

Decreased TGF- β Expression in PCOS-IR Rat Models after a Low-Carbohydrate High-Protein Diet

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ABSTRACT

Transforming growth factor β (TGF- β) is commonly associated with PCOS (Polycystic Ovary Syndrome) conditions and Insulin Resistance (IR). This is because TGF- β is a powerful regulator for the proliferation and differentiation of many cell types by directing the expression of hundreds of target genes including insulin. Hence, this research aims to identify the expression of TGF- β in PCOS-IR Rat Models after a low-carbohydrate, high-protein diet. The research design applied was the true experimental design. The selected population was female white rats (*Rattus norvegicus*), 3 months old, and weighing 100-200 grams. Modeling of PCOS with insulin resistance was carried out by injecting testosterone propionate hormones at a dose of 100 mg/kg BW for 28 days. On the last day after injection, a vaginal swab was taken to identify diestrus conditions. In the ANOVA test results, it was obtained p-value = 0.172, indicating that there is no significant difference in the mean value of TGF- β expression. It is said to be insignificant since the p-value <0.05. This research concludes that there is no significant difference in the mean value of TGF- β expression. Based on the mean value of TGF- β expression, it shows that the treatment group tends to have a lower mean value compared to the control group.

Keywords: *expression, insulin resistance, low-carbohydrate high-protein, polycystic ovary syndrome, TGF- β*

INTRODUCTION

Ten to fifteen percent of women of productive age suffer from PCOS, caused mostly by endocrine factors which are more widespread in women (Eleni et al., 2018). According to Azizi (2016), this disease is also associated with hormonal problems that disrupt the health of women of productive age and result in infertility. Metabolic disorders, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, visceral obesity, dyslipidemia, and risk factors for endothelial dysfunction are common in women with PCOS. Thus, PCOS is a serious health problem that can reduce women's life expectancy in addition to being a reproductive problem (Guo et al., 2016).

The underlying etiology of PCOS is still unknown, but there is a possibility of a strong correlation with insulin resistance (Firmansyah et al., 2018). Insulin resistance and hyperinsulinemia occur in 50-75% of PCOS patients and show peripheral insulin resistance similar to type 2 diabetes. Insulin resistance leads to hyperinsulinemia which can increase androgen production in the ovaries and result in hyperandrogenism. This is also related to the increased levels of growth hormone (GH) and insulin-like growth factor (IGF-1) (Hestiantoro et al., 2013; Ibanez et al., 2017).

Transforming growth factor β (TGF- β) is also associated with PCOS and insulin resistance. This is because TGF- β is a powerful regulator for the proliferation and differentiation of many cell types by directing the expression of hundreds of target genes including insulin. Based on the research conducted by Budi et al. (2015), it is known that insulin

increases the signaling of TGF- β by mobilizing intracellular TGF- β receptors. Members of the TGF- β superfamily are also expressed in the ovaries and have been implicated in the pathogenesis of abnormal follicle development and hyperandrogenism in PCOS, including activin, inhibin, anti-mullerian hormone (AMH), and bone morphogenic protein (BMP). A microarray study of granulosa cells in women with PCOS found increased differential expression of genes involved in TGF- β signaling (Raja-Khan et al., 2014).

Lifestyle modification is recommended as the first-line therapy in PCOS before drug therapy, which includes dietary intervention by regulating nutrient intake and physical activity (Lin et al., 2019). Nutritional regulation includes foods with a lower glycemic index and glycemic load by modifying the amount of carbohydrates, fats, and proteins. A low-carbohydrate, high-protein (LCHP) diet in PCOS with insulin resistance must be proven effective in improving the metabolic and endocrine systems. Therefore, more specific research is needed as a recommendation for appropriate PCOS management in terms of modifying the nutritional intake diet.

METHODS

The research design applied was the true experimental design (pure experiment). It is for the reason that in this design, the researcher can control all external variables that affect the course of the experiment, with the post-test control group design approach (Sugiyono, 2017). This research used female white rats (*Rattus norvegicus*) as experimental animals, which were made into the PCOS with Insulin Resistance (PCOS-IR) models. The selected population was female white rats (*Rattus norvegicus*), aged 3 months, and weighing 100-200 grams. Modeling of PCOS with insulin resistance was carried out by injecting testosterone propionate hormones at a dose of 100 mg/kg BW for 28 days. On the last day after injection, a vaginal swab was performed to identify diestrus conditions. After the data was collected and tabulated, normality and homogeneity tests were conducted and then continued with the ANOVA test to see the significance in each group. Furthermore, the data was processed and tested using the Pearson correlation test to determine whether there was a correlation between the research variables or not.

RESULTS

1. TGF- β Expression

Observation of TGF- β expression was carried out on the prepared ovarian tissues with Immunohistochemical staining. Data for each sample was assessed semi-quantitatively according to the modified Remmele method, where the Remmele scale index (Immuno Reactive Score/IRS) is the result of multiplying the percentage score of immunoreactive cells by the color intensity score of immunoreactive cells. Data for each sample is the mean value of IRS observed in ten different Fields of View (FV) at 100x and 400x magnification. From the results of the observations made, the following findings are shown:

Table 1. The Mean Value of TGF- β Expression

Group	n	Mean \pm SD (cells)
K-	12	3.700 \pm 1.974
K+	12	3.233 \pm 1.273
KP	12	2.583 \pm 0.752

Table 1 shows the differences in each group. The value was derived from the results of histological observations of each rat's ovaries. Then, the total TGF- β expression was averaged and the standard deviation value was calculated.

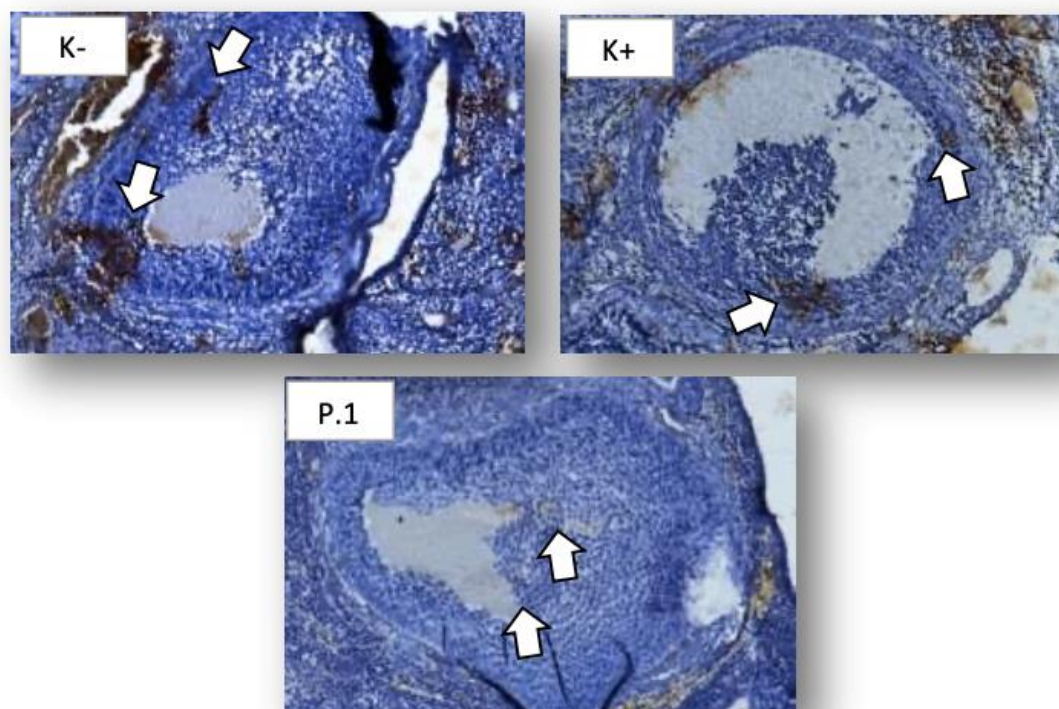


Figure 1 shows the TGF- β expression in each group. It denotes the presence of TGF- β expression in follicle granulosa cells as indicated by the presence of brown chromogen color (arrow), with IHC 400x.

2. Data Analysis

a. TGF- β Expression

The normality test used to examine the mean value of TGF- β expression was the Shapiro-Wilk normality test. The results of the normality test showed that the data distribution of the mean value of TGF- β expression in each group was normal ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, the analysis was continued with a homogeneity test using Levene statistics. The results of the homogeneity test showed significance ($p = 0.133$), which means the data is homogeneous. It is said to be homogeneous since the $p\text{-value} > 0.05$. Then, it was followed by the ANOVA test. From the results of the ANOVA test, it is known that the $p\text{-value} = 0.172$ indicates that there is no significant difference in the mean value of TGF- β expression. It is said to be insignificant since the $p\text{-value} < 0.05$.

b. The Correlation between IGF-1 Levels and TGF- β Expression in PCOS-IR Rat Models

The Pearson correlation test was used to determine the correlation between IGF-1 levels and TGF- β expression as well as the number of corpus luteum. The results of the Pearson correlation test are shown as follows:

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Test Results

Variable	n	Mean \pm SD	Pearson r	<i>p-value</i>
TGF- β Expression (<i>cells</i>)	36	3.172 \pm 1.459	0,098	0,571

Based on Table 2, the results of the Pearson correlation test show that there is no correlation between IGF-1 levels and TGF- β expression as well as the number of corpus luteum ($p > 0.05$).

DISCUSSION

Based on the research results, it is known that there is no significant difference in the mean value of TGF- β expression. Based on the mean value of TGF- β expression, it is indicated that the treatment group tends to have a lower mean value compared to the control group. These results are in line with the results of a research conducted by Markova et al. (2020) which concluded that providing a low-carbohydrate, high-protein diet with a composition of 40% carbohydrates, 30% protein, and 30% fat decreased TGF- β expression.

The decrease in TGF- β expression is likely due to the influence of low-carbohydrate, high-protein diet (LCHP). Low-carbohydrate and high-protein intake can activate calcium-activated potassium channels (BKCa), voltage and calcium in endothelial cells. BKCa activation promotes signaling through proline-rich tyrosine kinase-2 (Pyk2), c-Src, Akt and mitogen-activated protein kinase (MAPK) to suppress TGF- β production (Hovater and Sanders, 2012).

The PI3K-Akt signaling pathway plays a central role in mobilizing TGF- β receptors to the cell surface to enhance cell responsiveness to TGF- β . Akt signaling can be activated through growth factors to induce hyperactive TGF- β responses. Additionally, IGF-1 can also activate Akt to induce the enhancement of autocrine TGF- β responsiveness (Budi et al., 2015). Insulin also enhances TGF- β responses by mobilizing intracellular TGF- β receptors. FSH also promotes preantral follicle development along with a large number of paracrine factors derived from oocytes and granulosa cells, namely GDF9 and BMP15 (TGF- β superfamily), which are able to stimulate primary stage follicle development (Hsueh et al., 2015).

When FSH levels increase, androgen hormones decrease (Rosenfield and Ehrmann, 2016) and signal ovarian follicles for folliculogenesis. Decreased androgen hormones signal ovarian follicles for folliculogenesis as well as AMH as an intrafollicular modulator for follicle growth and maturation. The process of folliculogenesis will directly increase the secretion of several local cytokines in the ovaries, such as TGF- β , causing cumulus cell expansion which will initiate the mechanism of egg maturation (Santoso and Sulistiyono, 2014).

CONCLUSION

There is no increase in TGF- β expression in PCOS-IR rat models after following a low-carbohydrate, high-protein diet. Based on the mean value of TGF- β expression, it indicates that the treatment group tends to have a lower mean value compared to the control group.

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