Studies of Gastric Motility in Health and Diabetes

A thesis submitted by
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For the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Discipline of Medicine
University of Adelaide

May 2009
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Abstract

The human stomach is a complex organ with sophisticated function. – The control of delivery of nutrients to the small intestine is tightly regulated, and the patterns and determinants of the associated processes are numerous, complex and interrelated. The presence of nutrients in the small intestine stimulates the release of a number of gastrointestinal hormones, including glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1). Exogenous GLP-1 reduces fasting and postprandial glucose concentrations, and this is thought to be via a slowing of gastric emptying (GE). The effects of endogenous GLP-1 on GE and glycaemia were evaluated using exendin(9-39), a GLP-1 antagonist, in healthy subjects, in a randomised, placebo-controlled study, in Chapter 5. Exendin(9-39) increased postprandial glycaemia through an acceleration of GE; these findings support the putative role of GLP-1 as an enterogastrone. The capacity to measure GE has greatly increased the understanding of normal and disordered gastric physiology. 30 – 50 % of patients with longstanding diabetes have delayed GE. Scintigraphy remains the ‘gold standard’ in the measurement of GE, however, it is associated with a radiation burden. Recently, three-dimensional (3D) ultrasonography was validated against scintigraphy in healthy subjects. In Chapter 6, GE was measured concurrently
by 3D ultrasonography and scintigraphy in patients with diabetic gastroparesis, and good correlation and agreement was found between both techniques. Glycaemic control represents one of the main pathogenetic factors of diabetic gastroparesis. Hyperglycaemia slows, while hypoglycaemia accelerates, GE in healthy subjects and patients with uncomplicated type 1 diabetes. Chapter 7 reports a study investigating the effects of insulin-induced hypoglycaemia vs. euglycaemia on GE in longstanding type 1 diabetes. Hypoglycaemia accelerated GE of a mixed solid/liquid meal; the magnitude of this acceleration was greater when GE during euglycaemia was slower. In contrast to glucose, the effects of intravenous (iv) fructose (used widely in the diabetic diet) on GE are less well understood. The comparative effects of iv fructose, glucose and saline on GE and antropyloroduodenal motility in healthy males are reported in Chapter 8. Compared with saline, fructose infusion was associated with a slowing of GE and suppression of antral waves, the magnitude of which was comparable to glucose. Treatment for the management of gastroparesis is currently suboptimal and there is a need for novel prokinetic agents. Itopride has demonstrated prokinetic activity in dogs. The effects of itopride on GE, glycaemia and upper gastrointestinal symptoms were studied in patients with longstanding diabetes in a randomised, placebo-controlled trial (Chapter 9). There was a trend for itopride to accelerate both solid and liquid GE. 48% of patients had delayed solid and/or liquid GE on placebo, and in this group, itopride accelerated liquid, but not solid, GE. Autonomic neuropathy represents another pathogenetic factor of diabetic gastroparesis, and delayed GE is more prevalent in patients with autonomic dysfunction. There is evidence that C-peptide improves autonomic nerve function (ANF) in type 1 diabetes. The effects of C-peptide on GE and ANF were studied in patients with longstanding type 1 diabetes in randomised, placebo-controlled design, in Chapter 10. C-peptide had no effect on solid or liquid GE, or ANF. Gastroparesis,
particularly in patients with diabetes, represents an important clinical problem. The studies presented in this thesis have provided fundamental insights into the measurement and determinants of gastric motor function and postprandial glycaemia, and treatment of gastroparesis, however, further studies which assess the complex pathogenesis and pathophysiology of gastroparesis, and which include a larger cohort of patients, are warranted.
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 to Julie Eva Stevens 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.

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Signed __________________________

Julie Eva Stevens
May 2009
Dedication

To my parents,
for your unconditional love and sacrifice,
for the opportunities you have provided me,
for your unrelenting support and encouragement,
and for believing in me,
I am eternally thankful.
Acknowledgements

The studies presented in this thesis were conducted in the Department of Nuclear Medicine, Positron Emission Tomography and Bone Densitometry, the Gastrointestinal Investigation Unit, and the Discipline of Medicine, at the Royal Adelaide Hospital.

I wish to thank, first and foremost, my supervisors Associate Professor Karen Jones and Professor Michael Horowitz. To my principle supervisor, Associate Professor Karen Jones, it has been a long road, with many twists and turns – I will forever be indebted for your time, guidance, knowledge, support and friendship throughout the journey. To my co-supervisor, Professor Michael Horowitz, thank you for teaching me the importance of “seeing the wood for the trees”. To both Karen and Michael, your keen direction, sage advice and profound knowledge are admirable, inspirational and truly appreciated.

To my colleague and amigo, Anne Maddox, gracias for your help, for your friendship, for listening to my endless complaints, but most importantly, for the
countless laughs, jokes and banter, which got me through the madness on many occasions. To Antonietta Russo, what a marvellous team we make! Sincere thanks for your time and help with studies, for all that you have taught me (including the early days), and for your friendship. I wish to extend my gratitude to all other colleagues who have collaborated and assisted with the studies herein presented, in particular, Associate Professor Chris Rayner, Dr Carol Delaney and Dr Nicholas Talley.

Special thanks to Dr Diana Gentilcore, for your tremendous help, your ultrasound expertise, your genuine advice and friendship. To Dr Jing Ma, it has been a pleasure to work with you; thank you for your help, for the entertaining conversation and especially for the laughter. To Yan Lam, for our daily ‘trade’ talk which gave me perspective through banal times, thank you. Many thanks to all other PhD students, postdoctoral fellows and staff within the department who have been supportive throughout my candidature.

Thank you to Max Bellon and all other staff of the Department of Nuclear Medicine, Positron Emission Tomography and Bone Densitometry for the use of the gamma camera and radiopharmaceuticals, and to Marija-Liisa, I am especially appreciative of your help, wise words and superb coffee. Special thanks to Bryan Lewis (and the chickens!) of the Institute of Medical and Veterinary Science Animal Care Facility, and to Pauline of the Cardiovascular Investigation Unit.

To Dr Nancy Briggs and Lisa Miller of the Discipline of Public Health, I am extremely grateful of the statistical support and advice you have provided.
I am especially thankful to all international collaborators for imparting their knowledge, sharing their expertise, contributing their time, and for welcoming me into their departments and homes. Thank you to Professor Odd Helge Gilja and Professor Trygve Hausken of Norway, and to Dr Willem Renooij, Martin de Smet, Professor Andre Smout and Professor Melvin Samsom, of The Netherlands.

To Dr Des Williams, thank you for your advice and encouragement to pursue a PhD in the first place.

I wish to extend a special thank you to each and every patient and volunteer who dedicated their time to commit to the studies presented in this thesis.

To my friends, who have been so understanding and forgiving, thank you for your support, for the many welcome distractions, and for your enthusiasm for the finish line.

Lastly, but not in the slightest bit least, to my family - my grandparents (Eva, Les, Helena and Jozef), my brother (Chris), and parents (James and Irena) - thank you for your love, support and encouragement over the years.
Publications arising from this thesis

PUBLISHED


OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Effects of exendin(9-39), a glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) antagonist, on gastric emptying and glycaemia in healthy humans.