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Cardiorespiratory fitness and bone turnover markers in adults with metabolic syndrome: the mediator role of inflammation

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Running Head: Cardiorespiratory fitness, inflammation, and bone

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between inflammatory markers and bone turnover in adults is well known, whilst a negative association between cardiorespiratory fitness (CRF) and inflammatory markers has also been described. Hence, we tested whether the association between CRF and bone turnover markers is mediated by inflammatory markers in adults with metabolic syndrome. A total of 81 adults (58.5 ± 5.0 yrs, 62.7% women) were included in the analysis. CRF was measured by the six-minute walking test. Serum interleukine (IL)-1 β , IL-6, IL-10, tumor necrosis factor alpha, high-sensitivity c-reactive protein (hsCRP) and vascular endothelial growth factor, collagen type I cross-linked C-telopeptide, procollagen type I N-terminal propeptide (P1NP) and total osteocalcin were assessed using a sensitive ELISA kit. Body composition was assessed by dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry. Partial correlation was used to test the relationship between CRF, inflammatory markers and bone turnover markers, controlling for sex, lean mass and fat mass. Boot-strapped mediation procedures were performed and indirect effects with confidence intervals not including zero were interpreted as statistically significant. CRF was positively correlated with P1NP levels ($r=0.228$, $p=0.044$) and osteocalcin levels ($r=0.296$, $p=0.009$). Furthermore, CRF was positively correlated with IL-1 β levels ($r=0.340$, $p=0.002$) and negatively correlated with hsCRP levels ($r=-0.335$, $p=0.003$), whereas IL-1 β levels were positively correlated with P1NP levels ($r=0.245$, $p=0.030$) and hsCRP levels were negatively correlated with P1NP levels ($r=-0.319$, $p=0.004$). Finally, the association between CRF and P1NP levels was totally mediated by hsCRP ($P_M=39.9$). Therefore, CRF benefits on bone formation could be dependent on hsCRP concentrations in this population.

1 INTRODUCTION

2 Osteoporosis is a major disease affecting ageing populations worldwide (World Health
3 Organization, 2007). Bone loss occurs silently and progressively due to the alteration of bone
4 remodeling cycle, and it is reflected on bone turnover markers (Cooper & Ferrari, 2019). In
5 this regard, the imbalance between the bone formation and resorption processes is influenced
6 by genetics, age, sex hormone deficiency and lifestyle factors, although other metabolic
7 complications (e.g., insulin resistance, chronic inflammation, and the ensuing metabolic
8 syndrome [MetS]) seem to play an important role (Aspray & Hill, 2019).

9 The excessive fat mass accumulation in individuals with MetS may lead to inflammatory
10 markers secretion such as interleukin (IL)-1 β , IL-6, IL-10, tumor necrosis factor alpha (TNF-
11 α), vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) and high sensitivity c-reactive protein (hsCRP)
12 (Hanks et al., 2010; Jonas et al., 2015; Nishimura et al., 2009). Overall, the association between
13 inflammatory markers and bone health have been extensively described in different populations
14 (Ding et al., 2008; Gil-Cosano et al., 2020; Hanks et al., 2010; Utsal et al., 2014; Zheng et al.,
15 1997). With regards to bone turnover markers, these inflammatory markers seem to stimulate
16 bone resorption activities while decreasing bone formation in middle-aged and older adults
17 (Chen et al., 2013; Ugurlu et al., 2022) and this may be explained by the differentiation of the
18 stromal cells into adipocytes rather than osteoblasts (Rosen & Bouxsein, 2006). Thus, hsCRP
19 has been negatively associated with osteocalcin and procollagen type I N-terminal propeptide
20 (P1NP) in young, middle-aged and older adults (Andersson et al., 2017; Chen et al., 2013;
21 Ugurlu et al., 2022).

22 Inflammatory markers have been consistently associated to cardiorespiratory fitness (CRF) in
23 middle-aged adults (Hong et al., 2014; Jae et al., 2008; McGavock et al., 2004). High levels of
24 CRF largely negate the adverse effects of excess adiposity, which is also referred as the ‘fat

25 and fit' phenomenon (Oktay et al., 2017). Cross-sectional evidence has shown the prognostic
26 role of CRF in relation to bone health status in adult population (DeFina et al., 2016; I. Lee et
27 al., 2020; Ohta et al., 2021; Wainstein et al., 2016), although its association with bone turnover
28 markers has not been investigated yet.

29 Despite the relationship between CRF and inflammatory markers has been extensively
30 described (Hong et al., 2014; Jae et al., 2008; McGavock et al., 2004), no study has jointly
31 investigated the association of these predictors with bone turnover markers. Assessment of
32 bone turnover together with different inflammatory markers through mediation analysis (Baron
33 & Kenny, David, 1986) may increase our understanding on the mechanism responsible for
34 CRF-related changes in bone mass. Therefore, the aim of this study was to investigate whether
35 the association between CRF and bone turnover markers in adults with MetS is mediated by
36 inflammatory markers.

37

38 **METHODS**

39 *Design and participants*

40 This cross-sectional study was conducted using baseline measurements of the RESOLVE
41 project (REverse metabolic SyndrOme by Lifestyle and Various Exercises, registered at
42 Clinicaltrials.gov, number NCT00917917). An extended description of the study was
43 published elsewhere (Dutheil et al., 2013). Briefly, the RESOLVE project measured 100
44 overweight/obese adults with metabolic syndrome, according to the International Diabetes
45 Federation definition (Alberti et al., 2006), aged between 50 and 70 years, with a sedentary
46 lifestyle, stable body mass and stable treatment over the previous six months, post-menopausal
47 for women, no hepatic, renal or psychiatric diseases, nor cardiovascular or endocrine diseases
48 except those defining metabolic syndrome, no HIV infection, no use of medications altering

49 body weight, no restricted diet in the previous year, and with a satisfactory completion of a
50 maximal exercise tolerance test.

51 A total of 81 participants (58.5 ± 5.0 years old, 43% men) with valid data on CRF, inflammatory
52 markers, bone metabolism markers, lean mass and fat mass were included in this study.
53 Participants were recruited via advertisements and after signing the informed consent. The
54 study was reviewed and approved by the human ethics committees from St Etienne, France.

55 *Anthropometrics and body composition*

56 Body height was measured with a standard stadiometer to the nearest 0.1cm (Holtain, Ltd.,
57 Crymych, UK) and body weight was recorded to the nearest 0.1 kg using a digital scale (Seca,
58 Les Mureaux, France). Body mass index was calculated as weight (kg) divided by height
59 squared (m^2). Waist circumference was assessed at midabdominal midpoint between subcostal
60 and supra-iliac landmarks using a tape measure to the nearest 0.1cm. Fat mass and lean mass
61 were measured by Dual-Energy X-ray absorptiometry (Hologic QDR 4500 series; Waltham,
62 USA), with respective in vivo coefficient of variation (CV) of 4.2 and 0.4%. Visceral adipose
63 tissue was assessed from DXA scans, as described by Kamel et al (1999). We determined a CV
64 of 1.6% in the visceral adipose tissue measurements.

65 *Cardiorespiratory fitness and blood pressure*

66 CRF was assessed in field-based conditions using the six-minute walk test. In a nutshell, the
67 participants walked back and forth between cones separated by 30 m, and a length mark was
68 put throughout the hallway every 3 m. Individuals were instructed to walk as far as they could
69 within the 6-minute time period and verbal encouragement was commonly used according to
70 standardized guidelines (Agarwala & Salzman, 2020). Walk distance was measured by
71 counting the number of full laps and rounding to the nearest meter for the partial final lap (ATS,
72 2002).

73 *Biochemical measurements*

74 Fasting blood samples were drawn between 7.00 and 7.30 a.m., aliquoted and stored at -80°C
75 until analysis. Basic biological assays were performed in the biochemistry laboratory of the
76 University Hospital of Clermont-Ferrand, France. Inflammatory markers (i.e., IL-1 β , IL-6, IL-
77 10, TNF- α , hsCRP and VEGF) were assayed by ELISA using commercial kits (Millipore,
78 Billerica, MA, USA). Sensitivity, intra- and inter-assay CVs were 1.3 pg/mL, 9.0% and 9.0%
79 for IL-1 β ; 1.3 pg/mL, 7.0% and 10.0% for IL-6; 1.6 pg/mL, 4.3% and 4.5% for IL-10; 0.7
80 pg/mL, 6.0% and 9.0%, for TNF- α ; 0.1 mg/mL, <8% and <10% for hsCRP; and <5 pg/mL,
81 4.7% and 8.1% for VEGF.

82 Bone turnover markers included the serum concentration of total osteocalcin, which was
83 assayed by ELISA (N-MID Osteocalcin ELISA, Nordic Bioscience Diagnostics A/S,
84 Denmark). Intra- and inter-assay CVs were 2.6% and 4.7%, respectively, with a sensitivity of
85 0.5 ng/ml. Other bone metabolism markers such as P1NP and CTX-I were assayed using Cobas
86 6000 (Roche Diagnostic, Mannheim, Germany) with intra- and inter-assay CVs lower than 7%.

87 *Statistical analysis*

88 All the analyses were performed using the IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows version 20.0
89 (IBM Corp: Armonk, NY, USA), and the level of significance was set to $p < 0.05$. Descriptive
90 characteristics of the participants are presented as mean \pm standard deviation (SD) for normally
91 distributed variables or median [interquartile range] for non-normally distributed variables. All
92 variables were checked for normality using Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and visual check of
93 histograms, Q-Q and box plots.

94 Partial correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationship between CRF,
95 inflammatory markers and bone turnover markers controlling for covariates. We included
96 covariates that were selected in a stepwise hierarchical regression to identify the best predictors

97 for bone turnover markers (data not shown). Sex, age, body mass index, fat mass, lean mass,
98 waist circumference and visceral adipose tissue were considered for the stepwise method, but
99 only sex, lean mass and fat mass were included.

100 Then, we performed simple mediation analysis to investigate whether the association between
101 CRF and bone turnover markers was mediated by inflammatory markers, and controlling for
102 sex, lean mass and fat mass. PROCESS macro version 3.1, model 4, with 10,000 bias-corrected
103 bootstrap samples and 95% confidence intervals was used for these analyses. In a nutshell, the
104 mediation analysis is composed of ordinary least squared regression-based equations (paths)
105 that allow us to answer the question of how a predictor transmits its effect (total effect) on an
106 outcome being partitioned into direct (c' path) and indirect effect ($a \times b$ path). Most
107 contemporary analysts focus on the indirect effect by stating 2 steps in establishing mediation
108 (Hayes, 2013): (1) show that the causal variable is correlated with the mediator (path a); (2)
109 show that the mediator affects the outcome variable controlling for the predictor (path b). Thus,
110 mediation is assessed by the indirect effect of the CRF (predictor) on bone turnover markers
111 (outcome) through inflammatory markers (mediator). The total (c path), direct (c' path), and
112 indirect effects ($a \times b$ paths) are presented (Figure 1). Indirect effects with confidence intervals
113 not including zero were interpreted as statistically significant (Hayes, 2013) regardless of the
114 significance of the total effect (the effect of CRF on bone turnover markers) and the direct
115 effect (the effect on bone turnover markers when both CRF and inflammatory markers are
116 included as independent variables). The percentage of mediation (PM) was calculated as
117 “(indirect effect/total effect) \times 100” to know how much of the total effect was explained by the
118 mediation when the following assumptions were achieved: the total effect is larger than the
119 indirect effect and of the same sign.

120

121 RESULTS

122 Table 1 shows the descriptive characteristics of the overweight/obese adults with metabolic
123 syndrome by sex. Interaction analyses were performed for sex (data not shown) and since no
124 significant interactions were found ($p \leq 0.382$), analyses were performed for men and women
125 together.

126 INSERT TABLE 1

127 Partial correlations between CRF, inflammatory markers and bone turnover markers after
128 adjustment by sex, lean mass and fat mass are presented in Table 2. CRF was positively
129 correlated with P1NP and osteocalcin ($r=0.228$ and $r=0.296$, respectively). Likewise, CRF was
130 positively correlated with IL-1 β ($r=0.340$) and negatively correlated with hsCRP ($r=-0.355$).
131 Finally, IL-1 β was positively correlated with P1NP ($r=0.245$) and hsCRP was negatively
132 correlated with CTX and P1NP ($r=-0.233$ and $r=-0.319$, respectively). Additionally, IL-6 was
133 positively correlated with IL-1 β , IL-10 and TNF- α ($r=0.537$, $r=0.491$ and $r=0.338$,
134 respectively), TNF- α was positively correlated with IL-10 ($r=0.487$) and VEGF was negatively
135 correlated with P1NP ($r=-0.275$).

136 INSERT TABLE 2

137 Simple mediation analysis models controlling for sex, lean mass and fat mass are depicted in
138 Figure 2. CRF was positively associated with P1NP (Figure 2B and 2E, $c=3.394$, $p=0.044$) and
139 osteocalcin (Figure 2C and 2F, $c=4.228$, $p=0.009$). With regards to path a, CRF was positively
140 associated with IL-1 β (Figure 2A, 2B and 2C, $a=4.224$, $p=0.002$) and negatively associated
141 with hsCRP (Figure 2D, 2E and 2F, $a=-4.363$, $p=0.003$). In path b, IL-1 β was not associated
142 with bone turnover markers, whereas hsCRP was negatively associated with P1NP (Figure 2E,
143 $b=-0.311$, $p=0.020$). Finally, when CRF and IL-1 β / hsCRP were included as independent
144 variables (c' , direct effect), osteocalcin was predicted and P1NP was not. There was a

145 significant mediating effect of hsCRP on the relationship between CRF and P1NP (IE=1.356,
146 95%CI=0.269-2.582, $P_M=39.9\%$).

147 **INSERT FIGURE 2**

148

149 **DISCUSSION**

150 The present study quantifies for the first time, to our knowledge, the mediating role of
151 inflammatory markers in the association between CRF and bone turnover markers.
152 Interestingly, the results show that hsCRP levels mediate up to 39.9% of the association
153 between CRF and P1NP levels after controlling for sex, lean mass and fat mass. We did not
154 find a mediating role of inflammation in the associations of CRF with CTX and total
155 osteocalcin levels. These findings show how CRF is related to hsCRP and P1NP levels.
156 However, further studies are needed to elucidate the possible mechanisms behind these
157 relationships.

158 Several studies have assessed the association between CRF and inflammatory markers (Hong
159 et al., 2014; Jae et al., 2008; McGavock et al., 2004). The results of the present investigation
160 confirm that CRF was negatively associated with hsCRP levels, after controlling for sex, lean
161 mass and fat mass (path a). These results agree with several studies which found a negative
162 association between peak oxygen uptake and hsCRP levels in adults with type 2 diabetes (Jae
163 et al., 2008; McGavock et al., 2004). This fact could be related to the strong link between CRF
164 and the improved endothelial function and body composition, which may reduce the
165 inflammatory response in adults (Lucha-López et al., 2021). On the other hand, our positive
166 association of CRF with IL-1 β levels is not supported by Hong et al (2014) who found that
167 peak oxygen uptake and IL-1 β levels were negatively associated in obese adults after
168 controlling for age, gender, race and mean arterial pressure. These controversial results could

169 be explained by fat mass or other adiposity measures not being included as covariates in their
170 study despite the known associations between inflammation and obesity. Of note, many
171 randomized clinical trials have failed to show that training-induced increases in CRF
172 independent of weight loss improve levels of inflammatory markers (Arsenault et al., 2009; M.
173 G. Lee et al., 2012). In contrast, combining an exercise intervention with hypocaloric diet has
174 been shown to be effective to reduce CRP in adults with obesity (Bruun et al., 2006; You et al.,
175 2004). The latter results seem to be explained by the amount of fat loss achieved through the
176 exercise and hypocaloric diet intervention compared to the exercise intervention alone.
177 Moreover, Perissiou et al. (2020) found that the ketogenic state achieved after an 8-week
178 exercise intervention combined with low-carbohydrate diet was associated with higher fat loss
179 and lower CRP levels in adults with obesity, suggesting carbohydrate restriction as a key
180 element to modify inflammatory parameters.

181 Previous evidence has shown that hsCRP levels reduce bone formation markers such as P1NP
182 and osteocalcin in young, middle-aged and older adults (Andersson et al., 2017; Chen et al.,
183 2013; Ugurlu et al., 2022). Agree with these studies, our findings show that the association of
184 hsCRP with P1NP and total osteocalcin levels was negative in adults with MetS. This might
185 be explained by the fact that the inflammatory status derived from the MetS condition impairs
186 the differentiation of bone-marrow stromal cell into osteoblasts (Rosen & Bouxsein, 2006).
187 With regards to the association between IL-1 β and bone turnover markers, we did not find any
188 association. Opposite to our results, Al-Daghri et al. (2017) found a negative correlation
189 between IL-1 β and osteocalcin in postmenopausal women. The differences between our results
190 and the results of Al-Daghri et al. may be explained by the lack of cofounders in their
191 correlation analysis. Animal and *in vitro* studies suggests that IL-1 β provides an important
192 stimulus for osteoclasts' formation and activity, leading to excessive bone resorption.
193 However, the presence of osteoblasts seems to be crucial in the formation of osteoclasts by IL-

194 1β (Lee et al., 2010) which could compromise the bone resorption in adults with MetS. The
195 latter may explain the lack of association between IL- 1β and CTX levels in our sample.

196 Our results show that the association of CRF with P1NP and total osteocalcin levels was
197 significant after adjusting for sex, lean mass and fat mass (path c, total effect). Moreover, this
198 association became non-significant when hsCRP levels were introduced as covariate (path c',
199 direct effect), suggesting a potential mediating effect of hsCRP levels in its relationship with
200 CRF and P1NP variables. Additionally, the mediation analysis showed that the CRF/P1NP
201 relationship was totally mediated by hsCRP levels, which reinforces the abovementioned
202 protective role of CRF on the adverse effects of adiposity (Oktay et al., 2017). In this sense,
203 Torres-Costoso et al. (2021) have recently shown that fat individuals with high levels of CRF
204 had a good bone health, probably due to its relationship on the decrease in fat mass and the
205 ensuing inflammatory status (Torres-Costoso et al., 2015). Thus, this provides preliminary
206 evidence for the hypothesis that hsCRP levels play an important role in the relationship
207 between CRF and P1NP levels. Hence, our study reveals that, through its effect on hsCRP
208 levels, CRF may reduce the detrimental effects of MetS on bone turnover.

209 *Strengths and limitations*

210 Our study has some limitations. At first, the cross-sectional design rules out the possibility to
211 make cause-effect relationships. Second, the number of participants with complete data in all
212 studied variables is relatively small and thus, caution should be taken when interpreting the
213 results. Third, although 6-minute walk test has been proven to have good validity and
214 reliability, we did not use the gold standard to measure CRF (Mänttari et al., 2018). The
215 strengths of the study comprise the use of objective measures of inflammatory and bone
216 turnover markers. In addition, our statistical analyses were controlled for sex, lean mass and
217 fat mass which are relevant given their association with bone-related parameters.

218 To sum up, the present study suggests a mediating effect of hsCRP levels in the association of
219 CRF with P1NP levels. Therefore, if confirmed prospectively, improvements in CRF may
220 reduce hsCRP concentrations with potential benefits in the bone formation processes. Further
221 research should incorporate a broader set of bone metabolism markers (e.g., alkaline
222 phosphatase, sclerostin and irisin) to clarify the role of CRF and inflammatory status on bone
223 remodeling cycle in this population.

224

225

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229 FD and EUG made substantial contributions to data interpretations and manuscript drafting;
230 DC, BL, RC, PO, GW, AV and FD conceived of the study, and participated in its design and
231 coordination; DT, MMT, UCU, RB and MZ revised critically the manuscript. all authors have
232 read and approved the final version of the manuscript

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388 5122(96)01080-8

389

390

391 **Table 1.** Descriptive characteristics of the study subjects

	All (<i>n</i> = 81)	Men (<i>n</i> = 35)	Women (<i>n</i> = 46)
Age (years)	58.5 ± 5.0	59.2 ± 4.5	59.7 ± 5.4
<i>Anthropometric and body composition</i>			
Body mass (kg)	88.9 ± 13.4	95.6 ± 10.9	83.9 ± 12.9
Height (cm)	165.7 ± 8.8	173.5 ± 6.2	159.7 ± 4.9
BMI (kg/m ²)	32.3 ± 3.8	31.7 ± 3.2	32.8 ± 4.3
Waist circumference (cm)	101.9 ± 9.8	106.9 ± 8.4	98.3 ± 9.2
Lean mass (kg)	58.4 ± 11.1	68.9 ± 6.7	50.5 ± 6.1
Fat mass (kg)	30.4 ± 7.9	26.4 ± 6.1	33.5 ± 7.7
VAT (kg)	3.1 ± 0.7	3.2 ± 0.7	2.9 ± 0.7
<i>Inflammatory markers</i>			
IL-1β (pg/mL)	0.02 [0.02-0.11]	0.04 [0.02-0.25]	0.02 [0.02-0.06]
IL-6 (pg/mL)	2.50 [1.17-4.74]	1.95 [0.82-5.17]	2.64 [1.38-4.68]
IL-10 (pg/mL)	1.30 [0.10-3.41]	2.06 [0.10-5.83]	1.22 [0.10-3.41]
TNF-α (pg/mL)	9.47 [5.36-13.76]	10.72 [6.49-15.45]	8.04 [4.49-12.02]
hsCRP (mg/L)	3.05 [1.58-6.51]	1.68 [0.99-3.58]	4.77 [2.08-8.08]
VEGF (pg/mL)	146.25 [49.8-262.94]	150.06 [74.27-219.38]	142.20 [33.24-276.57]
<i>Cardiorespiratory fitness</i>			
6MWT (m)	581.3 ± 70.6	603.5 ± 74.7	564.5 ± 63.2
<i>Bone turnover markers</i>			
CTX (ng/mL)	0.5 ± 0.3	0.5 ± 0.3	0.6 ± 0.3
PINP (pg/mL)	43.6 ± 18.7	39.3 ± 15.3	46.9 ± 20.4
Osteocalcin (ng/mL)	14.2 ± 7.8	11.8 ± 4.4	16.1 ± 9.3

392 Data are presented by means ± standard deviation or median [interquartile range].

393 *BMI* body mass index; *VAT* visceral adipose tissue; *HOMA* homeostasis model assessment index-Steady state
394 beta cell function; *HDL-C* high density lipoprotein cholesterol; *LDL-C* low density lipoprotein cholesterol; *IL*
395 interleukin; *TNF- α* tumor necrosis factor alpha; *hsCRP* high-sensitivity c-reactive protein; *VEGF* vascular
396 endothelial growth factor; *6MWT* six-minute walk test; *CTX* collagen type I cross-linked C-telopeptide; *PINP*
397 procollagen type I N-terminal propeptide
398

399 **Table 2.** Partial correlations between cardiorespiratory fitness using the 6MWT, inflammatory markers and bone
 400 turnover markers adjusting for sex, lean mass and fat mass

	IL-1 β	IL-6	IL-10	TNF- α	hsCRP	VEGF	CTX	P1NP	Osteocalcin
6MWT	0.340*	0.078	-0.007	-0.016	-0.335*	-0.066	0.194	0.228*	0.296*
IL-1 β	-	0.537**	0.351*	0.166	-0.146	0.061	0.096	0.245*	0.154
IL-6		-	0.491**	0.338*	0.172	0.020	-0.104	-0.006	0.029
IL-10			-	0.487**	-0.056	0.063	0.014	0.143	0.024
TNF- α				-	0.015	0.183	-0.086	-0.159	-0.062
hsCRP					-	0.185	-0.233*	-0.319*	-0.172
VEGF						-	-0.119	-0.275*	-0.104
CTX							-	0.699**	0.743**
P1NP								-	0.693**

401 Boldface indicates statistical significance. * $P < 0.050$, ** $P < 0.001$

402 IL interleukin; *TNF- α* tumor necrosis factor alpha; *hsCRP* high-sensitivity c-reactive protein; *VEGF* vascular
 403 endothelial growth factor; *6MWT* six-minute walk test; *CTX* collagen type I cross-linked C-telopeptide; *P1NP*
 404 procollagen type I N-terminal propeptide

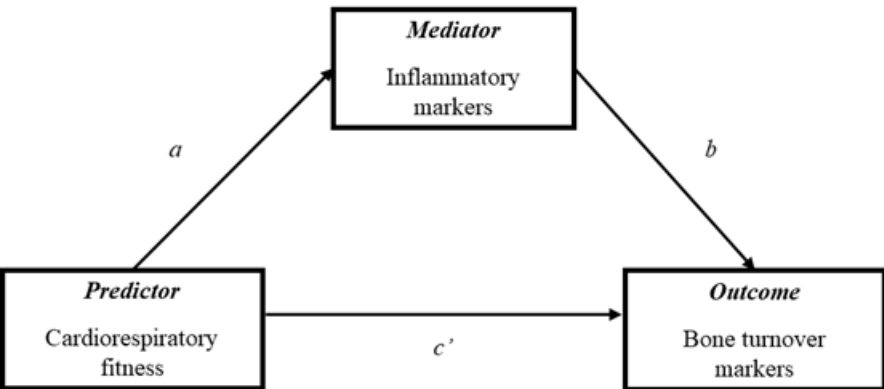
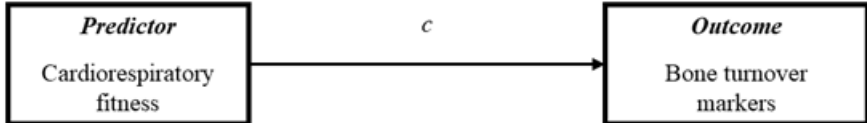
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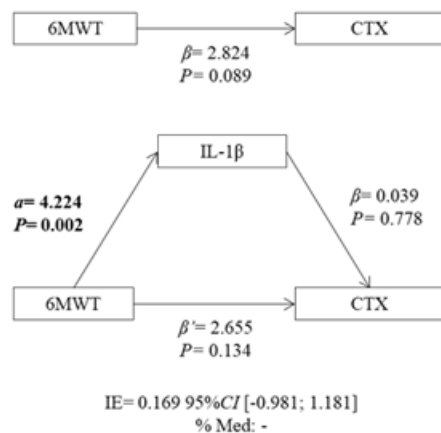
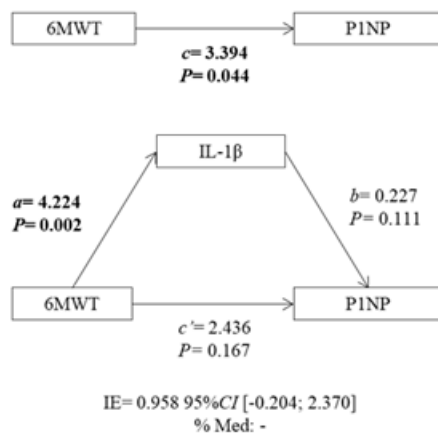
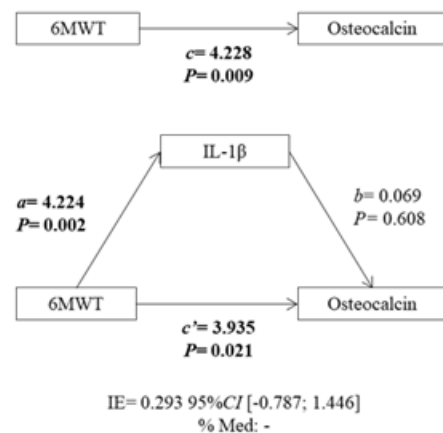
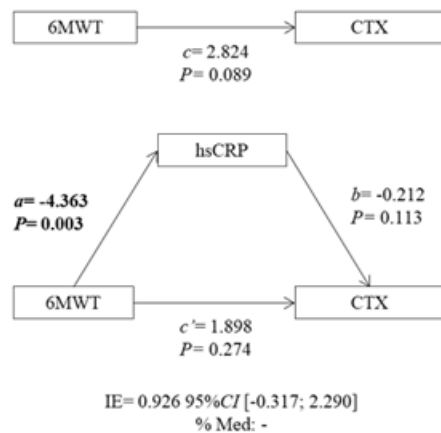
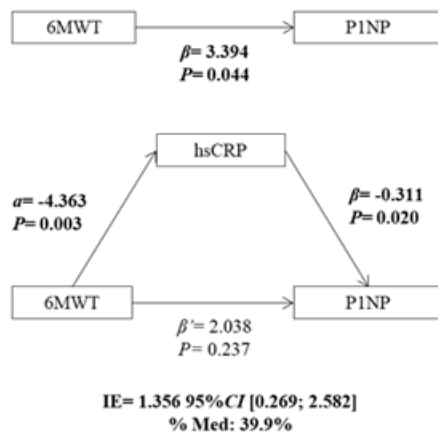
406 **List of Figures**

407 **Figure 1.** Causal diagram reflecting the simple mediation analyses. Path *c* shows the association
408 between the predictor and the outcome. Arrows *a* x *b* show the natural indirect effect pathway, and *c'*
409 shows the natural direct effect pathway.

410

411 **Figure 2.** Simple mediation models of the relationship between cardiorespiratory fitness using the
412 6MWT and bone turnover markers using IL- β and hsCRP as mediators, controlling for sex, lean mass
413 and fat mass. *IL* interleukin; *hsCRP* high-sensitivity c-reactive protein; *6MWT* six-minute walk test;
414 *CTX* collagen type I cross-linked C-telopeptide; *PINP* procollagen type I N-terminal propeptide



A**B****C****D****E****F**