



## Assessment of lipid profile in HIV-TB co-infected patients on drug therapy

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### ABSTRACT

To assess the lipid profile in HIV and TB co-infected patients receiving drugs and to correlate any variations between the lipid parameters and the CD4 cell counts and to establish relationship between the variables. Fasting blood samples were collected from 33 HIV and TB co-infected patients on combined anti-tubercular and anti-retroviral therapy and 33 healthy controls. Lipid profiles were analysed by enzymatic kit methods and CD4 count were estimated in flow cytometer (BDFACS). Statistical analysis was done by statcalc software.

High mean Serum total cholesterol, triglycerides, LDL and VLDL cholesterol, and low HDL cholesterol levels were seen among patients with CD4 cells less than 200/ cmm. Whereas high mean serum total cholesterol and LDL cholesterol, low HDL cholesterol and normal triglyceride levels were seen in comparison to control in patients with CD4 cell count more than 200 cells/ cmm. Neither any correlation was established between CD4 cell count and lipid parameters nor between lipid parameters and duration of drug therapy. Severe dyslipidemia is an associated complication in later stage of HIV-TB co-infected patients on combined therapy. Multiple host factors as well as anti-retroviral drugs precipitate dyslipidemia. In early stage of the disease serum triglycerides and VLDL cholesterol levels remain normal. Follow up of the patients should be undertaken for dyslipidemia related complications in all HIV-TB co-infected patients irrespective of their stages.

### INTRODUCTION

In India Presently there are about 3.7 million people are suffering from Human Immuno Deficiency Virus (HIV). [1] About 1.85 million new cases of tuberculosis (TB) occurs annually in India a greater number than in any other country. [1] Different reports from referral Institutions in India have suggested that HIV prevalence is high among TB patients. [2-9] About 5% of new tuberculosis cases in India occur in people with HIV co-infection. HIV infected patients are often subjected to alterations in different biochemical parameters like thyroid profile, LFT (Liver Function Test), lipid profile, renal profile etc.

Many previous works have reported hypocholesterolemia in early stage and hypertriglyceridemia and low High Density Lipoprotein Cholesterol (HDL-C) in later stage of HIV positive patients with low CD4 cell counts. [10, 11, 12] But when the patients are treated with protease inhibitors (PI), nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NRTI) and non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NNRTI) then the lipid profile presents differently like increased total cholesterol, triglycerides, LDL lipoproteins and decreased HDL cholesterol. [13] Dyslipidemia and risk of developing cardiovascular complications have been linked with HIV patients treated with anti-retroviral drugs. [14, 15] Several studies have shown that

Abbreviation: - HIV = Human Immuno Deficiency Virus, NRTI = Nucleoside Reverse Transcriptase Inhibitor, NNRTI = Non-Nucleoside Reverse Transcriptase Inhibitor, PI = Protease Inhibitor, HAART = Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy, LDL-C = Low Density Lipoprotein Cholesterol, VLDL-C = Very Low Density Lipoprotein Cholesterol, HDL-C = High Density Lipoprotein Cholesterol, TC = Total cholesterol, TG = Triglyceride, TB = Tuberculosis, CAT I and II = Category I and II.

stavudine and zidovudine increase serum total cholesterol, triglycerides and LDL cholesterol levels and decrease HDL-C levels and cause lipodystrophy whereas Nevirapine (NNRTI) therapy causes minimal changes in lipid profile with rise in HDL cholesterol, Total cholesterol TC and no change or decline in Triglyceride (TG) level and switching from PI to nevirapine causes reduction in TC, TG levels and waist-hip ratio. [16, 24, 25, 26, 27] Some studies have reported that increase in HDL-C might protect against development of coronary vascular diseases. [28] But as per Martindale drug reference lamivudine, Stavudine, Zidovudine and Nevirapine all they cause hypertriglyceridemia, hypercholesterolemia, insulin resistance and hyperglycemia. [29] There are very few studies done in India on lipid profiles of HIV-TB co-infected patients receiving ATD (anti-tubercular drug) and HAART (Human anti-retroviral therapy) simultaneously. This study tends to work out any changes in the lipid profile of such patients when on ATDs as per DOTS Category I and II (CAT I or II) and Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy (HAART) as a combination of 2 NRTI and 1 NNRTI (it is a well-studied and effective antiretroviral combination). [30] Besides how lipid profile is affected when so called lipid friendly Nevirapine was combined with NRTI was also observed here. None of our patients received PI.

## MATERIALS AND METHOD

Fasting blood samples were collected from 33 (non-icteric and non-diabetic) patients having HIV-TB co-infections on combined therapy of anti-tubercular drugs (like Isoniazid, Rifampicin, Pyrazinamide, Ethambutol and Streptomycin in different combinations according to categories of DOTS) and human anti-retroviral drugs (like Stavudine, Zidovudine, Lamivudine and Nevirapine in different three drugs combinations

of 2 NRTI and 1 NNRTI). Also fasting blood samples were collected from 33 healthy controls. CD4+ counts and lipid parameters were estimated in those samples. We have excluded patients who were not on combined anti-tubercular and anti-retroviral therapy. Serum total cholesterol (TC), triglycerides (TG), HDL-cholesterol (HDL-C) were analysed by enzymatic kit methods in semi-autoanalyser, LDL cholesterol (LDL-C) levels were determined from the formula (Friedewald formula):  $LDL-C = TC - (TG/5 + HDL-C)$ , serum VLDL-C levels were calculated as  $TG/5$  and CD4 count were estimated in flow cytometer (BDFACS). Statistical analysis was done by statcalc software.

The result shows dyslipidemia among all the patients suffering from HIV and TB co-infection. But it is more significant among patients having CD4 count less than 200 cells / cmm. Patients having CD4 count less than 200 cells / cmm and on both HAART and ATD therapy for some duration have significant hypercholesterolemia, hypertriglyceridemia, high VLDL and LDL cholesterol levels and low HDL cholesterol level. Whereas patients receiving combined anti-tubercular and anti-retroviral drugs with CD4 counts more than 200 cells / cmm present with better lipid profiles. Their mean triglycerides and VLDL cholesterol levels were within normal limits, mean serum cholesterol level was high in comparison to controls but less than 200 mg/dl and mean HDL cholesterol level was low but more than 40 mg/dl. Neither any correlation could be established between mean CD4 cell count and lipid profile parameters nor between duration of drug therapy and lipid profiles.

## DISCUSSION

Pathogenesis of dyslipidemia is multifactorial. It is the interactive products of viral load, host factors and drug therapy.

**Table 1:** Comparison of different parameters between cases and controls

Parameters	Cases (N = 18) (CD4 > 200/cmm)	Cases (N = 15) (CD4 < 200/cmm)	Controls (N = 33)
<b>CD4 Count</b>	503.27 ± 186.17 ( <i>p</i> < 0.001)	83.33 ± 39.4 ( <i>p</i> < 0.001)	1040.51 ± 189.89
<b>Total Cholesterol</b>	189.38 ± 50.48 ( <i>p</i> < 0.03)	297.7 ± 42.02 ( <i>p</i> < 0.002)	157.06 ± 43.05
<b>Triglycerides</b>	109 ± 29.13 ( <i>p</i> < 0.6)	306.73 ± 189.07 ( <i>p</i> < 0.003)	115.45 ± 49.47
<b>HDL Cholesterol</b>	41.05 ± 5.82 ( <i>p</i> < 0.001)	34 ± 5.59 ( <i>p</i> < 0.001)	47.89 ± 4.80
<b>LDL Cholesterol</b>	126.53 ± 50.53 ( <i>p</i> < 0.001)	206.56 ± 35.09 ( <i>p</i> < 0.001)	81.27 ± 34.46
<b>VLDL Cholesterol</b>	21.8 ± 5.8 ( <i>p</i> < 0.58)	57.1 ± 20.73 ( <i>p</i> < 0.001)	23 ± 9.9

**Table 2:** Correlation of lipid profile with CD4 count (when CD4 > 200 / cmm)

Parameters	Correlation Co-efficient	Significance
<b>Total Cholesterol</b>	- 0.213	< 0.395
<b>Triglyceride</b>	- 0.139	< 0.581
<b>HDL cholesterol</b>	0.214	< 0.394
<b>LDL cholesterol</b>	- 0.222	< 0.377
<b>VLDL cholesterol</b>	- 0.139	< 0.581

**Table 3:** Correlation of lipid profile with CD4 count (CD4 < 200 / cmm)

Parameters	Correlation Co-efficient	Significance
Total Cholesterol	- 0.337	< 0.220
Triglyceride	- 0.329	< 0.232
HDL cholesterol	0.26	< 0.351
LDL cholesterol	- 0.259	< 0.352
VLDL cholesterol	- 0.439	< 0.101

**Table 4:** Correlation of lipid profile with duration of HAART (when CD4 > 200/mm<sup>3</sup>)

Parameters	Correlation Co-efficient	Significance
<b>Total Cholesterol</b>	0.281	< 0.259
<b>Triglyceride</b>	0.244	< 0.329
<b>HDL cholesterol</b>	- 0.182	< 0.469
	0.273	< 0.272
<b>VLDL cholesterol</b>	0.244	< 0.329

**Table 5:** Correlation of lipid profile with duration of HAART (when CD4 < 200/cmm)

Parameters	Correlation Co-efficient	Significance
<b>Total Cholesterol</b>	0.206	< 0.461
<b>Triglyceride</b>	0.21	< 0.452
<b>HDL cholesterol</b>	0.144	< 0.608
<b>LDL cholesterol</b>	- 0.025	< 0.929
<b>VLDL cholesterol</b>	0.436	< 0.104

[24, 31] In untreated patients HIV infection itself causes dyslipidemia by declining serum TC, HDL-C, LDL-C and increasing TG levels with higher circulating HIV RNAs and longer period of infection. [11, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36] PIs have the highest incidence of causing dyslipidemia. But the patients in our study received either zidovudine (NRTI) or stavudine (NRTI) and nevirapine (NNRTI), lamivudine (NRTI) in combinations. The etiopathogenic role of NRTI causing dyslipidemia has been related to mitochondrial toxicity though controversial. [37, 38] Virus itself activates cytokines leading to dyslipidemia. Increased Interferon A level can cause hypertriglyceridemia. [11] Lipid parameters are also influenced by the opportunistic infections with the progress of diseases. [39] Apolipoprotein CIII and E polymorphism may play contributory role in different lipid parameters in different patients. [40, 41, 42] But finally several studies said that dyslipidemia is more prevalent in patient on anti-retroviral therapy than those who are not. [43, 44] Again the pattern of lipid profile changes and severity of dyslipidemia differs from one group of anti-retroviral agents to another group. [45] Gillard et al demonstrated in their study that lipoproteins from HIV patients on HAART are larger and more neutral lipid-rich, and their HDL are less stable and less receptor-competent. Plasma lipolytic activities or hepatic cholesteryl ester uptake are impaired in them. These findings may predict atherosclerosis of carotid artery. [46] Long term anti-retroviral therapy can lead to the development of metabolic syndrome characterised by insulin resistance, fat redistribution, hyperglycemia and hyperlipidemia (elevation in serum cholesterol and triglycerides) and known as the HIV lipodystrophy syndrome. [47, 48, 49, 50] It occurs with all kinds of drug combinations in 10-40% of treated patients. Among NRTIs stavudine has substantial mitochondrial toxicity and symptomatic manifestations. American Heart Association has recommended management of hyperlipidemia to reduce the risk of developing myocardial infarction and other cardiovascular risks from lipodystrophy and lipoatrophy. [47, 49, 50, 25] Our study includes data on 33 HIV-TB co-infected patients on combined anti-tubercular and anti-retroviral therapy and 33 healthy controls. All the patients of this study presented with hypertriglyceridemia, hypercholesterolemia, high VLDL-C and low HDL-C when mean CD4 count was less than 200 cell/cmm. But no correlation could be established between CD4 counts and lipid parameters. Which means development of dyslipidemia was not proportional to the viral load rather it was multifactorial. No significant correlations could also be established between duration of drug therapy and lipid profiles. So, in addition to dyslipidemia contributed by NRTI and NNRTI combined therapy, other factors like sex, race, viral load, apolipoprotein polymorphism, activated cytokines, opportunistic infections, dietary habits, life style, insulin resistance, glucose intolerance, redistribution of lipids, lipodystrophy and many other host factors play major role in developing dyslipidemia than drugs or virus alone. [51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56] Van Leth et al claimed that NNRTI causes elevation of HDL-C and TC levels. [21] Tungsiripat et al mentioned in his article that stavudine can cause elevation of TC, LDL-C and triglyceride levels or as per Saint-Marc T et al, can increase only triglyceride level. [53, 17] Khiangte et al in his study showed that patients on HAART had significantly high TC, HDL-C and TG levels than HIV positive patients without HAART. [57] In a study by Obirikorang et al significantly increased triglycerides was demonstrated in HIV positive patients in comparison to control. They also showed that there was no statistically significant correlation between mean HDL-C level and mean CD4 count when CD4 count was more than 200 cells /

cmm. [58] Rather there were low TC, HDL-C and LDL-C. Another study by Nguema et al also showed hypertriglyceridemia in HIV positive patients but mean total cholesterol level was low in them. [59] Study conducted by Adewole et al demonstrated low serum HDL-C and high LDL-C levels in HIV positive patients on anti-retroviral therapy. [60] Kumar et al had 47 HIV positive cases and 44 controls. High triglycerides and high LDL-C were their findings among HIV positive patients whereas there was no change in the value of TC and HDL-C. The rise in triglycerides and LDL-C levels had significant positive correlation with CD4 cell count in their study. [39] In our study patients with CD4 count more than 200 cells/cmm had mean serum triglyceride level was normal, mean serum TC, LDL-C levels were high and HDL-C level was low. That means dyslipidemia is more severe in late stage of disease than in early phase. Hypertriglyceridemia, hypercholesterolemia and low HDL-C levels are more significant in late stage of the disease with variations from patient to patient. Grunfeld et al found that hypertriglyceridemia worsens with the progress of the disease. [61] Galli et al reported 10% hypercholesterolemia and 23% hypertriglyceridemia in patients on two NRTI therapies. [18] Though few studies have showed hypocholesterolemia, our study clearly demonstrates hypercholesterolemia. So always the patients on HAART should undergo serum lipid profile estimations. There is several risk factors exists in relation to dyslipidemia. This dyslipidemia occurs with or without metabolic syndrome. Klein et al, Friis-Møller et al reported in their studies that HIV-infected patients have higher incidence of myocardial infarction and other cardiovascular diseases. [14, 15]

## CONCLUSION

Severe dyslipidemia is an associated complication in later stages of HIV-TB co-infected patients on combined therapy of anti-tubercular and anti-retroviral drugs. Multiple host factors as well as anti-retroviral drugs precipitate dyslipidemia. In early stage of the disease serum triglycerides and VLDL cholesterol levels remain normal. Though nevirapine was described as lipid friendly, when it was combined with zidovudine-lamivudine or stavudine-lamivudine, then prominent dyslipidemia occurred in the later stage of the disease and HDL-C remains low in all stages. Serum lipid profile should be estimated for dyslipidemia and long term follow up investigations for complications should be undertaken in all HIV-TB co-infected patients irrespective of their stages. Dyslipidemia so diagnosed should be treated accordingly to prevent development of related complications.

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