**iNOS IMMUNOREACTIVITY IN THE OVARIES OF RATS FEEDING WITH MUSSEL (Mytilus galloprovincialis)**

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**ARTICLE INFO**

| Article History: | ABSTRACT |
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| Received: 19 March 2018 | The ovary is an endocrine and exocrine gland that plays primary role in female development and reproductive activities. The seamen are collecting a lot of heavy metals by serving as filters in the seas. Since the last decades of the nineteenth century and until today, the study of the consequences of human exposure to heavy metals has risen as a central research area in the toxicological field. Among the group of metals with proven human toxicity aluminum (Al) and lead (Pb) are known to be highly neurotoxic. The Mediterranean mussel (Mytilus galloprovincialis) is a species of bivalve, a marine mollusc in the family Mytilidae. In our previous researches, we found Al, zinc (Zn) and iron (Fe) values were higher in mussels taken from Çamburnu region of the Dardanelles. In many tumors, inducible nitric oxide synthase (iNOS) expression is high, however, the role of iNOS during tumor development is very complex and quite perplexing, with both promoting and inhibiting actions having been described. The purpose of the study is to demonstrate the iNOS immunoreactivity in the ovarian tissues of rats which are fed with mussels that are collected from the Çamburnu region of the Dardanelles. The mussels given as food to the rats were removed from the Çamburnu region of the Dardanelles. Average 100±10 g weight were selected. After the beaks were overcooked, the meat broke off and the meat at 100 degrees was dried. Two groups of rats are included in the study, group 1 (n=6), control group fed with standard rat food, group 2 (n=6), 90% mussels and 10% standard rat food daily. To detect iNOS localization in the tissues, the LAB-SA Detection System was used. iNOS immunoreactivity was detected in the interstitial cell cytoplasm of the ovaries of rats fed with mussel. iNOS immunoreactivity was also observed in germ cell cytoplasm in some primordial follicles. There was statistically significant difference between the iNOS immunoreactivity of the interstitial cells in the ovarian parenchyma of the rats in the experimental and control groups (p> 0.05). |
| Accepted: 26 April 2018 | |

**Keywords:** Dardanelles, mussel, inducible nitric oxide synthase, rat, ovary.

**DOI:** 10.26900/jsp.2018.13

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Pb is a heavy metal with no known biological function in humans. On the contrary, it can damage various systems of the body including the hematopoietic, renal and skeletal systems with the central nervous system being its primary target [Wilson et al., 2000]. The susceptibility to Pb toxicity is influenced by several factors such as environmental exposure, age and nutritional status. Human exposure to Pb occurs via food, water, air and soil. Food
and water Pb sources include the use of Pb-containing ceramic dishware, metal plumbing, and food cans that contain Pb solder (White et al., 2007).

Oxidative stress, oxidative damage to cellular components, and the activation of oxidant sensitive transcription factor could in part underlie some of the toxic effects of Pb. The deleterious effects of Pb can involve both, ROS and reactive nitrogen species. Oxidative stress has been associated with Pb exposure in humans and in experimental animal models. In humans occupationally exposed to Pb, biomarkers of oxidative stress such as malondialdehyde, GSH status, glutathione peroxidase and catalase, exceeded the mean value of the control population (Costa et al., 1997; Garcon et al., 2004; Devi et al., 2007). The interference with nitric oxide production might represent another mechanism accounting for Pb neurotoxicity. Pb affects neuronal nitric oxide synthase (nNOS) in the developing rat brain. Rats perinatally exposed to Pb had decreased nNOS protein levels and activity in cerebellum and hippocampus at PND 21 and 35 as compared to their age-matched controls (Chetty et al., 2001).

In general, perinatal rat exposure to low levels of Pb causes an increased sensitivity of brain dopamine D2 and D3 receptors (Cory-Slechta et al. 1992; Gedeon et al., 2001), increased hippocampal activity of tyrosine hydroxylase [Bielszycyk et al., 1998], produces higher levels of dopamine (Leret et al., 2002; Devi et al., 2005), and enhances catecholaminergic neurotransmission in cerebral cortex, hippocampus and cerebellum due to increased turnover of norepinephrine (Devi et al., 2005). On the otherhand, perinatal exposure to high Pb concentrations decreases norepinephrine, epinephrine and dopamine levels in the cerebral cortex, hippocampus and cerebellum (Devi et al., 2005; Dubas et al., 1978; Sidhu et al., 2003), and decreases the activities of acetylcholinesterase (Sidhu et al., 2003), monoamine oxidase (Devi et al., 2005), and tyrosine hydroxylase (Mc Intosh et al., 1989).

Lead intoxication has been shown to promote atherosclerosis in experimental animals. There are also indications that chronic lead exposure may affect systemic lipid metabolism (Revis et al., 1981). Current evidence on lead-induced oxidative stress has been based mostly on in vitro experiments (Ding et al., 2000) or studies conducted in animals (Fowler et al., 2004).

In this study, it was aimed to determine the iNOS immunoreactivity in the ovarian tissue of rats fed with mussels containing heavy metal salts.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2.1. Ethics Statement

A total of 12 female Wistar albino rats, weighing 300±10 g, were used in the study. The study protocol was approved by the Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University Ethics Committee for Animal Research (ÇOMÜ- HADYEK / 2011-08-08).

2.2. Animal Model

The rats were kept for 30 days under appropriate conditions of temperature/humidity and a 12-h light cycle while being provided sufficient water and feed. The rats were randomly selected and divided into 2 groups. The first group (n: 6) was the control group; standard rat diet. Experimental group (n: 6): 90% mussel + 10% standard rat diet. Rats were fed twice daily for 30 days at 15% of their weight every morning and evening at the same time. The mussels given as food to the rats were removed from the Dardanelles Çamburnu region (Photo 1). Average 100±20 g weight were selected. After the beaks were overcooked, the meat broke off and the meat at 100 degrees was dried. It was weighed into each rat’s weight and 10 mg/kg intraperitoenal ketamine hydrochloride (Ketalar, Eczacibasi, Istanbul, Turkey), and 20 mg/kg of alfaxyme 2% (Rompun, Bayer Turkey Pharmaceutical Ltd., Istanbul, Turkey) were anesthetized and taken right ovary.
The rats, which had been hatchlings, were treated after the operation and delivered to the animal shelter for further investigations.

2.3. Histological evaluation

The ovarian tissues were maintained in immunofix (Leica) for 24 hours for histopathological examination. The paraffin embedded ovarian tissues were stained with hematoxylin and eosin (H & E) at a thickness of 5 microns. Immunohistochemical staining method was applied by cutting the paraffin embedded ovarian tissues 3 microns in thickness. The LAB-SA Detection System, (Histostain-Plus Bulk Kit, Invitrogen) was applied to determine immunohistochemical localization of iNOS enzyme in tissues. Sections taken from paraffin blocks were deparaffinized and rehydrated. Subsequently, 3% H₂O₂ was applied to the sections to block endogenous peroxidase activity.

The sections were incubated in citrate buffer (0.1 M, pH: 6.0) in the microwave (800 watts, 10 min) for antigen retrieval, and the samples were washed with phosphate buffer solution (PBS, 0.1 M, pH 7.2). After the samples had been incubated in the blocking buffer for 10 min, they were washed with PBS. Next, slides were incubated with anti-iNOS (inducible nitric oxide synthase) antibody (anti-NOS2, Santa Cruz Biotechnology), which was diluted at 1: 400 for the ovarium, for an hour at room temperature, and they were then washed with PBS. Afterwards, biotinylated secondary antibody was applied to the samples for 30 min (Ultravision Detection System, Thermo Scientific, Fremont, USA). Then the samples were washed with PBS again and incubated with Broad Spectrum Antibody (Invitrogen, USA) for 30 min. After washing the samples, diaminobenzadine-tetrahydrochlorid (DAB, Invitrogen Corporation) was applied to them. Negative control was used to determine specific iNOS immunoreactivity, and hematoxylin stain was used as a nuclear counter stain.

Dye samples were evaluated on the Zeiss AXIO Scope 1 brand research microscope. Analysis of iNOS immunoreactive cells in the ovarium parenchyma was performed using the Leica LAS V3.8 image analysis system. The Mann Whitney U-test was used the Non Parametric tests to determine the differences between the experimental group and the control group.

3. RESULT

In the ovarian tissue samples from the rats in the experimental groups, extensive positive iNOS immunoreactivity was observed in the interstitial cell (Figure 1) and germ cell cytoplasm in the primordial follicle (Figure 2) when the anti-NOS2 antibody was applied. iNOS immunoreactivity was not observed in the same tissue samples without iNOS antibody (Figure 3).

Positive iNOS immunoreactivity was not detected in the ovarian tissue samples from rats in the control group when anti-NOS2 antibody was applied (Figure 4). Statistical Analysis

There was statistically significant difference between the iNOS immunoreactivity of the interstitial cells in the ovarian parenchyma of the experimental and control groups (p>0.05).

4. CONCLUSION

In our study, positive iNOS immunoreactivity was detected in germ cell cytoplasm in interstitial cells and primordial follicles in the ovaries of rats fed with mussels containing heavy metal salts such as lead, copper, aluminum, zinc and iron. Various in vitro and in vivo studies have explored the underlying mechanisms by which chronic low level lead exposure can raise arterial pressure, thereby cardiovascular disease (CVD) development. These studies have identified the involvement of oxidative stress and inflammation...
iNOS catalyzes the production of NO, which has an important role in the maintenance of vascular regulation and immune system (Willerson et al., 2004).

Although not fully proven, Al accumulation in the brain is proposed to be associated with neurodegenerative diseases, including Alzheimer’s dementia, Parkinson’s disease, amytrophic lateral sclerosis, and dialysis encephalopathy (Gonçalves et al., 2007). Nutritional status is another significant risk factor for Pb intoxication and its effects. Iron, zinc and calcium deficiencies increase the retention of ingested Pb, which can also increase Pb gastrointestinal absorption (Goyer, 1996; Ruff et al., 1996), and affect the susceptibility to Pb neurotoxicity (Aimo et al., 2006). Human exposure to Al is mainly caused by environmental factors, such as soil contamination (Yokel et al., 2008). Al absorption are the gastrointestinal tract (Ittel, 1993).

Minerals play a critical role in iNOS expression. High levels of copper increase iNOS expression in lung, liver, and aorta (Cuzzocrea et al., 2003), thus demonstrating that excessive copper can have detrimental effects on both constitutive and inducible NO synthesis. The combined effects of increased iNOS expression and decreased eNOS activity in the same anatomical location could have profound consequences on inflammatory processes of cells within the cardiovascular bed. Iron either increases iNOS expression in macrophages and proximal tubules (Chen et al., 2001) or suppresses elevated iNOS protein levels in the heart and kidney (Ni et al., 1997). Thus, iron excess or deficiency can impair immunological, cardiovascular, and renal function. In addition, zinc modulates iNOS expression in the small intestine, thereby preventing cytokine-induced diarrhea (Cui et al., 1997). In addition, chromium and lead inhibit, but nickel and cobalt increase, iNOS expression in activated macrophages (Tian et al., 1996), suggesting an important role for NO in mediating the cytotoxic effects of environmental contamination by metals.

In pathological conditions, nitric oxide (NO) is a molecule of nitric oxide synthase (NOS) synthesized from L-arginine, which has a short potent free radical structure. As a result of high NOS production in pathological conditions, NO becomes neurotoxic and plays a role as cytotoxic molecule in the progress of secondary damage as a free radical. Our previous researches have shown that some mollusc species such as mussels grown in the Dardanelles, sea grass, sea chestnut, aquiva, and heavy metals such as iron, zinc, aluminum, lead and copper are found in sea water (Demir et al., 2011; Gezen et al. 2011; Ozkurnaz et al., 2012; Gezen et al. 2011).

In our work, detection of positive iNOS immunoreactivity in germ cell cytoplasm of interstitial cells and primordial follicles in the ovaries of rats fed with mussels containing heavy metal salts such as lead, copper, aluminum, zinc and iron in our study suggests that heavy metal salts may promote iNOS release.

The ovary is one of the endocrine glands that plays an important role in the maintenance of the reproductive activities [Carr, 1998]. The presence of iNOS immunoreactivity in these cells is thought to impair the production of gonadal hormones secreted from these cells and may result in low fertility results.
Footnotes
**At the time of this research, Dr. Aslı MURATLI was working at Department of Pathology of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University.
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Photo 1. The area where the mussels are collected
Arrow: Çamburnu region (Çanakkale, Turkey)
Star: Dardanelles

Figure 1. Experimental groups; 90% mussels + 10% standard rat diet standard rat feeds were given daily. Rat ovarium, (iNOS x10).
a. Arrow: Positive staining of iNOS in the cytoplasm of interstitial cells,
b. Star: Secondary follicle
Figure 2. Experimental groups; 90% mussels + 10% standard rat diet standard rat feeds were given daily. Rat ovarium, (iNOS x100).

a. Arrow head: Positive staining of iNOS in the cytoplasm of interstitial cells,
b. Arrow: Positive staining of iNOS in the cytoplasm of primordial follicle.

Figure 3. Experimental groups; 90% mussels + 10% standard rat diet standard rat feeds were given daily. Rat ovarium, Negative control staining of iNOS

a. Star: Secondary follicle,
b. Arrow: Interstitial cells,
c. Arrow head: Primary follicle,
d. Plus: Corpus luteum,
Figure 4. Control groups; 100% standard rat diet were given daily. Rat ovarium, (iNOS x20).

a. Arrow: Interstitial cells
b. Star: Primary follicle,

Abbreviation:
iNOS: inducible nitric oxide synthase, NOS: nitric oxide synthase, eNOS: endothelial nitric oxide synthase, CVD: cardiovascular disease, Al: aluminum, Pb: lead, H & E: hematoxylin and eosin, nNOS: neuronal nitric oxide synthase, NMDAR: N-Methyl-D-aspartate receptor
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