Nutrition, Metabolism & Cardiovascular Diseases (2016) **26**, 85–102

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

Nutrition, Metabolism & Cardiovascular Diseases

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/nmcd

Italian Society for the Study of Diabetes (SID)/Italian Endocrinological Society (SIE) guidelines on the treatment of hyperglycemia in Cushing's syndrome and acromegaly☆

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Available online 20 February 2016

KEYWORDS
Diabetes;
Steroid treatment;
Somatostatin agonists;
Pegvisomant;
GH hypersecretion;
Glucocorticoid excess;
Dopamine agonists;
Antidiabetic treatment

Abstract *Background:* Hyperglycemia is a common feature associated with states of increased growth hormone secretion and glucocorticoid levels.
Aims: The purpose of these guidelines is to assist clinicians and other health care providers to take evidence-based therapeutic decisions for the treatment of hyperglycemia in patients with growth hormone and corticosteroid excess.
Methodology: Both the SID and SIE appointed members to represent each society and to collaborate in Guidelines writing. Members were chosen for their specific knowledge in the field. Each member agreed to produce—and regularly update—conflicts of interest. The Authors of these guidelines prepared their contributions following the recommendations for the development of Guidelines, using the standard classes of recommendation shown below. All members of the writing committee provided editing and systematic review of each part of the manuscript, and discussed the grading of evidence. Consensus was guided by a systematic review of all available trials and by interactive discussions.

Preface

These Guidelines on the treatment of hyperglycaemia in Cushing's syndrome and acromegaly were endorsed by the Italian Society for the Study of Diabetes (SID) and the Italian Endocrine Society (SIE) to assist clinicians and other healthcare professionals to manage patients affected by these diseases.

The strong biological relationship between Cushing's syndrome, acromegaly and hyperglycaemia prompted these two societies to generate these Guidelines.

The processes involved in generating the Guidelines have been previously described (European Heart Journal 2013, 34:3035–3087). In brief, both the SID and SIE appointed members to represent each society and to collaborate in Guidelines writing. SID and SIE members were chosen for their specific knowledge in the field. Each

☆ Please cite this article as: Baroni MG, et al., Italian Society for the Study of Diabetes (SID)/Italian Endocrinological Society (SIE) guidelines on the treatment of hyperglycemia in Cushing's syndrome and acromegaly. Nutr Metab Cardiovasc Dis 2016; 26(2):85-102. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.numecd.2016.02.001 or J Endocrinol Invest. 2016 39(2):235-255. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s40618-015-0404-6.

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http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.numecd.2016.02.001
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Table 1 Classes of recommendations.

Classes of recommendations	Definition	Suggested wording to use
Class I	Evidence and/or general agreement that a given treatment or procedure is beneficial, useful, effective	Is recommended/is indicated
Class II	Conflicting evidence and/or a divergence of opinion about the usefulness/efficacy of the given treatment or procedure	
Class IIa	Weight of evidence/ opinion is in favor or usefulness/efficacy	Should be considered
Class IIb	Usefulness/efficacy is less well established by evidence/opinion	May be considered
Class III	Evidence or general agreement that the given treatment or procedure is not useful/effective, and in some cases may be harmful	Is not recommended

member agreed to produce—and regularly update—conflicts of interest.

The Authors of these guidelines prepared their contributions following the recommendations for the development of Guidelines, using the standard classes of recommendation shown below (Tables 1 and 2). All members of the writing committee provided editing and systematic review of each part of the manuscript, and discussed the grading of evidence. Consensus was guided by a systematic review of all available trials and by interactive discussions.

These Guidelines are the product of several hours of work, time given freely by the writing committee members. The authors received no funding or remuneration.

Introduction

Hyperglycemia is a common feature associated with states of increased growth hormone secretion and glucocorticoid levels. A sustained excess of these two hormones, which counteract insulin action, is associated with varying degrees of glucose intolerance, including impaired fasting glucose (IFG), impaired glucose tolerance (IGT), and overt diabetes mellitus (DM). The presence of different degrees of altered glucose tolerance is associated with an increased cardiovascular morbidity and mortality associated with acromegaly and Cushing's syndrome. For these reasons, disorders of glucose metabolism should be carefully monitored and treated in these patients. In addition, even in the presence of a normal glucose tolerance, patients should be screened for the appearance of glucose alterations by means of glycated hemoglobin (HbA1c) and/or oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT), particularly when HbA1c measurement are not diagnostic or inconclusive. There are no consensus guidelines on the frequency of screening for diabetes, but clinical judgment based also on the presence of risk factors such as obesity, family history, metabolic syndrome, should prompt for yearly checking for glucose abnormalities.

Table 2 Levels of evidence.

Level of evidence A	Data derived from multiple randomized clinical trials or meta-analyses
Level of evidence B	Data derived from a single randomized clinical trial or large non-randomized studies
Level of evidence C	Consensus of opinion of the experts and/or small studies, retrospective studies, registries

The goals of glycemic control in both acromegalic and Cushing's syndrome patients with alterations of glucose metabolism appear to be similar to those of diabetic patients.

Prevalence

Hyperglycemia and acromegaly

In patients with acromegaly, impaired glucose metabolism develops in the presence of concomitant β-cell insufficiency, and a proportion of patients will develop overt DM [1]. The presence of hyperinsulinemia, insulin resistance, glucose intolerance, and DM contributes to the increased cardiac morbidity and mortality in acromegalic patients [2–4]. Moreover, IGT has been found to correlate with the severity of acromegalic cardiomyopathy [5].

The prevalence of impaired glucose metabolism or DM in acromegaly varies between 19 and 56% [6]. In patients with acromegaly, the prevalence of the early stages of impaired glucose regulation (defined as IFG, IGT or their combination) has been shown to vary between 16 and 46% [6–8]; the prevalence of overt DM ranges between 15 and 38% in studies including at least 100 patients [9]. These differences in prevalence may be ascribed to different patient series and ethnicity and, for the older studies, to different diagnostic criteria. Overall, the prevalence of all forms of impaired glucose regulation (IFG, IGT, IFG/IGT and DM) is more than 50% in acromegalic patients, warranting close monitoring and treatment of hyperglycemia. The strongest risk factors for developing any of the possible forms of glucose intolerance include disease duration, higher GH levels, a family history for DM, the presence of hypertension and older age [8–10].

Hyperglycemia and Cushing's syndrome

Hyperglycemia is a frequent complication of Cushing's syndrome. Similar to acromegaly, hyperglycemia occurs as a consequence of an insulin-resistant state coupled with impaired insulin secretion, which are induced by high glucocorticoid levels. Glucocorticoids excess, either exogenous (the most frequent condition) or endogenous, is responsible for the occurrence of chronic complications, such as DM, glucose intolerance, hypertension, dyslipidaemia, obesity, coronary artery disease, and congestive heart failure. Specifically, DM is considered to be a common complication

of chronic exposure to excessive glucocorticoid levels, and plays an important role in contributing to morbidity and death in patients with Cushing's syndrome [11]. DM, hypertension and uncontrolled hypercortisolism were shown to be the most important predictors of death in Cushing's syndrome [12,13], which is increased 2-fold compared to the general population [11].

The exact prevalence of IGT or DM in patients with Cushing's syndrome is still uncertain. In patients undergoing treatment with glucocorticoids, an approximately two-fold increase in the risk of DM was reported [14]. Abdominal adiposity, familiarity for DM, higher glucocorticoid doses and longer period of treatment were all shown to be risk factors for the development of DM in glucocorticoid-treated patients [15].

In patients with endogenous Cushing's syndrome [14,16], disorders of glucose metabolism occur in about 50% of patients, with DM affecting about two-thirds of such patients. IGT is present in the rest of the patients, whilst IFG appears to be rare. The low frequency of subjects with both Cushing's syndrome and IFG represents a diagnostic problem, since some cases with hyperglycemia may be missed, as suggested by the observation that more than one half (64%) of patients with endogenous Cushing's syndrome and DM have normal fasting glucose [17]. This applies also to patients taking exogenous glucocorticoids, with high glycemic values occurring more often in the afternoon and evening, likely due to the time course of corticosteroid action as well as the prevalent glucose abnormality occurring in the post-prandial phase. For example 42% of nondiabetic patients with primary renal disease treated with GCs were found to have 2-h post-meal glucose values exceeding 200 mg/dl, but normal fasting glucose values [18]. This was also observed in a cohort of patients receiving prednisolone for the treatment of a variety of neurologic diseases, in which corticosteroid-induced DM developed in 50% of the patients, as indicated by 2-h post-meal glucose values $>$ 200 mg/dl [19], although fasting plasma glucose was usually $<$100 mg/dl in these study subjects.

A high prevalence of abnormal glucose tolerance and DM (22%) is also observed in subjects with adrenal incidentaloma or subclinical hypercortisolism, as reported by Mazziotti and co-workers [15]. In patients with endogenous, hypercortisolism a family history of diabetes and age were strong predictors of DM [20]. Other risk factors include age and body mass index, both of which are known to be associated with the development of DM in the absence of GC treatment.

Pathophysiology

Growth hormone hypersecretion and hyperglycemia (Fig. 1)

One of the major functions of GH is to provide a mechanism for surviving periods of food deprivation. GH stimulates lipolysis, providing free fatty acids and glycerol as metabolic substrates, and also inhibits insulin-induced

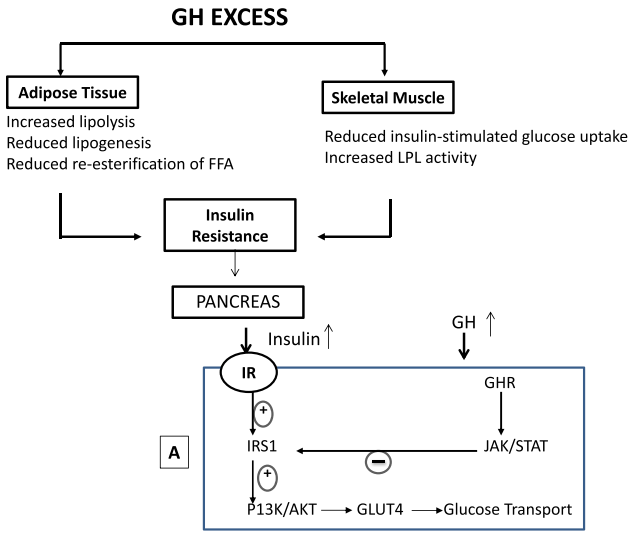

Figure 1 Effects of GH excess on carbohydrate and lipid metabolism. GH has pleiotropic effects on carbohydrate and lipid metabolism. The effects of GH in adipocytes determine increased lipolysis and reduced lipogenesis. FFA released from adipocytes secondary to GH interference induce insulin resistance at other sites, such as muscle In skeletal muscle GH excess determines reduced glucose uptake and increased lipolysis. Altogether these effects induce insulin-resistance, which in turns stimulates insulin secretion by the beta-cells. GH also antagonizes insulin action directly, interfering with the stimulation of downstream signaling molecules such as insulin receptor substrate-1 and PI 3-kinase via the GHR and activation of the JAK–STAT pathways (box A). Thus, GH affects insulin action on carbohydrate metabolism both directly (through cell signaling blockade mechanisms) and indirectly (by enhancing lipolysis in adipocytes and muscle). Abbreviations: AKT, protein kinase B; FFA, free fatty acids; GH, growth hormone; GHR, GH receptor; IR, insulin receptor; IRS, insulin receptor substrate; JAK, Janus kinase; LPL, lipoprotein lipase; STAT, signal transducer and activator of transcription.

suppression of hepatic gluconeogenesis, thus increasing glucose production. These effects counteract insulin action, and reduce the need for a dietary source of carbohydrate [21].

When GH is present in excess, both acute and chronic GH exposure induces insulin resistance by increasing endogenous glucose production and decreasing peripheral glucose disposal in muscle [22,23]. These effects appear to be largely secondary to stimulation of lipolysis and subsequent glucose–fatty acid substrate competition [24–26]. Some authors have shown that GH also acts directly to block insulin signaling by reducing stimulation of downstream signaling molecules such as insulin receptor substrate-1 and PI 3-kinase, which are important for stimulation of glucose transport in muscle and fat, and for inhibition of hepatic gluconeogenesis [26]. Specifically, the molecular mechanisms of inhibition of insulin signaling may reside in the existence of free monomeric regulatory subunits of phosphatidylinositol (PI) 3-kinase that are not coupled with p110 catalytic subunits of the enzyme and exhibit an inhibitory effect on PI 3-kinase activity by competing with p85/p110 dimers in binding to tyrosine phosphorylated IRS proteins [27]. These monomeric forms of p85, specifically the α isoform of p85, can be induced by

GH as well as by glucocorticoids, resulting in inhibition of PI 3-kinase activity [27–29]. However, in other studies the direct effects of GH on insulin signaling have not been clearly demonstrated [30].

Collectively, these effects have a negative impact on insulin action, and are responsible for the reduced insulin sensitivity seen in acromegalic patients. This insulin resistance secondary to excessive GH secretion is generally compensated by hyperinsulinemia, but abnormal glucose tolerance and diabetes may develop when insulin secretion declines. It has been shown that insulin sensitivity is reduced to a similar extent in acromegalic patients with normal glucose tolerance as well as in those with IGT or DM; however, in patients with normal glucose tolerance there is a compensatory hyperactivity of β-cells counteracting the reduced insulin sensitivity, which is not present in those with glucose intolerance [1].

Glucocorticoid excess and hyperglycemia (Fig. 2)

The leading mechanisms responsible for the development of abnormal glucose tolerance and DM in Cushing's syndrome are characterized by the stimulation of gluconeogenesis, and the development of insulin resistance, in association with an impairment of insulin secretion by the pancreatic β-cells [31]. Glucocorticoids exert their most important physiological role on metabolism during the postprandial period: they increase lipolysis and proteolysis, with the consequent release of fatty acids and amino acids, and promote glucose production, through the stimulation of gluconeogenesis, and the inhibition of glycogen synthesis [32]. These effects are directed to the liver, skeletal muscle and adipose tissue. Thus, glucocorticoid excess determines a pathological stimulation of gluconeogenesis together with the inhibition of insulin sensitivity in the liver, in the adipose tissue and in the skeletal muscles. In the liver GC excess increases glucose production directly, through the activation of enzymes for gluconeogenesis, together with the stimulation of lipolysis and proteolysis, with a parallel increase of substrates for gluconeogenesis [33]. Also the potentiation of the action of other counter regulatory hormones, in particular glucagon, leads to increased glucose production [34]. Glucocorticoids may also affect insulin action, further increasing liver glucose production.

In the muscle, they blunt insulin sensitivity, with consequent impairment in glucose transport and increase of plasma glucose levels. Specifically they impair insulin signaling, interfering with the major substrates of the insulin receptor, such as insulin receptor substrate-1 (IRS-1), PI-3 kinase, and AKT [27,35,36]. Induction of monomeric p85α results in the inhibition of PI 3-kinase activity [27]. The final effect in muscle cells is the reduction of glycogen synthesis and glucose uptake.

In the adipose tissue, glucocorticoids stimulate the differentiation of pre-adipocytes into adipocytes specifically in visceral fat, whereas they have limited actions in peripheral fat tissue: this affect adipose tissue metabolism, leading to increased lipolysis with elevation of free fatty acids [37]. They also influence the synthesis and release of different adipokines, which further contribute to the

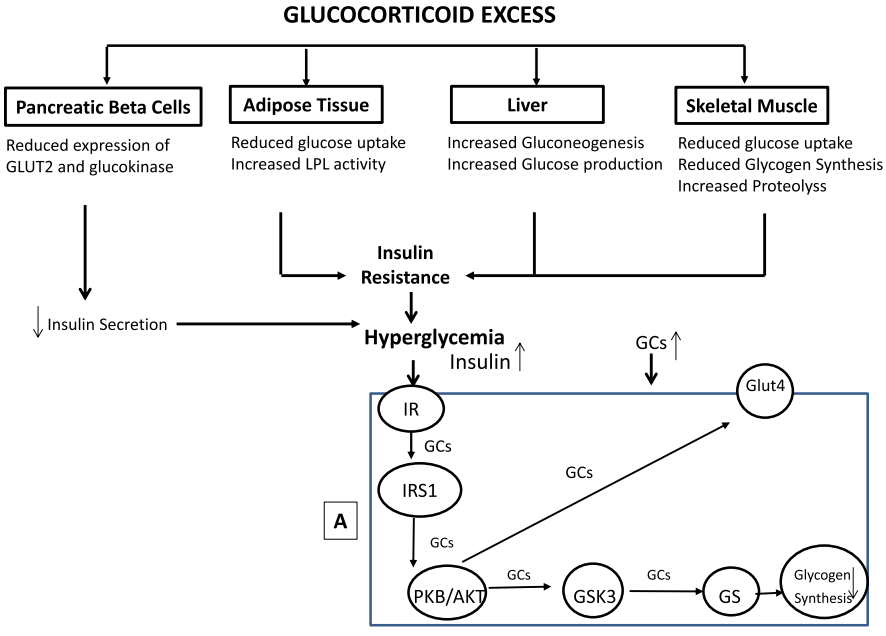

Figure 2 Effects of glucocorticoid excess on carbohydrate and lipid metabolism. GCs stimulate lipolysis and proteolysis, with the consequent release of fatty acids and amino acids, and promote glucose production, through the stimulation of gluconeogenesis, and the inhibition of glycogen synthesis. These effects are directed to the liver, skeletal muscle and adipose tissue. GCs may also cause β-cell dysfunction. At a molecular level, GCs antagonize insulin action directly, interfering with the stimulation of downstream signaling molecules such as insulin receptor substrate-1 and PI 3-kinase. In box (A) GCs indicates the processes inhibited by GCs excess. Abbreviations: GCs: glucocorticoids; AKT, protein kinase B; IR, insulin receptor; IRS1, insulin receptor substrate-1; PKB: protein kinase B; GSK-3: glycogen synthase kinase-3.

development of insulin resistance [38], resulting in the impairment of glucose uptake and disposal.

Finally, glucocorticoids may also cause β-cell dysfunction: both in vitro and in vivo studies in animal models show that they reduce the expression of the glucose transporter GLUT2 and glucokinase [39], the most important enzymes for β-cell energy metabolism, and essential for the activation of the insulin secretory processes. Therefore, these possible effects on β-cell dysfunction may contribute to the development of glucose intolerance and DM in patients with Cushing's syndrome.

In humans, it has been extensively demonstrated that the predominant mechanism responsible for glucose intolerance after administration of glucocorticoids is a reduced insulin sensitivity. The doubling of plasma cortisol (14 versus 37 μg/dL) in healthy male volunteers during an intravenous infusion of hydrocortisone was associated with approximately a 50% reduction in insulin sensitivity, as determined by the insulin clamp technique [21]. Oral administration of 30 mg/d of prednisone for 7 days to healthy volunteers reduced insulin sensitivity by 60% [40]. Similar reductions in peripheral insulin sensitivity were confirmed in nonobese female and male volunteers treated with dexamethasone [14]. The ability to compensate for this decrease in insulin sensitivity with an increase in insulin secretion determines the extent of the rise in plasma glucose level in response to glucocorticoids [41]. Therefore, the presence of factors predisposing to a reduced β-cell function (genetic, environmental, aging, etc.), together with impaired insulin action determined by glucocorticoid excess explains the progression towards altered glucose metabolism that is present in many subjects with Cushing's syndrome, but not in all.

Summary of pathophysiology in GCs and GH excess

The percentage of Cushing and Acromegaly patients that will develop IFG, IGT or DM and the individual risk for each patient depends from the presence and severity of acquired (i.e. obesity, aging) or genetic (i.e. familiar history) insulin-resistance. GH and GCs will mainly act by worsening insulin-resistance, also depending on the abnormal counterregulatory hormone level reached. Subjects at risk to develop glucose abnormalities (from IFG to DM) are those who have acquired or genetic impaired insulin secretion, and therefore unable to compensate the level of insulin-resistance.

Acromegaly

The effects of treatments for acromegaly on glucose control

The main targets in the treatment of acromegaly are the control of GH and IGF-I levels, the reduction of tumor mass, the improvement of symptoms, signs, and comorbidities, and, eventually, the reduction of mortality [42–44]. The mainstay of treatment for acromegaly is surgery [42,45]. Medical therapy may have an adjuvant role as a pre-surgery strategy in order to obtain an initial mass reduction and also to prevent complications during surgical procedures [46]. In addition, medical therapy is indicated when surgery has failed or has been only partially successful [44]. Finally, medical therapy has been proposed as first-line treatment also in large tumors in the absence of chiasmatic compression, when the probability of surgical cure is believed to be too low [42,45]. Radiation therapy is recommended as adjuvant treatment in patients with active disease despite surgery and medical treatment [42,44].

Medical treatment consists of three classes of drugs: 1. Dopamine D2 receptor agonists, bromocriptine, quinagolide and cabergoline [47]; 2. Somatostatin agonists (SSA), octreotide and lanreotide; they may partially reduce tumor mass in up to 70% of the patients [48–50]; 3. GH receptor antagonist pegvisomant, which is highly effective in reducing IGF-I circulating levels in patients resistant to other forms of treatment [51,52].

We will review the available evidence on the effect of the different therapies on glucose metabolism in patients with acromegaly. In addition, it should be considered that the reduction in GH levels induced by any treatment is expected to ameliorate glucose homeostasis in these patients, independently of its direct effects on glucose metabolism. This twofold possibility may contribute to misleading interpretations of therapy results on glucose levels.

The effect of surgery

Wasada et al. [53] studied six acromegalic patients with DM before and after transsphenoidal adenomectomy. They assessed insulin resistance using the euglycemic hyperinsulinemic clamp technique, and found an improvement of insulin sensitivity after surgery. Kasayama et al. [1] and Kinoshita et al. [54] investigated the effect of surgery on glucose tolerance in acromegalic subjects: both studies found an amelioration of IGT in these patients after surgery. Battezzati et al. [55] and Mori et al. [56] also observed that surgery improved insulin resistance in acromegalic patients.

In a study by Colao et al. [57], the effect of surgery or SSA on glucose metabolism was analyzed: neither surgery nor SSA significantly modified blood glucose in acromegalic subjects. However, a significant increase in fasting glucose levels was observed in patients receiving SSA but not achieving control of acromegaly. By contrast, after successful medical treatment, fasting glucose levels declined; in this study the best predictor of glucose metabolism deterioration was body mass index. In a similar study, Tzanela et al. [58] found that both surgery and SSA improved insulin sensitivity in acromegalic patients; however, in contrast to surgery, SSA had a negative effect on β-cell function. Similar results on insulin sensitivity after both surgery, and SSA were obtained by Giordano et al., who also found that SSA treatment improved all metabolic parameters in patients with disease control [59].

Stelmachowska-Banaś et al. [60] assessed the impact of transsphenoidal surgery in acromegaly, and found that both glucose alterations and insulin sensitivity can be normalized after surgery.

Summary of available evidence
Transsphenoidal surgery improves glucose tolerance in acromegalic subjects. This effect is likely to be mediated by the reduction in GH and IGF-1 levels [53–55,58–60].

Class I, Level of evidence B.

The effect of radiotherapy
Barrande et al. [61] reported the effect of conventional radiotherapy on glucose metabolism in 128 acromegalic subjects, including 32 patients with overt DM. They observed an improvement in blood glucose, associated to a subsequent reduction in GH levels. Stereotactic radiosurgery as an adjuvant treatment for acromegaly has also been used [62,63]. However, the effects on glucose metabolism have not been reported so far, notwithstanding that a long time interval may be necessary to obtain reliable results.

Summary of available evidence
No conclusion can be drawn, due to limited literature and to long-term effects of radiotherapy on GH and IGF-I levels. Further studies will be needed to evaluate the effects of stereotactic radiosurgery on glucose metabolism in acromegaly.

The effect of dopamine agonists
Bromocriptine is a dopamine-receptor agonist that has been used to treat GH and prolactin excess. Several studies reported that bromocriptine per se has a positive, albeit small, effect on glucose tolerance [64–67].

Rau et al. showed that long-term treatment with bromocriptine improves glucose homeostasis in acromegalic subjects [68]. Cabergoline, an ergot derivative dopamine agonist currently used to treat hyperprolactinemia, is more effective and better tolerated than bromocriptine [47]. Relatively few studies have assessed the role of cabergoline on glucose metabolism. Roemmler and colleagues have shown that in 9 acromegalic patients on pegvisomant therapy, the addition of cabergoline, 0.5 mg, improved glucose profiles with a concomitant reduction in plasma insulin concentrations [69]. In a prospective clinical trial, Higham et al. demonstrated that the combination of cabergoline (maximum dose 0.5 mg daily) and low-dose pegvisomant induced no deterioration of glucose tolerance after 18 weeks of treatment [70].

Summary of available evidence
Dopaminergic drugs are able to moderately improve glucose tolerance in acromegalic subjects [64–68,70].

Class IIb, Level of evidence C.

The effect of somatostatin agonists (SSA)
A large number of studies addressed the effect of SSA therapy on glucose metabolism in acromegaly. Since the reduction in GH/IGF-I levels mediated by these drugs may also improve glucose homeostasis, it may be difficult to evaluate a direct effect of SSA. Some authors have attempted to estimate such effect in normal subjects. In a small, randomized, crossover study, Parkinson et al. found a deterioration of glucose tolerance, and a reduction in insulin secretion during octreotide treatment in normal subjects, whereas pegvisomant had no effect [71].

More recently, Breitschaft et al. reported a worsening of glucose tolerance in normal subjects treated with the novel SSA pasireotide [72]. Previous studies in acromegalic subjects reported conflicting results. McKnight et al. found a heterogenous effect of octreotide on glucose tolerance in acromegalic patients [73]. James et al. reported an impairment in insulin secretion during OGTT in acromegalic subjects treated with octreotide [74]. Other observations indicate that, even when SSA therapy was able to improve the acromegalic syndrome, a similar improvement in glucose tolerance might not be obtained [75,76]. Furthermore, an Italian multicentric study reported that octreotide worsened the metabolic control in one fourth of acromegalic subjects with DM [77]. Hizuka also described divergent results on glucose metabolism in acromegalic patients treated with octreotide [78]. The majority of the most recent studies carried out in acromegalic subjects support the concept that SSA have a modest, if any, negative impact on glucose tolerance.

Steffin et al. reported a reduction in β-cell function in acromegalic patients treated with lanreotide, with no modification in insulin resistance [79]. A meta-analysis by Mazziotti et al. concluded that SSA have a minor clinical impact on glucose homeostasis in acromegalic subjects [80]. Among the relatively few studies in which SSA-mediated changes in glucose metabolism were assessed as primary end-point, Ronchi et al. compared the effects of two somatostatin analogs, lanreotide and octreotide-LAR, on glucose metabolism in patients with acromegaly. They concluded that octreotide appears to be more detrimental to glucose metabolism than lanreotide, despite being more effective in reducing GH and IGF-I levels [81]. In a subsequent study the same group pointed out that glycemic alterations developed more frequently in acromegalic subjects treated with SSA than in patients cured by surgery [82].

In a prospective study, Baldelli et al. also assessed the effect of octreotide-LAR and lanreotide on glucose metabolism. They found that both drugs improved insulin sensitivity, but, at the same time, glucose at 120 min following OGTT worsened, due to inhibition of glucose-stimulated insulin secretion [83]. In contrast, Cozzi et al. reported no variation in fasting glucose, OGTT and HbA1c in 67 acromegalic subjects after long-term treatment with octreotide-LAR [84].

In another prospective study, Colao et al. determined the effect of SSA on glucose metabolism in 112 acromegalic patients, 63 with normal glucose tolerance, 24 with IGT, and 25 with overt diabetes. At the end of the study period 11 patients (9.8%) showed improved glucose tolerance, and 17 had a worsening in glucose tolerance (15.2%). Interestingly, 90% of the patients with an improved tolerance had a good control of acromegaly, while 89% of those with worsened tolerance had not achieved a good control of the syndrome. The most important predictors of changes in

glucose tolerance were acromegaly control, baseline glucose tolerance, and GH levels [85].

In patients with acromegaly not controlled by standard maximal SSA therapy, the use of either high-dose or high-frequency octreotide-LAR did not modify glucose homeostasis in the majority of them [86].

In a long-term retrospective study, Couture et al. assessed glucose tolerance in 42 acromegalic patients primarily treated with lanreotide, subgrouped in different categories of glucose metabolism. The majority of patients (60%) did not show changes, 24% had an improvement, and 17% a worsening of glucose tolerance. An unsatisfactory control of GH levels was associated with the worsening of glucose tolerance [87]. In a study by Cambuli et al. SSA therapy in acromegalic patients was able to reduce insulin secretion, without altering glucose control [88].

Pasireotide is a multireceptor-targeted somatostatin analog with high affinity for 4 of the 5 somatostatin receptor subtypes (SSTR), including SSTR2 and SSTR5, which are the most prevalent sst in GH-secreting pituitary adenomas [89]. It has been recently shown that pasireotide-LAR demonstrated superior efficacy over octreotide-LAR, and it is considered a new treatment option for acromegaly [90–92]. Preliminary studies showed a greater ability of pasireotide than octreotide to promote hyperglycemia. In a phase II, randomized, multicenter, open-label, three-way, crossover study, Petersenn and colleagues observed that pasireotide, at the dose of 200, 400, and 600 μg s.c. twice daily in random order for 28 days, in patients with active acromegaly, induced a significantly increase in plasma glucose, HbA1c, as well as new cases of diabetes [92]. In another prospective, randomized, double-blind study, it was demonstrated that hyperglycemia-related adverse events were more common with pasireotide LAR than with octreotide LAR (62.9% versus 25.0%) [93]. The effects of SSA on glucose metabolism in acromegaly are summarized in Table 3.

Taken together, data from the literature on the effects of SSA on glucose metabolism in acromegaly indicate a modest worsening of glucose levels, due to inhibition of insulin secretion. However, this effect is clinically negligible and seems to be counteracted by the reduction in GH levels in those patients who achieve a good control of the disease. However, the novel SSA pasireotide seems more detrimental on glucose levels than other SSA.

Summary of available evidence

SSA may have a slight unfavorable effect on glucose tolerance in acromegalic subjects, mainly via impairment of insulin secretion. These results may be difficult to interpret because of the expected inhibitory effect of SSA on GH levels [77,79,80,84,85,87,88].

Class IIa, Level of evidence B.

Octreotide-LAR and lanreotide show a similar effect on glucose metabolism [80,83]. In one study lanreotide seems to be less detrimental than octreotide-LAR [81].

Class IIb, Level of evidence C.

The new SSA pasireotide has been shown to possess a more prominent effect to alter glucose tolerance [92,93].

Class I, Level of evidence B.

Pegvisomant

Pegvisomant is a genetically engineered molecule, which exhibits specific growth hormone (GH) antagonism by directly interacting with the GH receptor. In 2001, an analysis of the long-term safety and efficacy of pegvisomant in 160 patients with acromegaly treated for up to 18 months by van der Lely et al., showed that the drug significantly decreases fasting plasma glucose concentration while it did not significantly change HbA1c levels [52]. Sesmilo et al. analyzed 48 patients with acromegaly and 47 age- and body mass index-matched controls and showed that pegvisomant treatment did not change neither insulin nor glucose concentrations [94]. In head-to-head

Table 3 Effect of SSA on glucose metabolism in acromegalic patients.

Authors	Drug	Main outcome measures	Effect on glucose metabolism
McKnight et al., 1989 [73]	Octreotide	OGTT	Divergent
James et al., 1991 [74]	Octreotide	Ins secr	Worsened
Koop et al., 1994 [75]	Octreotide	OGTT	Worsened
Breidert et al., 1995 [76]	Octreotide	IR	Unchanged
Arosio et al., 1995 [77]	Octreotide	BG, HbA1c	Worsened
Hizuka, 1997 [78]	Octreotide	OGTT	Divergent
Steffin et al., 2006 [79]	Lanreotide	Ins secr	Worsened
Mazziotti et al., 2009 [80]	Octreotide	BG, OGTT, HbA1c	Unchanged
Ronchi et al., 2002 [81]	Lanreotide/oct	BG, OGTT, IR	Divergent
Ronchi et al., 2006 [82]	Lanreotide/oct	BG, OGTT, HbA1c	Worsened
Baldelli et al., 2003 [83]	Lanreotide/oct	OGTT, Ins secr	Divergent
Cozzi et al., 2006 [84]	Octreotide	OGTT, BG, HbA1c	Unchanged
Colao et al., 2009 [85]	Octreotide	OGTT	Divergent
Couture et al., 2012 [87]	Lanreotide	OGTT	Divergent
Cambuli et al., 2012 [88]	Octreotide	BG, Ins secr	Divergent
Petersenn et al., 2010 [92]	Pasireotide	BG, HbA1c	Worsened
Sheppard et al., 2014 [93]	Pasireotide	BG	Worsened

BG: blood glucose; OGTT: oral glucose tolerance test; Ins secr: insulin secretion; IR: insulin resistance; HbA1c: glycated hemoglobin.

comparison between octreotide (50 μg t.i.d. for 7 days) and pegvisomant (20 mg/d for 7 days), Parkinson et al. showed that pegvisomant had no effect on glucose tolerance and did not stimulate gut hormone responses during an OGTT and a standard meal. In contrast, octreotide significantly increased fasting plasma glucose, and deteriorated glucose tolerance [71]. In a subsequent study performed in 16 patients with active acromegaly, the same group demonstrated that pegvisomant, titrated until serum IGF-I was lowered into the age-related reference range, did not have any effect on glucose control [95]. At variance, Rose and Clemmons, in a small observational study, showed that pegvisomant treatment, given for 14–23 months at a dose of 15–30 mg/day, significantly reduced fasting glucose and HbA1c (from 8.1 ± 1.7 to 6.3 ± 1.5%) [96]. Drake et al. determined the effect of switching from octreotide-LAR to pegvisomant on glucose tolerance. They showed that, while the serum IGF-I concentrations during therapy with either drug was not different, fasting plasma glucose was lower on pegvisomant [97]. Jorgensen et al. found that pegvisomant reduced fasting blood glucose levels and improved glucose tolerance in acromegalic subjects [98]. The German Pegvisomant Observational Study documented that the drug had a favorable effects on glucose metabolism. Indeed, in a cohort of 229 acromegalic subjects, including 56 diabetic patients, pegvisomant significantly reduced both fasting glucose and HbA1c after 24 months [99].

In 2007, in a longitudinal study, De Marinis et al. aimed to determine the effect of the combination of SSA and pegvisomant on glucose metabolism over a 12 months period. They showed that the addition of pegvisomant treatment was accompanied by a significant improvement in insulin and glycemic control, but not in fasting glucose and HbA1c [100]. In an open prospective study, Colao et al. demonstrated that in 16 patients with acromegaly, pegvisomant at a dose of 10–40 mg/day, after 6 months, significantly reduced glucose levels [101]. In a multicenter, open-label, 32-week trial study, performed in 53 patients with acromegaly previously treated with octreotide-LAR, pegvisomant (10 mg/day) improved fasting glycemia and HbA1c [102]. In 7 patients with active acromegaly studied with the euglycemic clamp technique, pegvisomant treatment also ameliorated insulin sensitivity [103]. A similar observation was reported by Higham et al., who also found an improvement in insulin sensitivity induced by pegvisomant in acromegalic patients studied with the hyperinsulinemic euglycemic clamp technique [104]. In a randomized, controlled, multicentre trial comparing pegvisomant alone with combination therapy of pegvisomant (10 mg/day initially, then adjusted in 5-mg increments every 8 weeks based on IGF-I levels) and octreotide-LAR, Trainer et al. showed that the reduction of plasma glucose was greater with pegvisomant alone than with the combination therapy [105]. A similar observation was provided by Urbani et al., who showed that the introduction of pegvisomant, as compared with SSA, ameliorates glucose metabolism in partially controlled acromegalic patients [106]. Madsen et al., in a multicentre retrospective follow-up of patients with acromegaly treated with pegvisomant, showed a progressive amelioration in fasting glucose concentrations [107]. The effects of pegvisomant on glucose metabolism in acromegaly are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4 Effect of pegvisomant on glucose metabolism in acromegalic patients.

Authors	Main outcomes measures	Effect on glucose metabolism
van der Lely et al., 2001 [52]	BG, HbA1c	Improved
Sesmilo et al., 2002 [94]	BG	Unchanged
Parkinson et al., 2003 [95]	BG	Unchanged
Rose & Clemmons, 2002 [96]	BG, HbA1c	Improved
Drake et al., 2003 [97]	BG	Improved
Jorgensen et al., 2005 [98]	BG, OGTT	Improved
Schreiber et al., 2007 [99]	BG, HbA1c	Improved
De Marinis et al., 2007 [100]	BG, OGTT, HbA1c	Improved/ unchanged
Colao et al., 2006 [101]	BG, IR	Improved
Barkan et al., 2005 [102]	BG, HbA1c	Improved
Lindberg-Larsen et al., 2007 [103]	IR (clamp)	Improved
Higham et al., 2009 [104]	IR (clamp)	Improved
Trainer et al., 2009 [105]	BG	Improved
Urbani et al., 2013 [106]	BG, OGTT, IR, HbA1c	Improved
Madsen et al., 2011 [107]	BG	Improved

BG: blood glucose; OGTT: oral glucose tolerance test; IR: insulin resistance; HbA1c: Glycated hemoglobin.

Summary of available evidence

Pegvisomant reduces fasting glucose levels and improves insulin sensitivity in acromegalic subjects [52,96–107].

Class I, Level of evidence B.

The choice of antidiabetic therapy in acromegalic patients

Oral hypoglycemic agents, incretins, insulin

No studies have specifically addressed the role of antidiabetic therapy in the treatment of hyperglycemia in patients with acromegaly, and none has addressed either the role or the modality of administration of insulin therapy. There are few and small studies, which discuss the potential role of some of the available antidiabetic agents in the glucose control of acromegalic patients. Interestingly, Cambuli et al. analyzed glucose control in 70 acromegalic patients: metformin (65.7%), alone or in combination with other hypoglycemic drugs, was the most frequently used treatment for diabetes, followed by insulin (21.5%). Only 15.7% were treated with diet alone. The whole cohort showed a very good control of diabetes and acromegaly, independently of the type of treatment for GH excess [88]. More than 40 years ago Kumar et al. reported about 12 acromegalic subjects with secondary DM treated with glibenclamide [108]. Watanabe et al. successfully treated one acromegalic patient with acromegaly and diabetes with

pioglitazone (30 mg/day) [109]. It may be noteworthy that pioglitazone (45 mg/day) was also tried for the treatment of acromegaly per se (16 patients, 7 with diabetes) for four months. The drug did not change biochemical parameters of disease activity, and however the effect on glycemia was not reported [110].

Summary of available evidence
The lack of studies addressing the effect of different anti-diabetes therapeutic strategies in acromegalic subjects with altered glucose homeostasis does not allow drawing any conclusion.

General recommendations on the management of hyperglycemia in acromegalic subjects
All anti-diabetes medications available for type 2 DM can be potentially used in acromegalic subjects, notwithstanding that in these patients hyperglycemia occurs as a consequence of an insulin-resistant state coupled with impaired insulin secretion. Medical therapies for acromegaly have a different impact on glucose homeostasis: dopaminergic drugs and pegvisomant improve it, whereas somatostatin analogs may slightly worsen it. However, in view of widely recognized guidelines for the management of acromegaly, with specific indications for the optimal medical therapy, hyperglycemia "per se" must not be considered as a criterion to choose one or another of these therapies. This recommendation is strengthened by the availability of a wide spectrum of drugs for the control of hyperglycemia also in the acromegalic patient. Remarkable differences in the cost of various therapeutic options should also be considered.

Further studies are needed to clarify the optimal strategy to treat and control hyperglycemia in acromegalic subjects.

In conclusion, with the current knowledge the abnormalities of glucose metabolism in acromegalic patients should be managed as in non-acromegalic diabetic subjects.

Cushing syndrome

The effect of treatments for Cushing's syndrome on glucose control

In patients with endogenous Cushing's syndrome, control of hypercortisolism is the first step to improve glucose metabolism, taking into account that the different treatments of hypercortisolism may affect glucose tolerance, regardless of the correction of cortisol excess [111,112].

In patients with Cushing's disease, neurosurgical removal of pituitary adenoma is the first-line therapy, but the remission of hypercortisolism occurs only in 65–90% of patients, with risk of recurrence [113]. Radiotherapy may be a second-line treatment for persistence or recurrence of disease after surgery. Both of these therapeutic approaches may cause hypopituitarism that, if left untreated, may alter glucose metabolism and increase cardiovascular risk [114]. Bilateral adrenalectomy can be considered as a rescue treatment in patients with severe disease. This approach, however, causes adrenal insufficiency, and the subsequent treatment with glucocorticoids as replacement therapy may worsen the metabolic complications of Cushing's syndrome [115,116] in some patients. In Cushing's syndrome due to adrenal adenomas, monolateral adrenalectomy is the therapeutic gold standard; this approach can be considered also in adrenal incidentalomas with 'subclinical' Cushing's syndrome, especially if the patient is young and/or carrying comorbidities such as DM, hypertension and osteoporosis [117,118].

The impairment of glucose metabolism generally resolves with normalization of cortisol levels. However, insulin resistance and cardiovascular risk may persist after correction of hypercortisolism [119,120] and treatment of DM may need to be continued also in patients with 'cured' disease. Different studies have demonstrated that also patients cured for Cushing's disease have an increased prevalence of atherosclerosis, since they may maintain several clinical and biochemical abnormalities typical of the active phase of the disease, such as obesity, hypertension, impairment of glucose tolerance, hyperlipidemia. Waist to hip ratio (WHR) significantly correlates with several metabolic and vascular parameters in patients with cured Cushing's disease (Colao et al., 1999 [119]; Faggiano et al., 2003 [121]; Giordano et al., 2011 [122]).

Summary of available evidence
Glucose metabolism improves in patients cured from Cushing's disease in the long-term; however these patients maintain increased cardiovascular risk compared to the general population, probably due to residual abdominal obesity and/or insulin resistance syndrome [119,121,122].

Class I, Level of evidence C.

Influence of different options of medical therapy for Cushing's disease/syndrome on glycemic control

Drug treatment is currently considered a second-/third-line therapeutic approach in patients with Cushing's syndrome and can influence per se the outcome of GC-induced diabetes. Two different types of medical approach can be considered to treat Cushing's disease: adrenal- or pituitary-directed drugs [123–125].

The effect of adrenal directed drugs
Adrenal-directed or steroid-target medical therapies have a direct inhibitory effect on cortisol secretion by the adrenal glands or on its action through GC receptor. Some drugs such as ketoconazole and metyrapone are dose-dependent and reversible inhibitors of adrenal cortisol synthesis [113]. Mitotane, at doses greater than 4 g daily, causes cellular necrosis due to its irreversible effects on mitochondrial function; therefore it is mainly indicated in adrenal cancer [113]. The use of these drugs is limited because of variable efficacy and important side-effects [126].

Ketoconazole Ketoconazole is frequently used to lower circulating cortisol levels. To date, there are only

retrospective studies reporting its use. Castinetti et al., in 2008, evaluated 38 patients with Cushing's disease treated with ketoconazole (200–1200 mg/day) with a median follow-up of 23 months. All the 5 patients with DM achieved hormonal and metabolic control with ketoconazole therapy [127].

In a study by Valassi et al. on presurgical treatment of Cushing's syndrome, a total of 62 patients were evaluated (17 treated with ketoconazole alone, 22 with ketoconazole and metyrapone associated and 23 with metyrapone alone), for a median period of 4 months (range 1–30). At baseline, DM was present in eight patients. Thirty two (52%) patients were controlled or partially controlled by medical therapy: HbA1c levels decreased in these patients, and the dose of oral antidiabetic agents, when required, was reduced [128]. Recently, another multicenter study, by Castinetti and colleagues, reviewed the data from 200 patients with Cushing's disease treated by ketoconazole as a single agent (median final dose 600 mg/day, range 200–1200 mg). At the time of ketoconazole initiation, 32% of patients had DM, and an improved glycemic control was achieved in 56% of them [129].

Summary of available evidence

Ketoconazole at a dose of 200–1200 mg/day was demonstrated to improve glucose metabolism in patients with Cushing's syndrome [127–129].

Class I, Level of evidence C.

Metyrapone Metyrapone is a potent, short-acting inhibitor of cortisol synthesis with a rapid onset of action on the final step in cortisol synthesis, namely the conversion of 11-deoxycortisol to cortisol. Short-term metyrapone therapy induces clinical improvements in the majority of patients, with biochemical control in 75% of them [20]. Most patients tolerate the drug as long as hypoadrenalism is avoided. The major limitation of metyrapone is hirsutism and acne in women due to the androgenic effect of cortisol precursors. Various studies report the positive effect of metyrapone treatment on glucose metabolism in patients with Cushing's syndrome [128,130–133].

Summary of available evidence

Metyrapone at a dose of 250–4500 mg/day is able to improve glucose metabolism in patients with Cushing's syndrome [128,130–133].

Class I, Level of evidence C.

The effect of glucocorticoid receptor antagonists

Mifepristone Mifepristone, a progesterone receptor antagonist, has also GC receptor antagonist activity at higher concentrations. Case reports and small retrospective studies of its use in Cushing's syndrome document improvements in glucose metabolism; hypokalemia was the most commonly reported side effect [134–137].

An open-label, prospective, multicenter, 6-month study on the safety and efficacy of mifepristone was conducted in 50 patients with Cushing's syndrome, 29 with DM or impaired glucose tolerance [138]. The glucose AUC decreased by approximately 25% during OGTT in 60% of the patients from baseline to week 24. Overall, 87% of the patients had significant clinical improvements of glucose tolerance with this drug at a dose of 300–1200 mg/day.

Summary of available evidence

Mifepristone at a dose of 300–2000 mg/day improves glucose tolerance in patients with Cushing's syndrome [134–138].

Class I, Level of evidence B.

The effect of pituitary directed drugs

Cabergoline Recently, great interest has been raised for agents that target the pituitary corticotroph cells, which contain receptors and transcription factors that interact with dopamine, somatostatin, retinoic acid and their analogs. The dopamine D2 receptor is expressed in more than 75% of corticotroph pituitary adenomas and long-term therapy with cabergoline at a dose of 1–7 mg/week was shown to induce a sustained control of hypercortisolism in up to 40% of patients with Cushing's disease [139]. Small trials suggest that combination therapy with ketoconazole increases its effectiveness [140,141]. Moreover, cabergoline was found to decrease the prevalence of DM and glucose intolerance by 60% and 46%, respectively, independently of hypercortisolism control [139].

Summary of available evidence

Cabergoline may moderately improve glucose tolerance in patients with Cushing's disease, independently of hypercortisolism control.

Class IIa, Level of evidence C.

thiazolidinediones, retinoic acid and SSA The nuclear hormone receptor PPAR-γ (peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor-γ) is expressed in human ACTH-secreting adenomas, and thiazolidinediones (TZDs) (high-affinity ligands for this receptor) were shown to produce antiproliferative effects on corticotropinomas under experimental conditions [142]. Indeed, the use of TZDs in hypercortisolism may be of interest in view of their potential antiproliferative and antidiabetic efficacy. However, clinical studies have failed to reproduce the success observed in vitro and in mouse models [143,144].

The use of retinoic acid for the treatment of Cushing's disease is suggested by in vitro studies [141], and a recent prospective study with retinoic acid, up to 80 mg/day, described its potential role to normalize urinary cortisol [146], but very limited data are available.

ACTH-secreting adenomas also express multiple SSTR, including SSTR2 and SSTR5, involved in the regulation of ACTH release. However, there is evidence that glucocorticoid excess could mitigate the antisecretory effects of classical SSA (octreotide and lanreotide) by down-regulating SSTR2 [147]. Moreover, SSA are able to inhibit insulin secretion [148] and may further impair glucose tolerance in patients with persistent hypercortisolism.

Pasireotide

Recently, pasireotide, a novel multireceptor SSA, has been proposed as a new medical treatment option in Cushing's disease [148,149]. It has high binding-affinity for four of the five known SSTR subtypes (SSTR1–3 and 5) with 40-fold greater affinity for SSTR5 than does octreotide [150]. Expression of SSTR5 on ACTH-secreting adenomas is not influenced by glucocorticoid excess, and pasireotide was shown to inhibit ACTH release effectively both in vitro and in vivo [151]. Pasireotide is the first agent approved by the European Medical Agency and Food and Drug Administration to treat adult patients with Cushing's disease after surgical failure, with recurrence or for whom surgery is not an option, and has demonstrated high effectiveness for the biochemical control and clinical improvement of patients [145,152]. However, compared to other SSA, it may cause hyperglycemia or overt DM as a side effect [147,149].

It should be noted that SSTR5 is also involved in the regulation of insulin secretion by pancreatic β-cells, with inhibitory effects [148,153]. Short-term administration of increasing doses of pasireotide in normal volunteers results in increased blood glucose, secondary to decreased insulin secretion [154]; moreover, pasireotide inhibits insulin secretion without significant modification of glucagon output [149]. Another potential issue might be the effects of pasireotide on the GH/IGF-I axis, which, in addition to the inhibitory effects of glucocorticoids, could favor GH deficiency, and this may contribute to the development of metabolic alterations [155,156].

The pathophysiology of pasireotide-induced hyperglycemia was investigated in mechanistic studies in healthy volunteers [72,157]. These studies demonstrated that this drug could also affect the secretion of intestinal glucagon-like peptide (GLP)-1 and of glucose-dependent insulinotropic peptide (GIP), whereas hepatic and peripheral insulin sensitivity was not altered.

In patients with Cushing's disease, pasireotide-induced hyperglycemia was reported in 36% of patients in a first series [149], and then up to 73% in the phase III clinical trial [148]. Some patients (6%) discontinued this treatment because of a hyperglycemia-related adverse event or uncontrolled DM [148]. Despite the decline in cortisol levels, blood glucose and HbA1c increased early after pasireotide treatment initiation, and a glucose-lowering medication was initiated in 46% of patients [148]. The mean HbA1c level increased from a baseline mean 5.8–7.3% after 6 and 12 months of pasireotide, respectively [148]. Some small series and case reports of patients treated with pasireotide up to 5 years suggest that control of hypercortisolism achieved by this drug may correlate with a more favorable outcome for glucose metabolism in the setting of long-term treatment [158,159]. Table 5 summarizes relevant studies on pasireotide in CS.

Summary of available evidence

The new SSA pasireotide has been shown to significantly worsen glucose tolerance, despite control of hypercortisolism, in patients with CS [148,149,157,160].

Class I, Level of evidence B.

Considering the coexistence of SSTR and dopamine receptors in human ACTH-secreting adenomas, combination treatment may have a rationale. In a recent study, the addition of cabergoline to pasireotide improved the control of hypercortisolism, with responders increasing from 29% to 53% [161]; the subsequent addition of ketoconazole further improved the results. Finally, although no data are available on the effects of this drug combination on glucose metabolism, it can be hypothesized that concomitant treatment with a dopamine D2 receptor agonist may partially protect against the potential negative effects of SSTR5 modulators [139,162,163]. Further studies are required to demonstrate this hypothesis.

Options of anti-diabetes therapy in Cushing's disease/ syndrome patients

No studies have specifically investigated the role of anti-diabetes therapy in the control or prevention of

Table 5 Effect of pasireotide therapy on glycemic control in patients with Cushing disease.

Authors	Type of study	Treatment	Effect on glycemic metabolism
Boscaro, 2009 [149]	Open-label, single-arm, multicentric phase II study on 39 pts	600 mcg bid s.c. for 15 days	Hyperglycemia in 14 pts; antidiabetic therapy in 5 pts.
Colao, 2012 [148]	Double-blind, randomized, multicentric phase III study on 162 pts, for 12 months.	Pasireotide is given at the dose of 600 mcg bid or 900 mcg bid s.c. (possible increase up to 1200 mcg bid)	Hyperglycemia in 118/162 pts, with treatment discontinuation in 6% of pts. 74/162 pts started antidiabetic medications.
Mackenzie Feder, 2013 [158]	Monocentric experience of the extension of phase III trial in 4 pts	2/4 pts follow-up >48 months 2/4: Discontinuation after 6–12 months	Glucose intolerance or T2DM in all pts. 2 pts during extension phase discontinued antidiabetic therapies with normalization of glucose metabolism
Boscaro et al., 2014 [161]	Extension of phase II study in 19/38 pts Median duration 16 months	Pasireotide 600 mcg bid (possible increase up to 900 mcg bid)	13/19 pts (68%) with hyperglycemia

hyperglycemia in patients with endogenous hypercortisolism, and only few small studies have reported the effect of some anti-diabetes agents in glucocorticoid-induced hyperglycemia. Thus, for both exogenous and endogenous Cushing's syndrome there is a dearth of evidence as regards optimum treatment regimens to manage glucose metabolism abnormalities, and the recommendations are largely based on current best practice.

In patients taking exogenous glucocorticoids, drug exposure should be limited to the minimum effective dose because the risk of DM was shown to be closely correlated with the dose and duration of GC therapy [14,164–167]. Lifestyle modifications (hypocaloric diet and adequate low-moderate physical activity) are currently recommended for high-risk subjects predisposed to DM, but it should also be suggested for all patients undergoing treatment with glucocorticoids [15]. In patients developing glucocorticoid-induced hyperglycemia, first-line treatment should include drugs that increase insulin sensitivity, such as metformin and TZDs, and/or postprandial insulin secretion, such as dipeptidyl peptidase 4 inhibitors (DPP4-I), GLP-1 receptor agonists (GLP-1 RA), sulfonylureas or glinides. Table 6 summarizes the advantages and disadvantages of non-insulin antidiabetic agents.

Among insulin-sensitizers, TZDS are a second choice, because of their increased risk for heart failure, bone loss and fractures [168–170]. α-Glucosidase inhibitors, which moderately reduce postprandial hyperglycemia, may also be considered. In patients with uncontrolled DM despite oral agents, both short- or/and long-acting insulin analogs will be effective in correcting hyperglycemia. Some studies have recently reported the efficacy of GLP-1 receptor agonists in treating glucocorticoid-induced glucose intolerance. The use of exenatide was shown to antagonize the acute effects of prednisone on glucose tolerance, and β-cell function in healthy humans [171]. Matsuo et al. demonstrated the successful use of exenatide in four cases of patients with type 2 DM with worsened glycemic secondary to glucocorticoid treatment [172].

Table 7 Calculation of insulin dose based on body weight and steroid dose.

Dose of prednisone	Insulin dose
>40 mg/d	0.4 U/kg
30 mg/d	0.3 U/kg
20 mg/d	0.2 U/kg
10 mg/d	0.1 U/kg

Modified by: Clore and Thurby-Hay [14].

Given that glucocorticoids increase predominantly postprandial glucose levels, at least at the beginning of treatment, short-acting prandial insulin is often the initial therapy to be considered [14]. Also a basal insulin, either NPH or long-acting analog, con be the first choice. In a retrospective study comparing NPH insulin and glargine in hospitalized patients treated with prednisone, the two insulins showed equal efficacy end hypoglycemic risk, with a lower dose in the group treated with NPH [173]. A basal-bolus approach may be then initiated in patients with more pronounced glucose impairment. Insulin should be considered as first-line therapy in patients with DM undergoing high-dose glucocorticoid treatment, either short-term or occasionally. There are several reasons for this choice: first, the rapid action of insulin compared to oral anti-diabetes agents; second, the time course of corticosteroid action determines glucose abnormality occurring mostly in the post-prandial phase, and insulin is more capable to control these effects; third, the dose of insulin can be adjusted upward and downward to fit the patient's needs [14,174]. It is useful to remember that

Table 6 Non-insulin anti-diabetes medications: advantages and disadvantages in the context of GC-induced hyperglycemia. Modified from Perez et al., 2014 [180].

Drugs	Advantages	Disadvantages
Metformin	Mechanism of action (insulin sensitizer) No hypoglycemia Safety	Associated with hypoxia Slow onset of action Most effective on fasting glucose Need for increasing dose titration to improve tolerance Unpredictable hypoglycemic effects Contraindicated in renal failure and conditions
Sulfonylureas (e.g. glibenclamide, glimepiride, glipizide, glicazide)	Immediate onset of action	Persistent effect Moderate to high risk of hypoglycemia
Glinides (e.g. repaglinide)	Rapid onset of action Main effect on postprandial glucose Short duration of action (4–6 h)	Unpredictable effect Risk of hypoglycaemia Some dose titration required
Glitazones (pioglitazone)	Mechanism of action (insulin sensitizer) No hypoglycemia	Long onset of action (4–6 weeks) Main effect on fasting glucose Risk of heart failure due to fluid retention Risk of bone loss and fractures
DPP-4 I (e.g. sitagliptin, vildagliptin, saxagliptin, linagliptin, alogliptin)	Immediate onset of action Main effect on postprandial glucose No hypoglycemia	
GLP-1 analogs (e.g. exenatide, liraglutide, lixisenatide)	Immediate onset of action Main effect on postprandial glucose No hypoglycemia	Poor initial tolerance (nausea and vomiting) Subcutaneous administration

glucocorticoid-treated patients needing a basal-bolus regimen have a higher requirement of prandial insulin than basal (usually 70% of total insulin dose as prandial and 30% as basal) [174] (Table 7)

No studies are available on the use of antidiabetes therapy for glucose control in endogenous Cushing's syndrome, and only experts' opinions are available. DM treatment differs according to the severity of the disease [175]. In hospitalized patients, the priority is to rapidly achieve a good glycemic control, by means of cortisol-lowering agents (in particular metyrapone, with its rapid onset of action), with the addition of insulin treatment by insulin infusion, basal-bolus or basal-plus strategies [175].

In the outpatient setting, the priority is to improve symptoms, and to achieve long-term glycemic control [175]. Treatment of DM is mandatory in patients not cured with surgery, and it is also of paramount importance in patients with active hypercortisolism waiting for surgery, to minimize the risks associated with anesthesia and postsurgical complications. Insulin-sensitizers, especially metformin, are considered to be the first-line therapy in combination with cortisol-lowering agents. Nevertheless, some patients may need insulin therapy or other agents such as DPP4-I, GLP-1 RA, sulfonylureas, and TZDs [175]. Notably, there is very few data on the use of incretin-based therapy in endogenous Cushing's syndrome: in one study, the intravenous administration of a GLP-1 RA decreased plasma glucose levels in a patient with DM determined by endogenous hypercortisolism [176]. A close monitoring of glucose levels is needed as cortisol levels fall, e.g. after pituitary radiotherapy or in cyclical disease, as there may be frequently the need to reduce the dose of hypoglycemic agents, due to an increased risk of hypoglycemia.

Summary of available evidence

The lack of studies addressing the effect of different anti-diabetes agents in Cushing's syndrome/disease patients with altered glucose homeostasis does not allow to draw any conclusions on the optimum therapeutic strategy. Further studies are needed to clarify this aspect.

Options of anti-diabetes therapy in Cushing's syndrome patients with pasireotide-induced hyperglycemia

Due to the specific pathophysiology of pasireotide-induced hyperglycemia, newer anti-diabetic agents such as DPP-4 I (e.g., sitagliptin, vildagliptin, saxagliptin, linagliptin, alogliptin), and GLP-1 RA (e.g. liraglutide, exenatide, dulaglutide) may be effective in reducing the pasireotide-associated hyperglycemia without the risk of hypoglycemia [177]. No specific intervention studies with glucose outcomes have been conducted in the population of Cushing's disease patients with pasireotide-induced hyperglycemia. The only available data describe the short-term effects of several oral or injectable anti-diabetes medications to prevent pasireotide-induced hyperglycemia in healthy volunteers: in this setting, liraglutide and vildagliptin were found to be more effective than metformin and nateglinide [72]. Due to the frequency of hyperglycemia induced by pasireotide therapy, a group of experts in Cushing's disease and DM proposed some diagnostic and therapeutic recommendations [177]. Patients undergoing pasireotide therapy should be accurately educated and monitored. Before and during pasireotide treatment, accurate evaluation of glucose metabolism is mandatory [177,178]. In patients with an effective control of cortisol hypersecretion but persistently elevated glucose levels, a concomitant antidiabetes treatment must be considered before pondering withdrawal from pasireotide. The management of pasireotide-induced hyperglycemia should be based on the currently recommended treatment algorithms for type 2 DM [179]. In patients with prevalent insulin resistance, metformin can be considered as first-line therapy, unless contraindicated [177–179]. If glycemic control is not achieved or maintained with metformin alone, combination therapy with an incretin-based treatment is suggested [72]. GLP-1 RA appear to be superior in terms of glucose-lowering effect: this along with minimal risk of hypoglycemia makes these drugs an interesting option to treat DM in patients with Cushing's disease [72]. Eventually, if blood glucose levels are still uncontrolled, insulin therapy may be required [177–179].

Summary of available evidence

It is recommend that all patients with Cushing's disease undergoing pasireotide therapy are monitored for the development of IFG/IGT or manifest DM [149,150,160,177,178].

Class I, Level of evidence A.

In Cushing's disease patients developing hyperglycemia secondary to treatment with pasireotide, therapy should include appropriate lifestyle modifications (diet and exercise); metformin should be initiated as first-line therapy, unless contraindicated or not tolerated [72–74].

Class IIa, Level of evidence C.

In Cushing's disease patients with pasireotide-induced diabetes, if glycemic control is not achieved or maintained with metformin alone, combination therapy with an incretin-based treatment (a DPP4 I as a first attempt or, if not sufficient, a GLP-1 receptor agonist) is suggested. Finally, if blood glucose levels are still not controlled, insulin therapy may be required [72,177,178].

Class IIa, Level of evidence C.

Conflict of interest

AA has received research grant from Strategic Project DYCENDI from the University of Padova (STPD11ALFE). MGB has received research grant from Ateneo Sapienza 2014 (Prot. n. 0067282 -20.11.2014).

AA has received a speaker honorarium from Novartis, Lilly, Novo, Sanofi, Boehringher, Astrazeneca, Mediolanum, Servier, Janssen, Merck Sharp & Dohme. MGB has received a speaker honorarium from Lilly, Novo, Sanofi, Boehringher, Astrazeneca, Servier, Janssen, Merck Sharp & Dohme. FG as received a speaker honorarium from Novartis, Lilly, Novo, Sanofi, Boehringher, Astrazeneca, Janssen, Merck Sharp & Dohme. CS has received a speaker honorarium from Otsuka, Novartis, Lilly.

AA has received financial support for attending symposia from Novartis, Lilly, Novo, Sanofi, Boehringher, Astrazeneca; MGB has received financial support for attending symposia from Sanofi, Novo, Lilly; FG has received financial support for attending symposia from Sanofi, Merck Sharp & Dohme.

Scientific board members: AA: Novartis, Lilly, Novo, Sanofi, Boehringher, Astrazeneca, Mediolanum, Servier, Janssen, Merck Sharp & Dohme; FG: Novartis, Lilly, Novo, Sanofi, Boehringher-Ingelheim, Astrazeneca, Janssen, Merck Sharp & Dohme, Roche, Lifescan; MGB: Sanofi; CS Novartis, Viropharma.

VP declares non conflict of interest.

Ethical approval and informed consent

For the writing of these guidelines no research involving human participants and/or animals was performed. Therefore no ethical approval and no informed consent were necessary.

Acknowledgment

We wish to thank Dr Laura Bertoccini for help and suggestions.

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