Original Article
Exfoliative cytology of oral epithelial cells from patients with type 2 diabetes: cytomorphometric analysis

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Received July 26, 2013; Accepted August 15, 2013; Epub September 1, 2013; Published September 15, 2013

Abstract: This research objective is to identify cytomorphometrical changes using exfoliative cytology (EC) and later Papanicolaou (Pap) staining, for oral epithelial cells of patients with type 2 diabetes (DM2) (n = 30), while being compared to patients without the disease (n = 30). Additionally, we investigated an association between cellular changes and salivary flow levels; relationship that until now has not been reported. Results show that the cell diameter and the nuclear-cytoplasmic ratio was significantly higher compared to those patients without the disease (p ≤ 0.001 Student and Welch test). Decreased salivary flow was significantly associated with increased cell diameter and nuclear-cytoplasmic ratio (p ≤ 0.001 ANOVA with Tukey test). Evidence and clinical observations show that DM2 and decreased salivary flow are related to detectable cytomorphometrical changes in exfoliated cells, which may extend the horizon of this cytological technique.

Keywords: Diabetes mellitus type 2, cytological techniques, mouth mucosa, salivary flow, xerostomia

Introduction

Inside the most important pathologies that affect world population, diabetes is found. In the year 2000, it was estimated that 2.8% of the world population had diabetes, but actually there are more than 346 million of persons that have this disease, showing that the prevalence of this disease has been increasing according to the pass of the years, in spite of investigation findings and medicine practice [1].

Diagnosis of diabetes is made according to the American Diabetes Association values settled. Among them are the classic symptoms of diabetes, blood glucose levels taken at any time of day, greater than or equal to 200 mg/dl, unrelated to the time since the last meal [2]. Another criteria, also linked to blood sugar, but breakfast abstaining (with no caloric intake for at least 8 hours) is associated with a value which should be greater than or equal to 126 mg/dl, status that should be confirmed with a second blood glucose on another day [3]. Measurement of glycosylated hemoglobin (HbA1c) is another test that is done for people with diabetes. It is based on measuring the percentage of glucose bounded to hemoglobin in a specific manner, whereby high levels of glucose in blood contribute to an increased binding and thus, higher levels of HbA1c [4]. Every 3 months this test is done and expects to maintain HbA1c levels less than or equal to 7%, which is one of the main goals in diabetes care [5].

Among the most common oral abnormalities that can be observed in a dental clinical examination of patients with diabetes, there are gingivitis, periodontitis, abscesses, candidiasis and other opportunistic infections; so it is relatively easy to get to diabetes suspicion through a good anamnesis and a simple clinical examination of the patient [6].

While diabetes diagnostic confirmation by blood test is the most accepted and validated, this means a stressful situation for the patient and requires more time and resources, so it would be useful to find a new tool that could replace, complement or compare the results obtained by this, but giving greater patient comfort and tranquility.
Exfoliative cytology is the study of cells which have been extracted or removed from the epithelial surface of several organs [7]. Oral samples are obtained by a wooden paddle or a special brush called cytobrush, whose objective is to obtain the largest possible amount of cell samples [8], which are taken for Pap staining test. This technique has opened several ways for working in health area, with favorable results and has been enhanced with some of the currently available technology programs, also allowing tabulating and analyzing information quickly and easily [9].

Using exfoliative cytology it has been previously studied; morphological changes suffered by oral epithelial cells in diabetics, results which are higher and significant when are compared to healthy patients. These changes are represented by variations in the nucleus, nuclear area (the biggest change) and the nuclear cytoplasmic ratio [10-14]. The detection of qualitative and quantitative cellular changes by exfoliative cytology, may assist in the diagnosis of diabetes mellitus, however it is needed to understand the causes or processes that lead to the manifestation of them.

Among the main reasons that have been discussed to explain the cytomorphometrical alterations are aging and cell atrophy. Cellular aging in diabetic patients is associated with a decrease in the rate of cell changing, finding alterations on their nucleus and cytoplasm [15]. It is also known that diabetic patients mostly suffer from a decrease in salivary flow that leads to mucosal atrophy, which makes oral mucosa more susceptible to trauma [12]. Dehydration caused by decreased salivary flow, has been studied as a cause of alterations in cell morphometry in patients with alcoholism [16].

In this study we determined the suffered cytomorphometrical changes using exfoliative cytology in oral epithelial cells from patients...
Oral epithelial cells, type 2 diabetes and salivary flow

with diagnosis of type 2 diabetes, compared to patients without the disease. Additionally, we seek to find an association between cellular changes and salivary flow levels, a relationship to our knowledge, not been reported until now.

Materials and methods

For this research, we made an observational prospective study. Explicative variable was type 2 diabetes and response variable were cytormorphometrical changes in oral mucosa cells from patients with the disease. All protocols were approved by the Bioethics Committee of University of Talca (http://www.cesarrivera.cl/research/ethics000169.pdf), which follows the Declaration of Helsinki.

Sample size measurement

The sample simple size for two independent media was estimated with the GRANMO calculator from the Institut Municipal d’Investigació Médica, Barcelona, España (http://www.imim.es/ofertadeserveis/software-public/granmo/). It was considered for the estimation an unilateral contrast, alpha error of 5% and 20% for beta, a reason between the subjects from both groups of 1 (equilibrated), a common standard deviation of 17; a biological statistically difference for cytormorphometrical changes of 12 µm and a following loss of the 16% of the study subjects. 30 subjects were used for group 1 and 30 for the second, in order to detect any difference equal or higher of 12 units.

Subjects

Subjects were randomly selected from adults of the Preventive Medicine Review for Adults (Examen de Medicina Prevenitiva para Adultos, EMPA) and Cardiovascular Program (Programa Cardiovascular, PCV) of CESFAM Violeta Parra de Chillán, Chile (Public Health). Patients were divided into two groups: Group DM2: 30 patients with a known history of diabetes mellitus type 2 in the last year and HbA1c test made at least two months before the test. Subjects were sub-divid ed according to the classification made by Prasad, et al. [14]. Control Group: 30 patients without diabetes. We excluded smokers, alcohol consumers, diagnosed patients with anemia, history of liver transplant, kidney failure or other systemic condition. There were also excluded those patients on drug treatment for non-diabetic control, because previous studies have demonstrated that cellular and nuclear sizes are influenced by these factors. We obtained the informed consent of each individual (http://www.cesarrivera.cl/research/consent000169.pdf), name, age, gender, medical history, etc.

Procedures

Pilot: Pilot was conducted in the Morphology Laboratory, University of Talca, Chile, in order to determine whether the use of interproximal toothbrush was effective for sampling. A subject was selected, which was rinsed with sodium chloride 0.9%. Then, his cheek was gently dried with gauze and the sample was taken. It was fixed with alcohol set to 95°, and once the plate was dry, we performed hematoxylin-eosin staining (H&E). The sample was analyzed under the microscope and it was possible to observe a delimitated nuclear and cell forms, whereupon it was concluded that brush might be used later for definitive sample takes.

Patient preparation

The day of the citation to their respective health programs (patients did not have to assist to their consults, especially for this investigation actions); it was made a dental clinical exam to the subjects, previously to the take of samples, in order to check the status of oral mucosa from the donor site. Patients rinsed with a sodium chloride 0.9% solution. Then it was gently dried the mucosal surface with sterile gauze to remove surface debris and excess of saliva.

Sample preparation

Were taken swabs from the cheek mucosa of clinically normal, using the Colgate Interprox (Figure 1A). Samples were transferred to a dry
and clean plate, previously marked with a reference number for each patient, and then, they were evenly spread with a circular one way movement. Samples were immediately fixed with a spray citofixer (Figure 1B) and were sent to Laboratorio Cordillera of Chillán, Chile, in a special box for plates, for their posterior stain with the Papanicolaou method.

Cytological evaluation

Cytomorphometric analysis was performed for two persons from the Histology and Embryology Unit, University of Talca (CR, CN), who did not know to which group correspond each sample (simple blind). For cytological reading of the samples, it was used an optical microscope Carl Zeiss 0.25. Images were obtained with a digital camera Canon Eos Rebel Xsi, attached to the microscope a laptop-connected, and using Axiovision® Rel 4.8 for measurements (Figure 1C). 50 cells were clearly defined in each case, using Axiovision software, to obtain core and cytoplasm diameter, calculating at the same time the nuclear/cytoplasm ratio (NCR), using a simple mathematical division.

Salivary flow measurement

Salivary flow was objectified, using the protocol of the Cariology Department from the Malmö University, Sweden, both for stimulated (SSF) and non-stimulated salivary flow (NSSF) [17]. The patient should have eaten one hour before the test. Water intake was not restricted during this period. At the time of examination, the patient sat in an upright position with the head slightly tilted forward and should accumulate his saliva into the floor of the mouth. For unstimulated salivary flow, the produced patient’s saliva in a 15 min time was deposited in a millimeter plastic tube. For stimulated salivary flow, the patient should have to bite a paraffin piece until it got soften, to swallow the produced saliva in this period and thereafter for 3 minutes, it was measured the deposited saliva by the patient within a second tube graph. We recorded the amount of saliva produced (excluding foam) in milliliters per minute.

Evaluation of xerostomy

Each patient was consulted by xerostomy (subjective): do you notice your mouth usually dry?, looking for a dichotomous response [18]. The answers were finally ordered according to three parameters: “no”, for patients who responded that they never felt their mouth dry; “yes” for patients who had a constant feeling of dry mouth; also was added in the present study the valuation “sometimes”, for those patients who felt their mouth dry at certain times during the day, either morning, afternoon, evening or related with the intake of certain foods.

Statistical analysis

The results are presented as mean ± standard deviation. Normality test (Kolmogorov-Smirnov) and homogeneity of variance test (Levene’s test) were performed. Qualitative data was compared using Fisher exact test and Chi-Square. Quantitative data was compared in pairs, using the Student t test-Welch. It was also used the one-way ANOVA test with an adjustment for multiple comparisons (Tukey) and the Pearson correlation test. For statistical analysis we used a 95% confidence level. To perform the statistical analysis it was used SPSS® Statistics 17.

Results

The size of the study groups was balanced (CONTROL n = 30, DM2 n = 30). The average age was 45 for CONTROL and 42.8 years in DM2. The average CONTROL glycemia was 88.73 mg/dl and 133.07 mg/dl in DM2. The mean HbA1c in DM2 group was 7.33%. In DM2 group, 36.67% of patients presented other pathological conditions associated with diabe-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Nuclear Size CP</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Cytoplasm Size CP</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>NCR SSF CP</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>NCR NSSF CP</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>SSF CP</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>NSSF CP</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glycemia (mg/dl)</td>
<td>0.547</td>
<td>&lt; 0.001*</td>
<td>-0.176</td>
<td>0.089</td>
<td>0.585</td>
<td>&lt; 0.001*</td>
<td>-0.209</td>
<td>0.050*</td>
<td>-0.351</td>
<td>0.003*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HbA1c (%)</td>
<td>-0.126</td>
<td>0.254</td>
<td>-0.253</td>
<td>0.089</td>
<td>0.169</td>
<td>0.186</td>
<td>-0.164</td>
<td>0.194</td>
<td>-0.125</td>
<td>0.255</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Oral epithelial cells, type 2 diabetes and salivary flow

Patients with type 2 diabetes have an increased nuclear size and increased nuclear/cytoplasmic ratio

Table 1 shows the cytomorphometrical analysis of exfoliative cytology for CONTROL and DM2 groups. The nuclear diameter and the NCR were significantly higher in DM2 patients compared to CONTROL patients (p ≤ 0.001, Welch test and Student’s test). Cytoplasm size showed no statistically significant differences (p = 0.078, Welch test).

Patients with higher blood sugar levels have increased nuclear size and NCR, and decreased salivary flow

Table 2 shows in its upper column the relationship between variables such as glycemia, nuclear size, cytoplasmic size, NCR, stimulated salivary flow (SSF) and non-stimulated salivary flow (NSSF) in all patients included in the study. For a higher value of blood glucose, there is a nuclear enlargement and greater NCR (p < 0.001 in both cases, Pearson correlation coefficient). SSF and NSSF were decreased when there were higher glucose levels (p ≤ 0.05, Pearson correlation coefficient).

No correlation between HbA1c and nuclear size, cytoplasm, NCR and salivary flow

Table 2 shows the relationship between the variables Hb1Ac, nuclear size, cytoplasm size, NCR, stimulated salivary flow (SSF) and non-stimulated salivary flow (NSSF) in DM2 patients. There is not a direct relationship between these variables (p ≥ 0.05, Pearson correlation coefficient).

Patients with type 2 diabetes have decreased stimulated and unstimulated salivary flow

Table 3 shows the quantitative analysis of salivary flow test in DM2 and CONTROL groups. Salivary flow, both stimulated and non-stimulated, are significantly lower in DM2 patients compared with CONTROL patients (p ≤ 0.001, Welch test).

It was also determined the association between variables diabetes, SSF (decreased < 1 to 0.7 ml/min, greatly decreased < 0.7 ml/min) and NSSF (decreased < 0.1 to 0.25 ml/min, greatly decreased < 0.1 ml/min). Patients with diabetes had worse NSSF assessment (p = 0.026, Fisher test) and SSF (p = 0.002, Chi Square).

Cells from patients with decreased unstimulated salivary flow have an increased nuclear size and greater NCR

We divided all patients according to test results for unstimulated salivary flow, which were obtained in normal and decreased unstimulated salivary flow (NSSF). These values were associated with the nuclear/core diameter, cytoplasm and NCR. An 86.7% of the examined patients had a normal valuation for NSSF, while 13.3% had a decreased score for the exam.

Table 4 shows the cytomorphometrical analysis of exfoliative cytology from normal, decreased and very decreased SSF groups. In patients with decreased and highly

Table 3. Quantitative analysis of salivary flow from CONTROL and DM2 patients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean ± DE</th>
<th>P Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stimulated salivary flow (SSF) (ml/3min)</td>
<td>CONTROL</td>
<td>1.456 ± 0.3156</td>
<td>0.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DM2</td>
<td>1.054 ± 0.6078</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-stimulated salivary flow (NSSF) (ml/15min)</td>
<td>CONTROL</td>
<td>0.607 ± 0.1258</td>
<td>&lt; 0.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DM2</td>
<td>0.431 ± 0.2042</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p Value is statically significant.
decreased SSF there was a significant increase in the core size (p = 0.014 and p = 0.044 respectively, ANOVA with Tukey test) and greater NCR in both cases (p < 0.03 and 0.008 respectively, ANOVA with Tukey test). Cytoplasm size showed no statistically significant differences.

Xerostomy patients have an increased nuclear size and greater NCR

According to the given answers, a 60% of the patients said NO to have xerostomy, while a 10% presented IT and a 30% reported dry mouth feeling just sometimes. Table 6 shows cytomorphometrical analysis of exfoliative cytology for the assessment of xerostomy related at the time of the exam. In those patients who related to have xerostomy, there was a significant increase in nuclear/core size (p < 0.05, ANOVA with Tukey test). In reports in patients suffering from xerostomy, the calculated NCR was significant increased (p < 0.031, ANOVA with Tukey test). The size of the nucleus/core showed no significant differences between YES and sometimes groups (p = 0.585, ANOVA with Tukey test). Cytoplasm showed no statistically significant differences for any of the cases.

Discussion

In this research it was made an exfoliative citology with interproximal brush, for the cheek (bucca), clinically healthy, in 30 patients DM2 y 30 patients CONTROL (non diabetics). After that, from each patient, records of nuclear size, cytoplasm and mathematical proportions between them were taken, using a software of analysis comparison with cytomorphometrical analysis options.

Analysis found a significant increase in the core/nuclear size on DM2 patients, compared to the CONTROL group, and also a higher NCR value. This results are comparable to the reported previously by several studies [10-13]. Cytoplasm size was bigger in DM2 group in contrast to those patients from CONTROL, but without any significant difference. This is comparable with the results of Alberti, et al. [10], but contrary to the register by Jajarm, et al. [15].

It was tried to find a relationship between glycemia levels, salivary flow and nuclear/core size. An increase was described using the correlation of Pearson's coefficient for both parameters, finding a rise in those two values, when glycemia levels were increased, and also NCR values. This is mainly because of the increased levels of blood glucose, which is related to a failure in the cellular and/or hormonal mechanisms, implied in the diabetes process. In spite of this, it is not possible to certainly say if glycemia can be a predictor factor for these parameters, because even when it was observed an increase in the mean of both groups, glycemia levels may vary significantly according to momentary factors which are patient dependent. Consequently, glycated hemoglobin is a more reliable parameter at the moment of relating these variables.

Besides, a relationship between Hb1Ac levels and cellular size, cytoplasm and NCR was tried to find, but there was no statistically significant differences observed, and so, it was not possible to determine the influence of Hb1Ac on this. These results were not coincident with the study realized by Prasad, et al. [14], where he found that diabetes severity, measured with Hb1Ac, had a relation with the increase of the nuclear/core size and NCR. This could be because they used a bigger sample size (n = 50); besides, the subjects of this investigation had worse levels of Hb1Ac, including values higher than 12%, compared to our study, in which the higher value was 9.8%, so, according to the informed values by them, the control degree of our patients based on the Hb1Ac vary between well controlled and moderately controlled, moving away from the extremes that would be interesting to study, which is explained by the active therapeutic and following pro-

### Table 4. Relation between cytomorphometrical changes and non-stimulated salivary flow (NSSF)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>NSSF</th>
<th>Mean ± SD</th>
<th>p Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear size (µm)</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>8.7953 ± 1.03688</td>
<td>0.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decreased</td>
<td>9.6284 ± 0.50152</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cytoplasm size (µm)</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>44.7677 ± 4.28659</td>
<td>0.185\t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decreased</td>
<td>43.3386 ± 3.13872</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear: Cytoplasm ratio</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>0.1979 ± 0.02783</td>
<td>&lt; 0.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decreased</td>
<td>0.2228 ± 0.01405</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p Value is statically significant; *Welch's test; Student's test; NSSF: Non-stimulated salivary flow.
Table 5. Relation between cytomorphometrical changes and stimulated salivary flow (SSF)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>SSF</th>
<th>Mean ± SD</th>
<th>p Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear size (µm)</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>8.6322 ± 0.014</td>
<td>*&lt;sup&gt;ab&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decreased</td>
<td>9.6919 ± 0.5</td>
<td>&lt;sup&gt;bc&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Decreased</td>
<td>9.6438 ± 0.044</td>
<td>&lt;sup&gt;ac&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cytoplasm size (µm)</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>44.6893 ± 0.96</td>
<td>&lt;sup&gt;bc&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decreased</td>
<td>44.2348 ± 0.64</td>
<td>&lt;sup&gt;bc&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Decreased</td>
<td>42.2435 ± 0.36</td>
<td>&lt;sup&gt;bc&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear: Cytoplasm ratio</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>0.1945 ± 0.03</td>
<td>*&lt;sup&gt;ab&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decreased</td>
<td>0.2201 ± 0.8</td>
<td>&lt;sup&gt;bc&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Decreased</td>
<td>0.2291 ± 0.008</td>
<td>*&lt;sup&gt;bc&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*<sup>p</sup> Value is statically significant; *<sup>ab</sup>Between normal and decreased SSF; *<sup>bc</sup>Between very decreased and normal SSF; *<sup>ac</sup>Between very decreased and normal SSF.

When patients related xerostomy, alterations at nuclear level were similar to the obtained in cases of salivary flow decrease. This could be related to a contraction in the cellular size and loss of its intracellular content, as a compensatory mechanism to the epithelial atrophy produced in this patients [23]; one of the possible explanations that evidence proposes to explain cytomorphometrical changes in diabetic patients.

In spite that results were satisfactory, showing that diabetes mellitus type 2 produces cellular changes in the oral epithelium of the patients who have this disease, these alterations are not exclusive to diabetes. Cellular changes are present on patients with endocrine and respiratory diseases, associated with a decreased rate of keratinization of the cells in this systems, which will induce the increase of the core/nuclear diameter or size [24]. In smoking subjects, there is also a keratinization alteration, added to an epithelial dysplasia [25] and chronic inflammatory infiltrate [26], in which a similar pattern has been seen.

An inflammatory process may also generate in a cellular level, similar changes to those observed in the DM2 group. Due to the presence of ulceration and mucosal erosion present in stomatitis and gingivitis, squamous cell layer is partially or completely replaced by cells from deeper layers. These cells may vary in size and shape, being mostly increased in their nuclear size, with multiple ovoid nuclei and poorly conserved cytoplasm [27]. However, this consideration does not affect our sample, because the areas where the cells were taken were clinically healthy; besides the size looked increased in cytoplasmic cells from DM2 group versus CONTROL patients.

Patients with nutritional deficiencies may also suffer these alterations. It has been studied a few cases in which a vitamin B12 deficiency and folic acid, associated ameloblastic anemia, generates an increase in cell size and the NCR [28], and like in iron deficiency, iron deficiency anemia is associated. This is explained because folic acid has a role in DNA synthesis, because it is necessary for the formation of thymidine and pyrimidine. Iron is involved in the regulation of DNA synthesis and folic acid.
oral epithelial cells, type 2 diabetes and salivary flow

Table 6. Cytomorphometrical analysis of the exfoliative cytology related to xerostomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Xerostomy</th>
<th>Mean ± SD</th>
<th>p Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear size (µm)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>8.6147 ± 1.08943</td>
<td>0.039ac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9.6818 ± 0.61208</td>
<td>0.585bc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>9.2314 ± 0.74428</td>
<td>0.077ac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cytoplasm size (µm)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>44.3637 ± 4.25291</td>
<td>0.765ab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>43.079 ± 3.36715</td>
<td>0.438bc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>45.5034 ± 4.20045</td>
<td>0.613bc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear: Cytoplasm ratio</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0.1952 ± 0.0257</td>
<td>0.031abc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0.2256 ± 0.01894</td>
<td>0.241bc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>0.2052 ± 0.02982</td>
<td>0.398bc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p Value is statically significant; ab: Between patients that not related xerostomy and those who did; bc: Between patients who related xerostomy and those who have it sometimes; ac: Between patients who related xerostomy sometimes and those who do not.

To try to justify the increasing size of the nucleus in patients with diabetes, evidence of atrophy also yields epithelial cell aging. Aging is linked to the age of patients, because the type 2 diabetes is a disease also associated with more advanced decades of life. In previous researches, but analyzing patients with type I diabetes (mean age 32.7 years), there was an increase in nuclear size, compared with the control group, where the average age was 36.4 years [38]. If only cellular alterations caused aging, this explains why no major changes are observed in diabetic patients compared to younger healthier, hence the key is diabetes.

Another pattern that is directly related to aging, is the rate of cell turnover, which undergoes a decrease related adverse effect of ischemia due to atherosclerosis patients suffering from diabetes [39]. There is also an accumulation of the end products of advanced glycation, which involved not only in the pathogenesis of diabetes, but also in cellular aging [40, 41]. Previous studies have described the altering cell turnover as one possible explanation for the observed changes in diabetic patients, being necessary to measure the rates of proliferation and cell turnover from biopsy, which is an invasive procedure. By exfoliative cytology is not possible to measure this, as cells obtained belong to the upper strata where it occurs gradually epithelial keratinization, with the proliferation, switches off.

Finally, it is possible to say that cellular alterations occurred in patients with DM2, are related to blood glucose levels. It was also observed that the samples results could be altered by the last two conditions described. Note that the last two conditions mentioned above, liver transplantation and renal failure had not been mentioned as an exclusion criterion in previous studies, linking cytomorphometrical oral cell changes in diabetes.
that the decrease in salivary flow affects nuclear size and the NCR, in both tests, stimulated and unstimulated. Now, taking both factors, glucose and salivary flow, both have very similar levels of significance, but based on the last factor, salivary flow (quantitative and qualitative), we can find a more accurate answer regarding cellular changes observed in diabetic patients, due to the epithelial atrophy associated as possible main factor.

It has been previously demonstrated by cytomorphometrical analysis, cellular alterations existing in diabetic patients, seeking possible explanations for the events recorded. Our research took into account also the salivary alterations, which were shown to be effectively related to an increase in nuclear size and NCR, something that has not been reported previously. The hyposalivation and xerostomy can be important elements for dental exam, and the relationship of these factors with the use of exfoliative cytology may be an alternative available tool to the dental surgeon in the diagnosis and management of systemic diseases.

Further studies are required to identify if it is possible to use clinical information from salivary function and cytomorphometrical analysis, to see which patients have type II diabetes, being necessary to automatize cell measurements, which currently, is much easier to identify and control from the glycemia and HbA1c standards. An interesting line of research to follow is to identify whether cytomorphometrical changes vary throughout medical history of patients with diabetes, which would support the potential clinical relevance of cytology diagnosis made from dental exam.

Acknowledgements

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest. We would like to thank to the Dirección de Investigación (DI) of the Universidad de Talca for its cooperation.

Disclosure of conflict of interest

None.

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