



RESEARCH ARTICLE

ROLE OF VITAMIN E AS THERAPEUTIC AGENT TO COPE UP WITH LIVER FUNCTIONS  
IN CHROMIUM TREATED LABORATORY CHICKS

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ABSTRACT

Importance of exogenous application of vitamin E in the acceleration of Cr elimination in the liver function have been discussed in the present investigation. Developing chicks (100±20 gm body weight, 2-3 weeks old) were used as experimental animals. Present investigation revealed that deposition of Cr in all tissues affect the proper function of liver. Liver specific function defence offered by protective influence of vitamin E may be channelized through different mechanism. Vitamin E not only restricted the detoxification but also improved the liver functions. High concentration of Cr was determined in Cr treated chicks. Selective preferences for chromium was shown by vitamin E for maintaining optimal serum glutamic oxaloacetate transaminase – SGOT (AST), serum glutamic pyruvic transaminase – SGPT (ALT) and alkaline phosphatase (ALP) activity. Vitamin E appreciably improve the detoxication ability of liver. SGOT, SGPT and ALP were significantly increased in chicks treated with chromium compared to normal control group. Chicks treated with vitamin E along with Cr, shows significant decrease in SGOT, SGPT and ALP activity compared to Cr treated chicks where it was high. Hence, elevation in SGOT, SGPT and ALP could be due to biotransformation of heavy metals in liver leading to hepatic injury. This injury may be decreased by the supplementation of vitamin E in laboratory chicks.

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INTRODUCTION

Chromium is a naturally occurring element found in rocks, animals, plants, soil, volcanic dust and gases. It occurs in various oxidative states from Cr (II) to Cr (VI). A significant amount of chromium enters into the environment from chrome plating, textile dyes and paint industries. Hexavalent chromium is the most dangerous form of chromium used in chrome plating and causes cancer and mutagenesis (Gomez and Callao, 2006). Anthropogenic activities like tannery effluents, smelting, electroplating, metallurgy, industrial and agricultural practices have increased Cr level beyond the assimilation capacity of biota in the ecosystem (Vlizlo et al., 2014) which ultimately bioaccumulate in different organisms i.e. fish and poultry. Therefore, it has become the most toxic substance in marine and terrestrial ecosystems (Costa, 2003; Iftikhar et al., 2015; Bouaziz et al., 2015). Cr(VI) is more toxic and carcinogenic than chromium(III) (Bianchi et al., 1983; Tsuda et al., 1977; De Flora et al., 1989), because in contrast to Cr(III), Cr(VI) activity enters cells by the sulfate transport system (De Flora et al., 1989; Costa et al., 1984; Jennette, 1979). However, once inside the cells, Cr(VI) is readily reduced to Cr(III) (De Flora

et al., 1989; Costa et al., 1984; Jennette, 1979). Therefore, the cellular metabolism of Cr(VI) may play a role in the induction of chromate toxicity and carcinogenicity. Cr(VI) compounds have been shown to produce DNA single strand breaks and DNA-protein crosslinks (De Flora et al., 1989; De Flora et al., 1990; Sugiyama et al., 1986; Sugiyama et al., 1988; Fornace et al., 1981; Tsapokos et al., 1983; Cupo et al., 1985), and to selectively inhibit the activity of glutathione reductase (Koutras et al., 1964; Koutras et al., 1965; De Flora et al., 1984). Free radical injury produced by Cr(VI) is responsible for many pathological conditions. Free radicals can exist independently and they bear one or two unpaired electrons in valence shell. They are highly reactive to cell organelles e.g. polyunsaturated fatty acids, proteins and nuclear acids (Sanchez-Mendoza et al., 2015). Metals like Cr are very reactive and induce oxidative damage by generating reactive oxygen species (ROS) (Zhang et al., 2014). It interferes with metabolic process and biological reactions i.e. change in enzyme activity, membrane fluidity, ion transport and protein synthesis (Javed, 2015). Cr(VI) once entered in a cell is converted into its lower oxidation state i.e. Cr(III), which is a reactive intermediate of Cr(VI) responsible for the generation of ROS (Shati et al., 2014). However, the beneficial aspects of Cr with its effect in different doses and antioxidant combinations to explore and promote its optimum utilization in poultry nutrition and

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production. The hexavalent form of Cr has toxic effects on birds as it promotes the early aging process, reduces hatching ability and affects liver also (Asmatullah *et al.*, 1999). It also causes malformation or fetal death and leads to neural deformities. It has damaging effects on DNA and leads to mutation. It affects the function of gastrointestinal microflora on chronic exposure to high doses (Upreti *et al.*, 2004). It has the lethal effects on embryo and causes the defects in the development process leading to early chick mortality. It has the negative effect on chick growth and development (Asmatullah *et al.*, 1999). Toxicity can be developed when there will be the excess amount of trace mineral added in the feed of the poultry that may lead to decrease the production parameters such as egg production and defective embryo development along with toxicities (Miles, 2000).

Natural antioxidant vitamin E, ascorbic acid, riboflavin, cytochrome P-450 reductase, glutathione reductase etc. are free radical scavenger and quickly convert the highly toxic form of Cr (VI) to Cr (III) in the tissues which does not readily leave the cell (ATSDR, 1999). The metal is slowly released through kidney and bile (Yamaguchi *et al.*, 1983). However, during its stay, Cr (III) forms stable complexes with legands of protein, DNA and GSH and causes all kind of metabolic, genetical, immunological, developmental and carcinogenic changes (ATSDR, 1999; Singh *et al.*, 1998), therefore, a quick removal of the metal from the body is necessary. Poultry cannot synthesize vitamin E, thus, vitamin E requirements must be met from dietary sources (Sahin *et al.*, 2002) in case of increased demand in stress. Vitamin E is a biological chain-breaking antioxidant that protects cells and tissue from lipoperoxidative damage induced by free radicals (McDowell, 1989). Vitamin E has chromanol ring in its structure which donates hydrogen to free radicals thus making them unreactive (Kumari *et al.*, 2013). It is a lipid soluble antioxidant and biologically crucial for reducing heavy metal toxicity. In poultry feed, it is used to prevent different stress related diseases occurring due to intensive rearing (Murakami *et al.*, 2007; Mashkooor *et al.*, 2013). In literature, there is scanty information available regarding the use of vitamin E as ameliorative agent in Cr intoxicated birds and since vitamin E and selenium (Se) have protective effects against kidney toxicity (Arreola-Mendoza *et al.*, 2006) and liver damage (Soudani *et al.*, 2011), therefore, the following study was designed to determine the Cr induced toxicity and its amelioration with vitamin E. So it will be highly useful for scientists, researchers, veterinary professionals, poultry industry, pharmaceutical industry to enrich their knowledge in promoting Cr and its antioxidant combination usage.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The experiment was carried on Domestic chicks-Croiler Chabro (*Gallus gallus domesticus*). Newly hatched chicks were purchased from the Uttarakhand Village Poultry Project (State Govt. Poultry Farm), Bin, Pithoragarh (Uttarakhand). Selected all chicks were maintained and acclimatized according to the laboratory conditions. The animals were housed in battery cages under laboratory conditions at existing room temperature and relative humidity. They were fed on commercial food (Starter, Grower and Finisher) purchased from the local market and tap water *ad libitum*. Healthy male and female chicks (approximately 2-3 weeks old, body weight 100±20 gm) were used in present study.

The selected chicks were divided into three groups (A, B and C) randomly, each containing at least 6 chicks. Chicks of group A were administered with sublethal dose of potassium dichromate ( $K_2Cr_2O_7$ ) (5 mg/100 gm body weight) by gavage on each alternate day for 30 days. Chicks of group B were treated with potassium dichromate ( $K_2Cr_2O_7$ ) as chicks of group A but also administered with vitamin-E (intramuscularly) (0.5 IU/100 gm body weight) on each alternate day for 30 days. Chicks of Group C were administered with saline only to serve as purely control. Blood samples were collected from the wing vein using 3ml disposable syringe than directly transferred into a labeled test tube without anticoagulant. Serum was prepared by centrifugation and stored at 0°C for further analysis. The serum ALT, AST and ALP enzymatic activity were determined using commercial kits.

## Statistical analysis

All serum SGOT, SGPT and ALP values were expressed as mean ± SE. Parameters of all treatments were compared using Student's "t" test. Data were subjected to one way ANOVA for calculating the significance difference between the treatment. The level of significance were reported at  $p < 0.05$ .

## RESULTS

Enzymes markers of liver functions viz. serum glutamic oxaloacetate transaminase - SGOT (AST), serum glutamic pyruvic transaminase - SGPT (AST) and alkaline phosphatase (ALP) offer reliable information on status of liver function. Present results reveals that activity of SGOT and SGPT significantly increased in chromium treated chicks. While, the chicks supplemented with antioxidant i.e. vitamin E shows improvement in liver functions. It means vitamin E reduce the accumulation of chromium in liver by different channalized manner. Vitamin E restore the liver functions nearest to control level. Similarly, results on alkaline phosphatase shows that enzyme leakage increased in the serum after chromium treatment. Vitamin E succeeded in inhibiting the secretion of enzyme level and control upto the level of normal value. Hence, it protects the liver by oxidative stress by breaking different chain reactions (Table 1).

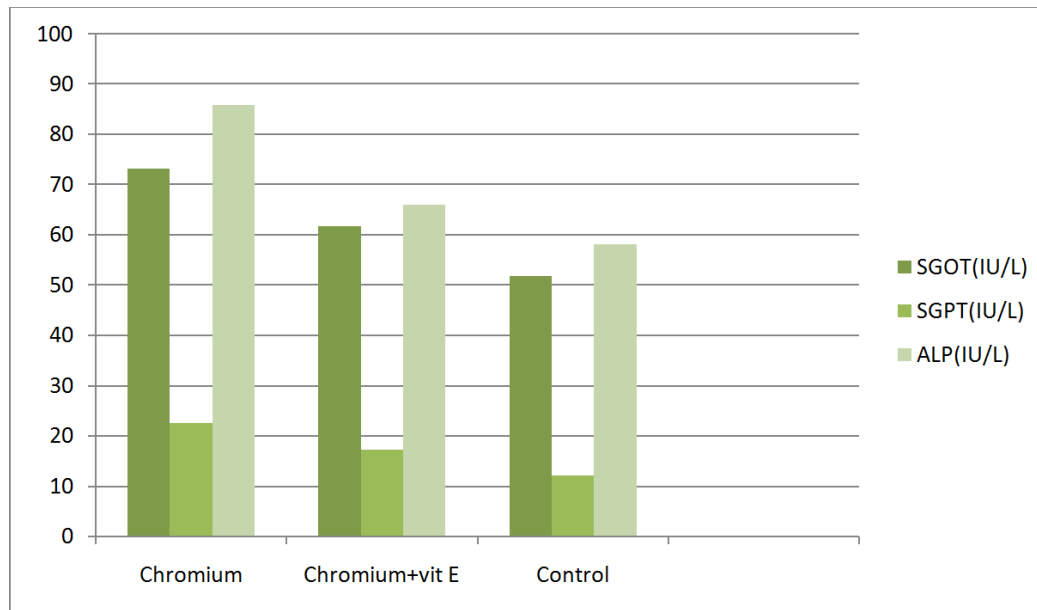
## DISCUSSION

Cr(VI) compounds have been shown to manifest toxic and carcinogenic effects in humans (Morris *et al.*, 1988; Anttila, 1990). Protection against metal toxicity has been a centre of attraction for industrial hygienists, public health officials, toxicologists and pharmacologists. For considerable longer period specific chelating agents were used to reduce the body burden of heavy metals. However, they were not preferred due to their own adverse effects. Since the discovery of the fact that oxidative damage is one of the mechanism responsible for their toxicity, the use of antioxidants was considered to be a suitable alternative. Antioxidants restricted the uptake and distribution of chromium in liver and other organs also. Efflux of enzymes in blood has been treated as a sensitive index of hepatotoxicity. Amongst them serum glutamic oxaloacetate transaminase (SGOT) and serum glutamic pyruvic transaminase (SGPT) possess significance diagnostic value. SGOT and SGPT have been extensively studied during acute or chronic intoxication of the liver (Rees and Sinha, 1960; Griffiths *et al.*, 1961).

**Table 1. Effect of vitamin E on SGOT, SGPT and ALP in chromium fed chicks**

Group	Treatment	SGOT (IU/L)	SGPT (IU/L)	ALP (IU/L)	Level of Significance
A	Chromium	73.18 ± 3.99	22.49 ± 2.65	85.76 ± 5.73	**
B	Chromium + Vitamin E	61.78 ± 2.42	17.30 ± 0.89	66.0 ± 13.91	**
C	Control	51.83 ± 5.77	12.15 ± 1.66	58.04 ± 4.88	**

Results are expressed as mean ± SE, \*\* indicates significant at  $p < 0.05$

**Influence of Vitamin E on liver enzymes in chromium fed chicks**

In present study, SGOT, SGPT and ALP were significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) increased in Cr treated chicks compared to control group. Previous study noted an elevation in the level of SGOT and SGPT i.e. in fish (Shaheen and Akhtar, 2012) and rats (Kim *et al.*, 2004; Mehany *et al.*, 2013). Cr toxicity cause elevation of serum hepatic enzymes due to leakage of these enzymes or increase in their production. Maximum leakage of these enzymes occurred in chicks treated with chromium. Co-treatment with antioxidant i.e. vitamin E influenced the hepatotoxicity of chromium and reduced it up to the control level. Hence, protective effects of vitamin E against chromium toxicity has been observed in chicks. The antioxidant effect of vitamin E is well documented in the literature, and this effect may be due in part to efficient radical scavenging (Dean and Cheeseman, 1987; Lieber *et al.*, 1986; Ames, 1983). Thus the protective mechanism of vitamin E in preventing DNA breaks produced by chromate might be due to its scavenging of paramagnetic chromium (V) during reduction of Cr(VI) in cells. In respect to DNA breaks, Cr(VI) reacts with hydrogen peroxide to form Cr(V), leading to the generation of hydroxyl radicals, which caused DNA breaks *in vitro* (Kawanishi *et al.*, 1986).

Similarly, alkaline phosphatase (ALP) was also included in this study. Alkaline phosphatase has a dimeric structure in serum and exist in same form when released from liver plasma membrane by phospholipase and proteases enzymes (Hartmann, 1989). The enzyme anchored to the plasma membrane by a glycosylphosphatidylinositol structure and when solubilized from membrane with non-ionic detergent triton X-100 or with butanol treatment at higher pH, the hydrophobic phosphatidylinositol remains covalently attached to C-terminal amino acid residue of the enzyme (Hawrylok and Stinson, 1988). Present results showed that enzyme leakage increased in the serum after chromium treatment. Co-treatment

with antioxidants diminished SGOT, SGPT and ALP activity nearest to control level. Therefore, vitamin E is an important antioxidant to protect the organs from harmful effects of heavy metals.

### Conclusion

The toxic effects of Cr and its amelioration with vitamin E on liver function were profiled in this study. In present study, chromium appears as a strong toxicity inducer and it alter all the functions of liver. However, administration of Vitamin E ameliorate Cr-induced toxicity efficiently. Vitamin E is a principle chain breaking antioxidant *in vivo* and have protective effect.

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