The relationship between dietary acid load and intensity of musculoskeletal pain condition: A population-based study

Bahrampour, N. & Clark, C. C. T.

Published PDF deposited in Coventry University's Repository

Original citation:
Bahrampour, N & Clark, CCT 2022, 'The relationship between dietary acid load and intensity of musculoskeletal pain condition: A population-based study', Food Science and Nutrition, vol. 10, no. 8, pp. 2542-2549.
https://dx.doi.org/10.1002/fsn3.2859

DOI 10.1002/fsn3.2859
ESSN 2048-7177

Publisher: Wiley Open Access

This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.
INTRODUCTION

Pain is a globally prevalent problem, and discerning the pathophysiology of musculoskeletal pain conditions (MPs) is important to support patient's health (Chen & Sehdev, 2019). Pain may persist for more than 3–6 months and is often attributed to nerve damage (Martin & Reid, 2017). The global prevalence of chronic pain is 20.4%, which is higher in women than men (21.7%) and those aged 65 and over (30.8%) (El-Metwally et al., 2019). Patients can also experience an intense range of pain from mild to severe (Dueñas et al., 2016). Overall, pain can cause, or contribute to, disability, in addition to lifestyle altering changes when treatment becomes ineffective (Institute of Medicine (US) Committee on Pain D and CIB et al., 1987).

Many large studies have suggested that pain intensity, especially MPs, may be associated with physical, lifestyle, and nutrition status (Mills et al., 2019). However, the role of dietary intake in treating and/or prevention of pain intensity is less well known. Choosing a planned individualized diet may help to reduce the complications and improvement of MPs (Elma et al., 2020). Accordingly, Elma et al. found that patients with rheumatoid arthritis pain have a low intake of calcium, folate, zinc, magnesium, and vitamin B6, while pain intensity may be related to fat and sugar intake in these patients (Elma...
et al., 2020). Dietary acid load (DAL) is defined as the balance of acid/base-inducing foods (Hayhoe et al., 2020). Problematically, modern Western diets are high in animal products like eggs, meats, cheese, and grains but low in fruits and vegetables (Frassetto et al., 2018), and this popular diet can aggravate chronic pain through pro-inflammatory cytokine secretion (Dragan et al., 2020).

Meat, eggs, cheese, and cereal grains are acid producing in the body, while base-inducing foods are fruits and vegetables (Frassetto et al., 2018). For evaluating the DAL, net endogenous acid production (NEAP) and potential renal acid load (PRAL), which is more accurate than NEAP (Mohammadpour et al., 2020), can be used (Cunha et al., 2019). Hayhoe et al. showed an inverse association between PRAL and musculoskeletal health in older adults (Hayhoe et al., 2020), where an acid-base imbalance may be responsible for increasing the inflammation and severity of pain (Zampieri et al., 2014). Moreover, some studies have shown that higher DAL is inversely associated with the health of the muscle mass (Granic et al., 2016). However, no study has evaluated the relationship between the DAL and pain intensity. Thus, the current study aimed to investigate the relationship between DAL and intensity of MPs among Iranian adults.

2 | MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 | Study population

This is a cross-sectional study, including 175 men and women. The participants were chosen from among patients expressing pain in physiotherapy and orthopedic clinics, >18 years, in districts 2 and 3 of Tehran, Iran, using multistage cluster random sampling. The sample size was calculated based on the Kelsey formula:

\[ N_{\text{Kelsey}} = \frac{(z_{\frac{1}{2}} + z_p)^2 \rho(1 - \rho)(r + 1)}{r(p_0 - p_1)^2} \]

Where \( \alpha = 0.05, \beta = 0.2, r = 1 \), with 80% power and 95% confidence interval (CI). The inclusion criteria were having MPs. Exclusion criteria were having a bone fracture in the last 3 months, pregnancy and/or lactation, and psychosomatic disorders. Information on age, gender, education, job, and marital status was collected. In addition, delivery type undergone by of women (cesarean, natural, and no delivery) was assessed via questionnaire. This study was approved by the National Committee for Ethics in Biomedical Research under code IR.IAU.SRB.REC.1399.084. All volunteers were informed about the study and provided written informed consent, prior to participation in the study.

2.2 | Anthropometric measurement

The weight was measured by digital scales, when participants were fasted for 8 h and were in light clothing, to the nearest 0.1 kg. The height was measured with Seca 216, to the nearest 0.1 cm, with participants in a standing position and unshod. The waist circumference (WC) (cm) and body mass index (BMI) (kg/m²) were measured for all participants according to standard techniques.

2.3 | Pain assessment

The MPs severity was evaluated using the validated McGill Pain Questionnaire, consisting of 20 questions (Khosravi et al., 2013). The intensity of MPs was scored from 0 (no pain) to 78 (severe pain) and was conducted by an expert nurse.

2.4 | Physical activity assessment

Physical activity (PA) of the participants was evaluated using the short form of the International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ) (Craig et al., 2003). The metabolic equivalent-minutes per week (MET-min/wk) were assessed by summing the activity hours per week. Finally, the variable was divided into three parts: low, moderate, and high activity.

2.5 | Dietary data collection

Food intakes of subjects were gathered using a 7-day 24-h dietary recall through an interview. All foods and beverages consumed were ascertained during the last 7 days. Then, each food and beverage was analyzed for their energy and nutrients with Nutritionist IV (version 7.0; N-Squared Computing, Salem, OR), a software program modified for Iranian foods (Ghodoosi et al., 2020). The software database was drawn from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) food composition tables. In addition, only a total energy range between 800 and 4000 kcal/d was accepted, outside of which, participants were excluded (Banna et al., 2017). PRAL and NEAP were used to discern the DAL: NEAP (mEq/day) = 54.5 × protein (g/day)/potassium (mEq/day) − 10.2 and PRAL (mEq/day) = 0.49 × protein intake (g/d) + 0.037 × phosphorus (mg/day) − 0.021 × potassium (mg/day) − 0.013 × calcium (mg/day) − 0.026 × magnesium (mg/day; Wu et al., 2020).

2.6 | Statistical analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was used to determine the normality of the data, and quantitative and qualitative variables were reported as the mean ± standard deviation (SD) and number (%), respectively. PRAL and NEAP were divided into quartiles based on the trends. To compare the differences between quantitative and qualitative variables, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), and chi-square tests
| Variables | NEAP (mEq/day) | PRAL (mEq/day) | p-Value |
|-----------|----------------|----------------|---------|
|           | Q1  | Q2  | Q3  | Q4  |           | Q1  | Q2  | Q3  | Q4  | p-Value |
| Education (n) % | | | | | | | | | | |
| Diploma or lower | (9) 37.5 | (5) 20.8 | (5) 20.8 | (5) 20.8 | .28 | (8) 33.3 | (4) 16.7 | (6) 25 | (6) 25 | .54 |
| Bachelor’s degree | (22) 29.7 | (22) 29.7 | (14) 18.9 | (16) 21.6 | | (24) 32.4 | (19) 25.7 | (16) 21.6 | (15) 20.3 | |
| Master degree | (9) 20 | (8) 17.8 | (16) 35.6 | (12) 26.7 | | (7) 15.6 | (12) 26.7 | (13) 28.9 | (13) 28.9 | |
| PhD degree | (4) 12.5 | (9) 28.1 | (9) 28.1 | (10) 31.3 | | (5) 15.6 | (8) 25 | (9) 28.1 | (10) 31.3 | |
| Job (n) % | | | | | | | | | | |
| Housekeeper | (5) 31.3 | (7) 43.8 | (2) 12.5 | (2) 12.5 | .01 | (4) 25 | (6) 37.5 | (6) 37.5 | 0 | .05 |
| Labor | 0 | (1) 50 | (1) 50 | 0 | | (1) 50 | 0 | 0 | (1) 50 | |
| Management employee | (1) 25 | (16) 25 | (18) 30 | (13) 20 | | (1) 24.1 | (17) 27.4 | (16) 25.8 | (14) 22.5 | |
| Nonmanagerial employee | (4) 18.8 | (7) 21.9 | (6) 18.8 | (13) 40.6 | | (6) 18.8 | (5) 15.6 | (8) 25 | (13) 40.6 | |
| No job | (11) 55 | (5) 25 | (3) 15 | (1) 5 | | (11) 55 | (5) 25 | (2) 10 | (2) 10 | |
| University student | (7) 16.3 | (8) 18.6 | (14) 32.6 | (14) 32.6 | | (7) 16.3 | (10) 23.3 | (12) 27.9 | (14) 32.6 | |
| Marriage (n) % | | | | | | | | | | |
| Married | (25) 34.7 | (19) 26.4 | (17) 23.6 | (11) 15.3 | .03 | (28) 38.9 | (15) 20.7 | (17) 23.6 | (12) 16.6 | .02 |
| Single | (19) 19.4 | (25) 25.5 | (24) 24.5 | (30) 30.6 | | (16) 16.3 | (27) 27.6 | (25) 25.5 | (30) 30.6 | |
| Divorce | 0 | 0 | (3) 60 | (2) 40 | | 0 | (1) 20 | (2) 40 | (2) 40 | |
| Gender | | | | | | | | | | |
| Male | (5) 10 | (8) 16 | (16) 32 | | .001 | (4) 8 | (11) 22 | (11) 22 | (24) 48 | <.001 |
| Female | (39) 31.2 | (36) 28.8 | (28) 22.4 | | | (40) 32 | (32) 25.6 | (33) 26.4 | (20) 16 | |
| Delivery type (n) % | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cesarean | (17) 50 | (10) 29.4 | (3) 8.8 | (4) 11.8 | .001 | (17) 50 | (9) 26.5 | (5) 14.7 | (3) 8.8 | .001 |
| Natural | (4) 33.3 | (4) 33.3 | (3) 25 | (1) 3.3 | | (4) 33.3 | (3) 25 | (3) 25 | (2) 16.7 | |
| No delivery | (18) 22 | (22) 26.8 | (24) 29.3 | (18) 22 | | (19) 23.2 | (20) 24.4 | (26) 31.7 | (17) 20.7 | |
| Age y (n) % | | | | | | | | | | |
| 18–35 | (15) 14.3 | (26) 24.8 | (29) 27.6 | (35) 33.3 | .006 | (15) 14.3 | (24) 22.9 | (32) 30.5 | (34) 32.4 | .001 |
| 36–55 | (20) 137.7 | (16) 30.2 | (13) 24.5 | (4) 7.5 | | (20) 137.7 | (16) 30.2 | (11) 20.8 | (6) 11.3 | |
| >55 | (9) 52.9 | (2) 11.8 | (2) 11.8 | (4) 23.5 | | (9) 52.9 | (3) 17.6 | (1) 5.9 | (4) 23.5 | |
| PA (n) % | | | | | | | | | | |
| High | (21) 27.6 | (23) 30.3 | (15) 19.7 | (17) 22.4 | .45 | (25) 32.9 | (20) 26.3 | (12) 15.8 | (19) 25 | .01 |
| Moderate | (3) 15 | (3) 15 | (7) 35 | (7) 35 | | (3) 15 | (2) 10 | (5) 25 | (10) 50 | |
| Low | (20) 25.3 | (18) 22.8 | (22) 27.8 | (19) 24.1 | | (16) 20.2 | (21) 26.6 | (27) 34.2 | (15) 19 | |
were used among quartiles, respectively. Linear regression was used, in crude and adjusted models, to understand the relationship between DAL and pain intensity. Model 1 was adjusted for age, PA, energy intake, BMI, WC, while model 2 was adjusted for model 1 + gender, education, job, marital status, and delivery type. In addition, Spearman correlation was conducted to complement linear regression analyses. Statistical significance was accepted, a priori, at $p < .05$.

3 | RESULTS

3.1 | General population characteristics

The mean ± SD age, weight, BMI, and pain intensity of participants were 33.23 ± 10.5 (y), 69.35 ± 15.19 (kg), 24.84 ± 4.32 (kg/m²), and 17.06 ± 17.37 across quartiles of DAL, respectively (Table 1). In addition, the mean ± SD of NEAP and PRAL were 45.13 ± 24.07 (mEq/day) and −0.43 ± 27.52 (mEq/day), respectively. A significant difference was found between job, marriage, sex, delivery type, age, PA, height, and pain intensity among PRAL quartiles ($p < .05$). Among NEAP quartiles, there was a significant difference in job, marriage, sex, delivery type, age, and height ($p < .05$).

3.2 | Dietary intakes across NEAP and PRAL quartiles

Dietary intakes of participants are shown between quartiles, after adjusting energy intake, in Table 2. The mean ± SD of total energy intake was 2230 ± 651 (Kcal) and there was a significant difference in potassium, magnesium, vitamin C, B9, and E, and fiber intake among PRAL quartiles ($p < .05$). Energy, protein, carbohydrate, and fat consumption increased across PRAL groups. Furthermore, dietary calcium, potassium, magnesium, vitamin C and B9, carbohydrate, and fiber intake were significantly different among NEAP quartiles ($p < .05$). Protein and sodium intake increased among NEAP quartiles.

3.3 | The relationship between DAL and pain intensity among participants

In Table 3, linear regression showed a positive relationship between PRAL and NEAP and pain intensity in the crude model and adjusted model 1. This remained between both PRAL and NEAP and pain intensity ($\hat{p} = 4.67$, 95% CI = 2.15–7.19, $p < .001$; $\hat{p} = 4.03$, 95% CI = 1.49–6.58, $p = .002$), respectively, after adjusting all confounders in model 2. In addition, we saw a negative, weak correlation between age, gender, and PRAL and NEAP. Moreover, MPs pain and PRAL and NEAP had a positive weak correlation ($r = 0.24$, $p = .001$; Table 4).
| Variables amounts per day<sup>a</sup> | NEAP (mEq/day) | PRAL (mEq/day) | p-Value | NEAP (mEq/day) | PRAL (mEq/day) | p-Value |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------|----------------|----------------|----------|
| Energy (Kcal)                   | 2184.82 ± 673.49 | 2096.69 ± 550.39 | 2254.45 ± 614.65 | 2391.29 ± 741.81 | .19 | 2274.64 ± 623.00 | 1993.18 ± 584.60 | 1998.45 ± 529.56 | 2651.92 ± 648.98 | <.001 |
| Minerals                        |                |                |          |                |                |          |
| Calcium (mg/day)                | 1207.20 ± 622.97 | 1209.49 ± 567.51 | 1365.55 ± 478.92 | 1106.73 ± 537.16 | .004 | 1285.23 ± 585.66 | 1105.67 ± 573.95 | 1144.41 ± 475.58 | 1353.65 ± 568.92 | .49 |
| Potassium (mg/day)              | 4593.57 ± 1971.99 | 3675.58 ± 1195.37 | 3731.55 ± 1145.43 | 3174.25 ± 1374.88 | <.001 | 4827.73 ± 1817.27 | 3342.67 ± 1163.59 | 3157.14 ± 1281.63 | 3851.25 ± 1244.81 | <.001 |
| Phosphorus (mg/day)             | 1462.96 ± 626.30 | 1478.75 ± 596.40 | 1679.71 ± 544.72 | 1629.16 ± 899.23 | .37 | 1533.87 ± 598.68 | 1326.44 ± 519.94 | 1403.16 ± 540.45 | 1980.22 ± 785.15 | .24 |
| Magnesium (mg/day)              | 395.34 ± 179.38 | 336.57 ± 127.38 | 339.50 ± 105.01 | 304.73 ± 135.62 | <.001 | 415.77 ± 168.85 | 306.97 ± 128.14 | 286.60 ± 199.26 | 366.85 ± 121.16 | <.001 |
| Sodium (mg/day)                 | 3590.22 ± 849.46 | 3758.71 ± 730.85 | 3965.63 ± 782.04 | 4327.20 ± 1280.31 | .006 | 3723.05 ± 881.85 | 3702.91 ± 720.67 | 3732.95 ± 760.68 | 4468.67 ± 1216.55 | .08 |
| Vitamins                        |                |                |          |                |                |          |
| C                               | 183.04 ± 90.91  | 123.84 ± 50.97  | 122.83 ± 66.49  | 85.16 ± 54.12  | <.001 | 192.43 ± 83.89  | 115.86 ± 52.18  | 100.71 ± 49.27  | 106.56 ± 54.78  | <.001 |
| B9                              | 469.44 ± 312.63 | 346.51 ± 123.71 | 334.26 ± 125.94 | 260.28 ± 102.07 | <.001 | 486.12 ± 305.13 | 316.28 ± 123.65 | 290.61 ± 124.99 | 318.75 ± 116.74 | <.001 |
| E                               | 23.68 ± 39.74   | 22.23 ± 32.69   | 18.30 ± 26.39   | 14.74 ± 9.64   | .17 | 20.96 ± 31.59   | 25.03 ± 42.91   | 17.88 ± 22.65   | 15.33 ± 11.05   | .01 |
| Macronutrients                  |                |                |          |                |                |          |
| Protein (g/day)                 | 74.82 ± 30.33   | 80.64 ± 26.71   | 98.46 ± 32.08   | 134.68 ± 113.08 | <.001 | 80.44 ± 28.50   | 74.14 ± 26.75   | 82.52 ± 31.31   | 150.14 ± 104.66 | <.001 |
| Carbohydrate (g/day)            | 276.15 ± 121.26 | 221.75 ± 69.57  | 354.40 ± 46.17  | 239.57 ± 124.52 | .002 | 232.20 ± 110.28 | 211.25 ± 69.34  | 213.90 ± 69.39  | 263.56 ± 122.42 | <.001 |
| Fat (g/day)                     | 97.08 ± 45.05   | 106.24 ± 49.78  | 105.54 ± 39.30  | 106.68 ± 27.55  | .17 | 97.91 ± 40.13   | 102.20 ± 55.16  | 97.10 ± 33.49   | 118.24 ± 29.27  | .04 |
| Fiber (g/day)                   | 23.93 ± 16.66   | 14.00 ± 4.63    | 13.05 ± 4.84    | 9.37 ± 5.08    | <.001 | 24.93 ± 16.04   | 12.40 ± 4.47    | 11.32 ± 4.87    | 11.76 ± 5.73    | <.001 |

Abbreviations: NEAP, net endogenous acid production; PRAL, potential renal acid load.
Calculated by analysis of variance (ANOVA) and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA).
All the variables, except energy, adjusted for energy intake. Bold values indicates that P-value < .05 was significant.
<sup>a</sup>Mean ± SD.
intake of fiber is 25 g per day for women and 38 g per day for men (Totsch et al., 2016); however, fiber intake was lower in this study and tended to decrease with higher intakes of DAL.

Some studies have shown a significant relationship between DAL and inflammation. For instance, higher DAL may cause metabolic acidosis, which can lead to the production of various inflammatory markers (Wu et al., 2019). Moreover, increasing pro-inflammatory cytokines, such as interleukin 1β (IL-1β), interleukin 6 (IL-6), and tumor necrosis factor (TNF-α), and reducing serum level of anti-inflammatory markers (interleukin 4 (IL-4), interleukin 10 (IL-10), interleukin 11 (IL-11), interleukin 13 (IL-13), and transforming growth factor-β (TGF-β)), are also responsible for nerve injury and feeling pain (Wu et al., 2019). The amount of potassium and magnesium, and vitamin C and B9 decreased constantly across the increasing quartiles of NEAP and PRAL. Potassium is needed for muscle contractions (Elma et al., 2020), while a Mediterranean-style diet, which is full of potassium, magnesium, and vitamin C and E, can be a protective diet for rheumatoid arthritis (Kaushik et al., 2020). Dietary vitamin C can contribute to antioxidant capacity and improve muscle soreness (Bryer & Goldfarb, 2006). In this study, dietary vitamin C decreased with higher DAL adherence. Interestingly, some previous studies have shown that vitamin B supplementation (such as B9) can alleviate neuropathic pain (Abdelrahman & Hackshaw, 2021). In the present study, a higher consumption of sodium was seen concomitant to a high DAL. It is evident that excess salt intake alters the endothelial function increasing production of TGF-β and modulating vascular endothelial growth factor C (VEGF-C) and increasing risk of arthritis. In addition, a greater intake of sodium can increase pain (Salgado et al., 2015). Finally, foods rich in acid-producing properties are usually low in magnesium; this nutrient can help to eliminate chronic pain due to prolonged opening of calcium channels and activation of N-methyl-D-aspartate (NMDA) receptors, which can remain open in the absence of magnesium (Tarleton et al., 2020).

Aligned with increasing PRAL, protein, carbohydrate, and fat intakes were concurrently elevated. In line with this study, the consumption of high amounts of carbohydrates can reportedly play an important role in oxidative stress, specifically via glucose oxidation (Kaushik et al., 2020). In addition, animal proteins, which are high in methionine, can reduce blood pH and the incidence of musculoskeletal pain (Elma et al., 2020). In contrast with the present study, a prior investigation found a significant positive association between a higher DAL and greater muscle strength. On the other hand consistent with this study, higher PRAL and NEAP scores may be to bone and muscle loss, which may elicit feelings of pain (Chan et al., 2015) through the ubiquitin–proteasome pathway and insulin-like growth factor-1 (IGF-1) signaling (Hayhoe et al., 2020; Mohammadpour et al., 2020). Finally, higher secretion of cortisol and muscle loss may be another probable mechanism of following higher DAL diets (Williamson et al., 2021).

To the best of our knowledge, the current study represents the first to have investigated DAL and MPs intensity. Nevertheless, one of the limitations of the present study is the imbalanced sample, with a disproportionate number of women versus men, which could

### TABLE 3 The association of NEAP and PRAL with pain intensity among subjects

| Variables                  | Pain intensity<sup>a</sup> |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
|                            | B median (95% CI)         |
| NEAP (mEq/day)             |                           |
| Crude                     | 2.30 (0.001–4.61)         |
| M1                        | 3.00 (0.55–5.45)          |
| M2                        | 4.03 (1.49–6.58)          |
| PRAL (mEq/day)            |                           |
| Crude                     | 2.46 (0.17–4.74)          |
| M1                        | 3.32 (0.87–5.77)          |
| M2                        | 4.67 (2.15–7.19)          |

Abbreviations: M1: Adjusted for age, PA, energy intake, BMI, body mass index, WC, waist circumference. M2: Adjusted for model 1+ gender, education, job, marital status, delivery type. Bold values indicates that P-value < .05 was significant.

<sup>a</sup>Linear regression was used; B: the rate of change per unit, CI, confidence interval; PRAL, Potential renal acid load; NEAP, Net endogenous acid production.

### TABLE 4 The correlation between dietary acid load (DAL) and musculoskeletal pain intensity

| Variables                  | DAL (mEq/day) | NEAP (mEq/day) |
|----------------------------|--------------|----------------|
|                            | R<sup>p</sup> | R<sup>p</sup>  |
| PA (met/h/w)               | −0.07 (.31)  | −0.05 (.45)    |
| Age (y)                    | −0.33** .001 | −0.32** .001   |
| Gender                     | −0.33** .001 | −0.32** .001   |
| Job status                 | 0.09 (.20)   | 0.09 (.21)     |
| Delivery type              | 0.12 (.11)   | 0.14 (.05)     |
| Marital status             | −0.17 .1     | −0.14 .05      |
| Education status           | 0.15a .04    | 0.18 .01       |
| BMI (kg/m<sup>2</sup>)     | −0.004 (.35) | 0.06 .37      |
| Energy intake (kcal)       | 0.18** .01   | 0.12 .11       |
| MPs intensity              | 0.24** .001  | 0.24** .001    |

Abbreviations: BMI, body mass index; MPs, musculoskeletal pain condition; NEAP, net endogenous acid production; PA, physical activity; PRAL, potential renal acid load.

Analyses were performed based on the Spearman correlation test. Bold values indicate that P-value < .05 was significant. *Significant relationship less than .05.; **Significant relationship less than .01.

## 4 DISCUSSION

In this study, for the first time, we assessed the association between pain intensity and both NEAP and PRAL, after adjusting for a comprehensive set of confounders. Accordingly, we noted that for each unit reduction of DAL, a ≥4-unit reduction in pain intensity was found. Concordant with this study, Totsch et al. found that poor diet quality, which is low in fruits and vegetables (low in potassium, vitamin C, and fiber) and high in processed red meat, may be responsible for reducing nociceptive sensitivity and increasing chronic pain in obese, inflamed, mice (Totsch et al., 2016). The recommended daily

### Table 1 | The correlation between dietary acid load (DAL) and musculoskeletal pain intensity

| Variables                  | DAL (mEq/day) | NEAP (mEq/day) |
|----------------------------|--------------|----------------|
|                            | R<sup>p</sup> | R<sup>p</sup>  |
| PA (met/h/w)               | −0.07 (.31)  | −0.05 (.45)    |
| Age (y)                    | −0.33** .001 | −0.32** .001   |
| Gender                     | −0.33** .001 | −0.32** .001   |
| Job status                 | 0.09 (.20)   | 0.09 (.21)     |
| Delivery type              | 0.12 (.11)   | 0.14 (.05)     |
| Marital status             | −0.17 .1     | −0.14 .05      |
| Education status           | 0.15a .04    | 0.18 .01       |
| BMI (kg/m<sup>2</sup>)     | −0.004 (.35) | 0.06 .37      |
| Energy intake (kcal)       | 0.18** .01   | 0.12 .11       |
| MPs intensity              | 0.24** .001  | 0.24** .001    |

Abbreviations: BMI, body mass index; MPs, musculoskeletal pain condition; NEAP, net endogenous acid production; PA, physical activity; PRAL, potential renal acid load.

Analyses were performed based on the Spearman correlation test. Bold values indicate that P-value < .05 was significant. *Significant relationship less than .05.; **Significant relationship less than .01.

## 4 DISCUSSION

In this study, for the first time, we assessed the association between pain intensity and both NEAP and PRAL, after adjusting for a comprehensive set of confounders. Accordingly, we noted that for each unit reduction of DAL, a ≥4-unit reduction in pain intensity was found. Concordant with this study, Totsch et al. found that poor diet quality, which is low in fruits and vegetables (low in potassium, vitamin C, and fiber) and high in processed red meat, may be responsible for reducing nociceptive sensitivity and increasing chronic pain in obese, inflamed, mice (Totsch et al., 2016). The recommended daily

### Table 1 | The correlation between dietary acid load (DAL) and musculoskeletal pain intensity

| Variables                  | DAL (mEq/day) | NEAP (mEq/day) |
|----------------------------|--------------|----------------|
|                            | R<sup>p</sup> | R<sup>p</sup>  |
| PA (met/h/w)               | −0.07 (.31)  | −0.05 (.45)    |
| Age (y)                    | −0.33** .001 | −0.32** .001   |
| Gender                     | −0.33** .001 | −0.32** .001   |
| Job status                 | 0.09 (.20)   | 0.09 (.21)     |
| Delivery type              | 0.12 (.11)   | 0.14 (.05)     |
| Marital status             | −0.17 .1     | −0.14 .05      |
| Education status           | 0.15a .04    | 0.18 .01       |
| BMI (kg/m<sup>2</sup>)     | −0.004 (.35) | 0.06 .37      |
| Energy intake (kcal)       | 0.18** .01   | 0.12 .11       |
| MPs intensity              | 0.24** .001  | 0.24** .001    |

Abbreviations: BMI, body mass index; MPs, musculoskeletal pain condition; NEAP, net endogenous acid production; PA, physical activity; PRAL, potential renal acid load.

Analyses were performed based on the Spearman correlation test. Bold values indicate that P-value < .05 was significant. *Significant relationship less than .05.; **Significant relationship less than .01.
impact our findings. Women have been post to report greater pain compared with men due to greater nerve density (Paller et al., 2009). Furthermore, the population of this study was mostly among young adults (18–35 years) and may explain the low mean score of pain intensity. Assessing older adults in the quarantine period of COVID-19 was logistically impractical, and this may have influenced the final results. In addition, based on the weak associations found, some hidden confounders may have influenced the results. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design of the study precludes causal inferences being made. Finally, the recall-based measurements in the present study are dependent on memory, cooperation, and communication ability of the subject, all of which may be subject to bias. Clearly, further studies are needed to ascertain the long-term impact of DAL on musculoskeletal pain.

5 CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates a significant, positive relationship between DAL and pain intensity among adults with musculoskeletal pain.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author thanks the study participants for their cooperation and assistance in physical examinations. This study was supported by SRBIAU (IR.IAU.SRB.REC.1399.084).

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author declares that there is no competing interest.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD STATEMENT

The National Committee for Ethics in Biomedical Research approved this study under code IR.IAU.SRB.REC.1399.084. The specifics of the study were told to all qualified participants and written consent was obtained. The data are not publicly available because of containing information that could compromise the privacy of the research. Data are available from the authors upon reasonable request and with permission.

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Committee for Ethics in Biomedical Research approved this study under code IR.IAU.SRB.REC.1399.084.

CONSENT FOR PUBLICATION

The author listed approved the final manuscript and consent for publication.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data supporting the results of this study are available from the Islamic Azad University of Science and Research Branch (SRBIAU) and have been used under license for the current analysis. However, data are available from the writers with the permission of the clinics and upon fair requests. It has been stated in our contract between the clinic and us that they never send us details about the participants because our data are part of a great database. Even they have their own competent statistics expert who analyzes our findings, and the results were written based on his report.

ORCID

Niki Bahrampour https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7408-8602

REFERENCES

Abdelrahman, K. M., & Hackshaw, K. V. (2021). Nutritional supplements for the treatment of neuropathic pain. *Biomedicines, 9*(6), 674. https://doi.org/10.3390/biomedicines9060674

Banna, J. C., McCrory, M. A., Fialkowski, M. K., & Boushey, C. (2017). Examining plausibility of self-reported energy intake data: Considerations for method selection. *Frontiers in Nutrition, 4*, 45. https://doi.org/10.3389/fnut.2017.00045

Bryer, S. C., & Goldfarb, A. H. (2006). Effect of high dose vitamin C supplementation on muscle soreness, damage, function, and oxidative stress to eccentric exercise. *International Journal of Sport Nutrition and Exercise Metabolism, 16*(3), 270–280. https://doi.org/10.1123/ijsnem.16.3.270

Chan, R., Leung, J., & Woo, J. (2015). Association between estimated net endogenous acid production and subsequent decline in muscle mass over four years in ambulatory older Chinese people in Hong Kong: A prospective cohort study. *The Journals of Gerontology: Series A, 70*(7), 905–911. https://doi.org/10.1093/gerona/glu215

Chen, J. (, Sehdev, J. S. (2019). *Physiology, pain*. StatPearls Publishing, [cited 2020 Dec 10]. Available from: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/3096911

Craig, C. L., Marshall, A. L., Sjöström, M., Bauman, A. E., Booth, M. L., Ainsworth, B. E., Pratt, M., Ekelund, U., Yngve, A., Sallis, J. F., & Oja, P. (2003). International physical activity questionnaire: 12-Country reliability and validity. *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise, 35*(8), 1381–1395. https://doi.org/10.1249/01.MSS.0000078924.61453.FB

Cunha, P., Paciência, I., Cavaleiro Rufo, J., Castro Mendes, F., Farafia, M., Barros, R., Silva, D., Delgado, L., Padrão, P., Moreira, A., & Moreira, P. (2019). Dietary acid load: A novel nutritional target in overweight/obese children with asthma? *Nutrients, 11*(9), 2072–6643. https://doi.org/10.3390/nu11092255

Dragan, S., Serban, M.-C., Damian, G., Buleu, F., Valcovici, M., & Christodorescu, R. (2020). Dietary patterns and interventions to alleviate chronic pain. *Nutrients, 12*(9), 2072–6643. https://www.mdpi.com/2072-6643/12/9/2510

Dueñas, M., Ojeda, B., Salazar, A., Mico, J. A., & Falide, I. (2016). A review of chronic pain impact on patients, their social environment and the health care system. *Journal of Pain Research, 9*, 457–467. Available from http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27418853

Elma, Ö., Yilmaz, S. T., Delliens, T., Coppieters, I., Clarys, P., Nijs, J. O., & Malfliet, A. (2020). Do nutritional factors interact with chronic musculoskeletal pain? A systematic review. *Journal of Clinical Medicine, 9*(3), 702. https://doi.org/10.3390/jcm9030702

El-Metwally, A., Shaikh, Q., Aldiab, A., Al-Zahrani, J., Al-Ghamdi, S., Arafshee, A. A., Housheh, M., Daar, O. B., Nooruddin, S., Razzaq, H. A., & Aldossari, K. K. (2019). The prevalence of chronic pain and its associated factors among Saudi Al-Kharj population; A cross sectional study. *BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders, 20*(1), 177. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12891-019-2555-7

Frassetto, L., Banerjee, T., Powe, N., & Sebastian, A. (2018). Acid balance, dietary acid load, and bone effects—a controversial subject. *Nutrients, 10*(4), 2072–6643. https://doi.org/10.3390/nu10040517

Ghodoosi, N., Mirzababaei, A., Rashidbeysi, E., Badrooj, N., Sajjadi, S. F., Setayesh, L., Yekaninejad, M. S., Keshavarz, S. A., & Shiraseb, F.
BAHRAMPOUR AND CLARK

& Mirzai, K. (2020). Associations of dietary inflammatory index, serum levels of MCP-1 and body composition in Iranian overweight and obese women: A cross-sectional study. BMC Research Notes, 13(1), 544. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13104-020-05390-x

Granic, A., Jagger, C., Davies, K., Adamson, A., Kirkwood, T., Hill, T. R., Siervo, M., Mathers, J. C., & Sayer, A. A. (2016). Effect of dietary patterns on muscle strength and physical performance in the very old: Findings from the Newcastle 85+ study. PLoS One, 11(3), e0149699. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0149699

Hayhoe, R. P. G., Abdelhamid, A., Luben, R. N., Khaw, K.-T., & Welch, A. A. (2020). Dietary acid–base load and its association with risk of osteoporotic fractures and low estimated skeletal muscle mass. European Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 74(S1), 33–42. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41430-020-0686-4

Institute of Medicine (US) Committee on Pain D and CIB, Osterweis, M., Kleinman, A., & Mechanic, D. Introduction. 1987; Available from: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK219246/

Kaushik, A. S., Strath, L. J., & Sorge, R. E. (2020). Dietary interventions for treatment of chronic pain: Oxidative stress and inflammation. Pain and Therapy, 9(2), 487–498. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40122-020-00200-5

Khosravi, M., Sadighi, S., Moradi, S., & Zendehdel, K. (2013). Persian-McGill pain questionnaire; translation, adaptation and reliability in cancer patients: A brief report. Tehran University Medical Journal, 71(1), 53–58. Available from http://tumj.tums.ac.ir

Martin, K. R., & Reid, D. M. (2017). Is there role for vitamin D in the treatment of chronic pain? Therapeutic Advances in Musculoskeletal Disease, 9, 131–135.

Mills, S. E., Nicolson, K. P., & Smith, B. H. (2019). Chronic pain: A review of its epidemiology and associated factors in population-based studies. British Journal of Anaesthesia, 123(2), e273–e283. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bja.2019.03.023

Mohammadpour, S., Djaafari, F., Davazrani, S., Djafarian, K., Clark, C. C. T., & Shab-Bidar, S. (2020). The association between dietary acid load and muscle strength among Iranian adults. BMC Research Notes, 13(1), 476. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13104-020-05309-6

Paller, C. J., Campbell, C. M., Edwards, R. R., & Dobs, A. S. (2009). Sex-based differences in pain perception and treatment. Pain Medicine, 10(2), 289–299. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1526-4637.2008.00558.x

Salgado, E., Bes-Rastrollo, M., de Irala, J., Carmona, L., & Gómez-Reino, J. J. (2015). High sodium intake is associated with self-reported rheumatoid arthritis: A cross sectional and case control analysis within the SUN cohort. Medicine (Baltimore) 94(37), e0924. https://doi.org/10.1097/MD.0000000000000924

Tarleton, E. K., Kennedy, A. G., Rose, G. L., & Littenberg, B. (2020). Relationship between magnesium intake and chronic pain in U.S. adults. Nutrients, 12(7), 2072–6643. https://doi.org/10.3390/nu12072104

Totsch, S. K., Waite, M. E., Tomkovich, A., Quinn, T. L., Gower, B. A., & Sorge, R. E. (2016). Total western diet alters mechanical and thermal sensitivity and prolongs hypersensitivity following complete Freund’s adjuvant in mice. The Journal of Pain, 17(1), 119–125. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpain.2015.10.006

Williamson, M., Moustaid-Moussa, N., & Gollahon, L. (2021). The molecular effects of dietary acid load on metabolic disease (The Cellular PasA Doble: The Fast-Paced Dance of pH Regulation). Frontiers in Molecular Medicine, 1. https://doi.org/10.3389/fmmed.2021.777088

Wu, T., Hsu, F.-C., & Pierce, J. P. (2020). Acid-producing diet and depressive symptoms among breast cancer survivors: A longitudinal study. Cancers, 12(11), 2072–6694. https://doi.org/10.3390/cancers12113183

Wu, T., Seaver, P., Lemus, H., Hollenbach, K., Wang, E., & Pierce, J. P. (2019). Associations between dietary acid load and biomarkers of inflammation and hyperglycemia in breast cancer survivors. Nutrients, 11(8), 2072–6643. https://doi.org/10.3390/nu11081913

Zampieri, F. G., Kellum, J. A., Park, M., Ranzani, O. T., Barbeiro, H. V., de Souza, H. P., da Cruz Neto, L., & Pinheiro da Silva, F. (2014). Relationship between acid–base status and inflammation in the critically ill. Critical Care, 18(4), R154. https://doi.org/10.1186/cc13993

How to cite this article: Bahrampour, N., & Clark, C. C. T. (2022). The relationship between dietary acid load and intensity of musculoskeletal pain condition: A population-based study. Food Science & Nutrition, 10, 2542–2549. https://doi.org/10.1002/fsn3.2859