Journal of Cardiovascular Disease Research

ISSN: 0975-3583,0976-2833 VOL15, ISSUE 01, 2024

EVALUATING LIVER ENZYME ABNORMALITIES IN CHRONIC ALCOHOL CONSUMERS: A BIOCHEMICAL CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

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Received Date: 12/12/2023 Acceptance Date: 18/01/2024

Abstract

Background: Chronic alcohol consumption is known to cause liver damage, often reflected in altered liver enzyme levels. This study aims to evaluate the extent and pattern of liver enzyme abnormalities in individuals with a history of chronic alcohol consumption. **Methods:** In this cross-sectional study, 200 chronic alcohol consumers were selected through convenience sampling from an urban population. Participants were categorized based on their duration and frequency of alcohol consumption. Blood samples were collected and analyzed for liver enzyme levels, including Aspartate Aminotransferase (AST), Alanine Aminotransferase (ALT), and Gamma Glutamyl Transferase (GGT). Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, with a focus on correlations between liver enzyme levels and alcohol consumption patterns. **Results:** Preliminary findings indicate a significant elevation in AST, ALT, and GGT levels in participants with a longer duration and higher frequency of alcohol consumption. Notably, GGT levels showed the most pronounced increase. The study also found a correlation between elevated enzyme levels and certain demographic factors, including age and gender. **Conclusion:** This study provides critical insights into the biochemical impact of chronic alcohol consumption on liver health. It underscores the importance of early detection and intervention in individuals with abnormal liver enzyme levels, particularly among high-risk demographics.

Keywords: Chronic Alcohol Consumption, Liver Enzymes, Biochemical Study, Cross-Sectional, AST, ALT, GGT.

ISSN: 0975-3583,0976-2833 VOL15, ISSUE 01, 2024

Introduction

Chronic alcohol consumption is a significant public health issue, known to have deleterious effects on various organ systems, particularly the liver. The liver is pivotal in alcohol metabolism, and prolonged exposure to high levels of alcohol can lead to a spectrum of liver abnormalities, ranging from simple steatosis to alcoholic hepatitis, fibrosis, and cirrhosis.[1] Liver enzyme tests, including measurements of Aspartate Aminotransferase (AST), Alanine Aminotransferase (ALT), and Gamma Glutamyl Transferase (GGT), are commonly used as indicators of liver health in clinical practice.[2]

Elevations in these enzymes can serve as a biomarker for liver damage and are often employed in the screening and monitoring of individuals with a history of alcohol abuse.[3] However, the pattern and extent of liver enzyme abnormalities in chronic alcohol consumers and their correlation with the duration and frequency of alcohol consumption are not fully elucidated. Understanding these relationships is crucial for early detection and effective management of alcohol-induced liver disease.[4]

Aim: To assess the patterns and severity of liver enzyme abnormalities in chronic alcohol consumers and their correlation with consumption patterns and demographic factors.

Objectives

1. To evaluate the levels of liver enzymes (AST, ALT, GGT) in individuals with a history of chronic alcohol consumption.
2. To analyze the correlation between liver enzyme abnormalities and the duration and frequency of alcohol consumption.
3. To investigate the influence of demographic factors such as age and gender on liver enzyme levels in chronic alcohol consumers.

Material and Methodology

Source of Data: Data for this study were collected from participants recruited from urban health clinics and hospitals, known to have a higher prevalence of patients with chronic alcohol consumption issues.

Study Design: This was a biochemical cross-sectional study aimed at evaluating liver enzyme abnormalities in chronic alcohol consumers.

Sample Size: The study included 200 participants, selected based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria outlined below.

Inclusion Criteria

1. Individuals aged 18 years and above.
2. Self-reported history of alcohol consumption for more than 5 years.
3. Willingness to participate in the study and provide informed consent.

Exclusion Criteria

1. Individuals with a history of liver diseases unrelated to alcohol consumption, such as viral hepatitis or autoimmune liver diseases.
2. Participants on medication known to affect liver enzyme levels.
3. Pregnant or breastfeeding women.

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Study Methodology: Participants meeting the inclusion criteria underwent a comprehensive health evaluation. Blood samples were collected to assess liver enzyme levels (AST, ALT, GGT). Information on alcohol consumption patterns, including duration and frequency, was obtained through structured interviews.

Statistical Methods: Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize demographic characteristics and enzyme levels. Inferential statistics, such as correlation and regression analysis, were used to examine the relationships between liver enzyme levels, alcohol consumption patterns, and demographic factors.

Data Collection

Data collection involved two main components:

1. Biochemical tests for liver enzyme levels.
2. Collection of self-reported data on alcohol consumption and demographic information through structured questionnaires.

Observation and Results

Table 1: Influence of Demographic Factors on Liver Enzyme Levels in Chronic Alcohol Consumers (n=200)

Demographic Factor	Elevated Liver Enzymes (n, %)	Normal Liver Enzymes (n, %)	Odds Ratio (OR)	95% CI	P-value
Total Participants	200 (100%)	-	-	-	-
Gender					
- Male	70 (35%)	60 (30%)	1.5	1.0-2.2	0.04
- Female	30 (15%)	40 (20%)	1.25	0.8-1.9	0.30
Age Group					
- 18-30 years	40 (20%)	30 (15%)	1.33	0.8-2.2	0.27
- 31-50 years	60 (30%)	40 (20%)	1.5	1.1-2.0	0.02
- 51+ years	40 (20%)	30 (15%)	1.33	0.8-2.2	0.25
Ethnicity					
- North Indian	35 (17.5%)	20 (10%)	1.67	1.0-2.8	0.05
- South Indian	25 (12.5%)	40 (20%)	1.0	0.6-1.7	0.99
- East Indian	20 (10%)	15 (7.5%)	1.67	1.0-2.8	0.05
- West Indian	20(10%)	25(12.5)	1.4	0.8-1.7	0.84

Table 1 in the study analyzed a sample of 200 participants. It revealed that males had a higher likelihood (OR: 1.5, P-value: 0.04) of elevated liver enzymes compared to females, whose odds ratio was lower (OR: 1.25) and not statistically significant (P-value: 0.30). Age-wise, participants in the 31-50 years group showed a significantly higher odds ratio (OR: 1.5, P-value: 0.02) of elevated liver enzymes compared to other age groups, where the odds ratios were 1.33 but not statistically significant. In terms of ethnicity, North and East Indian groups had a higher odds (OR: 1.67) of elevated liver enzymes, with the North Indian group showing statistical significance (P-value: 0.05), whereas the South and West Indian groups had lower

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and statistically non-significant odds ratios (OR: 1.0 and 1.4 respectively). This data suggests gender, age, and certain ethnicities may influence liver enzyme levels among chronic alcohol consumers.

Table 2: Correlation Between Liver Enzyme Abnormalities and Alcohol Consumption Patterns in Chronic Alcohol Consumers (n=200)

Alcohol Consumption Pattern	Correlation with Liver Enzyme Abnormalities (r)	Odds Ratio (OR)	95% CI	P-value
Duration of Alcohol Consumption				
- <5 years	-0.1	0.8	0.5-1.3	0.40
- 5-10 years	0.3	1.5	1.0-2.2	0.05
- >10 years	0.6	2.5	1.6-3.9	<0.001
Frequency of Alcohol Consumption				
- Occasional (Monthly)	-0.05	0.9	0.6-1.4	0.60
- Regular (Weekly)	0.2	1.3	0.9-1.8	0.10
- Frequent (Daily)	0.5	2.0	1.3-3.0	<0.01

Table 2 presents interesting findings from a sample of 200 participants. The table illustrates a clear correlation between the duration of alcohol consumption and liver enzyme abnormalities. Participants with over 10 years of alcohol consumption showed a strong positive correlation (r = 0.6) and a significantly higher odds ratio (OR = 2.5, P-value < 0.001) for liver enzyme abnormalities. Those with 5-10 years of consumption also had a positive correlation (r = 0.3) and a moderately increased odds ratio (OR = 1.5, P-value = 0.05). In contrast, those with less than 5 years of alcohol consumption did not show a significant correlation or odds ratio. Regarding the frequency of alcohol consumption, daily consumers exhibited a notable positive correlation (r = 0.5) and a high odds ratio (OR = 2.0, P-value < 0.01) for liver enzyme abnormalities, while occasional and regular consumers showed lower and statistically non-significant correlations and odds ratios. This data suggests that both longer duration and higher frequency of alcohol consumption are associated with an increased risk of liver enzyme abnormalities.

Table 3: Evaluation of Liver Enzymes Levels in Chronic Alcohol Consumers (n=200)

Liver Enzyme	Elevated Levels (n, %)	Normal Levels (n, %)	Odds Ratio (OR)	95% CI	P-value
AST (Aspartate Aminotransferase)					
- Elevated	120 (60%)	80 (40%)	-	-	-
- Normal	80 (40%)	120 (60%)	1 (reference)	-	-
ALT (Alanine Aminotransferase)					
- Elevated	100 (50%)	100 (50%)	-	-	-

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- Normal	100 (50%)	100 (50%)	1 (reference)	-	-
GGT (Gamma Glutamyl Transferase)					
- Elevated	130 (65%)	70 (35%)	-	-	-
- Normal	70 (35%)	130 (65%)	1 (reference)	-	-

Table 3 provides an overview of liver enzyme abnormalities among 200 participants. The table shows that 60% of participants had elevated levels of AST (Aspartate Aminotransferase), while 40% had normal levels, establishing AST as a commonly affected enzyme in this group. Similarly, ALT (Alanine Aminotransferase) levels were elevated in 50% of the participants, indicating an equal distribution between elevated and normal levels. The most significant finding is for GGT (Gamma Glutamyl Transferase), where 65% of participants had elevated levels, suggesting that GGT might be the most sensitive indicator among the three enzymes for liver abnormalities in chronic alcohol consumers. The table does not provide odds ratios or P-values, as it is primarily focused on presenting the prevalence of elevated versus normal enzyme levels in the study population.

Discussion

The findings from Table 1 can be discussed in relation to other studies, providing a broader context and understanding of the impact of demographic factors on liver enzyme levels in alcohol consumers.

1. **Gender Differences:** The study found that males had a higher likelihood (OR: 1.5) of elevated liver enzymes compared to females (OR: 1.25), which is statistically significant (P-value: 0.04 for males). This aligns with the findings of Ramakrishnan A *et al.*(2022) [1], who reported similar gender-based disparities in liver enzyme abnormalities among alcohol consumers, suggesting that biological differences might influence alcohol metabolism and liver damage.
2. **Age Groups:** Participants aged 31-50 years showed a significantly higher risk (OR: 1.5) of liver enzyme abnormalities. This finding is consistent with the research by Myilsamy S *et al.*(2022) [2], who observed a peak in liver abnormalities in the middle-age group, potentially due to prolonged exposure to alcohol. However, the younger (18-30 years) and older (51+ years) age groups in this study also showed increased odds (OR: 1.33), but these were not statistically significant, indicating a need for further investigation.
3. **Ethnic Variations:** The study highlights significant differences in liver enzyme elevations among different ethnic groups, with North and East Indians showing higher odds (OR: 1.67) of elevated enzyme levels. This could be indicative of genetic, dietary, or cultural factors influencing liver health, as suggested by Khalili P *et al.*(2022) [3]. However, the South Indian group showed no significant difference (OR: 1.0), and the West Indian group had a moderate, non-significant increase in odds (OR: 1.4). These findings echo the results of Patel *et al.* [4], who noted the role of genetic predispositions and lifestyle factors in liver enzyme variations among different ethnicities.

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Table 2 from the study provides insightful data on how different patterns of alcohol consumption affect liver enzyme levels. This can be discussed in the context of existing literature:

1. **Duration of Alcohol Consumption:** The study demonstrates a significant positive correlation between the duration of alcohol consumption and liver enzyme abnormalities. Those consuming alcohol for more than 10 years have a markedly higher risk (OR: 2.5, P-value: <0.001). This finding is in line with the research by Deshmukh MM *et al.*(2022) [4], who noted a strong association between prolonged alcohol use and liver damage. The correlation is less pronounced but still significant in the 5-10 year group (OR: 1.5, P-value: 0.05), suggesting a cumulative effect of alcohol over time.
2. **Frequency of Alcohol Consumption:** The study also finds a significant correlation between the frequency of alcohol consumption and liver enzyme abnormalities. Frequent (daily) consumers show a higher odds ratio (OR: 2.0, P-value: <0.01), aligning with findings from Li Q *et al.*(2022) [5], who observed that daily alcohol consumption significantly increases the risk of liver disease. In contrast, occasional (monthly) drinkers show a non-significant correlation, indicating a lower risk.

These findings suggest that both longer duration and higher frequency of alcohol consumption are key factors contributing to liver enzyme abnormalities. This is consistent with broader research in the field, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions for high-risk consumption patterns.

Table 3 from the study presents a comprehensive analysis of liver enzyme levels in a sample of 200 chronic alcohol consumers. The findings can be discussed in conjunction with existing research:

1. **AST (Aspartate Aminotransferase):** The study observed that 60% of the participants had elevated AST levels, which is consistent with the findings of Bisetegn H *et al.*(2022) [6]. They reported a high prevalence of AST elevation in alcohol consumers, linking it to hepatic injury and inflammation. The high percentage of elevated AST in this study reinforces the enzyme's sensitivity to alcohol-induced liver damage.
2. **ALT (Alanine Aminotransferase):** Elevated ALT levels were observed in 50% of the participants. This aligns with the research by Chálim Rebelo C *et al.*(2022) [7], which indicated that chronic alcohol consumption could lead to a significant increase in ALT levels, a marker often associated with liver cell damage.
3. **GGT (Gamma Glutamyl Transferase):** The study found that 65% of participants had elevated GGT levels, the highest among the three enzymes tested. This is in agreement with the findings of Kaewdech A *et al.*(2022) [8], who noted that GGT is particularly sensitive to alcohol consumption and is often the first enzyme to rise in chronic drinkers.

These findings collectively indicate that chronic alcohol consumption significantly affects liver enzymes, with GGT showing the highest sensitivity. They highlight the importance of monitoring these enzymes in individuals with a history of alcohol abuse for early detection and management of potential liver damage.

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Conclusion

The study provides critical insights into the impact of chronic alcohol consumption on liver health. Our findings demonstrate a significant association between prolonged and frequent alcohol consumption and elevated levels of liver enzymes AST, ALT, and particularly GGT, which emerged as the most sensitive indicator among the three. The study also revealed notable demographic variations, with males and middle-aged participants showing a higher prevalence of liver enzyme abnormalities. Furthermore, the study highlighted the influence of ethnicity on liver enzyme levels, suggesting the interplay of genetic and lifestyle factors.

These results underscore the importance of regular monitoring of liver enzymes in individuals with a history of chronic alcohol consumption. The significant correlations between enzyme levels and alcohol consumption patterns emphasize the need for targeted interventions and awareness programs, especially among high-risk groups identified in the study. Early detection and intervention could play a crucial role in preventing the progression of alcohol-induced liver damage.

Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of evidence on the biochemical effects of alcohol on liver function and provides a foundation for future research in this area. It also calls for a collaborative approach involving healthcare providers, policymakers, and community programs to address the challenges posed by chronic alcohol consumption and its impact on liver health.

Limitations of Study

1. **Cross-Sectional Design:** The cross-sectional nature of the study limits our ability to establish causality. While we can observe associations between alcohol consumption and liver enzyme levels, we cannot conclusively determine cause-and-effect relationships.
2. **Self-Reported Alcohol Consumption:** The study relies on participants' self-reported data for alcohol consumption history. This approach may introduce recall bias or underreporting, especially in cases where participants may not accurately remember or willingly disclose their alcohol intake.
3. **Lack of Longitudinal Data:** Without longitudinal follow-up, the study cannot account for changes in participants' drinking habits over time or the long-term effects of alcohol consumption on liver health.
4. **Limited Demographic and Ethnic Diversity:** The study’s sample may not represent the wider population, particularly if the demographic and ethnic diversity is limited. This restricts the generalizability of the findings to other groups.
5. **Exclusion of Other Risk Factors:** The study focuses solely on alcohol consumption as a risk factor for liver enzyme abnormalities, potentially overlooking other contributing factors like diet, lifestyle, or genetic predispositions.
6. **No Control Group:** The absence of a control group of non-alcohol consumers makes it difficult to compare and contrast the findings, which could provide a clearer picture of the specific impact of alcohol on liver enzymes.

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