

MCP-1 and CCR2 Gene Variants and the Risk for Osteoporosis and Osteopenia

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Aim: In this study, we investigated whether monocyte chemotactic protein 1 (*MCP-1*) and CC chemokine receptor 2 (*CCR2*) gene polymorphisms account for an increased risk of osteoporosis or osteopenia. **Methods:** Three hundred three postmenopausal women, 80 osteoporotic, 123 osteopenic, and 100 unrelated age-matched healthy controls, were included in the study. Genotyping of *MCP-1* A2518G and *CCR2* V64I gene polymorphisms were detected by PCR-RFLP. **Results:** We, for the first time, demonstrated the positive association of *MCP-1* GG, *CCR2* Val/Ile, and *CCR2* Val+ genotype with osteoporosis risk. However, *CCR2* Ile/Ile genotype frequencies were high in the control group compared with those of the patients with osteoporosis and osteopenia. Haplotype analysis confirmed the association of *MCP-1*/*CCR2* gene variants with osteopenia and revealed that the frequency of *MCP-1* A:*CCR2* Val haplotype was significantly higher in patients when compared with controls. **Conclusions:** In conclusion, our findings have suggested that *MCP-1* and *CCR2* gene variants were risk factors for osteoporosis and osteopenia.

Introduction

OSTEOPOROSIS is a systemic skeletal disease in which loss of bone mass and the microarchitectural deterioration of bone tissue leads to fragility fractures (Zajickova and Zofkova, 2003; Raisz, 2005). Enhanced bone resorption may be related with osteoclastogenesis from precursor cells, enhanced fusion and activation of osteoclasts, and prolonged lifespan due to an inhibition of osteoclast apoptosis (Manolagas, 2000; Teitelbaum, 2000). There are multiple mechanisms that play roles in the regulation of bone remodeling, and these involve not only the osteoblastic and osteoclastic cell lineages but also other marrow cells, in addition to the interaction of systemic hormones, local cytokines, growth factors, and transcription factors (Raisz, 2005). They are speculated as candidates for involvement in bone loss in different types of inflammatory diseases through the recruitment of osteoclast precursors but their potential effects in osteoclast recruitment, development, or function are not well understood (Choi *et al.*, 2000; Yu *et al.*, 2004). Osteoblasts have also been shown as a source of chemokines in bones (Yu *et al.*, 2004). Chemokines, particularly of two major (CXC, CC) families, are essential signals for the trafficking and localization of circulating hematopoietic cells. Monocyte chemotactic protein 1 (*MCP-1*, *CCL2* or *SCYA2*) is the most investigated CCL chemokine family member (Van

Coillie *et al.*, 1999). It is expressed by various types of cells which include fibroblasts, endothelial cells (Yu and Graves, 1995), and osteoblasts (Simonet *et al.*, 1997) and exhibits chemoattractant activity toward osteoclasts. It has been reported that an A2518G polymorphism in the regulatory region of the *MCP-1* gene affects *MCP-1* expression in response to inflammatory stimuli (Rovin *et al.*, 1999). The cellular influence of *MCP-1* is mediated by the CC chemokine receptor 2 (*CCR2*), a G-coupled receptor (Rollins, 1997). A 190 G/A single-nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) in the *CCR2* gene, located on chromosome 3p21-p24, is the most researched *CCR2* SNP in exon 1 (Murphy *et al.*, 2000). This mutation results in the substitution of valine by isoleucine (V64I) in the transmembrane region of the protein (Attar *et al.*, 2010). In light of this information, our aim in this study was to investigate some possible associations between *MCP-1* A2518G and *CCR2* V64I gene polymorphisms and the risk for osteoporosis.

Subjects and Methods

Subjects

The cohort of this study contained 303 Turkish postmenopausal women (80 osteoporotic, 123 osteopenic, and 100 healthy), 40–78 years of age, attending the Uskudar State Hospital in Istanbul between June 2009 and March 2010.

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During recruitment the WHO definitions and criteria for osteoporosis (World Health Organization Study Group, 1994) were used. The patients received a detailed, standardized questionnaire including questions regarding the osteoporosis risk factors, such as family history of osteoporosis, menopausal status and age, cigarette smoking, insufficient protein intake, alcohol consumption, medication use, and other medical conditions. Only patients with a clinical diagnosis of osteoporosis and osteopenia were recruited. The healthy group contained only individuals with normal bone mineral density (BMD). Exclusion criteria before enrollment included conditions, diseases, and/or treatments known to interfere with bone metabolism, such as malignancies, endocrinologic disorders (hypo- and hyperparathyroidism, hyperthyroidism, Cushing's syndrome), severe liver or gastrointestinal diseases, skeletal diseases (Paget's disease, osteogenesis imperfecta, osteomalacia, and rheumatoid arthritis), and current pharmacological treatment with corticosteroids, anabolic androgenic steroids, estrogens, estrogen-related molecules, or anticonvulsants. Menopause was defined as amenorrhea of at least 1 year duration. The study was approved by the Local Ethical Committee of Istanbul University Medical Faculty (Protocol No. 2006/2145) and a written, informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to giving their blood sample.

BMD measurement

BMD was measured at the lumbar spine (L1-L4) and hip (femoral neck and total hip) by dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry (DXA; Lunar DPX; GE Lunar Corporation, Madison, WI).

Genotyping

Genotyping method of the *MCP-1* A2518G and *CCR2* V64I gene polymorphisms: Blood specimens were collected in tubes containing EDTA, and DNA was prepared from the leukocyte pellet by SDS lysis, ammonium acetate extraction, and ethanol precipitation (Miller *et al.*, 1988). *CCR2* V64I and *MCP-1* A2518G genotypes were determined with the PCR-RFLP method according to previously published protocols (Szalai *et al.*, 2001a; Abdi *et al.*, 2002).

Statistical analyses

Statistical analyses were performed using the SPSS software package (revision 11.5; SPSS, Inc., Chicago, IL). Differences in the distribution of *MCP-1* A2518G and *CCR2* V64I

genotypes or alleles between cases and controls were tested using the χ^2 statistic. Comparisons of haplotype frequencies between the patients and the control groups were carried out using the Haploview program (Barrett *et al.*, 2005). Values of $p < 0.05$ were considered statistically significant.

Results

Characteristics of patients and healthy controls are shown in Table 1. BMI, L1-L4 BMD, femoral neck BMD, wards BMD, total BMD, and trochanter BMD were significantly different for the two study groups ($p < 0.01$).

The frequencies of *MCP-1* A2518G and *CCR2* V64I genotypes and their respective alleles among cases and controls are shown in Table 2. There was a statistically significant difference between the controls and the patients with osteoporosis for *CCR2* V64I genotypes and ($p = 0.003$).

The control group was not in Hardy-Weinberg equilibrium for both *MCP-1* and *CCR2* genotypes ($p = 0.01$ and $p = 0.00$, respectively); patients with osteoporosis were consistent for *MCP-1* ($p = 0.79$) and *CCR2* ($p = 0.13$), and patients with osteopenia were consistent only for *MCP-1* ($p = 0.61$) but not consistent with *CCR2* genotypes ($p = 0.04$).

MCP-1 AG genotype frequencies were found low in patients with osteopenia and *MCP-1* GG genotype was high in patients with osteoporosis compared with that of the control group ($p = 0.038$, $\chi^2 = 4.31$, OR = 0.56, 95% CI: 0.32-0.97; $p = 0.042$, Fisher's exact test OR = 4.69, 95% CI: 0.94-23.28, respectively).

The frequencies of *CCR2* Val/Ile genotype and Val+ allele were high in patients with osteoporosis compared with that of the control group ($p = 0.042$, Fisher's exact test OR = 4.69, 95% CI: 0.94-23.28; $p = 0.009$, $\chi^2 = 6.89$, OR = 2.7, 95% CI: 1.26-5.76; $p = 0.015$, Fisher's exact test OR = 0.93, 95% CI: 0.88-0.98, respectively). In contrast, *CCR2* Ile/Ile genotype frequencies were high in the control group compared with the patients with osteoporosis ($p = 0.015$, Fisher's exact test OR = 0.93, 95% CI: 0.88-0.98). In patients with osteopenia, carriers of the *CCR2* Val+ allele (Val/Val+Val/Ile genotype) frequency was high compared with the control group ($p = 0.045$, Fisher's exact test OR = 4.55, 95% CI: 0.92-22.43).

In addition to SNP analyses, haplotypes were evaluated for association with osteopenia and osteoporosis (Table 3). Haplotype analysis confirmed the association of *MCP-1*/*CCR2* gene variants with osteopenia and revealed that the frequencies of *MCP-1* A:*CCR2* Val and *MCP-1* A:*CCR2* Ile

TABLE 1. CLINICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Parameters	Osteopenia (n=123)	Osteoporosis (n=80)	Healthy controls (n=100)	P1	P2	P3
Age (year)	58.32±7.60	58.54±5.78	56.24±8.64	0.05	0.06	0.83
BMI (kg/m ²)	30.28±4.79	27.84±4.22	33.43±4.81	0.00	0.00	0.00
Menopause age (years)	47.19±4.66	46.07±5.5	47.06±4.29	0.88	0.36	0.14
Family history (%)	44.4	39.7	47.5	0.73	0.42	0.51
Smoking (%)	8.9	8.8	20	0.01	0.03	0.96
L1-L4 BMD (g/cm ²)	1.00±0.87	0.82±0.06	1.17±0.11	0.00	0.00	0.00
Femoral neck BMD (g/cm ²)	0.84±0.08	0.76±0.09	0.96±0.09	0.00	0.00	0.00
Wards BMD (g/cm ²)	0.67±0.09	0.58±0.10	0.81±0.10	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total BMD	0.90±0.08	0.81±0.09	1.05±0.09	0.00	0.00	0.00
Trochanter BMD (g/cm ²)	0.73±0.08	0.66±0.08	0.85±0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00

P1, osteopenia vs. control; P2, osteoporosis vs. control; P3, osteopenia vs. osteoporosis; BMI, body mass index; BMD, bone mineral density.

TABLE 2. DISTRIBUTION OF MCP-1 A2518G AND CCR2 V64I GENOTYPE FREQUENCIES IN PATIENTS AND CONTROL GROUPS

Genotypes/alleles	Osteopenia n (%)	Osteoporosis n (%)	Healthy controls n (%)	p-Value
MCP-1 A2518G				
AA	78 (63.4)	38 (47.5)	51 (51.0)	0.06 ^a ; 0.64 ^b
GG	4 (3.3)	7 (8.8)	2 (2.0)	0.56 ^a ; 0.042 ^b
AG	41 (47.0)	35 (43.8)	47 (47.0)	0.03 ^a ; 0.664 ^b
	<i>p</i> : 0.111	<i>p</i> : 0.119		
A	197 (80.0)	111 (69.37)	149 (74.5)	
G	49 (19.91)	49 (30.62)	51 (25.5)	0.15 ^a ; 0.28 ^b
CCR2 V64I				
Val/Val	108 (87.8)	57 (71.3)	80 (80.0)	0.111 ^a ; 0.171 ^b
Ile/Ile	2 (1.6)	0 (0)	7 (7.0)	0.045 ^a ; 0.015 ^b
Val/Ile	13 (10.6)	23 (28.8)	13 (13.0)	0.574 ^a ; 0.009 ^b
	<i>p</i> : 0.09	<i>p</i> : 0.003		
Val	229 (93.08)	137 (85.6)	173 (86.5)	
Ile	17 (6.91)	23 (14.37)	27 (13.5)	0.02 ^a ; 0.811 ^b

^aOsteopenia vs. control.^bOsteoporosis vs. control.

CCR2, CC chemokine receptor 2; MCP-1, monocyte chemotactic protein.

haplotypes were significantly higher and lower, respectively, in patients when compared with controls.

Discussion

The osteoporosis candidate genes may be categorized according to the function(s) of the coded molecules, mostly included in the metabolism of bone cells (osteoblasts and osteoclasts), structure and turnover of collagen and minerals (calcium and phosphorus), and regulatory/hormonal (obviously, sex hormone) pathways. There are multiple gene polymorphisms that have been investigated in association studies with bone mass and fragility (Liu *et al.*, 2006; Ralston and Crombrugge, 2006) but new and more effective approaches are likely to arise from a better understanding of the regulation bone cell function (Raisz, 2005). We, for the first time, demonstrated the positive association of MCP-1 and CCR2 gene variants with osteoporosis or osteopenia risk. In our study, the frequencies of MCP-1 GG, CCR2 Val/Ile, and CCR2 Val+ genotype are more prevalent in patients with osteoporosis than in controls. On the other hand, the CCR2 Ile/Ile genotype is more prevalent in controls than in osteoporosis and osteopenia patients. In addition, haplotype anal-

ysis confirmed the association of MCP-1/CCR2 gene variants with osteopenia and revealed that the frequency of MCP-1 A:CCR2 Val haplotype was significantly higher in patients when compared with controls.

At present, it is hard to explain by which mechanisms genotypes of chemokines result in osteoporosis or osteopenia. Nevertheless, we can make some plausible interpretations depending on the previous study findings. Inflammation can influence the balance between bone formation and resorption and patients with chronic inflammatory diseases seem to have increased risk of developing osteopenia (Hardy and Cooper, 2009). The relevance between the immune system and bone metabolism, or "osteimmunology," involves molecular and cellular interactions between osteoblasts, osteoclasts, lymphocytes, and the monocyte-macrophage lineage (Takayanagi, 2007). The association between inflammation and bone turnover appears to depend mainly on the production of cytokines. As estrogen levels decrease at menopause, there is an increase in the production of proinflammatory cytokines; this process may contribute to increased osteoclast activity and subsequent loss of bone density (Swanberg *et al.*, 2010). However, cytokines play dual roles in bone homeostasis by different activities depending on the type of immune response (Dewhirst *et al.*, 1985; Takayanagi *et al.*, 2000; Takayanagi, 2007). Some of the studies reported that the -2518 A/G polymorphism of MCP-1 may be related with its gene expression. Rovin *et al.* (1999) reported the over-representation of -2518 G frequency in Asian and Mexican populations compared with a Caucasian population. In results from several studies, the G allele has generally been regarded to be associated with inflammation and different types of diseases such as Kawasaki disease, coronary artery disease, asthma, and lupus nephritis (Jibiki *et al.*, 2001; Szalai *et al.*, 2001a, 2001b; Tucci *et al.*, 2004). The current study result is consistent with studies showing an increased risk of MCP-1 GG genotype and G allele in different type of diseases.

It was shown that polymorphisms in the CCR2 gene that alter macrophage recruitment have been reported to influence a number of diseases including AIDS (Doms and Peiper, 1997), multiple sclerosis (Miyagishi *et al.*, 2003), breast cancer (Zafiroopoulos *et al.*, 2004), carotid atherosclerosis (Nyquist

TABLE 3. THE FREQUENCIES OF HAPLOTYPES OF MCP-1 AND CCR2 GENE IN STUDY GROUPS

	Frequency			χ^2	p-Value
	Overall	All patients	Control		
Haplotype associations in osteopenia					
MCP-1 A:CCR2 Val	0.696	0.748	0.630	7.113	0.0077
MCP-1 G:CCR2 Val	0.205	0.182	0.235	1.752	0.1856
MCP-1 A:CCR2 Ile	0.080	0.052	0.115	5.594	0.018
MCP-1 G:CCR2 Ile	0.019	0.017	0.020	0.143	0.7051
Haplotype associations in osteoporosis					
MCP-1 A:CCR2 Val	0.607	0.579	0.630	0.96	0.3272
MCP-1 G:CCR2 Val	0.254	0.277	0.235	0.828	0.3629
MCP-1 A:CCR2 Ile	0.115	0.114	0.115	0.0	0.988
MCP-1 G:CCR2 Ile	0.024	0.029	0.020	0.323	0.5695

et al., 2009), and renal transplant rejection (Omrani *et al.*, 2008). It has been speculated that its distribution is strongly dependent on ethnicity (Smith *et al.*, 1997; Anzala *et al.*, 1998; Struyf *et al.*, 2000; Lewandowska *et al.*, 2002). The CCR2 (V64I) mutation leads to the substitution of valine by isoleucine in the transmembrane region of the protein. Data on the effect of this SNP on the expression of CCR2 are controversial (Nakayama *et al.*, 2004; Navratilova, 2006).

In conclusion, our study has suggested that MCP-1 polymorphism may increase the transcription of MCP-1 by increasing association of MCP-1 with its receptor, leading to the elevated biological activity of the MCP-1/CCR2 system. The increased activity of this system may contribute to inducing osteoclast activity and subsequent loss of bone density. However, further studies are required to evaluate the association of the MCP-1/CCR2 system with osteoporosis.

Disclosure Statement

No competing financial interests exist.

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