Role of the Gastrointestinal Tract in Postprandial Blood Pressure Regulation
Role of the Gastrointestinal Tract in Postprandial Blood Pressure Regulation

A thesis submitted by
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# Table of contents

Summary ........................................................................................................................................... 2  
Declaration of originality ..................................................................................................................... 7  
Dedication ......................................................................................................................................... 9  
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................................. 11  
Publications arising from the thesis ..................................................................................................... 15  

## Chapter 1: Pathophysiology of postprandial hypotension

1.1 Introduction ...................................................................................................................................... 18  
1.2 Prevalence and significance of postprandial hypotension ............................................................... 19  
   1.2.1 Prevalence of postprandial hypotension in the healthy elderly .................................................. 20  
   1.2.2 Prevalence of postprandial hypotension in diabetes mellitus ................................................... 20  
   1.2.3 Prevalence of postprandial hypotension in patients with other illnesses ..................................... 21  
   1.2.4 Significance of postprandial hypotension ................................................................................... 21  
1.3 Factors influencing postprandial hypotension .................................................................................. 22  
   1.3.1 Meal composition ...................................................................................................................... 23  
   1.3.2 Meal volume ............................................................................................................................. 24  
   1.3.3 Meal temperature ...................................................................................................................... 26  
   1.3.4 Time of meal ingestion .............................................................................................................. 26  
   1.3.5 Body posture ............................................................................................................................ 27  
   1.3.6 Medication ................................................................................................................................. 27  
   1.3.7 Other illnesses ........................................................................................................................... 28  
1.4 Pathophysiology of postprandial hypotension .................................................................................. 29  
   1.4.1 Splanchnic blood flow ............................................................................................................... 29  
   1.4.2 Gastric distension ...................................................................................................................... 31  
   1.4.3 Small intestinal nutrient exposure .............................................................................................. 32  
   1.4.4 Neural mechanisms .................................................................................................................. 35
1.4.4.1 Sympathetic nerve activity ........................................ 35
1.4.4.2 Nitric oxide .......................................................... 36
1.4.4.3 5-hydroxytryptamine .............................................. 36

1.4.5 *Hormonal mechanisms* ............................................ 37
1.4.5.1 Insulin ............................................................... 37
1.4.5.2 Glucagon-like peptide-1 ........................................... 38
1.4.5.3 Vasoactive intestinal polypeptide, substance P, calcitonin gene-related peptide ............................................. 39
1.4.5.4 Neurotensin .......................................................... 39

1.5 Management of postprandial hypotension ............................ 40
1.5.1 *Non-pharmacological approaches* ................................ 41
1.5.1.1 Dietary modifications .............................................. 41
1.5.1.2 Adequate fluid intake ............................................. 42
1.5.1.3 Non-nutrient gastric distension ................................... 42
1.5.1.4 Exercise ............................................................... 43
1.5.1.5 Slowing of gastric emptying and small intestinal nutrient exposure ......................................................... 43

1.5.2 *Pharmacological interventions* .................................... 44
1.5.2.1 Caffeine ............................................................... 44
1.5.2.2 Medication usage .................................................. 45
1.5.2.3 Somatostatin analogues .......................................... 46
1.5.2.4 Other medications .................................................. 47

1.6 Conclusions .................................................................. 48

**Chapter 2: Blood pressure regulation**

2.1 Introduction .................................................................... 56
2.2 Cardiac output .............................................................. 56
2.3 Peripheral resistance ...................................................... 57
2.4 Blood volume ............................................................... 57
2.5 Vasomotor centre .......................................................... 57
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Cardiovascular control centre</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Baroreceptors</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Chemoreceptors</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Cerebral ischaemia</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>Higher brain centres</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>Hormones</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>Autoregulation</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>Nervous control of blood flow</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chapter 3: Gastric motor function**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Physiology of normal gastric emptying</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1</td>
<td>Role of the proximal stomach</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2</td>
<td>Role of the distal stomach</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.3</td>
<td>Role of the pylorus</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.4</td>
<td>Migrating motor complex</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.5</td>
<td>Patterns of gastric emptying</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.5.1</td>
<td>Solids</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.5.2</td>
<td>Liquids</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Regulation of gastric emptying</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chapter 4: Methodologies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Ethics and subject approval</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Blood pressure and heart rate</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Gastric emptying</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4.1 Scintigraphy ......................................................... 77
4.4.2 Ultrasonography .................................................. 78
  4.4.2.1 Two-dimensional (2D) imaging ......................... 78
  4.4.2.2 Three-dimensional (3D) imaging ....................... 78
4.5 Intraduodenal infusion ........................................... 80
4.6 Intraluminal pressures ......................................... 81
4.7 Splanchnic blood flow .......................................... 82
4.8 Blood glucose concentrations .................................. 83
4.9 Gastrointestinal hormone concentrations ....................... 83
  4.9.1 Plasma insulin concentrations ............................ 83
  4.9.2 Plasma glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) concentrations 84
  4.9.3 Plasma glucose-dependent insulinotropic polypeptide (GIP)
       concentrations ................................................. 84
4.10 Cardiovascular autonomic nerve function ......................... 84
4.11 Statistical analysis ........................................... 85
4.12 Conclusions .................................................... 85

Chapter 5: Measurement of gastric emptying of low- and high-
nutrient liquids using 3D ultrasonography and
scintigraphy in healthy subjects

5.1 Summary ............................................................. 89
5.2 Introduction ....................................................... 89
5.3 Research design and methods ................................... 93
  5.3.1 Experimental protocol ........................................ 93
  5.3.2 Scintigraphy ..................................................... 94
  5.3.3 Ultrasonography ............................................... 94
  5.3.4 Statistical analysis ............................................ 95
5.4 Results ............................................................ 96
  5.4.1 Scintigraphic measurements of gastric emptying ........... 96
5.4.2 Relations, and limits of agreement, between scintigraphic and 3D ultrasonography measurements ................................. 96
5.5 Discussion ........................................................................ 97

Chapter 6: Effects of intraduodenal glucose concentration on blood pressure and heart rate in healthy elderly subjects

6.1 Summary ........................................................................... 107
6.2 Introduction ......................................................................... 108
6.3 Research design and methods ................................................. 109
   6.3.1 Experimental protocol .................................................... 110
   6.3.2 Measurement of blood pressure and heart rate .............. 111
   6.3.3 Measurement of blood glucose concentrations .............. 111
   6.3.4 Assessment of cardiovascular autonomic nerve function .... 112
   6.3.5 Statistical analysis ....................................................... 112
6.4 Results ............................................................................... 112
   6.4.1 Blood pressure and heart rate ....................................... 113
   6.4.2 Blood glucose concentrations ....................................... 113
6.5 Discussion ........................................................................... 114

Chapter 7: Comparative effects of intraduodenal glucose, triglyceride and protein on blood pressure, heart rate and splanchnic blood flow in healthy elderly subjects

7.1 Summary ........................................................................... 121
7.2 Introduction ......................................................................... 122
7.3 Research design and methods ................................................. 125
   7.3.1 Experimental protocol .................................................... 125
   7.3.2 Measurement of blood pressure and heart rate .............. 127
Chapter 8: Acarbose attenuates the hypotensive response to sucrose in the healthy elderly; associations between slowing of gastric emptying and stimulation of GLP-1
Chapter 9: Gastric distension attenuates the hypotensive response to intraduodenal glucose in healthy elderly subjects

9.1 Summary ................................................................. 170
9.2 Introduction ............................................................ 171
9.3 Research design and methods ......................................... 174
  9.3.1 Experimental protocol ............................................. 174
  9.3.2 Measurement of blood pressure and heart rate ............... 176
  9.3.3 Measurement of gastric emptying ............................... 177
  9.3.4 Measurement of blood glucose concentrations ............... 177
  9.3.5 Assessment of cardiovascular autonomic nerve function ..... 177
  9.3.6 Statistical analysis ................................................. 178
9.4 Results ................................................................. 178
  9.4.1 Blood pressure and heart rate .................................. 179
  9.4.2 Gastric emptying .................................................. 182
  9.4.3 Blood glucose concentrations ................................... 182
9.5 Discussion ............................................................. 183

Chapter 10: The role of nitric oxide mechanisms in gastric emptying of, and the blood pressure and glycaemic responses to, oral glucose in healthy elderly subjects

10.1 Summary ............................................................... 193
Chapter 10: Introduction

10.2 Introduction ............................................................................. 194
10.3 Research design and methods ............................................. 196
   10.3.1 Experimental protocol ................................................. 196
   10.3.2 Measurement of blood pressure and heart rate .......... 197
   10.3.3 Measurement of gastric emptying .............................. 198
   10.3.4 Measurement of blood glucose, plasma insulin, GIP, and
       GLP-1 concentrations .................................................. 198
   10.3.5 Assessment of cardiovascular autonomic nerve function .... 199
   10.3.6 Statistical analysis ...................................................... 199
10.4 Results ................................................................................. 200
   10.4.1 Blood pressure and heart rate ........................................ 200
   10.4.2 Gastric emptying .......................................................... 201
   10.4.3 Blood glucose, plasma insulin, GIP, and GLP-1 concentrations .. 201
10.5 Discussion ............................................................................. 202

Chapter 11: Effects of the 5-HT3 antagonist, granisetron, on blood pressure, heart rate, and antropyloroduodenal motility in response to intraduodenal glucose infusion in healthy elderly subjects

11.1 Summary ............................................................................. 211
11.2 Introduction .......................................................................... 212
11.3 Research design and methods .............................................. 215
   11.3.1 Experimental protocol ............................................... 216
   11.3.2 Measurement of blood pressure and heart rate .......... 217
   11.3.3 Antropyloroduodenal pressures .................................. 218
   11.3.4 Measurement of blood glucose concentrations ............ 219
   11.3.5 Assessment of cardiovascular autonomic nerve function .... 219
   11.3.6 Statistical analysis ...................................................... 219
11.4 Results ................................................................................. 221
11.4.1 Blood pressure and heart rate ................................................. 221
11.4.2 Antropyloroduodenal pressures ............................................ 224
  11.4.2.1 Antral pressures ......................................................... 224
  11.4.2.2 Pyloric pressures ..................................................... 225
  11.4.2.3 Duodenal pressures ................................................... 227
  11.4.2.4 Antropyloroduodenal sequences ................................. 229
11.4.3 Blood glucose concentrations ............................................. 230
11.5 Discussion ............................................................................. 230

Chapter 12: Conclusions .............................................................. 244

References ................................................................................ 252
Summary
This thesis presents studies relating to the role of the gastrointestinal tract in postprandial blood pressure regulation. The areas that have been addressed include: (i) the methodological approaches to the evaluation of gastric emptying, blood pressure, splanchnic blood flow, intraluminal manometry and gut hormones and (ii) the pathophysiological mechanisms underlying postprandial hypotension, with a particular focus on ‘gastric’ and ‘small intestinal’ mechanisms and their potential therapeutic relevance. All of the studies have been either published or manuscripts have been prepared for publication.

While scintigraphy represents the ‘gold standard’ for the measurement of gastric emptying, recent studies suggest that three-dimensional (3D) ultrasonography may also allow a precise measure of gastric emptying. Concurrent scintigraphic and ultrasonographic measurements of gastric emptying of liquids were performed in healthy young volunteers. There was a good correlation and agreement between scintigraphic measurements of gastric emptying and 3D ultrasonography after ingestion of both low- and high- nutrient drinks, indicating that 3D ultrasonography, provides a valid measure of gastric emptying of liquid meals in normal subjects.

Postprandial hypotension, defined as a fall in systolic blood pressure of ≥ 20mmHg, occurring within two hours of a meal is now recognised as an important clinical problem, particularly in the elderly and in patients with type 2 diabetes. The mechanisms mediating postprandial hypotension are poorly understood. The effects of variations in concentration of intraduodenal glucose on the magnitude of the fall in
blood pressure were evaluated in healthy elderly subjects. Blood pressure fell, and heart rate and blood glucose increased over time during infusions, however, there was no difference in blood pressure, heart rate or blood glucose concentrations between the study days. These observations suggest that glucose induced postprandial hypotension is a load rather, than concentration, dependent phenomenon.

The effect of meal composition has been reported to influence the hypotensive response to a meal and information relating to the effects of triglyceride and protein on blood pressure is inconsistent. The comparative effects of isocaloric and isovolaemic intraduodenal infusions of glucose, triglyceride and protein on the magnitude of the postprandial fall in blood pressure and rise in heart rate and superior mesenteric artery blood flow were evaluated in healthy elderly subjects. There were comparable falls in systolic blood pressure and rises in heart rate, however, the maximum fall in systolic blood pressure occurred later after triglyceride and protein and the stimulation of superior mesenteric artery blood flow was less after protein. These observations suggest that the relatively slower systolic blood pressure response after triglyceride and protein may potentially reflect the time taken for digestion of triglyceride to free fatty acids and protein to amino acids.

Acarbose is an antidiabetic drug that slows both gastric emptying and small intestinal glucose absorption. The effects of acarbose, on blood pressure, heart rate, gastric emptying of, and the glycaemic, insulin, glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) and glucose-dependent insulinotropic-polypeptide (GIP) responses to, an oral sucrose load were
evaluated in healthy elderly subjects. Acarbose attenuated the fall in blood pressure and increase in heart rate induced by oral sucrose. Acarbose slowed gastric emptying and was associated with increased retention in the distal stomach. Stimulation of GLP-1 may contribute to the slowing of gastric emptying and suppression of postprandial glycaemia by acarbose. These findings suggest that acarbose may represent a therapeutic option for the treatment of patients with postprandial hypotension.

Recent studies indicate that gastric distension attenuates the postprandial fall in blood pressure. The effects of gastric distension on blood pressure and heart rate during intraduodenal infusion of glucose at a constant load and concentration were evaluated in healthy elderly subjects. Intragastric administration of water markedly attenuated the falls in systolic and diastolic blood pressure induced by intraduodenal glucose. Heart rate increased, with and without gastric distension, in response to intraduodenal glucose infusion but not after intraduodenal saline infusion. This study suggests that gastric distension may potentially be used as a simple adjunctive treatment in the management of postprandial hypotension.

Studies employing nitric oxide synthase blockers have established, in animals, that nitric oxide mechanisms are important in the regulation of splanchnic blood flow and, hence, may effect postprandial blood pressure. The role of the nitric oxide synthase inhibitor, NG-nitro-L-arginine-methyl-ester (L-NAME), on gastric emptying, postprandial blood pressure, plasma insulin concentration and incretin hormone (ie GIP and GLP-1) release, following an oral glucose load, were evaluated in healthy elderly
subjects. L-NAME attenuated the postprandial fall in blood pressure and increase in heart rate but had no effect on gastric emptying of glucose. L-NAME attenuated the glucose-induced rise in plasma insulin but had no effect on the incretin (GIP and GLP-1) hormone response to oral glucose. The study indicates that the magnitude of the fall in blood pressure and increase in heart rate and stimulation of insulin secretion induced by oral glucose in healthy elderly subjects are mediated by nitric oxide mechanisms by an effect unrelated to changes in gastric emptying, or the secretion of GIP and GLP-1.

Studies utilising 5-hydroxytryptamine (5-HT) infusions in animals have demonstrated regional variations in intestinal blood flow suggesting a role for 5-HT in postprandial haemodynamic responses. The effects of the 5-hydroxytryptamine 3 (5-HT3) antagonist, granisetron, on the blood pressure, heart rate, antropyloroduodenal motility and glycaemic responses to intraduodenal glucose infusion were assessed in healthy elderly subjects. Granisetron had no effect on blood pressure, heart rate or antral and pyloric motor responses but modulated the duodenal motor response, to intraduodenal glucose. This study indicates that while the cardiovascular response to intraduodenal glucose does not appear to be influenced by the stimulation of 5-HT3 receptors, this receptor may be involved in the modulation of the duodenal motor activity.
Declaration of originality
This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis being made available in the University Library. The author acknowledges that copyright of published works contained within this thesis resides with the copyright holder/s of those works.

_________________________

Diana Gentilcore

December 2006
Dedication
For my husband Laurie

Your courage is inspirational.
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Publications arising from this thesis


Other publications
