



Acute effect of gibberellic acid on serum enzymes and blood markers in male albino rats

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Abstract

This study was designed to evaluate the influence of a phytohormone, gibberellic acid (GA₃) on marker enzymes and biomarkers of serum, and blood hemoglobin and its blood cells counts of rat. In order to evaluate the positive/negative effects, the rats were administered 75µg, 150µg and 300µg of GA₃/kg body weight as a single dose. GA₃ treatments produced differential effects on the different parameters at dose dependent manner after 4 hours.

The down regulation in specific activities of ALT, ALP, GGT and amylase were noted against the control with significant up regulation of AST activity. GA₃ also produced dose dependent effect on biomarkers. There is a substantial reduction in the quantity of glucose, urea, creatinine, calcium, phosphorus, sodium and potassium was recorded against the control. On the other hand, the insignificant increase in content of total protein, albumin and uric acid was observed at all dose of GA₃ treatment against the control. GA₃ increased the RBC, WBC and neutrophil by decreasing the lymphocyte total numbers. Platelets, monocytes and eosinophils count were not altered by any dose of GA₃.

In conclusion, GA₃ produced dose dependent effect on different parameters of rat blood serum.

Keywords: phytohormone; gibberellic acid; creatinine; neutrophil

Introduction

Plant growth regulators (PGRs) gave entry into animal cells through diet. Gibberellic acid (GA₃) is an extensively prevalent plant growth regulator due to its use in agriculture. It is a diterpene hormone derived from acetyl Co A through the mevalonic acid metabolic pathway in plants. GA₃ plays a significant role in plant cellular processes such as in cell elongation, breaking dormancy in seeds and buds, in flowering and parthenocarpic fruit development and in the mobilization of food reserves in grass, in seed germination and in juvenility and sex expression (1). GA₃ is known to be ubiquitously present in the plant kingdom.

Recent research has indicated that Plant growth regulators expressed biological potentials in animal cells. It is reported that fecundity, longevity and egg vitality in insects was affected by PGRs treatment (2,3). Ozmen et al (4) observed that abscissic acid and GA₃ affected sexual differentiation and other physiological parameters of mice. PGRs caused increase in the number of splenic plaque forming cells and circulating WBCs, hematocrit value and thymus weight in young deer mice (5). GA₃ induced liver neoplasm in Egyptian toads and the tumours could be diagnosed as hepatocellular carcinomas

(6). Ustan *et al* (7) have reported that GA₃ induced microabscesses and hydropic degeneration in the liver and mononuclear inflammatory infiltration in the kidneys of mice. PGRs induced oxidative stress, leading to generation of free radicals and caused lipid peroxidation as one of the molecular mechanisms of in PGRs induced toxicity (8). The long term use of high levels of GA₃ showed a significant decrease in testicular weight and sperms count in male albino rats (9). The feeding of GA₃ to *Mus musculus* doubled the proportion of females producing litters without increase in litter size or number (10). GA₃ had positive influence of on body weight, food conversion rate and fecundity on rats, poultry, pigs and calves (11, 12, 13). GA₃ exhibited estrogenic hormone-like action in mammals (14, 15). In castrated male rats, GA₃ partially restored the weight of prostate but did not significantly change the weight of epididymis and seminal vesicles (16). Gawienowski had clearly demonstrated that GA₃ not only exhibited synergistic uteropic effect with estradiol in the immature mouse, but also expressed possessed androgenic properties in male chicks (17). Elkomy *et al* demonstrated that GA₃ can have testosterone like biological effects on male chicks, was noted for comb and testes weights and secretion of testosterone in male chicks. GA₃ exhibited a direct androgenic-like action on rabbit testis and a positive effect on semen quality and quantity (18, 19).

Therefore, the present study was therefore aimed at investigating the short term effect of GA₃ on male albino rats with regard to the specific activities of marker enzymes (AST, ALT, ALP, GGT and amylase), the content of blood markers (hemoglobin, glucose, cholesterol, triglycerides, total protein, albumin, urea, uric acid and creatinine), serum electrolytes (sodium, potassium, phosphorus and calcium) and blood cell counts (RBC, WBC, platelets, neutrophils, eosinophils, monocytes and lymphocytes). This study highlights the nutritional and biological importance of understanding the influence of

environmental (plant) factors on the biology of animal cell functions.

Materials and Methods

Materials

Gibberellic acid (Sigma) was a gift from Dr.Kanabiran, Reader, Pondicherry University, India. All chemicals used for this study were of analytical grade purchased from manufacturers in India. Glass distilled water was used for the preparations of all reagents. Male albino wistar strain rats (160-180g,10-12 weeks old) were obtained from JIPMER, Puducherry, India. The rats were housed at 20±2°C in light/dark cycles. All rats were fed Kamadhenu (India) rat feed pellet (analysed and established composition) and were given water *ad libitum*. The care of rats followed 'guidelines for the care and use of laboratory animals' during experiments.

Methods

The rats were housed in 4 groups of 6 each. A control group was given 50µl of 50% absolute alcohol subcutaneously to serve as control. The experimental group of rats was given 75µg, 150µg and 300µg of GA₃/kg body weight in 50µl of 50% absolute alcohol administered subcutaneously as a single dose. Following this the rats were anaesthetized 4 hours later with anesthetic ether and blood was collected by cardiac puncture. Collected blood was centrifuged for the preparation of serum. Blood collected in EDTA was used for hematological studies. AST and ALT enzyme activity were assayed by the method of Reitman and Frankel (20). ALP was assayed by the method of Bessey *et al* (21). GGT activity was measured by Orłowski and Meister method (22). Amylase activity was assayed by the method of Bernfeld (23). Blood hemoglobin content was estimated by the method of Sahli's (24). Glucose content was measured by the modified procedure of Asatoor and King method (25). Cholesterol and triglycerides content were measured by using standard kits supplied by Ranbaxy Diagnostic Limited, Mumbai, India. Protein content was measured by the method of Lowry *et al* (26). The

quantity of serum albumin was measured by the method of Reinhold (27). Urea content was measured by the method of Netelson et al (28) and uric acid by Caraway et al (29). Creatinine content was measured by the method of Owen et al (30). Serum content of calcium, phosphorus, sodium and potassium were determined by the procedure of Halloran et al (31). Total count of RBC and total and differential count of WBC were enumerated by the method of Chesbrough et al (31). Data was expressed as mean \pm Standard Error Mean (SEM) for six rats. SPSS 11 program was used for statistical analysis. The difference between control and treated values was calculated using one way ANOVA and statistical significance was noted ($p < 0.05^*$) for all the tests.

Results

Treatment of rats with GA₃ caused dose dependent changes in the activities of serum enzymes (Table.1), in the content of glucose, ,

urea, uricacid, creatinine (Table.2) and in RBC, WBC, platelet count and in the differential counts of WBCs (Table.3). Treatment of rat with different doses of GA₃ altered specific activities of each enzyme studied. The specific activity of AST showed a marginal increase of 14.1%, 16.5% and 2.5% respectively at 75,150 and 300 μ g use of GA₃ versus the control rats. In contrast, the rat serum ALT, ALP, GGT and amylase specific activities decreased for almost all doses of GA₃ treatment versus the respective controls. The ALT specific activity decreased ($p < 0.05$ level) 31% for 75 μ g, 20% for 150 μ g and 6.2% for 300 μ g GA₃ used in the study. The activity of GGT decreased at all doses of GA₃ used with a maximum decrease (30%) at 300 μ g GA₃. Amylase specific activity was marginally down regulated at 75 μ g and 150 μ g GA₃ doses, while induced considerable decrease (49%) at 300 μ g of GA₃ dose.

Table 1: Effect of GA₃ on rat serum enzyme specific activities.

Enzymes	Control	GA ₃ treatment (μ g/kg body weight)		
		75 μ g	150 μ g	300 μ g
AST	3.39 \pm 0.159	3.78 \pm 0.182*	4.49 \pm 0.203**	4.95 \pm 0.238**
ALT	0.94 \pm 0.063	0.65 \pm 0.045**	0.75 \pm 0.041*	0.88 \pm 0.053
ALP	6.48 \pm 0.380	4.41 \pm 0.205**	5.96 \pm 0.399	6.48 \pm 0.496
GGT	0.101 \pm 0.007	0.072 \pm 0.003**	0.084 \pm 0.004*	0.098 \pm 0.005
Amylase	10.42 \pm 0.233	9.32 \pm 0.725*	9.22 \pm 0.456*	5.31 \pm 0.284**

Enzyme specific activities were expressed in IU/gm of wet tissue $\times 10^{-3}$

Each value represents \pm SEM of 6 rats.

* $p < 0.05$ and ** $p < 0.001$

Table 2: Effect of GA₃ on rat serum biomarkers and mineral contents

Biomarkers	Control	GA ₃ treatment (μ g/kg body weight)		
		75 μ g	150 μ g	300 μ g
Glucose (mg/dl)	110.0 \pm 6.73	82.0 \pm 4.61**	76.0 \pm 3.83**	72.0 \pm 4.47**
Total protein (gm/dl)	6.00 \pm 0.44	6.72 \pm 0.201*	6.60 \pm 0.221	6.12 \pm 0.413
Albumin (gm/dl)	3.60 \pm 0.21	4.00 \pm 0.27*	3.87 \pm 0.24	3.87 \pm 0.24
Urea (mg/dl)	33.0 \pm 1.38	27.1 \pm 1.06*	25.1 \pm 1.14**	19.3 \pm 1.04**
Uric acid (mg/dl)	9.70 \pm 0.69	10.9 \pm 0.47	12.0 \pm 0.55**	13.70 \pm 0.6**
Creatinine (mg/dl)	1.01 \pm 0.06	1.31 \pm 0.08**	1.37 \pm 0.09**	1.4 \pm 0.08**
Calcium (mg/dl)	11.30 \pm 0.77	11.8 \pm 1.06	10.2 \pm 0.88	9.50 \pm 0.48*
Phosphorus (mg/dl)	6.12 \pm 0.34	5.46 \pm 0.354	5.06 \pm 0.230*	4.44 \pm 0.20**
Sodium (meq/l)	147.0 \pm 5.25	144.0 \pm 5.59	132.0 \pm 5.01*	130.0 \pm 3.84*
Potassium (meq/l)	4.90 \pm 0.45	4.00 \pm 0.16*	3.80 \pm 0.15*	3.60 \pm 0.14**

Each value represents \pm SEM of 6 rats.

* $p < 0.05$ and ** $p < 0.001$

Similarly, treatment of rat with different doses of GA₃ altered the biomarker content of rat blood in a dose dependent manner (Table 2). There was however, no significant change in hemoglobin content due to any doses of GA₃. Nevertheless, the blood glucose content, significantly decreased at all doses of GA₃ such as, by 26% with 75µg, 31% with 150µg and 49% with 300µg GA₃ compared to corresponding controls. Serum cholesterol was noted to be only marginally increased (25%) by 300µg GA₃, whereas showed 21% for 75µg and 6.2% for 150µg GA₃. Similar to cholesterol, the triglyceride content also marginally decreased at low dose (14%) and increased pattern was observed for all remaining doses of GA₃ treatments. The total serum protein and serum albumin content remained stationary for all doses of GA₃ treatment. Serum urea content decreased 18%, 24% and 42% at 75, 150 and 300µg GA₃ doses respectively. Creatinine, sodium, potassium and phosphorus content also noticeably decreased at all doses of GA₃ treatment in a dose dependent manner. In contrast, the serum uric acid content was however found to be increased significantly ($P < 0.05$) at all doses of GA₃. Gibberellic acid produced quantum alterations in the numbers of certain blood cells in a dose dependent manner (Table 3). The RBC number increased 46% at 75 and 105% at 150µg GA₃ dose. The total number of WBC also increased following 150µg dose of GA₃. GA₃ did not produce significant changes in platelet, eosinophil, and monocyte numbers. Surprisingly,

a progressive increase followed by decrease in the percentage of neutrophils and lymphocytes respectively was noted for low to high does of GA₃ treatment of the rats.

Discussion

Since GA₃ is a popular plant growth hormone and information on its acute positive or negative in vivo effect on higher animals is almost nil this compound was used for the present study. The data collected was from a single time point by using different doses of GA₃. The results of this study cannot be compared to any other previous study as no previous study on short term effect of GA₃ in rat model exists.

In this study, the acute effect of GA₃ on rat was analyzed by determining changes in selected enzyme activities and blood/serum markers. Measurement of the activities of various enzyme markers in the animal tissues and body fluids had a critical role in disease investigation and diagnosis (32), as also for the identification of drug toxicity including that of natural compounds (33). The present study indicated that GA₃ have differential effects on serum and blood parameters in a dose dependent manner. Each enzyme studied behaved differently towards different doses of the compound administered (Table 1). The marginal increase in serum AST activity was noted 4 hours post GA₃ treatment.

Table 3: Effect of GA₃ on rat serum lipid profile

Lipid fractions	Control	GA ₃ treatment (µg/kg body weight)		
		75µg	150µg	300µg
Cholesterol (mg/dl)	78.0 ± 4.44	72.0 ± 4.67	78.0 ± 4.42	84.0 ± 5.79
Triglycerides (mg/dl)	56.0 ± 3.92	54.0 ± 3.94	58.0 ± 3.69	62.0 ± 3.67
HDL (mg/dl)	17.1 ± 0.69	21.1 ± 1.11**	20.2 ± 1.04*	20.1 ± 1.11
LDL (mg/dl)	39.0 ± 1.12	42.0 ± 2.91	45.0 ± 2.27*	47.0 ± 2.01**
VLDL (mg/dl)	22.1 ± 1.21	10.1 ± 0.62**	12.2 ± 0.61**	17.2 ± 1.04**

Each value represents ± SEM of 6 rats.

* $p < 0.05$ and ** $p < 0.001$.

Table 4: Effect of GA₃ on rat blood cells count.

Blood cells	Control	GA ₃ treatment (µg/kg body weight)		
		75µg	150µg	300µg
RBC (x10 ⁶ /cumm)	5.9 ± 0.24	8.73 ± 0.29**	8.27 ± 0.336**	6.82 ± 0.32*
WBC (x10 ³ /cumm)	6.00 ± 0.24	5.15 ± 0.27*	6.29 ± 0.37	7.7 ± 0.30**
Platelets (x 10 ⁵ /cumm)	2.72 ± 0.18	1.62 ± 0.07**	2.01 ± 0.07**	2.85 ± 0.20
Neutrophils(%)	52.0 ± 4.25	58.0 ± 3.77	62.0 ± 2.68*	64.0 ± 3.68*
Eosinophils(%)	2.0 ± 0.13	2.0 ± 0.13	2.0 ± 0.26	2.0 ± 0.12
Monocytes(%)	1.0 ± 0.13	1.0 ± 0.14	1.0 ± 0.16	1.0 ± 0.13
Lymphocytes(%)	46.0 ± 2.28	40.0 ± 3.55*	35.0 ± 1.02*	34.0 ± 1.26*
Hemoglobin (gm%)	13.9 ± 1.04	14.6 ± 0.91	14.0 ± 1.17	13.1 ± 1.11

Each value represents ± SEM of 6 rats.

*p<0.05 and **p<0.001.

The concrete reason for such a change is not clearly understood. The significant increase in serum AST activity denoted increased release of this enzyme from tissues as well as due to the increased transaminase activity. It may also be due to the effect of GA₃ on tissues with the possibility of damage of the cardiac and hepatic tissues of rat, as they remain the prime source for serum AST activity. Serum enzymes are generally derived from tissues through extrusion and damage to cell membranes (34). It may also be possibly mediated by changes in the aspartate amino transferase metabolism in the cardiac and liver tissue caused by GA₃. Reson et al reported that increase of transaminase activities were related to aminoacid imbalance that initiated protein catabolism (34). Therefore, enzymes from diseased tissues and organs may manifest in the serum, resulting in increased serum enzyme activity. Alterations in biochemical as well as haematological parameters may be considered toxicity indices of compounds/drugs as result of their chronic use (35). On the other hand, reduction in the activities of serum ALT, ALP, GGT and amylase was noted in GA₃ treated rats, surprisingly below the control values. The specific reason for this observation is not presently known. This decrease in enzyme activity may possibly be due to decreased synthesis and release of these enzymes from their sources and or inhibition or reduction of enzyme

activities. Serum content of these enzyme activities reflected the overall status of the animal health when subjected to exogenous modulants, infection or injury. Decreased transaminase levels are commonly observed for substances that induced liver cytochrome P⁴⁵⁰. Down regulation of ALT synthesis would affect the ability of the liver to metabolize amino acids for energy production in the cell. This would limit the capacity of the hepatocytes to generate appropriate energy levels in this tissue through pyruvate generation. Gamma glutamyl transpeptidase, activity found highest in the kidney, was significantly reduced with medium and higher doses of GA₃. The decrease in activity of this enzyme may probably be due to an imbalance in metabolism of glutathione that is needed for detoxification of foreign compounds. There was also significant reduction in amylase enzyme activity recorded using 300µg of GA₃. GA₃'s suppressive effect on amylase is probably through encouraging tissue lipogenesis.

A progressive decrease in the quantity of glucose was noted at all doses of GA₃ treatment. This may be lead to a hypoglycemic effect of GA₃ on rat tissues. Further it suggests increased glucose utilization by cells resulting in greater glucose entry into the cells of each tissue. Utilization of the G-6-P generated, either through the glycolysis or through the HMP pathway remains the

established biochemical measure to counteract enhanced glucose load in tissues. In contrast, the amount of total free cholesterol and triglyceride in the serum of rat was found to be elevated when 300µg of GA₃ was used. The reason for an elevated cholesterol and triglyceride due to GA₃ possibly represents increased mobilization of these lipids from tissues, or due to their decreased transport from blood to tissues. The total protein and albumin content was not significantly altered by any dose of GA₃, indicating that the protein metabolism was not affected by GA₃.

Urea, an end product of protein metabolism, was significantly reduced at all doses of GA₃ treatment, a positive indication of normal kidney function with no adverse effect on protein metabolism. From the above facts it is clearly understood that the GA₃ treatments did not produce significant changes in protein metabolism. The amount of urea excretion depended upon the glomerular filtration rate and when this process failed, the plasma urea level gets raised. Uric acid, the end product of purine metabolism has proved to be a selective antioxidant, capable especially of reacting with hydroxy radicals and hypochlorous acid⁴⁶. Increased level of uric acid in GA₃ treated rats was noted in this study. A reduction in MDA content was also noted in all the tissues studied for the different doses of GA₃ treatment (data not shown). There seems to be correlation between increase in uric acid and the decrease in MDA content noted in this study. The serum creatinine was found to be reduced by GA₃ treatment. Serum creatinine level and BUN are the only parameters used for the determination of nephrotoxicity⁴⁷. BUN is produced endogenously by tissue creatinine breakdown, and a change increase in serum creatinine level depended upon the glomerular filtration rate. When creatinine excretion failed to balance the production, serum creatinine level increased (36). Results of this study led to conclude that GA₃ promoted greater creatinine excretion. GA₃ treatment also were reduced the content of serum minerals. The reason for the reduction in the quantity of

sodium, potassium, calcium and phosphorus noted was not clearly understood. It may be due to alterations in the permeability of electrolytes across cell membranes/ or due to aberrations in the membrane ATPase function. A decrease in these ions may lead to severe complications in body functions.

The total numbers of RBC, WBC and neutrophil were significantly increased at all doses of GA₃ treatment, possibly due to an action of GA₃ on hemopoiesis. Decrease in platelet counts except at 75 and 300µg GA₃ dose and of lymphocytes at all doses of GA₃, while the eosinophil and monocyte numbers remained stationary. Reason for the differential response of blood cells to exogenous GA₃ administration was not clear. In conclusion, treatment of rat with GA₃ produced dose dependent effect on serum enzymes and blood markers. This study highlights the possible varied effects of GA₃ in the rat and possibly in other mammals as a short term response to its presence in the animal tissue. Further detailed study is required to report on its wider effects.

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