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Therapeutic Antioxidants in the Management of Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia: Implications for Liver Function and Systemic Oxidative Stress Modulation

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ABSTRACT

Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH) is a prevalent urological disorder among aging males, often associated with lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) and reduced quality of life. Emerging evidence implicates oxidative stress (OS) in the pathogenesis of BPH, highlighting the therapeutic potential of antioxidant-based interventions. Antioxidants exert protective effects through modulation of reactive oxygen species (ROS), regulation of inflammatory pathways, and prevention of cellular damage in prostatic tissues. However, the metabolism and bioavailability of antioxidant compounds are intricately linked to liver function, a primary site of drug detoxification and antioxidant metabolism. This review elucidates the mechanistic basis of antioxidant therapy in BPH, emphasizing key phytochemicals (e.g., lycopene, quercetin, curcumin, resveratrol) and synthetic antioxidants with demonstrated efficacy. Furthermore, it discusses the role of liver function in modulating systemic antioxidant capacity and therapeutic outcomes in BPH patients. The review explores the bidirectional relationship between hepatic oxidative stress and prostate health, proposing integrative therapeutic strategies targeting both the liver and prostate for optimal management of BPH. Understanding these interactions offers novel insights into personalized antioxidant therapy in urological practice, with implications for reducing systemic oxidative burden and preserving liver health.

Keywords: Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia; Oxidative Stress; Antioxidants; Liver Function; Urological Complications

INTRODUCTION

Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH) is a highly prevalent non-malignant proliferative condition of the prostate gland predominantly affecting aging males. Globally, its incidence increases significantly with advancing age, affecting approximately 50% of men over the age of 50 years and up to 80% of men over 70 years [1]. BPH is histologically characterized by hyperplasia of the stromal and epithelial cells within the periurethral region of the prostate, leading to increased prostate volume, urinary outflow obstruction, and lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) such as urinary frequency, urgency, nocturia, hesitancy, and weak urinary stream [2]. While the exact etiology of BPH remains multifactorial, key contributing factors include hormonal alterations, particularly increased dihydrotestosterone (DHT) activity, chronic inflammation, metabolic syndrome, and age-related tissue remodeling [3,4]. Among the emerging mechanisms implicated in the pathogenesis of BPH is oxidative stress (OS), a condition arising from an imbalance between reactive oxygen species (ROS) generation and the antioxidant defense system of the body [5]. ROS, including superoxide anions, hydrogen peroxide, and hydroxyl radicals, have been shown to induce oxidative damage to cellular components such as lipids, proteins, and nucleic acids within the prostate [6]. Chronic OS fosters a pro-inflammatory microenvironment, enhancing the release of inflammatory cytokines, growth factors, and angiogenic molecules that support stromal and epithelial proliferation. Therapeutic strategies targeting OS have gained increasing attention in the management of BPH, particularly through the use of natural and synthetic antioxidants [7,8]. These agents can modulate ROS production, inhibit inflammatory cascades, and prevent oxidative injury in prostatic tissue, thereby improving LUTS and slowing disease progression [9].

However, the therapeutic response to antioxidant interventions is not uniform and may be significantly influenced by hepatic function [10] The liver plays a central role in drug metabolism, detoxification of xenobiotics, and regulation of systemic antioxidant capacity. Many antioxidants, particularly phytochemicals, undergo extensive hepatic biotransformation, which affects their bioavailability, pharmacokinetics, and therapeutic efficacy [11] Liver dysfunction, often prevalent in aging populations and individuals with metabolic syndrome, may impair antioxidant metabolism, exacerbate systemic OS, and modulate treatment outcomes in BPH [12] Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between therapeutic antioxidants, liver function, and prostate health is essential for optimizing BPH management strategies.

Oxidative Stress in the Pathogenesis of BPH

Mechanisms of Oxidative Stress in Prostate Tissue

The pathophysiological role of oxidative stress in BPH development is increasingly recognized in experimental and clinical studies [13]. In the prostate, ROS are generated from both endogenous sources, such as mitochondrial respiration, and exogenous factors including environmental toxins, smoking, infections, and dietary imbalances [4]. Excessive ROS accumulation leads to lipid peroxidation, which compromises the integrity of cellular membranes, disrupts cellular signaling, and triggers apoptosis or necrosis of prostatic cells [15]. Furthermore, oxidative damage to DNA in prostate cells promotes genetic mutations, epigenetic alterations, and activation of transcription factors such as nuclear factor-kappa B (NF-κB), hypoxia-inducible factor-1α (HIF-1α), and activator protein-1 (AP-1), which collectively upregulate pro-inflammatory cytokines (e.g., IL-6, TNF-α), growth factors (e.g., VEGF), and matrix metalloproteinases (MMPs) [16]. This cascade fosters chronic inflammation, angiogenesis, tissue remodeling, and extracellular matrix deposition, all of which contribute to prostate enlargement and LUTS in BPH [17]

Biomarkers of Oxidative Stress in BPH

Several oxidative stress biomarkers have been identified and quantified in clinical studies involving BPH patients, highlighting the systemic and localized oxidative burden associated with the disease [18]. Notably, elevated levels of malondialdehyde (MDA), a by-product of lipid peroxidation, and 8-hydroxy-2'-deoxyguanosine (8-OHdG), a marker of oxidative DNA damage, have been reported in prostatic tissues, serum, and urine of BPH patients compared to healthy controls [19]. Additionally, significant reductions in the activity of key antioxidant enzymes such as superoxide dismutase (SOD), glutathione peroxidase (GPx), and catalase (CAT) have been observed, indicating impaired antioxidant defense mechanisms in BPH [20]. These biomarkers not only provide valuable diagnostic and prognostic information but also serve as important therapeutic targets for antioxidant interventions. Effective management of oxidative stress through antioxidant therapy may mitigate ROS-induced tissue injury, attenuate inflammation, and slow down the progression of BPH [21]. However, the success of such interventions may largely depend on adequate liver function to ensure optimal metabolism and systemic distribution of antioxidant agents.

Therapeutic Antioxidants for BPH Management

Antioxidant-based therapy has emerged as a promising approach in the management of benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), targeting the oxidative stress (OS) and inflammatory pathways implicated in the disease's progression [22]. Antioxidants exert their effects through multiple mechanisms, including scavenging reactive oxygen species (ROS), inhibiting lipid peroxidation, restoring endogenous antioxidant enzyme activity, and downregulating pro-inflammatory cytokines [23]. Therapeutic antioxidants in BPH management can be broadly categorized into natural (phytochemicals) and synthetic antioxidants.

Natural Antioxidants

Natural antioxidants, particularly phytochemicals derived from fruits, vegetables, and medicinal plants, have shown substantial efficacy in modulating oxidative stress and reducing the severity of lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) in BPH [23].

Lycopene

Lycopene, a carotenoid predominantly found in tomatoes, exhibits potent antioxidant activity. It neutralizes free radicals, inhibits cellular proliferation, and reduces the expression of insulin-like growth factor-1 (IGF-1), a key driver of prostatic growth. Clinical studies have demonstrated that lycopene supplementation can significantly reduce prostate-specific antigen (PSA) levels and prostate volume in BPH patients [24,25].

Quercetin

Quercetin, a flavonoid abundant in onions, apples, and berries, exhibits anti-inflammatory, anti-proliferative, and antioxidant properties. It modulates signaling pathways such as nuclear factor-kappa B (NF-κB) and downregulates inflammatory mediators like tumor necrosis factor-alpha (TNF-α) and interleukins (IL-6, IL-8) in prostate tissue [26,27].

Curcumin

Curcumin, the bioactive compound from turmeric (Curcuma longa), has been extensively studied for its antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and anti-fibrotic properties. It suppresses the activity of NF-κB, inhibits ROS production, and attenuates prostatic inflammation [28]. Curcumin also enhances the expression of endogenous antioxidant enzymes such as superoxide dismutase (SOD) and catalase (CAT).

Resveratrol

Resveratrol, a polyphenol found in grapes and berries, has shown potential in reducing oxidative damage in the prostate. It inhibits ROS generation, reduces fibrosis, and improves tissue remodeling [29].

Synthetic Antioxidants

Synthetic antioxidants such as N-acetylcysteine (NAC) and alpha-lipoic acid (ALA) are being explored for their ROS-scavenging capacity and cytoprotective effects in BPH. NAC acts as a precursor for glutathione synthesis, a critical intracellular antioxidant, while ALA regenerates other antioxidants like vitamins C and E and provides mitochondrial protection [30].

Liver Function and Antioxidant Therapy in BPH

The liver is the central organ responsible for the metabolism, detoxification, and bioactivation of most therapeutic agents, including antioxidants. Hepatic metabolism plays a critical role in determining the pharmacokinetic properties of antioxidants — absorption, distribution, metabolism, and excretion (ADME) — which ultimately influence their bioavailability and therapeutic efficacy in BPH management [31]

Hepatic Metabolism of Antioxidants

Many natural antioxidants undergo extensive phase I and phase II biotransformation in the liver. Phase I metabolism involves oxidation, reduction, or hydrolysis reactions primarily mediated by cytochrome P450 (CYP450) enzymes, while phase II reactions involve conjugation processes such as glucuronidation, sulfation, and methylation to enhance solubility for excretion [32]. For instance, curcumin and resveratrol are subject to rapid hepatic metabolism, which limits their systemic bioavailability unless formulated in nanoparticle or liposomal delivery systems.

Impact of Liver Dysfunction on Antioxidant Efficacy

Liver dysfunction, which may arise from non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), hepatitis, cirrhosis, or metabolic syndrome, can compromise the liver's ability to metabolize and detoxify antioxidants. Impaired hepatic function may lead to reduced antioxidant bioactivation, increased systemic oxidative burden, and diminished therapeutic efficacy in BPH treatment [33]. Conversely, antioxidants with hepatoprotective properties may exert dual benefits by supporting liver function while mitigating oxidative stress in the prostate.

Moreover, systemic OS arising from hepatic dysfunction can exacerbate prostatic tissue injury, creating a bidirectional pathological link between liver health and prostate disease. Integrating antioxidant therapy that concurrently supports liver and prostate health offers a promising therapeutic strategy for BPH patients with coexisting liver disorders.

Bidirectional Relationship Between Liver Health and Prostate Function

The emerging link between liver health and prostate function in the context of oxidative stress (OS) offers a paradigm shift in understanding the systemic nature of benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) [34]. The liver, as the body's primary detoxification organ, regulates systemic oxidative status through its role in antioxidant metabolism, lipid regulation, and inflammatory modulation. On the other hand, systemic oxidative burden, often exacerbated by liver dysfunction, can aggravate pathological processes in distant organs, including the prostate [35].

Hepatic Oxidative Stress and Prostate Disease

Hepatic oxidative stress is a pathological feature of several liver diseases, including non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), hepatitis, and cirrhosis. These conditions lead to excessive generation of reactive oxygen species (ROS), overwhelming the antioxidant defense mechanisms. The systemic spillover of ROS and pro-inflammatory cytokines such as tumor necrosis factor-alpha (TNF-α) and interleukin-6 (IL-6) from the liver can reach distant tissues, including the prostate, promoting inflammation, tissue remodeling, and hyperplasia [36]. Additionally, metabolic syndrome, which is closely associated with NAFLD, increases the risk of BPH through dysregulated lipid metabolism, insulin resistance, and systemic inflammation. Elevated levels of hepatic-derived inflammatory mediators can directly contribute to prostate enlargement and exacerbate lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS).

Integrative Therapeutic Approaches

Integrative therapeutic strategies that simultaneously target hepatic and prostatic oxidative stress may provide superior outcomes in BPH management. For example, hepatoprotective agents such as silymarin, curcumin, and glycyrrhizin exhibit dual antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects in both liver and prostate tissues [4]. Furthermore, lifestyle interventions aimed at improving liver health, such as weight loss, dietary modification, and exercise, have been shown to reduce both liver steatosis and prostate volume [37. Emerging evidence supports the

use of polyphenol-rich diets, including green tea catechins, resveratrol, and lycopene, for their systemic antioxidant benefits that encompass both hepatic and prostatic protection. Combining these agents with standard pharmacotherapy for BPH may reduce the reliance on alpha-blockers and 5-alpha reductase inhibitors, which are often associated with adverse effects [38]

Future Perspectives and Research Directions

Despite the promising role of antioxidant therapy in BPH management, several challenges remain that warrant future research. One key area is the development of liver-friendly antioxidant formulations that maximize therapeutic efficacy while minimizing hepatic metabolic burden. Novel drug delivery systems, including nanoparticles, liposomes, and phytosomes, are being explored to enhance the bioavailability of poorly absorbed antioxidants like curcumin and resveratrol [39]. Another critical research frontier is the exploration of the gut-liver-prostate axis in redox regulation. The gut microbiota modulates the metabolism and bioavailability of dietary antioxidants. Dysbiosis, characterized by an imbalance in gut microbial populations, may impair antioxidant efficacy and promote systemic OS [40]. Probiotic and prebiotic interventions, alongside antioxidant supplementation, represent a novel strategy for restoring gut-liver-prostate homeostasis. Personalized antioxidant therapy based on patient-specific biomarkers, including liver function tests, OS markers (e.g., malondialdehyde, 8-OHdG), and inflammatory profiles, is another promising area. Tailoring antioxidant selection and dosing to individual patient profiles could improve treatment outcomes and minimize adverse effects [6]. Future clinical trials should adopt integrative designs that assess the combined efficacy of hepatoprotective and anti-BPH antioxidants in diverse patient populations, including those with metabolic syndrome, NAFLD, or hepatic dysfunction. Moreover, longitudinal studies are needed to evaluate the long-term safety and efficacy of high-dose antioxidant therapy, particularly in elderly patients who represent the primary demographic affected by BPH.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, advancing the understanding of the bidirectional liver-prostate oxidative stress axis will pave the way for safer, more effective, and personalized antioxidant-based interventions in the management of benign prostatic hyperplasia. Antioxidant therapy presents a promising adjunct in the management of BPH, targeting the underlying oxidative stress that drives prostatic hyperplasia and urological complications. Given the central role of the liver in antioxidant metabolism, preserving hepatic function is crucial for therapeutic efficacy. Integrative treatment strategies that concurrently support liver health and mitigate prostate oxidative damage hold significant translational potential in urological practice.

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