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Efectividad del concentrado de fibrinógeno en pacientes traumáticos con hemorragia crítica

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REVIEW

FIBRINOGEN REPLACEMENT
IN TRAUMA UNCONTROLLED BLEEDING:
A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

There are many theoretical reasons to consider the fibrinogen replacement in the patient with Trauma-Induced Coagulopathy (TIC), but not many conclusive high-quality prospective studies have been carried out to determine its optimal efficacy and safety. The fibrinogen use is based on scarce observational data and empiric experience; while uncontrolled post-traumatic bleeding is still the leading cause of potentially preventable death among trauma patients.

This review aims to collect the data available in PubMed about the use of fibrinogen replacement in patients with TIC.

TREATMENT FOR CRITICAL BLEEDING – TRAUMA-INDUCED COAGULOPATHY – FIBRINOGEN – BLOOD DERIVATES

RESUMEN

La teoría apoya el uso del concentrado de fibrinógeno en la coagulopatía asociada al traumatismo; sin embargo, no se dispone de resultados concluyentes obtenidos de ensayos clínicos prospectivos de alta calidad para determinar qué circunstancias son óptimas para su uso y para estudiar su seguridad. A pesar de que la hemorragia crítica asociada al traumatismo es la principal causa de muerte evitable entre los pacientes traumáticos, el uso del concentrado de fibrinógeno, hasta el momento, se ha basado en datos observacionales y en experiencia empírica.

Esta revisión pretende recoger la evidencia disponible en la base de datos PubMed sobre el tratamiento de la hemorragia crítica asociada al traumatismo.

TRATAMIENTO DE LA HEMORRAGIA CRÍTICA – COAGULOPATÍA ASOCIADA AL TRAUMATISMO – FIBRINÓGENO – HEMODERIVADOS

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Both authors are currently doing some research on fibrinogen, and CSL Behring has contributed economically to the research project.

Eur J Clin Pharm 2016; 18(1): 43-7.

Received: 27/02/2015.

Accepted: 23/06/2015.
(No. 2236)

INTRODUCTION

Uncontrolled post-traumatic bleeding is the leading cause of potentially preventable death among trauma patients. Excessive and uncontrolled bleeding, commonly referred to as Trauma-Induced Coagulopathy (TIC), affects a quarter of all trauma patients and it is associated with substantial injuries, increased transfusion requirements, and poor outcomes.¹⁻⁷

Despite the limitation of a clear definition of TIC, evidence supports a role for platelet dysfunction, endothelial activation, endogenous anticoagulation, oxidative modification of proteins involved in the coagulation process, protein C activation and low fibrinogen levels. A variety of causes for fibrinogen depletion in major trauma have been identified, such as blood loss or dilution, consumption, hyperfibrinolysis, hypothermia and acidosis.⁸⁻²³

Normal hemostasis is critically dependent on fibrinogen as a substrate for clot formation. Fibrinogen is usually the most vulnerable coagulation factor, reaching lower critical levels during the course of a severe injury. Fibrinogen is a plasma glycoprotein synthesized solely in the liver, and it plays a key role for both platelet aggregation and fibrin formation and stabilization. It has been described that low fibrinogen concentrations are associated with an increased risk of bleeding and a higher mortality.¹⁻⁷

The plasma concentration of fibrinogen in healthy subjects ranges from 2-4.5 g/L; nevertheless, in patients with various congenital or acquired conditions, fibrinogen is markedly reduced and sometimes even undetectable with current methods of determination. The techniques for the fibrinogen measurement are also controversial.

While laboratory measurement of fibrinogen, classically by Clauss, is time consuming and prone to errors at the extremes of values; point-of-care tests consisting on functional measurements of fibrin polymerization (for example, thromboelastometry or thromboelastography) are increasingly being used.

The fibrinogen level at which treatment is required is open to debate. According to some recent reviews,^{1,2} there is no universally accepted critical fibrinogen concentration in trauma patients, although the key role of fibrinogen in the control of life-threatening hemorrhages is widely accepted. British^{29,31,32} and American³⁰ guidelines are the most restrictive, recommending the fibrinogen replacement if the concentration falls below 1 g/L. Meanwhile, the current European Trauma Guidelines,^{26,27} the ones from the European Society of Anaesthesiology²⁸ and the Canadian National Advisory Committee on Blood and Blood Products³³ recommend a plasma fibrinogen concentration in trauma patients not lower than 1.5-2 g/L. However, these recommendations are not definitive as they are based on scarce observational data.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ozier et Hunt³⁴ back in 2010 wrote an article in order to deplore the indiscriminate use of fibrinogen supplementation. On one hand, they claimed that there are many reasons to consider fibrinogen supplementation in the patient with a coagulopathy caused by excessive bleeding as fibrinogen is the first haemostatic factor to decrease critically. They even took into consideration the fibrinogen prophylactic administration to prevent the postpartum and cardiac surgery hemorrhage, based on the pre-procedure critical fibrinogen plasma concentrations which are considered to be independent predictors of excessive bleeding. On the other hand, unfortunately, no randomized or blinded study has been carried out to support this prophylactic administration. In this article, the authors claim that large, well-conducted clinical trials are required to measure clinically significant outcomes such as transfusion requirements. Moreover, the possible negative effects of using fibrinogen (for example, increased rate of postoperative venous thromboembolism) should be studied in order to obtain a full-risk-benefit analysis.

Hayakawa et associates³⁵ have recently published a retrospective observational study which aimed to elucidate the time-dependent changes in platelet count and coagulation variables, including fibrinogen levels, during the early phase of severe trauma. Eighty trauma patients were enrolled; and 35 were diagnosed with Disseminated Intravascular Coagulation (DIC). The results of laboratory tests on arrival at the emergency department show some remarkably elevated Fibrin/fibrinogen Degradation Products (FDP) and D-dimer levels, whereas fibrinogen levels are consequently lower among these patients. It demonstrates that fibrinogen reaches its critical level before the other routine coagulation parameters in trauma patients. A clear consumption of platelets and coagulation factors is also observed during the early phase of DIC.

Deras et al.³⁶ retrospectively reviewed 663 trauma patients. At admission, 105 patients (20%) had severe coagulopathy, 215 (33%) had moderate coagulopathy, and 313 (47%) had no coagulopathy. The number of patients with a fibrinogen level of less than 1.5 g/L at admission increased with the severity of the coagulopathy: 87% (severe), 29% (moderate) and 1% (without coagulopathy), $p < 0.001$. It concluded that the severity of coagulopathy at admission was an independent risk factor of the occurrence of fibrinogen deficit within the first 24 hours ($p < 0.001$).

Several studies have established a relationship between plasma fibrinogen levels and survival in acquired fibrinogen deficiency. Kenji et al.³⁷ retrospectively reviewed a cohort of massively transfused trauma patients. They carried out a 12-year study period in which 758 patients required a massive transfusion. Only in 260 patients a fibrinogen level was obtained on admission. 92 patients had normal admission fibrinogen levels (≥ 180 mg/dL); 114 had abnormal admission fibrinogen levels (≥ 101 to ≤ 180 mg/dL), and 54 patients had critical levels (≤ 100 mg/dL). Patients with a critical fibrinogen level had significantly higher mortality at 24 hours compared with patients with abnormal (31.5% vs 5.3%; $p < 0.001$) and normal fibrinogen levels (31.5% vs 4.3%; $p < 0.001$). A critical fibrinogen level was the most important independent predictor of mortality ($p = 0.012$).

Rourke et al.³⁸ carried out a prospective cohort study that included 517 patients. Fibrinogen levels were determined with the Clauss method, and global hemostatic competence was assessed with thromboelastometry. Low admission fibrinogen level was independently associated with injury severity score ($p < 0.01$), shock ($p < 0.001$), and prehospital fluid volume ($p < 0.001$). It is to highlight that fibrinogen level was an independent predictor of mortality at 24 hours and 28 days ($p < 0.001$).

A unique analysis among injured soldiers on army combat was performed by Stinger and associates.³⁹ It supports the importance of fibrinogen replacement in the early phase of the trauma-induced coagulopathy. The typical amount of fibrinogen within each blood product was used to calculate a fibrinogen-to-Red Blood Cells (RBC) ratio. Patients were divided depending on the transfusions received and such ratio: low (< 0.2 g fibrinogen/RBC Unit) or high (≥ 0.2 g fibrinogen/RBC Unit). A strong association between increasing fibrinogen-to-RBC ratios and survival was observed.

Schöchl et al.⁴⁰ investigated administration of fibrinogen concentrate as first-line of haemostatic therapy in trauma patients with severe bleeding; additional PCC therapy was administered if recent coumarin intake or prolonged clotting time. These treatments were guided by thromboelastometry which is claimed to be a huge improvement in the coagulopathy diagnose as it precisely tells which coagulation factors are missing. The observed mortality (24.4%) was compared with the theoretical mortality calculated by the TRISS (Trauma Injury Severity Score) mortality (33.7%, $p = 0.032$) and the RISC (Revised Injury Severity Classification) score of 28.7% ($p > 0.05$). As

TABLE 1.

Authors	Contents	Fibrinogen measurement method	Conclusion
Ozier et Hunt ³⁴	Reasons to consider fibrinogen supplementation in the patient with a coagulopathy.		Well-conducted clinical trials are required to obtain a full-risk-benefit analysis.
Hayakawa et associates ³⁵	Observational retrospective study. 80 trauma patients enrolled to elucidate the time-dependent changes in platelet count and coagulation variables, including fibrinogen levels, during the early phase of severe trauma.	Standard laboratory tests, any available fibrinogen level value on admission was used.	Fibrinogen reaches its critical level before the other routine coagulation parameters in trauma patients. A clear consumption of platelets and coagulation factors is also observed during the early phase of DIC.
Deras et al. ³⁶	Observational retrospective study. 663 trauma patients included. The results of coagulation tests and plasma fibrinogen levels at admission were studied.	Plasma fibrinogen levels were measured by the Clauss method, using the same analyser.	The severity of coagulopathy at admission was an independent risk factor of the occurrence of fibrinogen deficit within the first 24 hours ($p < 0.001$).
Kenji et al. ³⁷	Observational retrospective study. 758 patients required a massive transfusion. Fibrinogen levels at admission and survival were studied.	Standard laboratory tests, any available fibrinogen level value on admission was used.	A critical fibrinogen level (< 100 mg/dL) was the most important independent predictor of mortality ($p = 0.012$).
Rourke et al. ³⁸	Prospective cohort study. 517 trauma patients included. The overall objective was to characterize the changes and role of fibrinogen in major trauma patients.	Fibrinogen levels determined by the Clauss method. Global haemostatic competence assessed with thromboelastometry.	Low admission fibrinogen level was independently associated with injury severity score ($p < 0.01$), shock ($p < 0.001$), and blood loss ($p < 0.001$). Fibrinogen level was an independent predictor of mortality at 24 hours and 28 days ($p < 0.001$).
Stinger and associates ³⁹	Observational retrospective study. 252 patients at a U.S. Army combat support hospital who received a massive transfusion were divided depending on the transfusions received and such ratio: low (< 0.2 g fibrinogen/RBC Unit) or high (≥ 0.2 g fibrinogen/RBC Unit).	Fibrinogen levels on hospital admission were not available.	A strong association between increasing fibrinogen-to-RBC ratios and survival was observed.
Schöchl et al. ⁴⁰	Observational retrospective study. 131 major trauma patients included. Fibrinogen concentrate was administered as first-line haemostatic therapy, guided by thromboelastometry.	Coagulation management was guided by thromboelastometry (ROTEM).	The observed mortality (24.4%) was compared with the theoretical mortality calculated by the TRISS (Trauma Injury Severity Score) mortality (33.7%, $p = 0.032$) and the RISC (Revised Injury Severity Classification) score of 28.7% ($p > 0.05$).
Farriols et al. ⁴¹	Observational retrospective study. 69 patients suffering from various forms of acquired severe hyperfibrinogenemia with life-threatening consumptive thrombo-haemorrhagic disorders (surgery, trauma and digestive haemorrhage), or underlying disease states that limit fibrinogen synthesis (hepatic dysfunction, haematological malignancies) were included. The aim of the study was to assess the efficacy and safety of the fibrinogen administration.	Standard laboratory tests.	A direct relationship between plasma fibrinogen levels and survival in acquired fibrinogen deficiency. After a median dose of 4 g, a mean absolute increase of 1.09 g/L in plasma fibrinogen was measured and coagulation parameters were significantly improved ($p < 0.001$).

a consequence, it can be concluded that an early normalization of the fibrinogen levels improves the expected survival.

Fariols et al.⁴¹ carried out a study including all forms of acquired severe hyperfibrinogenemia not only trauma patients. 69 patients were included, and the 62% corresponded to consumptive hyperfibrinogenemia. The mean initial fibrinogen plasma level was 0.76 g/L. After a median dose of 4 g, a mean absolute increase of 1.09 g/L in plasma fibrinogen was measured and coagulation parameters were significantly improved ($p < 0.001$). These data indicate a direct relationship between plasma fibrinogen levels and survival in acquired fibrinogen deficiency (Table 1).

Finally, the epidemiology and overall effect of hyperfibrinolysis were recently described by Raza et al.,²⁵ showing that the vast majority of patients exhibit some degree of fibrinolysis, and that 5% of patients develop severe hyperfibrinolysis. This was not due to hypothermia or iatrogenic complications, suggesting that this condition is a distinct disease entity and contributor to TIC. Fibrinolysis is controlled by plasmin that is generated following activation of plasminogen by tPA and uPA. Plasmin degrades fibrin clots by cleaving cross-linked fibrin, a process that is inhibited by PAI-1, as PAI-1 inactivates tPA and uPA. The protein C activation, for instance, inhibits PAI-1 so it does not inhibit the fibrinolysis performed by plasmin, and contributing to the endogenous anticoagulation.

CONCLUSION

After reviewing the recent literature on PubMed, there are many reasons to consider fibrinogen supplementation in the patient with trauma-induced coagulopathy. The studies have supported that fibrinogen is the first haemostatic factor to decrease critically, as it reaches its critical level before the other routine coagulation parameters.

It has also been observed that a critical fibrinogen level on admission is an independent predictor of mortality, and the direct relationship between the severity of the coagulopathy on admission and the fibrinogen deficit. As a consequence, it seems logical to assume that the early normalization of the critical fibrinogen levels would improve the expected survival.

However, there is no consensus about where to establish the critical threshold for the fibrinogen supplementation. Globally, supplementing when fibrinogen plasma levels are above 2 g/L would be groundless; and, on the contrary, the replacement is of highly urgency when they are below 1 g/L. The clinical situation of the patient should have the last word for administering or not fibrinogen when its plasma levels values are among 1 g/L and 2 g/L.

Moreover, the fibrinogen supplementation has to be prescribed in such rational background. The risk-benefit analysis of the fibrinogen replacement when fibrinogen plasma levels are correct is not favourable. It should not be forgotten that fibrinogen is a blood product with its associated difficulties (high cost, purification and sterility of the product, limited supply and increased risk of venous thromboembolism). CP

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