DIETARY FAT ENHANCES AIRWAY INFLAMMATION IN ASTHMA

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Dietary fat activates innate immune responses, leading to an increase in systemic inflammation. However, the effect of dietary fat on airway inflammation has not been investigated. We hypothesised that a high fat intake may lead to increased airway neutrophilia in asthma. The aim of this study was to examine the effect of a high fat versus low fat food challenge on airway inflammation in asthma.

\textbf{Methods:} Non-obese subjects with asthma were randomized to receive a high fat/ high energy (HF) (n=14) or low fat/ low energy (LF) (n=16) food challenge. 16 obese subjects also received a HF challenge. Subjects on the HF challenge consumed a meal containing 4480 kJ, including 52\% of energy (60g) from fat. Subjects on the LF challenge consumed a meal containing 840 kJ, including 13\% of energy (3g) from fat. At baseline, hypertonic saline challenge and clinical assessment were performed. Induced sputum samples were collected at baseline and at 4 hours. Airway inflammatory markers included induced sputum total and differential cell counts, IL-8 and neutrophil elastase, measured by commercial assay. TLR4 mRNA expression from sputum cells was measured using RT-PCR.

\textbf{Results:} At 4 hours after the food challenge, subjects on the HF challenge, had a significantly higher increase in %sputum neutrophils (16.4 (4.4 (SEM)) \% vs 3.4 (4.1) \%, p = 0.044) and higher fold increase in TLR4 mRNA expression (2.06 (1.3-5.4 (IQR)) vs 1.00 (0.6 – 1.4), p = 0.037), compared to the LF challenge. Subjects on the HF challenge also had an impaired bronchodilator response, with a lower increase in FEV1/FVC\% at 4 hours compared to the LF challenge (1.0 (-2.0-2.6 (IQR)) \% vs 4.5 (2.7-6.8) \%, p = 0.001). There were no differences in the responses of obese vs non-obese asthmatics to the HF challenge. \textbf{Conclusions:} A high fat/ high energy challenge causes an increase in airway inflammation and suppresses bronchodilator response in asthma. Strategies aimed at reducing dietary fat intake may be useful in reducing inflammation in asthma.

\textbf{Supported by:} NHMRC project grant.