in obesity and obesity-related diseases. Biomed Res Int 2014;2014:658913.
13. Ortiz-Mendoza CM. Impaired fasting glucose in breast cancer survivors of a general hospital at Mexico City: A case series study. J Res Med Sci 2019;24:9.
14. Yasui T, Tomita J, Miyatani Y, Yamada M, Uemura H, Irahara M, et al. Associations of adiponectin with sex hormone-binding globulin levels in aging male and female populations. Clin Chim Acta 2007;386:69-75.
15. Aguilar-Salinas CA, García EG, Robles L, Riaño D, Ruiz-Gomez DG, García-Ulloa AC, et al. High adiponectin concentrations are associated with the metabolically healthy obese
phenotype. J Clin Endocrinol Metab 2008;93:4075-9.
16. Mishra S, Gupta V, Mishra S, Sachan R, Asthana A. Serum level of orexin-A, leptin, adiponectin and insulin in north Indian obese women. Diabetes Metab Syndr 2017;11 Suppl 2:S1041-3.
17. Cruz-Mejía S, Durán López HH, Navarro Meza M, Xochihua Rosas I, De la Peña S, Arroyo Helguera OE. Body mass index is associated with interleukin-1, adiponectin, oxidative stress and ioduria levels in healthy adults. Nutr Hosp 2018;35:841-6.
18. Tamang HK, Timilsina U, Singh KP, Shrestha S, Pandey B, Basnet S, et al. Assessment of adiponectin level in obese and lean Nepalese population and its possible correlation with lipid profile: A cross-sectional study. Indian J Endocrinol Metab 2013;17:5349-54.
19. Ryan AS, Berman DM, Nicklas BJ, Sinha M, Gingerich RL, Meneilly GS, et al. Plasma adiponectin and leptin levels, body composition, and glucose utilization in adult women with wide ranges of age and obesity. Diabetes Care 2003;26:2383-8.
20. Jonas MI, Kurylowicz A, Bartoszewicz Z, Lisik W, Jonas M, Domienik-Karlowicz J, et al. Adiponectin/resistin interplay in serum and in adipose tissue of obese and normal-weight individuals. Diabetol Metab Syndr 2017;9:95.
21. Nayak BS, Ramsingh D, Gooding S, Legall G, Bisram S, Mohammed A, et al. Plasma adiponectin levels are related to obesity, inflammation, blood lipids and insulin in type 2 diabetic and non-diabetic Trinidadians. Prim Care Diabetes 2010;4:187-92.
22. Selthofer-Relatić K, Radić R, Šišljagić V, Bešnjak I, Bulj N, et al. Leptin/adiponectin ratio in overweight patients – Gender differences. Diab Vasc Dis Res 2018;15:260-2.
23. Li W, Saud SM, Young MR, Chen G, Hua B. Targeting AMPK for cancer prevention and treatment. Oncotarget 2015;6:7365-78.
24. Derosa G, Ferrari I, D’Angelo A, Tinelli C, Salvadeo SA, Ciccarelli, L, et al. Matrix metalloproteinase-2 and -9 levels in obese patients. Endothelium 2008;15:219-24.
25. Kosmala W, Plaksej R, Przewlocka-Kosmala M, Kuliczkowska-Plaksej J, Bednarek-Tupikowska G, Mazurek W. Matrix metalloproteinases 2 and 9 and their tissue inhibitors 1 and 2 in premenopausal obese women: Relationship to cardiac function. Int J Obes (Lond) 2008;32:763-71.
26. Głowińska-Olszewska B, Urban M. Elevated matrix metalloproteinase 9 and tissue inhibitor of metalloproteinase 1 in obese children and adolescents. Metabolism 2007;56:799-805.
27. Belo VA, Souza-Costa DC, Lana CM, Caputo FL, Marcaccini AM, Gerlach RF, et al. Assessment of matrix metalloproteinase (MMP)-2, MMP-8, MMP-9, and their inhibitors, the tissue inhibitors of metalloproteinase (TIMP)-1 and TIMP-2 in obese children and adolescents. Clin Biochem 2009;42:984-90.
28. Gummesson A, Hagg D, Olson FJ, Hulthe J, Carlsson LM, Fagerberg B. Adipose tissue is not an important source for matrix metalloproteinase-9 in the circulation. Scand J Clin Lab Invest 2009;69:636-42.