Letter to the Editor

Camel milk as an adjunct to insulin therapy improves long-term glycemic control and reduction in doses of insulin in patients with type-1 diabetes. A 1 year randomized controlled trial

In earlier studies we had observed that camel milk supplementation reduces the insulin requirement in type 1 diabetic patients [1,2]. It is found that one of the camel milk protein has many characteristics similar to insulin [3] and it does not form coagulum in acidic environment [4]. This lack of coagulum formation allows the camel milk to pass rapidly through the stomach together with the specific insulin like protein/insulin and remains available for absorption in intestine. Radioimmunoassay of camel milk has revealed high concentration of insulin, i.e. 52 units/l [5]. The aim of the present study was to determine the long-term efficacy and safety of camel milk as an adjunct to insulin therapy in patients with type 1 diabetes.

In a 52 weeks, randomized controlled study, 24 patients with type 1 diabetes were divided into two groups with mean age (13 7.5 versus 15 ± 9.4), BMI (17 ± 5.2 versus 17 ± 4.4) HbA_1c (7.54 ± 1.38 versus 7.8 ± 1.38). Plasma insulin (7.73 ± 2.42 versus 6.91 ± 2.13), C-peptide (0.22 ± 0.03 versus 0.18 ± 0.04) and mean dose of insulin required (33 ± 11 versus 32 ± 12). Group 1 ($n = 12$) received usual care and group 2 ($n = 12$) received 500 ml camel milk in addition to usual care for 1 year. Frequent blood sugar monitoring was done to maintain euglycemia by titrating the doses of insulin. Anti insulin antibodies were measured every 3 months. Changes from base line to end point were analysed using MANCOVA. After 1 year of treatment there was statistically significant increase in body mass index (17 ± 4.4 to 19.7 ± 2.97, $p < 0.001$), improvement in fasting blood sugar (119 ± 19 to 95.42 ± 15.70 $p < 0.003$) and in HbA_1c (7.8 ± 1.38 to 6 ± 0.96, $p < 0.001$). There was a significant reduction in the mean doses of insulin (32 ± 12 to 17.83 ± 12.40, $p < 0.005$) in patients receiving camel milk. Fasting plasma insulin and C-peptide levels did not reveal any significant change in either group, (Table 1). No significant treatment-emergent adverse events were reported in either group. Anti insulin antibody titers were less than 10% even after 1 year.

The important observation of this study was the significant reduction in insulin doses to obtain glycemic control at the end of 1 year in patients taking camel milk. Breitling [6] suggested that camel milk is having anti diabetic activity possibly because of: Insulin like activity, regulatory and immuno modulatory functions on β cells. El Agamy et al. [7] found good amounts of lysozyme, lactoferrin, lactoperoxidase, immunoglobulin G and secretory immunoglobulin A in camel milk. Beg et al. [8] has found that amino acid sequence of some of the camel milk proteins, is rich in half-cystine, which has superficial similarity with insulin family of peptides.

In conclusion, camel milk as an adjunct to insulin therapy appears to be safe and efficacious in improving long-term glycemic control and helps in reduction in the doses of insulin in patients with type 1 diabetes.

Table 1
Effect of camel milk on glycemic control and insulin requirement in type 1 diabetes

Variables	Before treatment	After treatment	p-value
Group 1: control group			
BMI (kg/m^2)	17 ± 5.2	18.2 ± 3.8	NS
HbA_1c (%)	7.54 ± 1.38	7.63 ± 1.03	NS
Dose of insulin (units/day)	33 ± 11	30.16 ± 8.54	NS
Mean blood sugar (mg/dl)	121 ± 17.3	105.25 ± 14.50	0.041
Plasma insulin (μIU/ml)	7.73 ± 2.42	$19.54 \pm .43$	0.041
C-peptide (ng/ml)	0.22 ± 0.03	0.21 ± 0.06	NS
Group 2: camel milk group			
BMI (kg/m^2)	17 ± 4.4	19.7 ± 2.97	0.001
HbA_1c (%)	7.8 ± 1.38	6 ± 0.96	0.001
Dose of insulin (units/day)	32 ± 12	17.83 ± 12.40	0.005
Mean blood sugar (mg/dl)	119 ± 19	95.42 ± 15.70	0.001
Plasma insulin (μIU/ml)	6.91 ± 2.13	18.17 ± 7.12	0.03
C-peptide (ng/ml)	0.18 ± 0.04	0.24 ± 0.07	NS

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R.P. Agrawal[*]
R. Beniwal
D.K. Kochar
Department of Medicine
S.P. Medical College
Bikaner 334003, India

F.C. Tuteja
S.K. Ghorui
M.S. Sahani
National Research Center
on Camel, Bikaner, India

S. Sharma
Maharana Pratap University of
Agriculture and Technology, Udaipur, India

[*]Corresponding author. Present address: 2 Adarsh Colony, Bikaner 334003, India
Tel.: +91 151 2202431; fax: +91 151 2541931
E-mail addresses: rpagrawal@sancharnet.in
agrawalrp@datainfosys.net
(R.P.Agrawal)

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