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Davison, Glen; Marchbank, Tania; March, Daniel Scott; Thatcher, Rhys; Playford, Raymond

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**Zinc carnosine works with bovine colostrum in truncating heavy exercise induced increase in gut permeability in healthy volunteers.**

Glen Davison <sup>1\*</sup>, Tania Marchbank <sup>2,3\*</sup>, Daniel S March <sup>4</sup>, Rhys Thatcher<sup>5</sup>, Raymond J Playford <sup>2</sup>

1. Endurance Research Group, School of Sport & Exercise Sciences, University of Kent, University of Kent at Medway, Medway Building, Chatham Maritime, Chatham, Kent ME4 4AG, 2. Peninsula Medical School, Plymouth University, The John Bull Building, Tamar Science Park, Research Way, Plymouth, PL6 8BU 3. Digestive Diseases, Blizard Institute of Cell and Molecular Science, Barts and The London School of Medicine, Queen Mary, University of London, 4 Newark Street, London E1 2AT, 4. Department of Infection, Immunity & Inflammation, University of Leicester, Maurice Shock Medical Sciences Building, University Road LE1 9HN, 5. Institute of Biological Environmental and Rural Sciences, Carwyn James Building, Aberystwyth University, Penglais Campus, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, SY23 3FD

\*G. Davison and T. Marchbank contributed equally to this work.

Correspondence      Prof. RJ Playford,  
  
                                 Peninsula Medical School,  
  
                                 Plymouth University  
  
                                 The John Bull Building  
  
                                 Tamar Science Park  
  
                                 Research Way  
  
                                 Plymouth PL6 8BU

**Tel:**                      +441752582002

**Email:** raymond.playford@plymouth.ac.uk

**Names for PubMed indexing:** Davison, Marchbank, March, Thatcher, Playford

**Running title:** ZnC +/- bovine colostrum and gut permeability.

**Abbreviations:** Bax $\alpha$ ; B cell leukemia/lymphoma-2 associated X protein-alpha, Bcl-2; B-cell lymphoma 2, HRP; horseradish peroxidase, HPLC; high pressure liquid chromatography, Hsp; heat shock protein, VO<sub>2</sub>max ; maximal oxygen uptake, NSAID; nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory, pSer; phosphorylated Serine, pTyr; phosphorylated Tyrosine, ZnC; zinc carnosine, ZO1; zona occludens protein 1

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## 1 ABSTRACT

2 **Background:** Heavy exercise causes gut symptoms and, in extreme cases, “heat stroke” due  
3 to increased intestinal permeability of luminal toxins.

4 **Objective:** To examine whether zinc carnosine (ZnC) a health food product taken alone or in  
5 combination with bovine colostrum, a natural source of growth factors, moderated such  
6 effects.

7 **Design:** 8 volunteers completed a four-arm double-blind, placebo-controlled, crossover  
8 protocol (14 days placebo, ZnC, colostrum, ZnC + colostrum) prior to standardized exercise  
9 undertaken 2 and 14 days after starting treatment. Changes in epithelial resistance, apoptosis  
10 signalling molecules and tight junction protein phosphorylation in response to 2°C rise were  
11 determined using Caco-2 & HT29 intestinal cells.

12 **Results:** Body temperature increased 2°C and gut permeability (5 hour urinary  
13 lactulose:rhamnose ratios) increased 3-fold following exercise ( $0.32 \pm 0.016$  baseline to  $1.0 \pm$   
14  $0.017$  at +14 days,  $p < 0.01$ ). ZnC or colostrum truncated rise by 70% after 14 days treatment.  
15 Combination treatment gave additional benefit and truncated exercise induced increase at +2  
16 day (30% reduction,  $p < 0.01$ ). 2°C temperature rise in *in vitro* studies caused doubling of  
17 apoptosis and reduced epithelial resistance 3-4-fold. ZnC or colostrum truncated these effects  
18 (35-50%) with greatest response seen with combination treatment (all  $p < 0.01$ ). Mechanisms  
19 of action included increasing Hsp70 and truncating temperature-induced changes in B cell  
20 leukemia/lymphoma-2 associated X protein-alpha (Bax $\alpha$ ) and B-cell lymphoma 2 (Bcl-2). ZnC  
21 also increased total occludin and reduced phosphorylated Tyrosine (pTyr)-occludin, pTyr-  
22 occludin and phosphorylated Serine (pSer)-occludin, enhancing tight junction formation and  
23 stabilisation.

24 **Conclusion:** ZnC taken alone or with colostrum increased epithelial resistance and tight  
25 junction structure and may have value for athletes and preventing heat stroke in military

26 personnel.

27 **Keywords:** Repair; gut growth; injury; nutraceutical; clinical trial

## 28 INTRODUCTION

29 Several stresses affect the integrity of the intestinal barrier including prolonged strenuous  
30 exercise (1), heat stress (2) and drugs such as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory agents  
31 (NSAIDs)(3). Loss of intestinal integrity may result in passage of luminal endotoxins into the  
32 circulation, causing an inflammatory cascade, exacerbating loss of barrier function. This can  
33 result in severe systemic effects (4), such as in exertional heat stroke, associated with  
34 hyperthermia, multi-organ failure and endotoxemia. Similar processes have relevance for  
35 many athletes involved in heavy exercise such as long-distance running where gastrointestinal  
36 symptoms including cramps, diarrhoea, nausea, and bleeding are commonly reported (5, 6).  
37 These symptoms are probably due to a combination of reduced splanchnic blood flow (7),  
38 hormonal changes, altered gut permeability, and increased body temperature.

39  
40 Pharmacological options to reduce these problems are limited, particularly in competitive  
41 athletics. There is, therefore, interest in using natural or naturally derived products. One  
42 product already commercially available is zinc carnosine (ZnC), where zinc and carnosine are  
43 linked in a polymeric one-to-one ratio and is currently marketed as a zinc dietary supplement  
44 with “added value for gastric health”. Combining zinc with carnosine has potential  
45 advantages over simple zinc supplementation as carnosine is a dipeptide (comprising  $\beta$ -  
46 alanine and l-histidine) that is naturally present in long living cells such as muscle and nerves,  
47 where, among other actions, it probably has a role as an antioxidant (8).

48

49 We previously showed ZnC stimulates several aspects of gut mucosal integrity, including  
50 stimulating cell migration and proliferation *in vitro* and reducing the amount of gastric and

51 small intestinal injury caused by NSAIDs in rats and mice (9). Furthermore, using normal  
52 volunteers, we demonstrated that ZnC prevented the rise in gut permeability caused by  
53 clinical doses of the NSAID indomethacin (9). Its potential value in decreasing gut  
54 permeability associated with heavy exercise and its mechanism of actions are, however,  
55 unknown.

56

57 We now examine the effect of oral ZnC on gut permeability and exercise-induced temperature  
58 rise in subjects undertaking heavy exercise and compared effects of ZnC alone with taking it  
59 in combination with bovine colostrum, a rich source of growth factors and immune  
60 modulators (10). Our previous studies utilising colostrum alone showed benefit in reducing  
61 exercise induced increased gut permeability in athletes, but only after prolonged (14 days)  
62 administration (11). Colostrum given alone, therefore, also provided a useful positive control.

63

64 To examine some of the mechanisms by which protective effects were mediated, we  
65 performed a series of *in vitro* studies using two human intestinal cell lines focusing on the  
66 effect of a temperature rise to 39°C (similar to that seen in athletes undergoing the *in vivo*  
67 studies) on apoptosis, epithelial barrier resistance, heat shock protein 70 (Hsp70) expression  
68 and tight junction (TJ) proteins in the presence and absence of test compounds.

69

## 70 **MATERIALS & METHODS**

71 Chemicals were purchased from Sigma (Poole, Dorset) unless otherwise stated.

72

### 73 **A) CLINICAL STUDY: EFFECT OF ZNC AND COLOSTRUM ON EXERCISE-** 74 **INDUCED CHANGES IN HUMAN GUT PERMEABILITY.**

75  
76 Zinc carnosine (Lonza Nutrition Inc USA) and indistinguishable placebo capsules were used  
77 for clinical study. Colostrum (*Neovite* brand lactose-reduced colostrum) and placebo were  
78 provided by Colostrum UK, London. Placebo used in place of colostrum was isoenergetic and  
79 isomacronutrient milk protein concentrate at 80% protein content (principally casein) and was  
80 indistinguishable in appearance and taste from the colostrum powder, which was the form  
81 administered.

82  
83 **Ethical Approval:** All procedures were conducted according to the Declaration of Helsinki.  
84 Ethics approval was obtained from Aberystwyth University Ethics Committee.

85  
86 **Subjects:** Eight healthy males took part and all were active individuals who exercised  
87 regularly 4 or more times per week (4 participants were runners, 1 cyclist, 1 lacrosse player, 1  
88 footballer, 1 rugby player). Physical parameters were: mean age 25, range 19-33; height 1.78  
89  $\pm 0.02$  m; body mass 80.1 $\pm$ 2.5 kg; BMI 24.98 $\pm$ 0.17 kg/m<sup>2</sup>; maximal oxygen uptake  
90 (VO<sub>2</sub>max) 59.6 $\pm$ 1.8 ml/kg/min; peak speed in VO<sub>2</sub>max test 18 $\pm$ 0.4 km/h; running speed at  
91 80% VO<sub>2</sub>max 13.5 $\pm$ 0.03 km/h; (values mean  $\pm$  SEM). Subjects completed a pre-exercise  
92 screening questionnaire (Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire: PAR-Q) before  
93 participating in each test. VO<sub>2</sub>max exercise assessments were performed by standard methods  
94 as reported previously (9) on day -5 of each arm to ensure consistency of the 80% VO<sub>2</sub>max  
95 protocol on day +2 and +14 (**Figure 1 and 2**).

96  
97 **Preparation of subjects for the exercise study:** Subjects completed a 24 h food diary on the  
98 day before the main exercise trial in the first arm of the trial and repeated this diet in the  
99 subsequent arms.. All trials were performed after an overnight fast of at least 10 h. Subjects

100 reported at 07:00 for all trials and self-positioned a rectal thermistor (Grant Instruments,  
101 Cambridge, England), 10 cm beyond the anal sphincter, and positioned a telemetric heart rate  
102 monitor transmitter band (Polar S610i, Polar Electro Oy, Tampere, Finland). Core  
103 temperature ( $T_{core}$ ) was recorded using an electronic data logger (Squirrel SQ2020, Grant  
104 Instruments, Cambridge, England).

105 Subjects sat for 10 min before baseline venous blood sample (pre-exercise) was taken.  
106 Subjects then ran on the treadmill, with 1% grade, for 20 min at a constant speed equivalent to  
107 80%  $VO_{2max}$ , as determined from preliminary tests. Expired gas was analyzed during  
108 exercise using an online breath-by-breath system (Jaeger Oxycon Pro. Hoechberg, Germany).  
109 Core body temperature, heart rate, and rating of perceived exertion were recorded every 5 min  
110 during the trial. After completing the run, subjects were quickly seated and a second blood  
111 sample (post-exercise) was obtained (within 5 minutes). Subjects then emptied their bladder  
112 before consuming the intestinal permeability test drink and commencing with a 5-h urine  
113 collection to determine intestinal permeability.

114

115 **Study design:** In a four-arm double-blind placebo controlled randomised crossover design,  
116 subjects received oral supplementation twice a day for 14 days with a 14 day washout period  
117 between each study arm (Figure 1 and 2). Each arm was administered in a randomised fashion  
118 using the web site *randomization.com* (4x4 blocks). Timing was based on our previous  
119 studies using this type of protocol that had demonstrated was sufficient time to ensure  
120 baseline permeability values returned back to normal (11).

121 Maximal oxygen uptake ( $VO_{2max}$ ) was assessed on day -5 for each arm of the study. Gut  
122 permeability assessments were performed under non- exercise conditions on day -2 and 0 (to



123 confirm stable baseline) and immediately following the standardised exercise (treadmill  
124 running 20 min at 80%  $\text{VO}_2\text{max}$ ) protocol on day +2 and +14.

125 Oral supplements consisted of 37.5 mg ZnC + 10 g placebo, 10 g bovine colostrum + placebo  
126 capsule, 37.5 mg ZnC + 10 g bovine colostrum and 10 g placebo + placebo capsule, taken  
127 twice per day. The capsules (ZnC) and powder (colostrum) or their placebo equivalents were  
128 taken just prior to breakfast or evening meal. The doses were chosen based on the results of  
129 pilot in vitro studies (**Supplemental Material 1, Supplemental Figure 1**).

130

131 **Analytical methods:** Intestinal permeability was assessed using our previously published  
132 protocol, equipment and methods (11). Results are expressed as a simple area under the curve  
133 ratios as described by us previously (11) and also as ratio of percentage of ingested sugar  
134 excreted in the urine as used by some other groups (12).

135

## 136 **B) IN VITRO STUDIES**

137 To investigate mechanisms by which test compounds influenced gut permeability in the  
138 clinical study, we performed a series of experiments examining the effect of a 2°C rise (from  
139 37 to 39°C).

140

141 **Cell lines:** HT29 is derived from colorectal adenocarcinoma of 44-year-old Caucasian female  
142 (ATCC)(13). Caco-2 is derived from colorectal adenocarcinoma of 72-year-old male (ATCC)  
143 and exhibits tight junctions and desmosomes between adjacent cells and grows as polarized  
144 monolayers (14).

145

146 **Transepithelial permeability assays:** The influence of temperature changes on  
147 transepithelial permeability in the presence and absence of test factors were determined using  
148 two different methods. One determined changes in transepithelial electrical resistance using  
149 our previously published methods (11). The other analysed the passage of horseradish  
150 peroxidase (HRP) across the epithelial layer using standard methods (15). To enhance any  
151 effects seen, the above experiments were also performed in low calcium medium (0.9 mM) in  
152 addition to normal calcium medium (1.7 mM).

153

154 **Heat shock protein 70 (Hsp70) assay:** Effects of temperature change and various test factors  
155 on cell lysate Hsp70 levels were determined using our previously published methods (11),  
156 using a Duoset Elisa kit (DYC1663-2, R&D Systems Europe, Abingdon, UK).

157

158 **Cell apoptosis assays:** Effects of temperature change and the various test factors on cell  
159 lysate levels of active caspase-3 (an effector caspase) and caspase-9 (an initiator caspase)  
160 were determined using methods previously described (11), using commercial colorimetric  
161 assay kits (BF3100 and BF10100, R&D Systems). In addition, Westerns were performed  
162 using caspase-3 (sc-7272, Santa Cruz) and caspase-9 (sc-81589) antibodies capable of  
163 detecting both pro-caspase and active caspase. Films were scanned and mean signal density of  
164 each band determined using Adobe Photoshop.

165

166 Concentrations of the anti-apoptotic protein Bcl-2 and the pro-apoptotic protein Bax $\alpha$  were  
167 determined in the same cell lysates as used for caspase analyses, using Duoset Elisa kits  
168 (DYC827B-2 and DYC820-2, respectively, R&D Systems Europe Ltd).

169

170 **TJ protein and phosphorylation assessments:** Effects of temperature change were assessed  
171 using standard assays and commercial kits: occludin, zona occludens protein 1 (ZO1) and  
172 claudin-1 (tight junction antibody samples pack 90-1200, Invitrogen), tyrosine, serine and  
173 threonine phosphorylation levels were measured by standard ELISA (anti-phosphothreonine  
174 ab9337, anti-phosphotyrosine ab9318 and anti-phosphoserine ab9332, all Abcam, Cambridge  
175 UK). In addition, Western analyses were performed for total occludin, ZO1 and claudin-1 and  
176 a commercial kit (35050, Thermo Scientific). Immunocomplexes were prepared from lysates  
177 by incubation with relevant TJ antibody and analysed by Western using anti-  
178 phosphothreonine , anti-phosphotyrosine or anti-phosphoserine and a commercial kit (35050,  
179 Thermo Scientific). Films were scanned and the mean signal density of each band was  
180 determined using Adobe Photoshop.

181

## 182 **Statistical analyses**

183 All values are expressed as the mean  $\pm$  SEM unless stated. For in vitro studies, a JMP  
184 statistical package (version 10) was used to perform three way ANOVA with temperature,  
185 treatment and time as factors. For the clinical study, a three way ANOVA with treatment  
186 (arm), permeability and time as factors was performed. Where a significant effect was seen  
187 ( $p < 0.05$ ), individual comparisons were performed using t-tests based on the group means,  
188 residual and degrees of freedom obtained from the ANOVA, a method equivalent to repeated  
189 measures analyses (11).

190

## 191 **RESULTS**

192 **A) CLINICAL STUDY: EFFECT OF ZNC AND COLOSTRUM ON EXERCISE-**  
193 **INDUCED CHANGES IN HUMAN GUT PERMEABILITY.**

194 As expected, rating of perceived exertion expressed during exercise, heart rate (mean rise  
195  $106 \pm 2$  BPM, from  $73 \pm 1$  to  $179 \pm 1$  BPM), lactate concentrations (mean rise  $5.76 \pm 0.31$  mM,  
196 from  $1.10 \pm 0.07$  to  $6.86 \pm 0.31$  mM), core temperature (mean rise  $1.59 \pm 0.04$  °C, from  
197  $36.75 \pm 0.02$  to  $38.33 \pm 0.05$  °C),  $\text{VO}_2$ ,  $\text{VCO}_2$  and respiratory exchange ratio, all rose in response  
198 to exercise (all  $p < 0.01$ ). The presence of supplements had no significant effect on results.  
199  $\text{VO}_{2\text{max}}$  assessments on day -5 of each arm and 80%  $\text{VO}_{2\text{max}}$  protocol on day 2 and 14 were  
200 not different between the four arms (**Table 1**).

201  
202 Baseline permeability expressed as the ratio of Lactulose/Rhamnose under the curve values  
203 were similar at the beginning of each study arm (**Figure 3**). Permeability increased about 3-  
204 fold in response to exercise during the placebo arm (rising from  $0.318 \pm 0.016$ , initial baseline  
205 value, to  $0.979 \pm 0.026$  at day +2 and  $1.000 \pm 0.017$  at day +14 (both  $p < 0.01$  vs baseline).  
206 Expressing results as Lactulose/Rhamnose % urinary excretion ratios gave equivalent results  
207 (Supplemental Material 1, **Supplemental Figure 2**).

208 After 2 days treatment, ingestion of ZnC alone or colostrum alone did not significantly reduce  
209 the rise in exercise induced permeability compared to placebo. In contrast, ingestion of ZnC +  
210 colostrum attenuated this increase in permeability by 30% ( $p < 0.01$  versus the other treatment  
211 groups arms at the same time point).

212 After 14 days treatment, the increase in permeability caused by exercise was reduced by 71%  
213 in the ZnC alone arm, 68% in the colostrum alone arm and by 85% in the ZnC + colostrum  
214 arm (Figure 3, all  $p < 0.01$  vs placebo at same time point). ZnC + colostrum was significantly  
215 better at truncating the rise in permeability induced by exercise than using colostrum alone  
216 ( $p < 0.05$ ) and although it had a greater reductive effect than using ZnC alone, this difference  
217 was not statistically significant at the  $< 0.05$  level. ( $p = 0.069$ ).

218 The order in which the arms were administered did not influence results (although numbers  
219 are too small to perform detailed statistical analysis).

220

## 221 **B. IN VITRO STUDIES**

222 **Transepithelial permeability:** Results examining electrical resistance (**Figure 4A**) or  
223 passage of HRP (**Figure 4B**) confirmed the protective effects of test substances. Using this  
224 protocol, the combination of ZnC + colostrum resulted in a significant beneficial effect (77%  
225 attenuation of increased permeability caused by temperature rise), which was greater than that  
226 seen when cells were incubated with either ZnC (52% attenuation) or colostrum (41%  
227 attenuation) given alone (**Figure 4A and B**).

228

229 **Apoptosis:** Both ELISA and western blot analysis showed that increasing incubation  
230 temperature caused an approximate 2-fold increase in active caspase 3 and 9 expression at the  
231 8 h time points (**Figure 5 and Supplemental Figure 3**). Addition of ZnC, colostrum or ZnC  
232 + colostrum had no significant effect on caspase expression when incubated at 37°C.  
233 However, the co-presence of ZnC, colostrum or the combination all significantly reduced  
234 caspase 3 and 9 expression compared to cells grown in medium alone at 39°C (all  $p < 0.01$ ).  
235 These changes were specific as they were not seen when the caspase-3 or caspase-9 inhibitor  
236 were also added to the cells (**Supplemental Figure 4**).

237

238 The 2°C rise caused increased Bax $\alpha$  concentration from  $578.6 \pm 16.7$  to  $797.4 \pm 29.7$  pg/ml  
239 ( $p < 0.01$ ) at the 4 h time point (**Figure 6A**). Addition of ZnC alone did not affect Bax $\alpha$   
240 expression at either 37 or 39°C whereas colostrum alone did reduce the temperature-induced  
241 rise in Bax $\alpha$ . A significant further decrease in Bax $\alpha$  concentration was seen when ZnC and

242 colostrum were added together at 39°C (p<0.01 vs ZnC alone, Figure 6A). Similar results  
243 were seen after 8h (data not shown).

244

245 The 2°C rise resulted in a decrease of Bcl2 levels from  $350 \pm 2$  to  $292 \pm 2$  pg/ml to (p<0.01)  
246 after 4 h (Figure 6B). Addition of ZnC, colostrum or the combination did not affect Bcl2  
247 levels at 37°C. At 39°C, the presence of ZnC or colostrum alone significantly attenuated the  
248 temperature-induced decrease in Bcl2 levels and an additive/synergistic effect was seen when  
249 ZnC and colostrum were added together, completely preventing the temperature induced  
250 decline in Bcl2. Similar results were seen after 8h (data not shown).

251

252 Raising incubation temperature caused increased Hsp70 levels from  $139 \pm 1$  to  $181 \pm 3$  pg/ml  
253 (p<0.01) after 4 h (Figure 6C). Adding ZnC alone or colostrum alone increased Hsp70 levels  
254 at both 37°C and 39°C above values seen in cells grown in medium alone (all p<0.05).

255 Compared to giving either test compound alone, additional increases were found when ZnC  
256 and colostrum were added together in cells at 39°C at both time points (Figure 6C+D).

257

258 **TJ protein expression and phosphorylation:** As results at 4h were similar to those at 8h,  
259 they are reported together below.

260

261 ZO1: Total ZO1 increased in response to temperature rise and were not affected by test  
262 factors (**Figure 7A**). P-Tyr-ZO1 were reduced by temperature rise and presence of colostrum  
263 or combination treatment reduced levels further (Figure 7B). P-Ser-ZO1 was reduced by  
264 temperature rise. The co-presence of test factors increased p-Ser-ZO1 levels at both 37 and  
265 39°C (Figure 7C). Analyses using Western blotting and densitometry showed similar results  
266 (**Supplemental Figure 5**).

267

268 Occludin: Total occludin increased in response to temperature rise. Presence of ZnC,  
269 colostrum or combination all increased total occludin levels at 37°C. At 39°C all test factors  
270 caused additional rises in total occludin levels compared to cells in medium alone (**Figure**  
271 **8A**). Increased temperature caused p-Tyr-occludin to rise but presence of test factors reduced  
272 p-Tyr-occludin levels at both 37 and 39°C with largest fall seen in cells treated with ZnC +  
273 colostrum (Figure 8B). P-Ser-occludin levels were reduced in response to temperature rise  
274 and presence of test factors caused further reductions in p-Ser-occludin ratios, with the largest  
275 fall seen with combination treatment (Figure 8C). Analyses using Western blotting and  
276 densitometry showed similar results (**Supplemental Figure 6**).

277

278 Claudin-1: Total claudin-1 was not affected by temperature change or test factors (**Figure**  
279 **9A**). P-Tyr-claudin-1 levels rose in response to temperature increase and there was a small but  
280 significant truncation of the rise in the presence of ZnC alone or in combination with  
281 colostrum (Figure 9B). P-Ser-claudin-1 was not significantly affected by temperature rise or  
282 presence of test factors (Figure 9C). Analyses using Western blotting and densitometry  
283 showed similar results (**Supplemental Figure 7**).

284

285

286 **DISCUSSION**

287 Using a combination of a clinical trial and *in vitro* experiments, we showed that ZnC  
288 attenuates the exercise-induced increase in gut permeability through mechanisms that include  
289 reducing temperature-induced apoptosis, induction of Hsp70 and modulation of TJ protein  
290 expression and phosphorylation. Enhanced results were seen if the ZnC was co-administered  
291 with another natural bioactive nutraceutical product; bovine colostrum.

292

293 Numerous exercise protocols are used by exercise physiologists. We chose a 20-min run at  
294 80%  $\text{VO}_2\text{max}$  protocol as we have previous experience of this (11), it allows a crossover  
295 study design to be used in a relatively short period, reliably increases gut permeability by 2-3  
296 fold and increases core temperature by 1.5–2°C. Assessment of intestinal permeability by  
297 quantitating unmediated absorption of at least two sugars of different sizes provides a  
298 sensitive index of intestinal damage as we and others have previously shown (11, 12, 16).

299

300 Subjects'  $\text{VO}_2\text{max}$  and speed at 80%  $\text{VO}_2\text{max}$  remained consistent for all arms and similar  
301 exercise-induced changes in core temperatures were observed in each study arm. The  
302 protective effect of test substances could, therefore, not be attributed to changing core  
303 temperature during exercise. Gut permeability increased 3-fold in response to exercise in the  
304 placebo control arm, as expected using this protocol (11). These changes in gut permeability  
305 are similar to those reported by us previously in subjects ingesting clinically relevant doses of  
306 the NSAID indomethacin (9), which is known to cause small intestinal injury (17).

307

308 Similar levels of protection, as determined by gut permeability, were seen when either ZnC or  
309 colostrum were administered alone with no protective effect seen after 2 days treatment but  
310 reducing permeability values by 70% after 14 days treatment. At this +14 day time point,



311 additional advantage was seen with combination treatment and, possibly more importantly in  
312 regards to the use by athletes or military entering a high temperature environment,  
313 combination treatment also attenuated exercise induced gut permeability after only 2 days  
314 treatment.

315

316 We then undertook a series of *in vitro* studies to examine the effect of the core temperature  
317 rise on gut integrity in a controlled environment. We used two well validated complementary  
318 models to examine changes in trans-epithelial resistance by following changes in electrical  
319 resistance (11) and passage of a large molecule (HRP) across polarized monolayers of human  
320 colonic cancer cells (15). We have experience of studying effects of proteins in these systems  
321 and it removes confounding factors such as changes in blood flow. The results were  
322 consistent with the clinical trial; temperature rise was associated with increased permeability  
323 but this effect could be attenuated by the co-presence of ZnC +/- colostrum, with greatest  
324 effects seen with combination treatment. These effects are likely to be due, at least in part, to  
325 effects on paracellular permeability, such as alteration in TJs (18) and changes in apoptosis.

326

327 Temperature rise is a well-known trigger of apoptosis (11), and we measured active caspase-3  
328 and 9 to examine potential effects of test compounds. We showed that this 2°C rise was  
329 sufficient to increase apoptosis and that ZnC truncated this response, possibly by maintaining  
330 levels of the anti-apoptotic protein Bcl-2. An additive effect was seen in the maintenance of  
331 Bcl-2 when ZnC and colostrum were added together.

332

333 Hsps maintain cellular homeostasis during normal cell growth and enhance survival during  
334 and after various cellular stresses (19). Increased Hsp expression may be one mechanism  
335 through which thermo-tolerance occurs in animals and cells (20). Hsp70 is increased in

336 response to temperature rises as a homeostatic mechanism for maintaining viability under  
337 conditions that increase the accumulation of damaged proteins. Our finding that ZnC induced  
338 Hsp70 expression at 37°C and caused additional increases when added at 39°C suggests that  
339 this pathway may have relevance to our results. Importantly, our *in vitro* results were  
340 demonstrated reproducing the temperature rise seen in the clinical study (to ~39°C), and seen  
341 in most athletes during standard performance, rather than the typical 41.5°C used in rat  
342 models of hyperthermia that results in massive breakdown of mucosal integrity.

343

344 Intestinal epithelial TJs are multi-protein complexes that connect adjacent cells on apical and  
345 lateral membranes and act as selective barriers. TJ integrity is regulated by assembly of  
346 extracellular loops of transmembrane proteins occludin and claudin and several intracellular  
347 plaque proteins such as ZO-1 which link to the actin cytoskeleton. TJ function is regulated by  
348 changes in both absolute amounts and degree of phosphorylation at specific residues. In  
349 general terms, increased expression of occludin, claudin and/or ZO-1 increase TJ formation  
350 and increase resistance (for good overview see 21, 22). Increased total occludin in response to  
351 ZnC can, therefore, be considered as potentially beneficial. Tyr phosphorylation of any of the  
352 three TJ proteins assessed hinders TJ formation, reducing epithelial resistance. Our finding  
353 that ZnC reduced pTyr levels of claudin and occludin should therefore enhance TJ formation  
354 although it should be noted that the changes in claudin phosphorylation in response to  
355 treatment were small and, therefore, of unclear significance. Similarly, our finding that ZnC  
356 reduced phosphorylation of serine in occludin should also enhance TJ formation.

357

358 We showed that the overall effect of giving bovine colostrum alone or ZnC alone were similar  
359 in reducing exercise induced permeability. Both compounds increased Hsp70 levels and  
360 reduced heat induced apoptosis, although the signalling processes somewhat different with

361 colostrum, but not ZnC, reducing the temperature- induced rise in Bax $\alpha$  levels. Analyses of  
362 TJ modulation also showed broadly similar results in phosphorylation effects on the TJ  
363 proteins although some differences, such as reduced pTyr of ZO-1 by colostrum, but not by  
364 ZnC, were seen.

365

366 There is currently demand by the general public for more natural types of products, often  
367 termed “alternative-”, “complementary-” therapies or “nutriceuticals” (from nutrition and  
368 pharmaceuticals). Because of their natural origin, the general public often assume they are  
369 safe and may take high doses for prolonged periods. Caution needs to shown, however, as  
370 there is biological activity in many of these products, such as colostrum which is rich in  
371 multiple growth factors. (see 23) The general principals of using the lowest dose for the  
372 shortest time possible, therefore, seems appropriate. In the current studies, ZnC was  
373 administered at 37.5 mg twice daily, giving total daily dose of zinc of 16 mgs/day. Current  
374 recommendations for daily zinc intake are 5.5-9.5mg (male) and 4-7mg (female) from UK  
375 food standards authority and 11mg (male) and 8 mg (female) from US NIH with daily upper  
376 recommended limits being 25mg/day in UK and 40 mg/day in US. The regimen used in the  
377 current studies is therefore well within safety guidelines.

378

379 The findings of additive or synergistic effects (dependent on parameter) are particularly  
380 relevant in the clinical study as it was only combination treatment that was effective after 2  
381 days treatment. This suggests that short courses, taken for a few days before embarking on  
382 prolonged heavy exercise (such as athletic events or military manoeuvres in hot climates)  
383 could provide optimal results while minimising dosing. Further studies appear warranted to  
384 explore these findings. These could include examination of athletes undertaking prolonged  
385 strenuous exercise, such as a marathon where it would also be of interest to examine blood

386 endotoxin levels. It would also be of interest to examine additional markers of cellular  
387 integrity and enterocyte permeability such as I-FABP, although it seems likely that later blood  
388 samples and potentially a longer exercise protocol than that used in our studies would be  
389 required to demonstrate such changes (24). Additional studies could also include the  
390 relevance of hypoxia on paracellular and cellular integrity when cells are stressed by hypoxia  
391 alone and in combination with temperature rises. Our current studies focusing on temperature  
392 change builds on previous work showing ZnC prevents NSAID gut damage. It would  
393 therefore be of interest to examine its effects on other gut disorders such as inflammatory  
394 bowel disease where uncontrolled inflammatory response combined with disruption of  
395 epithelial integrity is a major factor.

396

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**Author contributions:** GD, TM, RJP designing research studies, GD, TM, DSM, RT conducting experiments, GD, TM, DSM, RT acquiring data, GD, TM, RJP analyzing data, and GD, TM, RJP writing the manuscript.

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**Table 1. VO<sub>2</sub>max and 80% VO<sub>2</sub> max exercise assessments.**

	Day -5 of trial VO <sub>2</sub> max protocol	Day 2 of trial 80% VO <sub>2</sub> max protocol	Day 14 of trial 80% VO <sub>2</sub> max protocol
Placebo +Placebo	5.01 (4.44 – 5.11)	3.73 (3.31 – 3.89)	3.61 (3.26 – 3.79)
Colostrum + Placebo	4.77 ( 4.50 – 4.93)	3.54 (3.25 - 3.77)	3.48 (3.19 – 3.69)
ZnC + Placebo	4.73 (4.57 – 5.06)	3.53 (3.34 – 3.78)	3.45 (3.29 – 3.73)
ZnC + Colostrum	4.78 (4.61 – 4.89)	3.458 (3.35 – 3.70)	3.54 (3.36 – 3.58)

<sup>1</sup>There were no significant differences between any of the treatment arms.  
<sup>2</sup> Data shown as median and interquartile range (n=8)  
<sup>3</sup> Data analyzed by 3-way ANOVA followed by t-tests based on the group means, residual and degrees of freedom obtained from the ANOVA.



## FIGURE LEGENDS

### Figure 1. Consort Flowchart for randomised trial.

### Figure 2. Schematic of trial design.

Each subject took part in a double blind cross over protocol. Subjects received oral supplementation twice a day with ZnC, bovine colostrum, ZnC + bovine colostrum or placebo for 2 weeks with a 2-week washout in between study arms. The timings used to determine  $\dot{V}O_{2\max}$  and to undertake 80%  $\dot{V}O_{2\max}$  protocols, gut permeability assessments (involving 5 h urine collection) and blood samples are shown.

### Figure 3. Gut permeability assessments during trial shown in Figure 2.

Two baseline assessments (no exercise) were performed before each arm of the study. Tests products were started on day 0. The other 2 assessments were performed at the end of 2 and 14 days ingestion of placebo (■), ZnC (X), colostrum (○) or ZnC + colostrum (□) immediately after the subject had followed a 20 min 80%  $\dot{V}O_{2\max}$  protocol. Results are expressed as Lactulose/Rhamnose area under the curve ratio. Data expressed as mean +/-SEM (n=8). Data analysed by 3 way ANOVA followed by t-tests based on the group means, residual and degrees of freedom obtained from the ANOVA. \*\* signifies  $p < 0.01$  compared the placebo arm at the same timepoint, ++ signifies  $p < 0.01$  compared to ZnC arm at that timepoint, \$ and \$\$ signifies  $p < 0.05$  and  $p < 0.01$ , respectively, compared to colostrum arm at that timepoint .

**Figure 4. Effect of ZnC +/- colostrum on temperature induced changes in transepithelial electrical resistance and permeability to Horse radish peroxidase using Caco-2 monolayers.**

**A)** Transepithelial resistance was measured in confluent polarised monolayers after incubating at 37 or 39°C for 8 hours.

**B)** Permeability through the monolayers was also assessed by the measurement of passage of HRP into the basal medium, having been added to the apical medium at time zero.

Data expressed as mean +/-SEM (n=4). Data analysed by 3 way ANOVA followed by t-tests based on the group means, residual and degrees of freedom obtained from the ANOVA. \*\* signifies p<0.01, respectively compared to medium alone at the same temperature, + and ++ signifies p<0.05 and p<0.01 compared to ZnC alone at the same temperature. \$\$ signifies p<0.01 compared to colostrum alone . p<0.01 for all test conditions, 37°C vs 39°C

**Figure 5. Effect of ZnC +/- colostrum on temperature induced apoptosis, active caspase 3 and 9.**

Caco-2 cells were incubated at 37 or 39°C for 8 hours in medium alone or with ZnC, colostrum or ZnC + colostrum. Changes in apoptosis were determined using active caspase-3 (A) & 9 (B) assay kits, following changes in absorbance at 405 nM. Studies were also analysed using western analysis and showed similar results (Supplemental Figure 3). Data expressed as mean +/-SEM (n=3). Data analysed by 3 way ANOVA followed by t-tests based on the group means, residual and degrees of freedom obtained from the ANOVA. \* and \*\* signifies p<0.05 and p<0.01 compared to medium alone at the same temperature and timepoint, respectively. p<0.01 for all test conditions 37°C vs 39°C

**Figure 6. Effect of ZnC +/- colostrum on temperature induced changes in the pro-apoptotic protein Bax $\alpha$ , the anti-apoptotic protein Bcl-2 and heat shock protein expression (Hsp70).**

Caco-2 cells were incubated at 37 or 39°C in medium alone or with ZnC, colostrum or ZnC + colostrum. Changes in Bax $\alpha$ , (A), Bcl-2 (B) after 4h are shown. Changes seen in Hsp70 after 4h (C) or 8h (D) incubation at these two temperatures are also shown. Similar results were seen using HT29 cells (data not shown)

Data expressed as mean +/-SEM (n=3). Data analysed by 3 way ANOVA followed by t-tests based on the group means, residual and degrees of freedom obtained from the ANOVA.\* and \*\* signifies p<0.05 and p<0.01, respectively compared to medium alone at the same temperature and timepoint,++ signifies p<0.01 compared to ZnC alone at the same temperature and timepoint, \$ and \$\$ signifies p<0.05 and p<0.01, respectively compared to colostrum alone at the same temperature and timepoint. p<0.01 for all test conditions, 37°C vs 39°C

**Figure 7. Effect of ZnC +/- colostrum on temperature induced changes of ZO1 protein levels and phosphorylation.**

Cells were incubated in the presence of test factors for 8 h at either 37 or 39°C.

A) Total ZO1, B) Phospho-tyrosine ZO1, C) Phospho-serine ZO1 analysed by Elisa. Studies using Western blotting and densitometry gave similar results (Supplemental Figure 5). Data expressed as mean +/-SEM (n=3). Data analysed by 3 way ANOVA followed by t-tests based on the group means, residual and degrees of freedom obtained from the ANOVA. \*\* signifies

$p < 0.01$ , respectively compared to medium alone at the same temperature, ++ signifies  $p < 0.01$ , respectively compared to ZnC alone at the same temperature.

**Figure 8. Effect of ZnC +/- colostrum on temperature induced changes of occludin protein levels and phosphorylation.**

Cells were incubated in the presence of test factors for 8 h at either 37 or 39°C.

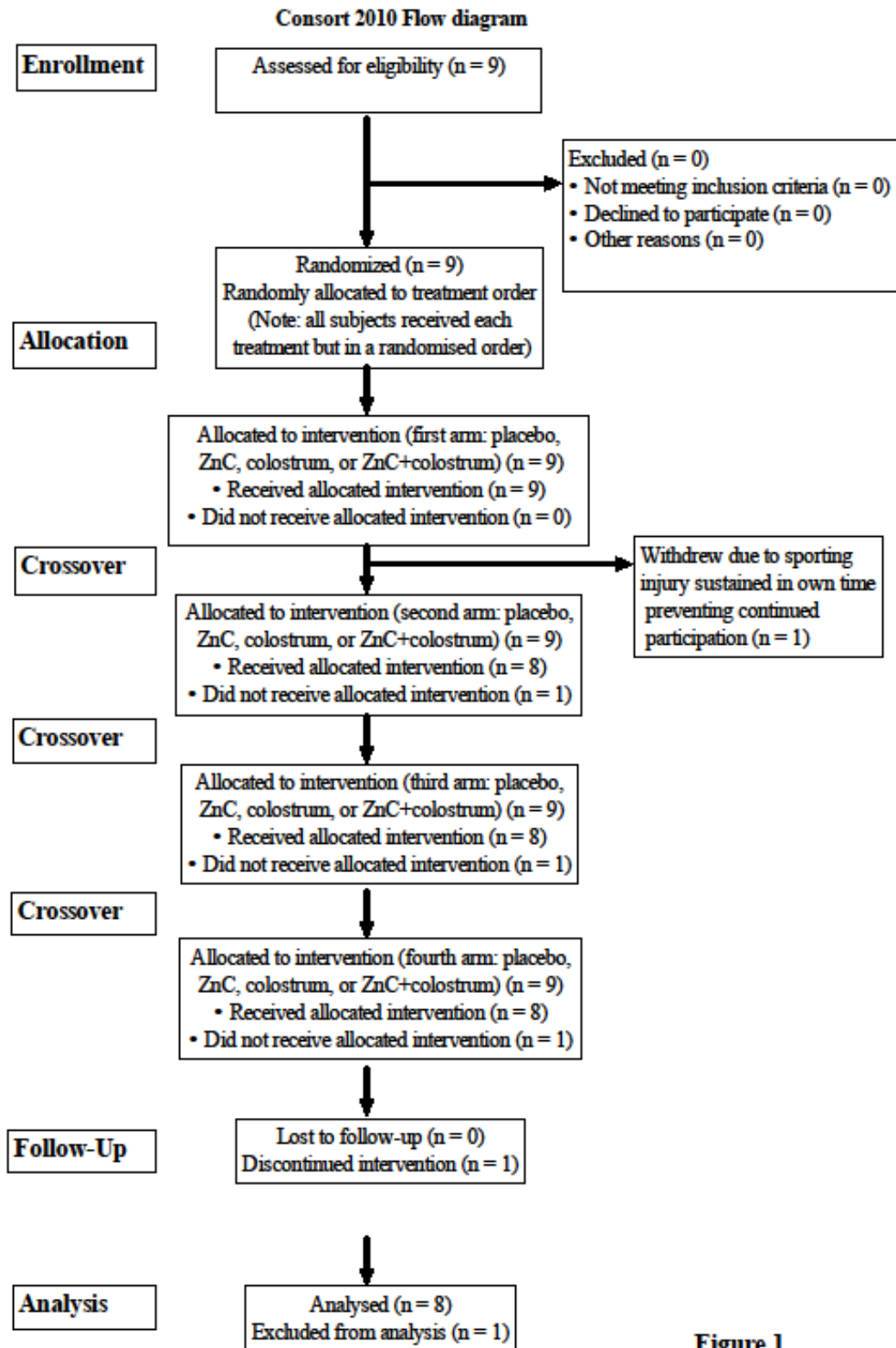
A) Total occludin, B) Phospho-tyrosine occludin, C) Phospho-serine occludin analysed by Elisa. Studies using Western blotting and densitometry gave similar results (Supplemental Figure 6). Data expressed as mean  $\pm$  SEM (n=3). Data analysed by 3 way ANOVA followed by t-tests based on the group means, residual and degrees of freedom obtained from the ANOVA. \* and \*\* signifies  $p < 0.05$  and  $p < 0.01$ , respectively compared to medium alone at the same temperature, + signifies  $p < 0.05$ , respectively compared to ZnC alone at the same temperature, \$ signifies  $p < 0.05$  compared to colostrum alone at the same temperature.

**Figure 9. Effect of ZnC +/- colostrum on temperature induced changes of claudin 1 protein levels and phosphorylation.**

Cells were incubated in the presence of test factors for 8 h at either 37 or 39°C.

A) Total claudin-1, B) Phospho-tyrosine claudin-1, C) Phospho-serine claudin-1 analysed by elisa. Studies using Western blotting and densitometry gave similar results (Supplemental Figure 7). Data expressed as mean  $\pm$  SEM (n=3). Data analysed by 3 way ANOVA followed by t-tests based on the group means, residual and degrees of freedom obtained from the

ANOVA. \*\* signifies  $p < 0.01$ , respectively compared to medium alone at the same temperature.



**Figure 1**

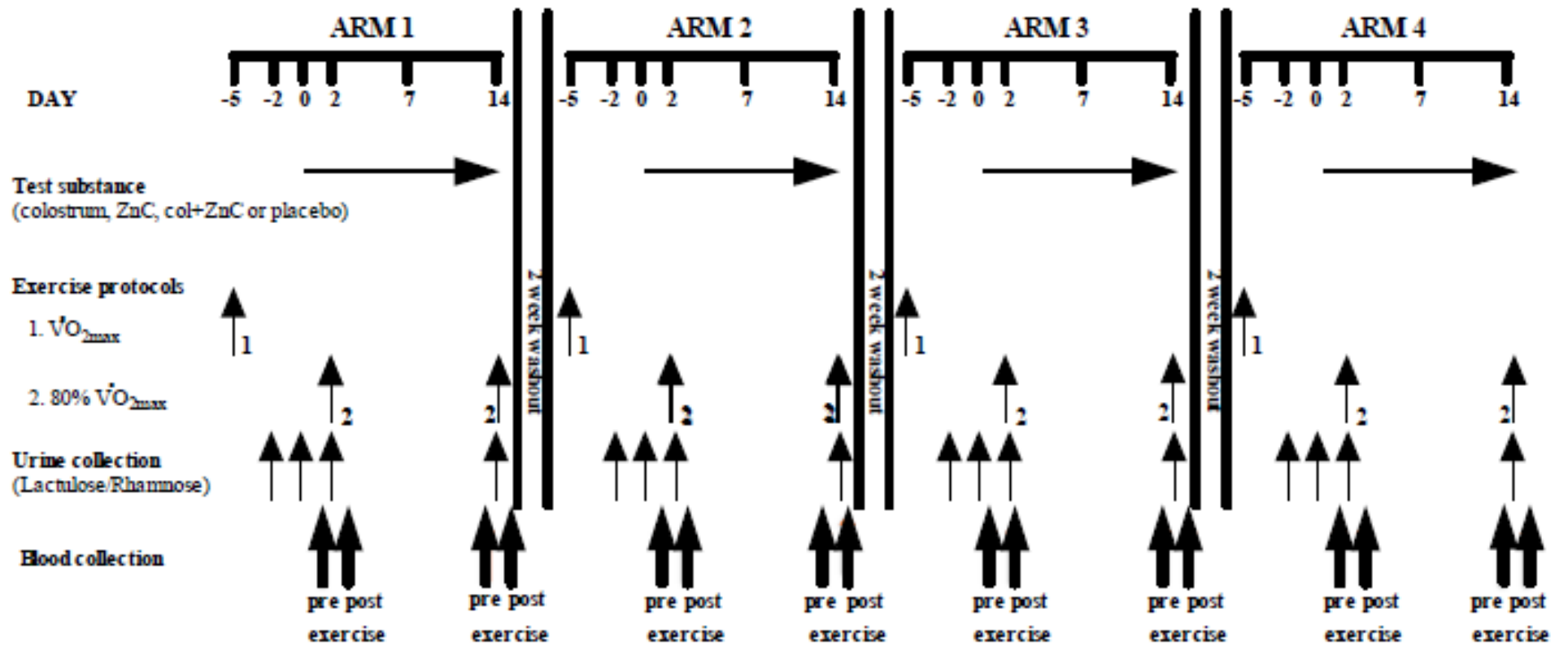


Figure 2

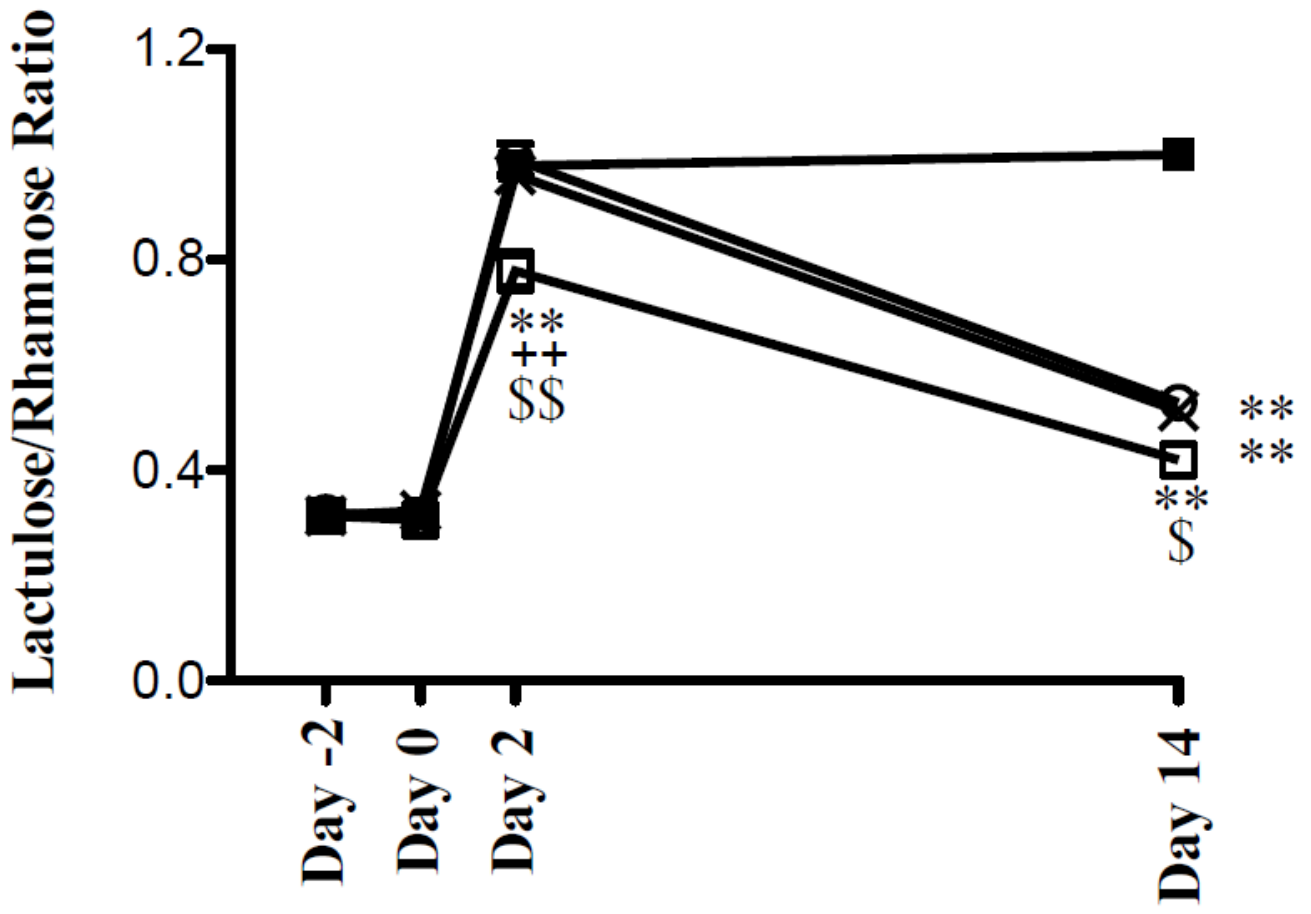
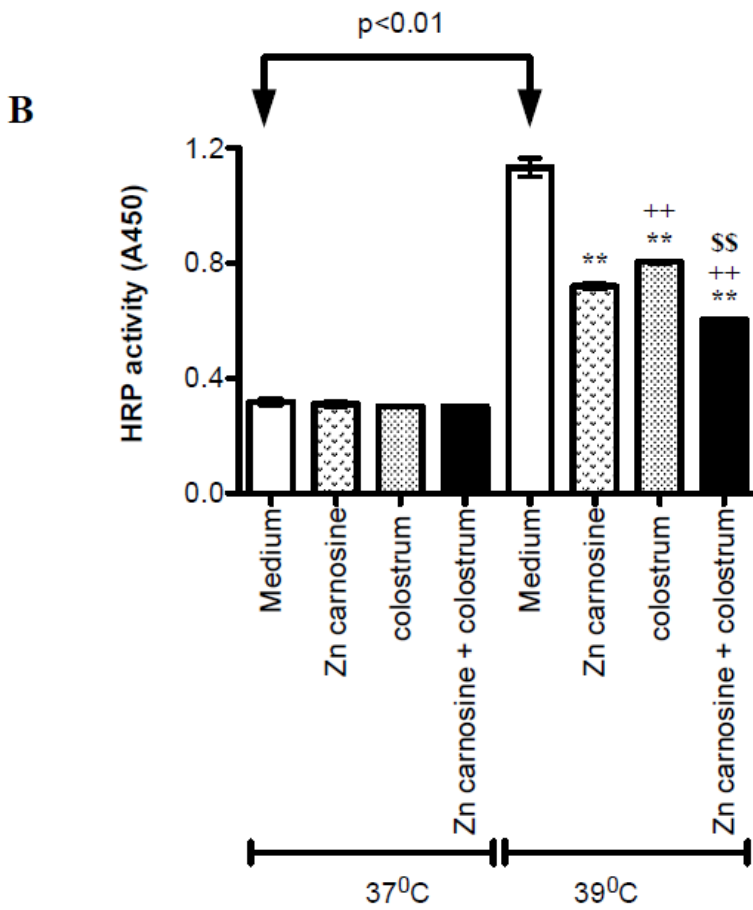
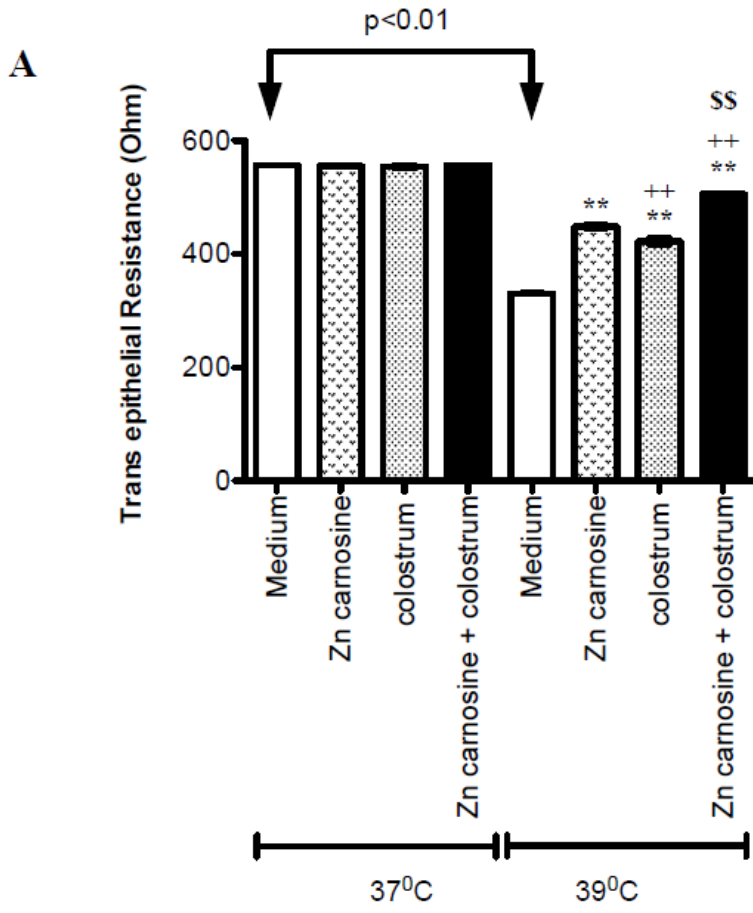


Figure 3





**Fig 4**

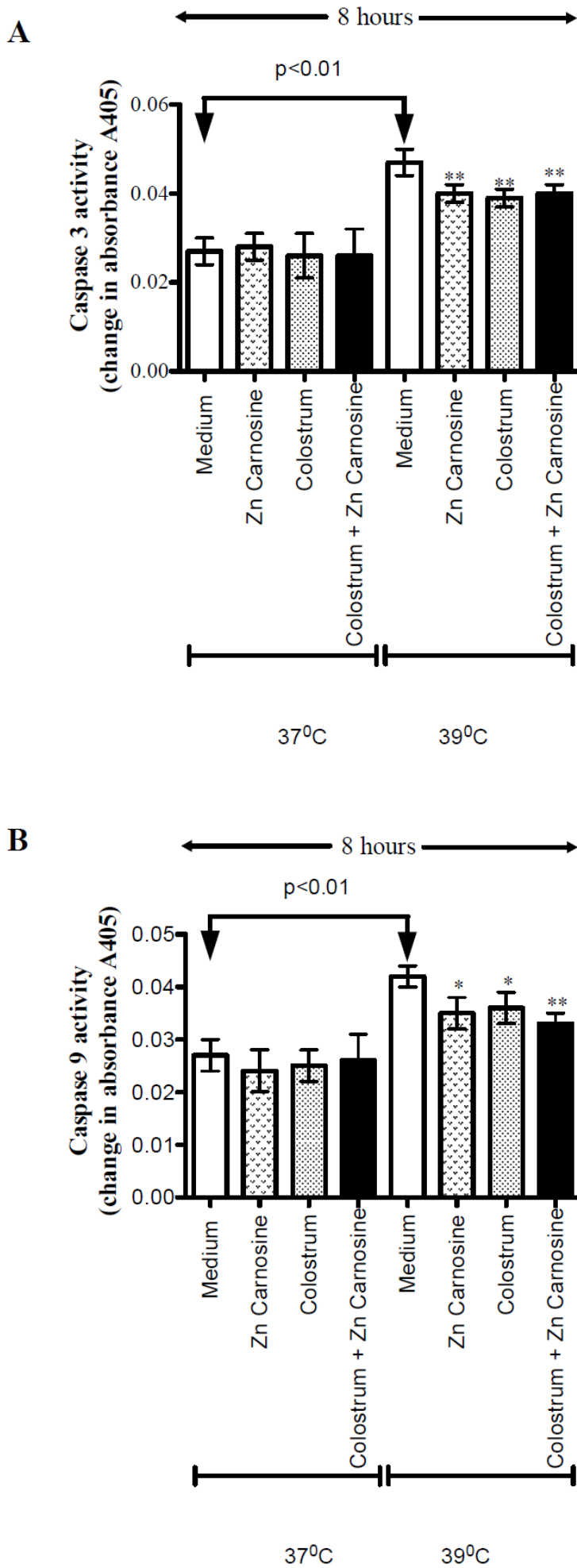


Fig 5

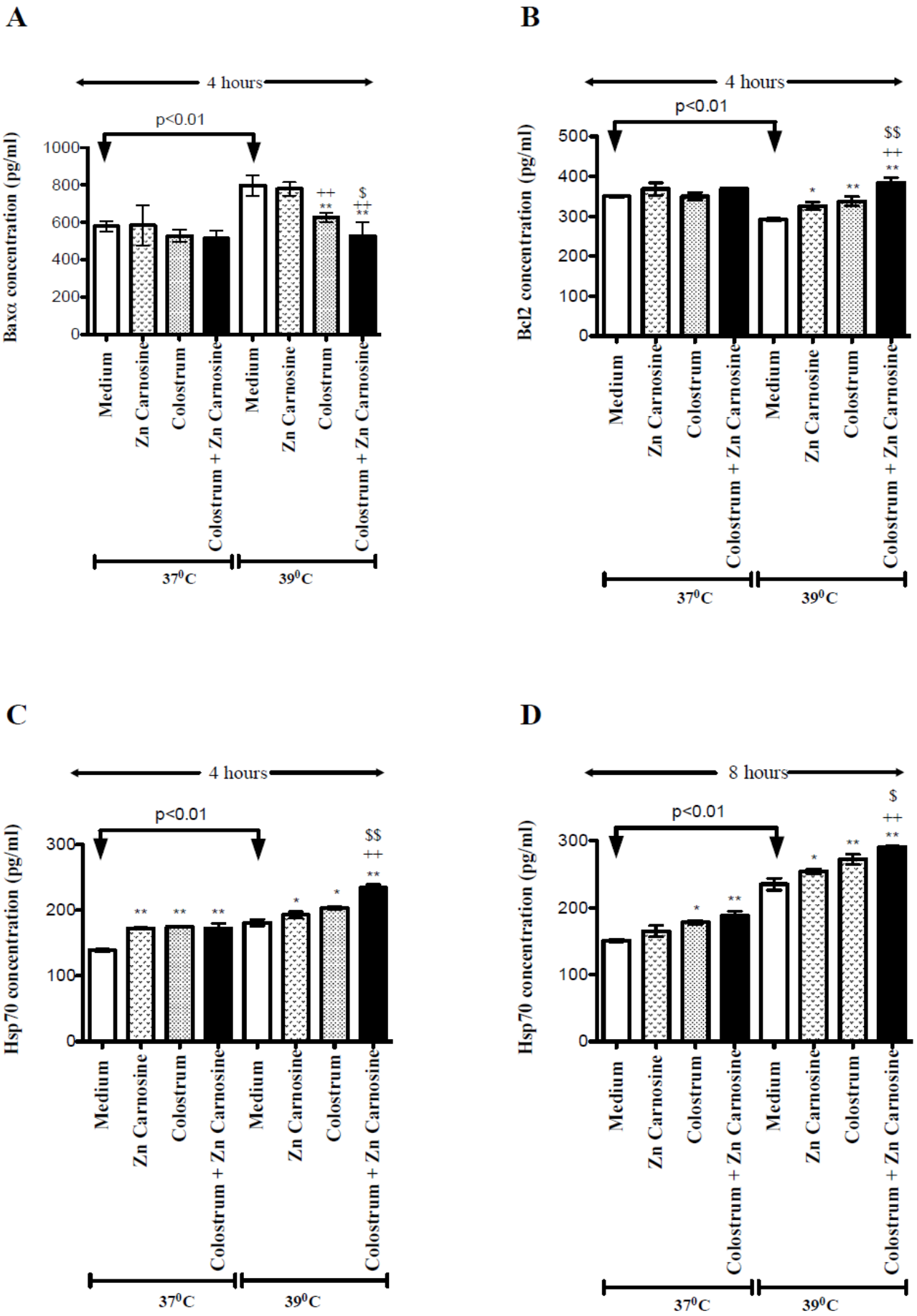


Figure 6

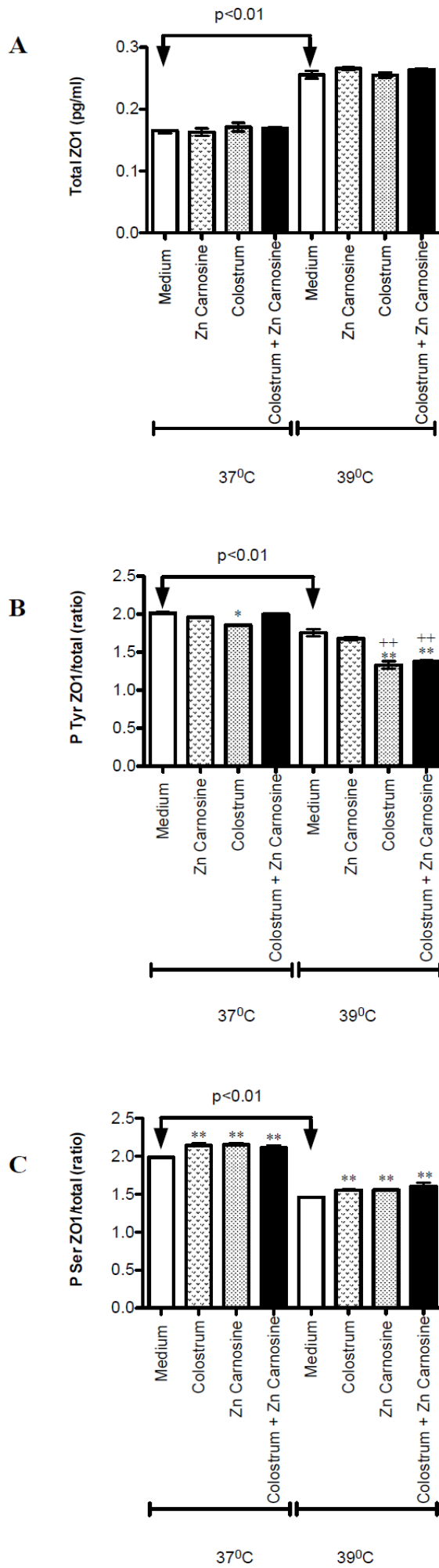


Figure 7

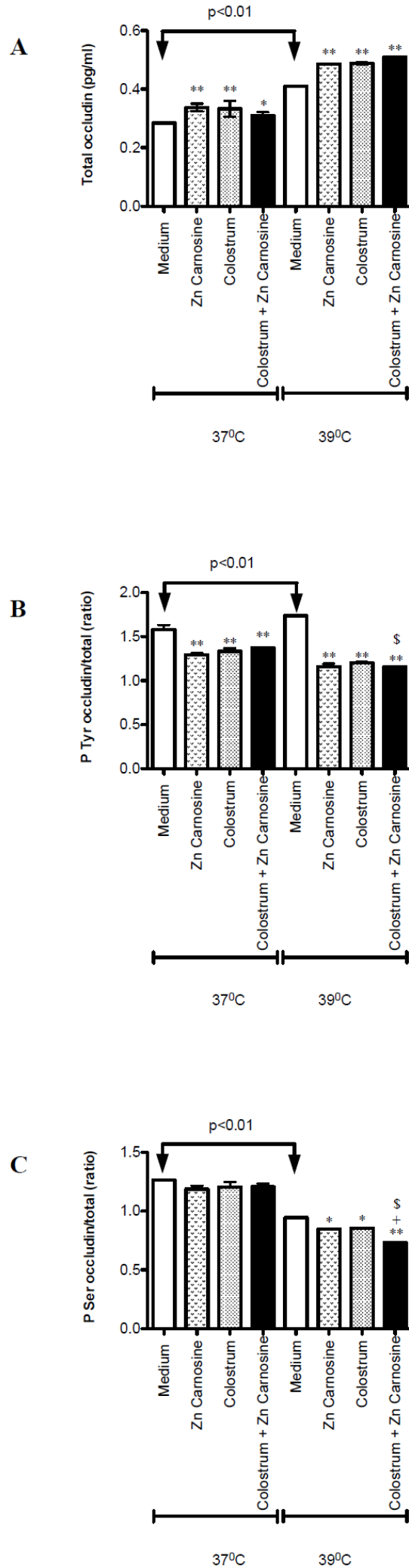


Figure 8

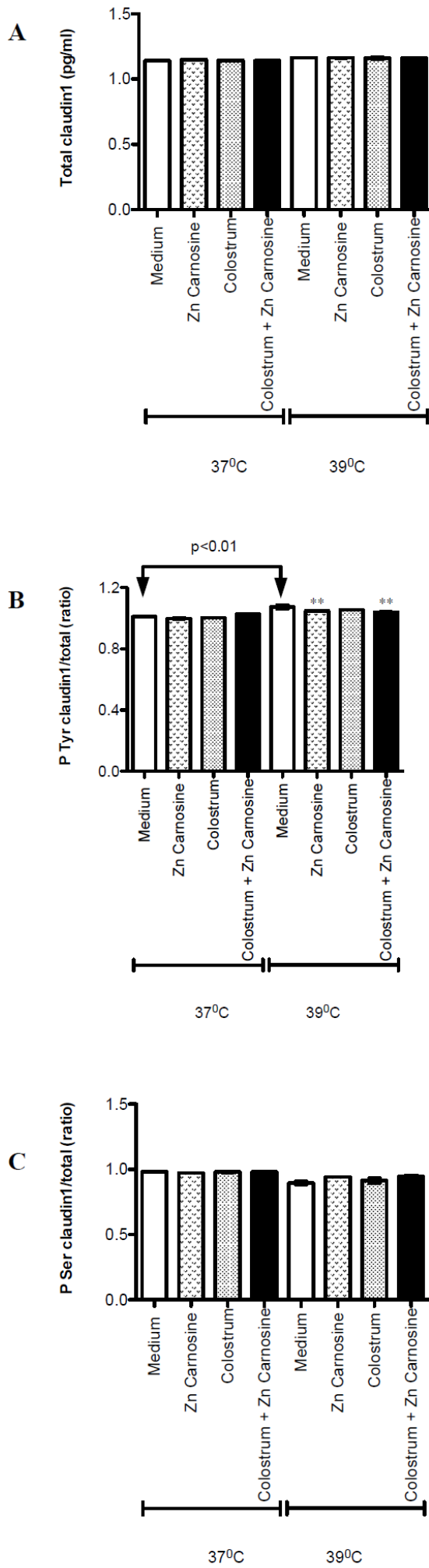


Figure 9