Abstracts

Endothelial progenitor cells (EPC) are cell populations mobilized from the bone marrow in response to endothelial damage. Its relationship with vascular risk damage and subclinical vascular damage in systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) is being actively studied, but their role as an activity biomarker was not evaluated.

Aim to study EPC and CEC levels in SLE patients and compare them to healthy controls, as well as study their relationship with clinical and analytical markers of disease activity.

Methods A prospective, analytical, case-control study was conducted; in a center for systemic autoimmune diseases in Montevideo, Uruguay. EPCs and CEC levels were quantified by multiparametric flow cytometry. EPCs were defined as CD45<sup>-ve</sup>, CD34<sup>+</sup>, CD133<sup>-ve</sup>, CD31<sup>+</sup>, CD146<sup>+</sup>, CD3<sup>-ve</sup> and CEC as CD45<sup>-ve</sup>, CD34<sup>+</sup>, CD133<sup>-ve</sup>, CD31<sup>+</sup>, CD146<sup>+</sup>, CD3<sup>-ve</sup>.

Disease activity was assessed using 'Systemic Lupus Erythematosus Disease Activity Index' (SLEDAI) and 'Physician's Global Assessment' (PGA), erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR), C reactive protein (CRP), complement (C3 and C4), double-stranded DNA (dsDNA) antibody levels and proteinuria.

Results 28 controls and 22 SLE patients age and sex matched were enrolled. Patients median ages was 29.5±11.5 years and controls were 36±11.25 years, (p=0.28). Sex ratio (female/male) was 22/2 and 24/4 in patients and controls (p=0.68).

SLE patients showed significantly lower levels of EPC (median 0.2202±0.4377 cells/μl vs 1.051±1.3849 cells/μl), p<0.0001, and lower levels of CEC (median 0.2321±0.49677 cells/μl vs 0.7043±0.5706 cells/μl), p=0.0004 than controls.

EPC levels correlated with proteinuria/creatinuria ratio (r=0.5386, p=0.0097) and with dsDNA level (r=0.5118, p=0.0211) in SLE patients.

EPC level was higher in patients with significant proteinuria (median 0.5871±1.5086 cells/μl vs 0.1150±0.42442 cells/μl), p=0.0474 (figure 1); and in patients with increased dsDNA level (median 0.5871±1.2562 cells/μl vs 0.1150±0.3504 cells/μl), p=0.0249.

No correlation was found with the levels of C3, C4, SLEDAI, as well as prednisone dose at the time of enumeration.

Conclusions EPS and CEC levels correlate with disease activity in SLE, particularly with renal involvement. Currently, we are enrolling more patients in order to confirm these results, but we postulate that, in the future, EPC may be used as a biomarker of disease activity.

Endothelial Progenitor Cells as a Promising Biomarker of Systemic Lupus Erythematosus Activity

1,2Gonzalo Silveira, 1,2Sofía Grille, 1Adriana Carlomagno, 1Martín Rebella, 2,3Sabrina Ranero, 1,2Álvaro Danza. 1Clínica Médica 1, Hospital Pasteur, Facultad de Medicina, Universidad de la República, Montevideo, Uruguay; 2Departamento Básico de Medicina, Hospital de Clínicas, Facultad de Medicina, Universidad de la República, Montevideo, Uruguay; 3Cátedra de Hematología, Hospital de Clínicas, Facultad de Medicina, Universidad de la República, Montevideo, Uruguay; 4Clínica Médica ‘C’, Hospital de Clínicas, Facultad de Medicina, Universidad de la República, Montevideo, Uruguay; *Both authors contributed equally

Background

Endothelial progenitor cells (EPC) and circulating endothelial cells (CEC) are cell populations mobilized from the bone marrow in response to endothelial damage. Its relationship with vascular risk damage and subclinical vascular damage in systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) is being actively studied, but their role as an activity biomarker was not evaluated.

Methods

One hundred sixty-eight consecutive patients (153 females) attending the a large lupus clinic, without past history of cardiac disease (heart failure, coronary artery disease, valvulopathy etc.) and/or pulmonary hypertension, were enrolled. None had chest pain or electrocardiographic (ECG) abnormalities suggestive of acute coronary syndrome. High-sensitivity cardiac troponin I (cTnI) and B-natriuretic peptide (BNP) were measured simultaneously in serum and plasma samples, respectively. Patients were categorized according to normal or abnormal BNP and/or cTnI. For the assessment of the impact of AM duration on abnormal cardiac biomarkers, patients were divided in two groups according to the median duration of use, which was calculated at 5.6 years in the current cohort. Statistical analysis was performed with SAS 9.0 software; p<0.05 was considered significant.

Results

Sixteen patients (9.5%) had elevated BNP and/or cTnI. Compared to subjects with normal biomarkers, they were older, had longer disease and AM use duration and more frequently persistent creatinine phosphokinase (CPK) elevation (CPK elevation (table 1). Multivariable regression analysis showed prolonged AM treatment (>5.6 years) and persistent CPK elevation to be important predictors for elevated cardiac biomarkers [HR=5.43, 95% CI=1.14 to 25.9, p=0.034 and HR=4.62, 95% CI=1.22 to 17.51, p=0.024, respectively]. Two patients with significant proteinuria and persistent CPK elevation conferred an increased risk for abnormal BNP and cTnI, which might predict AMIC.

Conclusions

Approximately 9% of SLE patients had elevated myocardial biomarkers, in the absence of prior cardiac disease or pulmonary arterial hypertension. Prolonged AM therapy and persistent CPK elevation conferred an increased risk for abnormal BNP and cTnI, which might predict AMIC.