β-hCG levels in mild and severe preeclampsia

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Serum β-hCG Levels in Pregnant Women with Mild and Severe Preeclampsia During the Third Trimester

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Abstract

**Background:** Preeclampsia is a prevalent complication that frequently arises during pregnancy. It is a disorder of the trophoblasts. Given that human chorionic gonadotropin is secreted by the trophoblast, this complication may have an impact on its serum concentration. **Objective:** To compare the β-hCG levels of expectant women who are preeclamptic and those who are normotensive. **Methods:** A prospective cross-sectional study design was implemented at Al-Elweyia Maternity Teaching Hospital for this investigation. One hundred fifty expectant women in their third trimester are participating. The study participants were allocated into three cohorts, each consisting of 50 women: normotensive, mild preeclamptic, and severe preeclamptic. β-hCG levels in maternal serum were determined using an enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) in every instance. **Results:** Compared to expectant women with normotensive conditions and patients with mild preeclampsia, the levels of maternal serum β-hCG were significantly elevated in patients with severe preeclampsia. β-hCG levels were not significantly affected by maternal age across all three groups. **Conclusion:** β-hCG concentrations are greater in pregnant women with moderate and severe preeclampsia compared to normotensive women, with severe preeclampsia being more pronounced than mild. **Keywords:** β-hCG, Complications, Maternal outcome, Preeclampsia, Pregnancy.

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INTRODUCTION

Preeclampsia (PE), an enigmatic condition that may manifest during pregnancy, has the potential to inflict damage upon a multitude of organs. This multisystemic disorder, which is associated with insufficient early placentation, manifests as proteinuria and increased blood pressure beyond the 20th week of gestation. Numerous organ systems are profoundly affected, encompassing neurological disorders, hematological complications, renal and hepatic impairments, and indicators of uteroplacental dysfunction [1–4]. Pregnancy-related hospitalizations are primarily attributed to PE, which is ranked as the second most prevalent cause of maternal mortality on a global scale. The prevalence of PE varies considerably between 2% and 10% worldwide but is substantially higher in developing nations, where it ranges from 4% to 18% [5,6]. Prenatal control for pregnant women and active termination of pregnancy for patients with severe PE are the only effective methods of reducing morbidity and mortality among pregnant women and their infants at this time. A lot of research suggests that the main cause of PE may be inadequate trophoblast invasion into the mother’s spiral arteries, which leads to decreased placental blood flow, trophoblast apoptosis, and the release of pro-inflammatory cytokines [7]. However, the exact causes of PE are still unknown. Recent research utilizing placentas and maternal blood from patients with PE provides additional support for the notion that the placenta may be the pathophysiological origin of PE. So, being able to accurately predict placental failure by finding early proteomic biomarkers of dysfunction would be very helpful for being able to take action quickly to lower the risk of PE. Several biochemical indicators of placental dysfunction have been utilized thus far to evaluate prognostic factors for PE before clinical symptoms manifest. Preeclampsia (PE) may be influenced by β-human chorionic gonadotropin (β-hCG), according to some studies [8,9]. β-hCG has also been proposed as a serum marker for PE screening during the 8–14 weeks of the gestational period. β-hCG, a glycoprotein hormone generated by trophoblasts, is commonly utilized in the diagnostic processes of hydatidiform mole, pregnancy, and ectopic pregnancy. Trophoblasts are places of placental vascularization, placental implantation, and blastocyst attachment [10]. Trophoblasts are specialized placental cells. Their function is to enable the transfer of nutrients and gases from the placenta to the neonate. In a normal pregnancy, the peak concentration of β-hCG is observed during the 10th and 12th weeks of gestation, after which it gradually decreases. hCG levels in the serum may fluctuate in response to abnormal placentation development or function [11]. Several studies have established a correlation between reduced β-hCG levels in the first trimester and the development of preeclampsia [12]. However, some findings are inconsistent with one another [13,14]. Certain studies have indicated that patients who were diagnosed with severe PE had substantially elevated β-hCG levels, while those with moderate PE did not demonstrate any noticeable alteration [13]. To investigate the predictive value of serum-hCG levels, specific researchers conducted a meta-analysis. The findings revealed that pregnant women with PE had substantially elevated β-hCG levels compared to healthy women. However, this study did not investigate the temporal aspect of serum β-hCG detection [9]. After this, numerous studies investigated the correlation between blood β-hCG levels and PE. Nevertheless, a number of articles reached the conclusion that the relationship lacked statistical significance [15–18].

METHODS

Study design and sample selection

This prospective cross-sectional investigation was carried out at the Baghdad-based Al-Elweyia Maternity Teaching Hospital. The Hospital Administration and the Obstetrics and Gynecology Committee of the Arabic Board for Medical Specialization both granted sanction for the study protocol. In this investigation, a sample of 150 pregnant women was evaluated. Specifically, they were all between the 28th and 40th weeks of gestation during their third trimester. The duration of pregnancy was ascertained by utilizing the first day of the preceding menstrual cycle or an early pregnancy based on ultrasonography examination in cases where the woman had irregular periods or was uncertain of her last menstrual period (LMP). Pregnant women with mild preeclampsia, pregnant women with severe preeclampsia, and normotensive pregnant women (the control group) comprised the study cohort.

Inclusion criteria

The study included patients who were 18–40 years old, singleton pregnant in the third trimester, and had no prior history of diabetes mellitus, hypertension, or any other chronic illness.

Exclusion criteria

Excluded from the study were women who had previously experienced chronic hypertension, diabetes mellitus, or any other chronic disease, as well as those who were older than 40 or had a history of multiple pregnancies.

Evaluation and outcomes measurements

Prior to being included in the study, written agreement was obtained from each participant. The patients were split up into three groups of fifty each, according to the following categories: Group 1 consists of expectant mothers who have visited the hospital's antenatal clinic and have normal blood pressure. Group 2 consists of pregnant women with mild preeclampsia whose blood pressure is within 140/110 mmHg to 140/110 mmHg, who have proteinuria (defined as urine dipstick samples with less than 2+ albumin) and no other significant problems.
that could harm the mother or the fetus. Severe preeclamptic pregnant women in Group 3 have a systolic blood pressure of at least 160 mmHg, a diastolic blood pressure of at least 110 mmHg, and a proteinuria defined as a urine dipstick sample with a protein content of >2+ albumin. These patients may also exhibit complications that impact the mother or the fetus, such as cerebral or visual impairment, epigastric pain, pulmonary edema, a platelet count below 100,000/ml, abnormal liver function, oliguria (urine output of less than 30 ml/hr) or urine output of 400 ml/24 hr. Every patient gave a thorough medical history that covered things like age, parity, employment, history of hypertension, other medical disorders, headache, vertigo, vision disturbance, and heartburn symptoms. An evaluation was performed to detect any abnormalities related to edema, soreness in the epigastrium, or abnormalities in awareness and reflexes. Systolic and diastolic pressures were measured on a regular basis. A thorough biochemical test was carried out to measure blood urea, albuminuria, serum creatinine, uric acid, liver enzymes, and platelet count in order to rule out any possible abnormalities in the vital organs. The ELISA method was used to measure the amounts of β-hCG in serum.

**Statistical analysis**

Data were analyzed using MINI TAB software version 14. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to estimate the differences in means of maternal serum β-hCG hormone among the three groups. Also Student t-test was used to assess the difference between two groups. Values with p-value < 0.05 were considered statistically different.

**RESULTS**

Figure 1 shows that the average level of β-hCG in the blood of pregnant women who did not have high blood pressure (the control group) was 9.7±2.47 IU/mL. It was 18.4±2.7 IU/mL in women with mild preeclampsia and 24.13±4.63 IU/mL in women with severe preeclampsia. Based on the ANOVA analysis, there was a significant difference among the groups (p-value= 0.0001).

Based on the post hoc analysis, Figure 1 revealed significant differences between the three groups when compared with each other (p<0.001). In Figure 2A, the results demonstrate no significant difference among the three groups (p=0.221) regarding the gestational age: the mean gestational age in the normotensive group was 37.7±1.9 weeks, 37.5±2.1 weeks in the mild preeclampsia group, and 36.9±3.0 weeks in the severe preeclampsia group. Meanwhile, Figure 2B showed non-significant differences (p=0.331) among the three groups regarding maternal age. In normotensive women, the mean age was 26.0±6.2 years, 24.3±6.1 years in the mild preeclampsia group, and 25.2±7.4 years in the severe preeclampsia group.

Moreover, post hoc analysis did not show significant differences among groups when compared with each other in both gestational and maternal ages (p>0.05).

The systolic blood pressure results in Figure 3A show a big difference between the three groups (p<0.001): the normotensive group had a mean value of 114.8±7.4 mmHg, the mild preeclampsia group had 149.6±4.9 mmHg, and the severe preeclampsia group had 174.9±11.5 mmHg. Meanwhile, Figure 2B showed significant differences (p<0.0.001) among the three groups regarding the diastolic pressure. In normotensive women, the diastolic pressure was 72.2±6.9 mmHg, 94.2±4.2 mmHg in the mild preeclampsia group, and 118.9±7.4 mmHg in the severe preeclampsia group. Moreover, post hoc analysis revealed significant differences among groups when compared with each other in both the systolic and diastolic pressures (p<0.05).
The precise etiology of preeclampsia remains unknown. One of the most significant factors, however, is vasospasm, which induces local hypoxia and vascular injury [19]. Many of the changes seen in the ultrastructure of placental tissue from women who are preeclamptic are similar to changes seen in placental tissue that was cultured in an environment with low oxygen [20]. The findings of the current investigation demonstrated a noteworthy correlation between heightened levels of β-hCG in the maternal serum and the degree of preeclampsia. Specifically, severe preeclamptic pregnancies exhibited a substantially higher concentration of β-hCG than normotensive and mildly preeclamptic pregnancies. This finding is consistent with the majority of prior research [21], albeit divergent from a few additional studies [22,23]. A potential correlation has been identified between the level of β-hCG and the severity of preeclampsia [24]. Other authors have found that the β-hCG level may show if someone has preeclampsia [25] and may also show if the placental trophoblast isn't working properly in cases of pregnancy-induced high blood pressure. In a study conducted in Istanbul (2004), Gurbuz et al. compared the mean levels of β-hCG in pregnant women with mild preeclampsia, severe preeclampsia, superimposed hypertension, and chronic hypertension to those of normotensive pregnant women. The researchers discovered that the mean levels of β-hCG were significantly elevated in the severe cases [26]. Also, different research has found that pregnant women who are preeclamptic have significantly higher levels of gonadotropin in their urine compared to women who are not preeclamptic [27]. Urine gonadotropin is the urinary metabolite of β-hCG. According to these findings [28], placental hypoperfusion may be a contributing factor in preeclampsia. An additional investigation found that β-hCG concentrations were notably greater in expectant pregnancies. This finding is consistent with the majority of β-hCG pregnancies exhibited a substantially higher concentration [29]. While the quantification of β-hCG levels might not serve as an early diagnostic tool [30], it could potentially provide insight into the disease's severity [31]. Using serum β-hCG as a marker of cytotrophoblast differentiation, researchers found that pregnant women with intrauterine growth restriction (IUGR) and preeclampsia had higher levels of serum β-hCG [32]. The current investigation reveals that significantly increased β-hCG levels may indicate intrauterine growth restriction and adverse neonatal outcomes.

**Conclusion**

Serum levels of β-hCG are higher in preeclamptic women (both moderate and severe) than in normotensive pregnant women, and this difference could serve as a predictor of bad outcomes for both the mother and the fetus.
Conflict of interests

No conflict of interest was declared by the authors.

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Data sharing statement

Supplementary data can be shared with the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

REFERENCES


