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The Influence of Physical Activity and Carbohydrate Management on Glycemic Control in Type 1 Diabetes: Exploring the Potential of Artificial Intelligence in Diabetes Care

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Managing Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus (T1DM) involves balancing mental health, diet, and physical activity (PA). For T1DM patients, maintaining stable glucose levels is difficult due to the risk of both low blood sugar after meals (postprandial hypoglycemia) and complications from high blood sugar (hyperglycemia). This study explores how PA influences glucose regulation and examines carbohydrate intake strategies, control methods, and the potential role of artificial intelligence (AI) in diabetes management.

Design/methodology/approach: A systematic review of studies on exercise, diet, and glycemic control in T1DM patients was conducted. Data from meta-analyses, randomized

trials, and observational studies were sourced from PubMed, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate.

Findings: Regular PA improves glycemic control, lowering glycated hemoglobin (HbA1c), insulin needs, and body mass index (BMI). Structured high-intensity exercise programs lasting over 24 weeks are particularly effective for glycemic control. However, fear of hypoglycemia and work schedules can be barriers. Aerobic exercise reduces visceral fat, while anaerobic exercise enhances glucose uptake and insulin sensitivity.

Keywords: Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus, physical activity, glycemic control, carbohydrate intake, artificial intelligence

1. Introduction

Type 1 diabetes mellitus (T1D) arises from autoimmune destruction of pancreatic β -cells, resulting in a deficiency of insulin secretion and the need for external insulin administration [1]. Disregulated glucose levels in T1D contribute to microangiopathies and macroangiopathies, significantly increasing the risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD), which is, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the leading cause of mortality worldwide. These complications manifest earlier in people with T1D compared to the general population [2], underscoring the crucial importance of a healthy lifestyle and regular physical activity in managing the disease.

Numerous cross-sectional studies have confirmed the beneficial effects of exercise on glycaemic control in people with diabetes. For example, Bohn et al. [3] conducted a study involving 18,028 patients with T1DM (aged 18-80 years), demonstrating a reduction in glycated haemoglobin (HbA1c) levels after regular physical activity. HbA1c reflects average blood sugar levels over the past 90 days and is a key indicator to assess glucose control. In addition, a reduction in daily insulin requirements and body mass index (BMI) was observed compared to the control groups [3]. Similar results were reported in a study presented by Carral et al. [4] involving 130 adults with T1DM, highlighting the significant improvement in HbA1c values associated with intense exercise of more than 150 minutes per week. García-Hermoso et al. [5] advocated structured exercise programs as an adjunctive therapy for the treatment of T1DM.

Their systematic review and meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials involving 509 adolescents with T1D showed positive effects on glycaemic control after participation in programs lasting more than 24 weeks, with sessions involving at least 60 minutes of highintensity exercise.

Despite these positive results, there are still significant gaps between scientific evidence and practical knowledge among people with T1DM. Moser et al. [6], developed the Barriers to Physical Activity in Diabetes (type1) (BAPAD1) scale, a 12-item questionnaire highlighting critical barriers to PA such as fear of hypoglycaemia, work schedules and concerns about diabetes managemen

1. Methodology

A systematic review of literature on exercise types, dietary strategies, and glycemic control methods for T1DM patients was conducted. Meta-analyses, randomized controlled trials, and observational studies were analyzed using PubMed, Google Scholar, ResearchGate

2. Results

Physical Activity

There are different types of physical activity. These can be divided into aerobic exercise, such as walking, running, cycling and swimming, which engage large muscle groups and improve cardiovascular endurance, and anaerobic exercise, including resistance training such as weight lifting, sprinting and high-intensity interval training (HIIT).

Aerobic exercise, in turn, supports weight control by reducing visceral adipose tissue, which is often insulin resistant and associated with increased inflammation and impaired glucose metabolism. Obesity-associated adipose tissue increases immune cell infiltration, releasing proinflammatory cytokines that exacerbate insulin resistance [7]. This requires higher doses of insulin for glycaemic control, complicating diabetes management affects fasting glucose levels and increases the risk of baseline hypoglycaemia.

Anaerobic exercise requires the immediate use of glucose in muscle cells. They deplete and replenish glycogen stores, increasing the ability of muscles to store more glucose as glycogen during recovery and increase muscle mass [8,9]. During muscle exercise, blood glucose levels are lowered via an insulin-independent pathway. Muscle contractions during exercise facilitate the translocation of glucose transporter type 4 (GLUT4) to the cell membrane, promoting glucose uptake [10]. High-intensity anaerobic exercise triggers also the release of

catecholamines and anabolic hormones. Epinephrine and norepinephrine briefly increase blood glucose levels by promoting hepatic glucose production. Testosterone and growth hormone (GH) can increase muscle growth and improve insulin sensitivity in the long term [11]. The disadvantage is that due to the acute hormonal response and high energy requirements, anaerobic exercise can cause rapid fluctuations in blood glucose levels, further increasing the risk of hypoglycaemia [12].

The long-term benefits reduce the frequency and severity of both hyperglycaemic and hypoglycaemic episodes and reduce insulin requirements through insulin sensitivity of muscle cells [13]. That can persist for several hours to days after training, depending on the intensity and duration of exercise. That's why consistency is key. The reduced insulin dose decrease the risk of insulin-related side effects, such as hypoglycaemia or weight gain, and improves overall diabetes control even if hypoglycaemia, by itself, can be severe and occur during or a few hours after exercise [14].

Commonly accepted training guidelines include at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity per week or 75 minutes of more intense activity per week [15]. This can be spread over 3 days, with a maximum of 1 day off without training [15]. Alternatively- an aerobic HIIT or resistance training 2-3 times a week- not day after day [16]. Finally, it is important to integrate spontaneous physical activity throughout the day to combat a sedentary lifestyle.

Nutrition

Diabetics are advised to adhere to the Mediterranean diet, which comprises 45-65% carbohydrates (CHO), 20-35% fat, and 10-35% protein. For individuals engaging in regular exercise, the recommended daily CHO intake equals approximately 3-7 g/kg body weight [7]. The effects of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats on glycemia vary, and additional factors such as muscle mass, age, gender, fitness level, stress, and genetics also play crucial roles.

For patients with T1DM, planning PA involves evaluating current glycemic levels, CHO consumption, meal timing relative to exercise, and the exercise's duration and intensity [12]. As exercise intensity increases, the body transitions from using free fatty acids (FFAs) to CHO as its primary energy source [17]. Muscles utilize stored glycogen and glucose for adenosine triphosphate (ATP) production, but T1DM impair mitochondrial function and skeletal muscle metabolism, leading to delayed phosphocreatine regeneration [18]. Thus, carbohydrates are essential for both performance and the prevention of hypoglycemia [18].

To balance glycemia and optimize performance, CHO intake should be managed according to the glycemic index (GI) of foods. Low-GI foods consumed prior to exercise can provide a

sustained CHO release, reducing insulin needs. Conversely, high-GI foods can quickly raise blood glucose levels [12]. If baseline glycemia is low or if the activity involves endurance training, high-GI foods might be necessary, with an intake of 45 g/kg body weight [9].

For exercise lasting less than 45 minutes or when glycemic levels are around 126 mg/dl, CHO supplementation is not typically required; however, an intake of 0.1-0.3 g/kg of CHO is recommended to prevent hypoglycemia [19]. For longer exercises, consuming 1.0-1.2 g/kg body weight of carbohydrates per hour for up to four hours post-exercise is advised to replenish glycogen stores [19]. Alternatively, CHO intake can be reduced to 0.8 g/kg per hour if proteins are added to the meal at 0.2-0.4 g/kg per hour [9]. For endurance activities, a CHO intake of 30-60 g/kg (up to 90 g/kg for activities exceeding 90 minutes) is suggested [13,19,20]. The mean CHO amount required to maintain euglycemia between activities is approximately 25.6 ± 13.3 g [21]. To prevent late-night hypoglycemia, a snack with low-GI carbohydrates, protein, and fat is recommended [19,22].

Riddell et al. [14] suggest that for activities lasting less than one hour, initial glucose concentrations should be 126–180 mg/dl (7–10 mmol/l) for aerobic exercise and 90–126 mg/dl (5–7 mmol/l) for anaerobic exercise. Exercise should not commence if ketone levels are elevated or if severe hypoglycemia (≤ 2.8 mmol/l or < 50 mg/dl) occurred within the last 24 hours [23].

When planning exercise approximately 2-3 hours post-meal, insulin doses should be matched to the meal to avoid hyperinsulinemia, which can inhibit fat oxidation and increase glucose utilization, raising the risk of hypoglycemia. Adjustments include reducing basal insulin by 20-50%, modifying postprandial insulin doses, or increasing CHO intake. Bolus insulin may be reduced by up to 75% with careful monitoring [24,25,26]. A reduction in bolus insulin and consumption of a low-GI snack up to an hour before training can mitigate hyperglycemia. Reducing basal insulin by 80% at the start of exercise is more effective than basal insulin suspension and is associated with a reduced risk of hypoglycemia during and after activity [24,25,26]. Insulin should be administered in areas not actively involved in muscle contraction [24,25,26].

Nocturnal Hypoglycemia

To manage nocturnal hypoglycemia effectively, consider exercise timing, type, and glucose management. Resistance exercises or high-intensity interval training (HIIT) performed in the afternoon or evening can help stabilize blood glucose levels, whereas morning aerobic

exercise capitalizes on the "dawn phenomenon," which increases glucose levels [28]. Adjusting insulin doses post-exercise, adhering to American Diabetes Association (ADA) recommendations for additional glucose intake, and setting narrow alarm limits on continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) devices assist in nocturnal glucose control [28].

Reducing basal insulin rates by 20% for six hours post-exercise is particularly beneficial for those using insulin pumps [21]. An evening snack rich in carbohydrates is recommended, but excessive insulin boluses should be avoided to prevent rebound hyperglycemia. Awareness of daily physical activity's cumulative effect on nocturnal glycemia requires similar adjustments throughout the day [21]. Utilizing CGM systems with overnight alarms allows real-time monitoring, supporting timely interventions to prevent hypoglycemia [29]. Additionally, reducing overnight basal insulin rates by 20% and adjusting bolus insulin doses by up to 50% for post-exercise meals further enhances nocturnal glycemic control [29].

Management way with AI support

Effective glycemic management during and after exercise in individuals with Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus (T1DM) necessitates a comprehensive approach that integrates several key strategies. These include optimizing exercise timing, managing carbohydrate intake based on glycemic index (GI), and making precise insulin adjustments. Such strategies are critical for maintaining stable glycemic control and reducing the risk of nocturnal hypo- and hyperglycemic episodes [19,21,27,28,29].

Continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) systems provide real-time glucose data, enabling immediate detection and management of glycemic fluctuations during physical activity. By continuously monitoring glucose levels, CGM systems facilitate the prevention of hypoglycemic episodes and allow for timely adjustments to maintain glucose within target ranges [30-32]. Hybrid closed-loop insulin delivery systems, which autonomously adjust insulin delivery based on CGM data, are effective in maintaining glucose levels within desired ranges and reducing hypoglycemia risk during exercise [21]. Combining CGM with continuous subcutaneous insulin infusion (CSII) pumps or automated insulin delivery (AID) systems leverages artificial intelligence (AI) to optimize glucose control and adapt insulin dosing in real-time [27,33].

Recent advances in AI offer promising solutions for enhancing diabetes care. AI-based systems can facilitate personalized treatment plans by adapting strategies based on individual patient data, thus improving glycemic control and reducing complications. AI-enabled devices and

applications support remote monitoring and provide real-time feedback during exercise, enhancing management precision [34].

Research has shown that AI can significantly impact insulin dosing strategies. For instance, Tyler et al. [35] utilized methods for optimizing insulin dosing, while Pesl et al. [36] developed the ABC4D bolus calculator for mealtime dosing recommendations. Bergenstal et al. demonstrated that automated insulin titration guidance improves glycemic control. AI systems, such as those described by Kodama et al. [37], have shown high accuracy in predicting hypoglycemia, with a sensitivity and specificity of 0.79 and 0.80, respectively. Furthermore, Alotaibi et al. [38] designed the SAED mobile management system, which reduced HbA1c levels and enhanced diabetes knowledge. Hamon and Gagnayre [39] used natural language processing to identify knowledge gaps in diabetes education.

Despite these advances, the integration of AI into diabetes management faces challenges, including data privacy concerns and the need for seamless integration with existing healthcare infrastructure. Looking forward, the future of AI in diabetes management involves developing AI-enabled ecosystems that integrate various digital health technologies to create comprehensive systems for diabetes prevention and management. Continued research and technological development hold promise for transforming diabetes care by improving predictive accuracy, optimizing treatment plans, and providing personalized support [16,20,22,27,29,40,41]. Artificial intelligence truly has the potential to revolutionize diabetes management, enhancing patient outcomes and reducing the disease's economic burden. Ongoing advancements in AI underscore its capacity to improve glycemic control and offer personalized care strategies.

Discussion

This review highlights the importance of regular physical activity (PA) in managing glycemic control for individuals with Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus (T1DM). Research supports that engaging in structured exercise, especially high-intensity sessions, leads to reductions in HbA1c levels, insulin use, and body mass index (BMI). However, practical challenges, such as the risk of hypoglycemia and competing life demands, often limit consistent participation in PA. Additionally, tailoring carbohydrate intake and insulin dosing to match exercise parameters remains a complex, individualized process. Emerging technologies, like continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) systems and artificial intelligence (AI), show promise in bridging the gap between current evidence and day-to-day diabetes management by enabling real-time adjustments and more personalized care strategies.

Conclusions

Engaging in regular physical activity is a proven strategy to improve glycemic control in individuals with Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus (T1DM). It effectively lowers HbA1c levels, reduces the need for insulin, and decreases BMI. To optimize outcomes, carbohydrate intake and insulin dosing should be carefully tailored to the intensity and duration of exercise to minimize the risk of hypoglycemia and hyperglycemia. Recent advancements in continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) and artificial intelligence (AI) are paving the way for more effective, real-time glucose management and personalized treatment, offering great potential for future improvements in diabetes care

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