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Long-term high fructose and saturated fat diet affects plasma fatty acid profile in rats

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(2Laboratoire de Nutrition-Diététique, Université de la Méditerranée, Marseille, 13010, France)
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Received Mar. 23, 2011; Revision accepted Aug. 30, 2011; Crosschecked July 10, 2011

Abstract: As fructose and saturated fatty acid consumption has greatly increased in western diets and is linked with an increased risk of metabolic syndrome, the aim of this study was to investigate the effects of a moderate (10 weeks) and a prolonged (30 weeks) high fructose and saturated fatty acid (HFS) diet on plasma fatty acid (FA) composition in rats. The effects of a few weeks of this diet had already been described, but here we tried to establish whether these effects persist or if they are modified after 10 or 30 weeks. We hypothesized that the plasma FA profile would be altered between 10 and 30 weeks of the HFS diet. Rats fed with either the HFS or a standard diet were tested after 10 weeks and again after 30 weeks. After 10 weeks of feeding, HFS-fed rats developed the metabolic syndrome, as manifested by an increase in fasting insulinemia, total cholesterol and triglyceride levels, as well as by impaired glucose tolerance. Furthermore, the plasma FA profile of the HFS group showed higher proportions of monounsaturated FA like palmitoleic (16:1n-7) and oleic (18:1n-9) acids, whereas the proportion of some (n-6) polyunsaturated FA, such as linoleic (18:2n-6) and arachidonic (20:4n-6) acids, was lower than in the control group. After 30 weeks of the HFS diet, we observed changes mainly in the levels of 16:1n-7 (decreased) and 20:4n-6 (increased). Together, our results suggest that an HFS diet could lead to an adaptive response of the plasma FA profile over time, in association with the development of the metabolic syndrome.

Key words: High fructose and saturated fatty acid diet; metabolic syndrome; plasma fatty acids; adaptive response, rats
doi:10.1631/jzus.B1100090 Document code: A CLC number:

1 Introduction

Over recent decades, fructose consumption has increased dramatically in industrialized countries as manufacturers have turned to using fructose instead of sucrose to sweeten processed foods and beverages. Similarly, the intake of saturated fats has risen during the same time period. It has been reported that the current high dietary intake of fructose and saturated fats contributes to the epidemic of the metabolic syndrome (Malik et al., 2006, Astrup and Finer, 2002), which is generally considered to be an association of impaired glucose tolerance, hypertension, dyslipidemia, hyperuricemia and central obesity (Balkau et al., 2006; Chen et al., 2007). Rodents fed with high-fructose and/or high-fat diets develop metabolic abnormalities such as hyperinsulinemia, insulin resistance (IR), and dyslipidemia (Basciano et al., 2005; Buettner et al., 2005; Abdullah et al., 2009). Many studies have shown that IR is directly associated with lipid disorders like an increase in plasma fatty acid (FA) levels or changes in the cell membrane’s FA...
composition. Both induce alterations in insulin action and the signaling pathway (Griffin et al., 1999). The proportions of plasma and tissue FA depend on various processes, e.g., dietary intake, intestinal absorption, endogenous synthesis, metabolism and storage (Ma et al., 1995), in which different enzymes such as desaturases and elongases play a major role (Kim et al., 1995). The composition of plasma FA can be used as a disease risk indicator (Aro, 2003) since an altered FA composition has been related to metabolic and cardiovascular disorders (Riccardi et al., 2004). There is evidence that dyslipidemia in fructose and saturated-fat fed rats is accompanied by an increase in saturated and monounsaturated fatty acids (SFA, MUFA) and by a decrease in polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA) (Girard et al., 2005). However, how the metabolic syndrome may affect the plasma’s lipid profile and which FA mainly contributes to its development, remain to be investigated. A comprehensive understanding of the plasma fatty acid profile may provide more insights into metabolic syndrome progression associated with an HFS-diet. As far as we know, no previous study has determined the changes in plasma FA composition induced by a prolonged high fructose and saturated fat diet (HFS; 30 weeks). We hypothesized that after an HFS diet prolonged to 30 weeks, changes in plasma fatty acid may occur concomitantly with the development of the metabolic syndrome. This fat-rich fructose-rich diet largely mimics that of Western societies (Grundy, 1998). Consequently, the aim of this study was to investigate the effects of short (10 weeks) and long term (30 weeks) HFS consumption on plasma biochemical parameters and FA profiles in response to IR development.

2 Materials and Methods

2.1 Animal feeding design

Young male Sprague-Dawley rats (180-200 g) purchased from Janvier (Le Genest-St. Isle, France) were maintained in a temperature- and humidity-controlled environment and fed ad libitum. After 1 week of adaptation under feeding with standard diet (3.32 Kcal/g, SAFE, Augy, France), the rats were divided into two groups: a control group fed with standard diet for 30 weeks and a HFS group fed with an identical diet except that the total carbohydrates and lipids present in the control diet were replaced by 61.7% fructose and 12% lard, respectively (4.3 Kcal/g, SAFE, Augy, France) (Table 1). The animals received the same weight of food once a day, with free access to food and tap water. All the experiments were conducted in compliance with the Centre National Recherche Scientifique guidelines for animal ethics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 Composition of the diets, including their fatty acid profiles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constituents (g/100 g dry weight)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methionine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sucrose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cellulose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fructose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minerals and vitamins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soybean and fish lipid sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main fatty acids (% total fatty acids)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatty Acid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>∑SFA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>∑MUFA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>∑PUFA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HFS high fructose and saturated fatty acids, ∑ SFA total saturated fatty acids, ∑ MUFA total monounsatured fatty acids, ∑ PUFA total polyunsatured fatty acids.

2.2 Reagents
Butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT) from Sigma-Aldrich was added to methanol (50 µg BHT/ml methanol) to prevent fatty acid oxidation. The internal standard 23:0 methyl ester (Sigma-Aldrich) was dissolved in the methanol-BHT mixture at 100 µg/ml. A standard mixture of 37 fatty acid methyl esters (FAME) purchased from Supelco was used as external standard.

2.3 Sample collection and biochemical analysis
After overnight fasting, blood was collected from the tail vein of each rat and the plasma was fractionated. Plasmatic levels of total cholesterol, triglycerides and glucose were determined using an automated analyzer (DXC, Beckman) and kits from Sigma Diagnostic (France). Plasma insulin was assessed using a rat insulin immunoassay kit (Mercodia, France).

2.4 Glucose tolerance test
The intraperitoneal glucose tolerance test (IPGTT) was performed after 12 h of fasting. Briefly, glucose (1 g/kg body weight) was injected intraperitoneally and glucose levels were determined with an automated glucometer (Ascensia BRIO, Bayer Diagnostics, France) before and 30, 60, 90, 120, and 180 min after injection.

2.5 Determination of fatty acid by gas chromatography
The one-step transesterification reaction was performed as described by Masood et al. (2005). Briefly, 1.7 ml of methanol, 100 µl of acetyl chloride, 100 µl of the internal standard solution (containing 10 µg of 23:0 methyl ester) and 50 µl of plasma were combined in screw-capped glass tubes. The samples were incubated for 60 min at 100°C in a water bath. After cooling to room temperature, 0.75 ml of hexane was added to the samples. After vortexing, the upper organic phase was collected. This step was repeated twice. The combined organic phases were evaporated to dryness under nitrogen and the lipids were resuspended in 60 µl of hexane prior to analysis. Analyses were performed using a Hewlett-Packard 5890 gas chromatograph equipped with a fused silica capillary column (60 m X 0.25 mm id., 0.20 µm film thickness) (Supelco SP-2340, USA) and a flame ionization detector. Nitrogen was used as the carrier gas and the injection and detection temperatures were set to 270°C and 260°C, respectively. The initial oven temperature was set to 140°C. After 5 min the oven temperature was increased from 140°C to 240°C at a rate of 4 °C/min and was then maintained at 240°C for 20 min. The relative amount of each fatty acid was expressed as a percentage of the total fatty acids and was determined by integrating the area under the peak and dividing the result by the sum of the areas under the peaks corresponding to all the fatty acids present in the sample.

2.6 Estimation of desaturase activity
The product/substrate (18:1n-9/18:0) and (16:1n-7/16:0) ratios, the (20:3n-6/18:2n-6) ratio, and the (20:4n-
6/20:3n-6) ratio were used to estimate the activities of delta-9 desaturase (Δ9D), delta-6 desaturase (Δ6D) and delta-5 desaturase (Δ5D), respectively (Clore et al., 2000).

2.7 Statistical analyses
All results are expressed as means±SEM. Student’s t-test was used to compare the mean values. Statistical analysis of the data was carried out using the Sigma Stat 3.11 software (Systat Software Inc, San Jose, Calif.). Differences were considered significant at P-values of <0.05.

3 Results

3.1 HFS rats exhibit characteristics of metabolic syndrome
The body weight of rats fed with HFS for 30 weeks decreased by 11% relative to the control group, while no significant difference in body weight was observed after 10 weeks of HFS diet (Table 2). The fasting glucose and plasma insulin levels were significantly higher in the HFS group irrespective of the diet duration. Furthermore, the IPGTT revealed a significant increase in blood glucose levels in HFS rats vs control rats, irrespective of the post-injection time and diet duration (Fig. 1). Plasma triglyceride (TG) and cholesterol levels increased in HFS groups relative to the control group (Table 2) suggesting that the HFS intake contributes to dyslipidemia.

Table 2 Blood metabolic parameters in rats fed with a standard or a high fructose and saturated fat (HFS) diet for 10 or 30 weeks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diet</th>
<th>10 weeks</th>
<th>30 weeks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>HFS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Weight (g)</td>
<td>472±8</td>
<td>456±13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glucose mmol/L</td>
<td>5.6±0.63</td>
<td>8.66±0.43a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insulin (ng/L)</td>
<td>225±12.5</td>
<td>480±21.1a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triglycerides (mmol/L)</td>
<td>1.4±0.1</td>
<td>2.1±0.15a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol (mmol/L)</td>
<td>1.25±0.12</td>
<td>1.67±0.12a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data are means±S.E.M. n = 8-20 rats in each group. a P-value <0.05 vs standard diet.
Fig. 1 intraperitoneal glucose tolerance test (IPGTT)

IPGTT profiles were determined in rats fed with either the standard ($\Delta$) or the high fructose and saturated fatty acid (HFS) diet. (A) HFS (○) 10 weeks. (B) HFS (□) 30 weeks. Blood glucose was measured after overnight fasting (t = 0) then at 30, 60, 90, 120, 150, and 180 min following intraperitoneal glucose injection. Data are means ± SEM, n = 12 per group. *P-value < 0.05 vs standard diet.

3.2 Modifications of plasma FA distribution following a prolonged HFS diet

In all experimental groups, the major plasma FA were palmitic (16:0), palmitoleic (16:1n-7), stearic (18:0), oleic (18:1n-9), vaccenic (18:1n-7), linoleic (18:2n-6), arachidonic (20:4n-6) and docosahexaenoic (22:6n-3 or DHA) acids (Table 3). Compared to the control group, significant differences were observed in the HFS group. The level of the D9D product of 18:0, 18:1n-9 doubled after 10 and 30 weeks, while the level of 16:1n-7, another product of D9D, doubled only after 10 weeks. Among n-6 polyunsaturated fatty acids (n-6 PUFA), 18:2n-6 decreased by 62% and by 68% after 10 and 30 weeks of HFS diet, respectively. However, the level of its elongation and desaturation product, 20:4n-6 strongly decreased only after 10 weeks. An HFS diet also caused a decrease in the level of n-3 PUFA, 18:3n-3, only after 30 weeks and a decrease in the level of 22:6n-3 after 10 and 30 weeks. The (18:1n-9/18:0) and (20:3n-6/18:2n-6) ratios, used respectively to estimate the $\Delta$9D and $\Delta$6D activities, increased after 10 and 30 weeks while the $\Delta$9D activity (16:1n-7/16:0) significantly increased only after 10 weeks. A decrease in $\Delta$5D activity (20:4n-6/20:3n-6) was observed only after 10 weeks.

The FA composition was not altered in rats fed with standard diet for 10 and 30 weeks. In contrast, after 30 weeks of HFS diet, we observed significant changes in the plasma FA profiles, compared to 10 weeks of HFS diet. Indeed, the proportion of 16:1n-7 and that of its precursor 16:0 significantly decreased (-50% and -15%, respectively) between 10 and 30 weeks of the diet while the proportion of 18:1n-9 and that of its precursor 18:0 did not change. C18:1n-7, resulting from an elongation of 16:1n-7, decreased by 16% after 30 weeks of HFS diet compared with the level at 10 weeks. Among n-6 PUFA, 18:2n-6 was unchanged and 20:4n-6 showed a 2-fold increase between 10 and 30 weeks of the HFS diet. The proportion of 18:3n-6, the desaturation product of 18:2n-6, after 30 weeks of HFS diet decreased by 84% compared to the level at 10 weeks. Furthermore, after 30 weeks of HFS diet, total n-6 PUFA increased by 40% while total MUFA was unaltered. Concerning n-3 PUFA, no significant change in the proportion of 18:3n-3 and 22:6n-3 was observed between 10 and 30 weeks of the HFS diet. The $\Delta$9D (18:1n-9/18:0) and $\Delta$6D (20:3n-6/18:2n-6) activities were unchanged between 10 and 30 weeks in the HFS group. In contrast, $\Delta$9D (16:1n-7/16:0) activity significantly decreased after 30 weeks of HFS diet while $\Delta$5D activity (20:4n-6/20:3n-6) increased.
Table 3  Plasma fatty acid composition in rats fed with a standard or a high fructose and saturated fat (HFS) diet for 10 or 30 weeks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fatty acid</th>
<th>10 weeks Control</th>
<th>HFS</th>
<th>30 weeks Control</th>
<th>HFS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14:0</td>
<td>0.50±0.03</td>
<td>0.90±0.08&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0.57±0.16</td>
<td>0.57±0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:0</td>
<td>22.95±0.39</td>
<td>25.07±1.10&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>21.78±0.43</td>
<td>21.22±0.47&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:1n-7</td>
<td>2.75±0.38</td>
<td>5.82±0.56&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3.65±0.61</td>
<td>2.91±0.24&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:0</td>
<td>9.51±0.24</td>
<td>10.96±1.15&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>7.53±0.37</td>
<td>10.85±0.61&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:1n-9</td>
<td>12.15±1.27</td>
<td>30.09±1.66&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>12.68±0.39</td>
<td>31.82±1.45&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:1n-7</td>
<td>4.25±0.42</td>
<td>5.03±0.11&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>5.11±0.48</td>
<td>4.25±0.15&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:2n-6</td>
<td>22.79±1.09</td>
<td>8.65±0.49&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>23.96±0.62</td>
<td>8.02±0.30&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:3n-6</td>
<td>0.17±0.06</td>
<td>0.24±0.09&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0.23±0.13</td>
<td>0.04±0.02&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:3n-3</td>
<td>0.97±0.35</td>
<td>0.63±0.18&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.29±0.44</td>
<td>0.50±0.06&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20:3n-6</td>
<td>0.68±0.09</td>
<td>0.65±0.14&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0.73±0.17</td>
<td>0.69±0.05&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20:4n-6</td>
<td>18.45±1.85</td>
<td>8.29±1.32&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>16.95±1.39</td>
<td>16.09±1.20&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22:6n-3</td>
<td>2.68±0.55</td>
<td>0.94±0.09&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3.16±0.36</td>
<td>1.43±0.18&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24:0</td>
<td>1.03±0.22</td>
<td>0.48±0.13&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0.73±0.11</td>
<td>0.26±0.08&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>∑n-6 PUFA</td>
<td>42.08±2.77</td>
<td>17.83±1.82&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>41.90±1.03</td>
<td>24.85±1.10&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>∑MUFA</td>
<td>19.16±1.94</td>
<td>40.93±2.09&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>21.44±1.29</td>
<td>38.98±1.51&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:1n-7/ 16:0 Δ9</td>
<td>0.12±0.02</td>
<td>0.23±0.01&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0.17±0.03</td>
<td>0.14±0.01&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:1n-9/ 18:0 Δ9</td>
<td>1.29±0.15</td>
<td>3.03±0.40&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.72±0.11</td>
<td>3.08±0.26&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20:4n-6/ 20:3n-6 Δ5</td>
<td>31.80±5.82</td>
<td>14.06±1.73&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>26.89±6.60</td>
<td>24.43±2.55&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20:3n-6/ 18:2n-6 Δ6</td>
<td>0.03±0.01</td>
<td>0.07±0.01&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0.04±0.005</td>
<td>0.09±0.01&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The proportion of each fatty acid is expressed as a percentage of the total amount of fatty acids. Values are means±S.E.M (n = 4-6 rats/group). ∑n-6 PUFA total polyunsaturated fatty acids, ∑MUFA total monounsaturated fatty acids, Δ desaturase activity. Samples were measured in duplicate. Values are means±S.E.M (n = 4-6 rats/group).

<sup>a</sup>, significantly different from the control group at the same time point (P- value <0.01)<br>
<sup>b</sup>, significantly different from the control group at the same time point (P- value <0.05)<br>
<sup>c</sup>, significantly different from 10 week HFS group (P- value <0.01)<br>
<sup>d</sup>, significantly different from 10 week HFS group (P- value <0.05)<br>
The main FA are tabulated, minor FA make up to 100 %

4 Discussion

In this report, we showed that HFS consumption for 30 weeks leads to an increase in glycemia, insulinemia, triglyceride and cholesterol levels and to abnormal IP GTT. These results are in accordance with previous studies showing that fructose and saturated-fatty acid diets induce impaired glucose tolerance, dyslipidemia and hyperinsulinemia (Abdullah et al., 2009; Girard et al., 2005; Thorburn et al., 1989). The coexistence of glucose intolerance and fasting hyperinsulinemia in HFS rats strongly suggests the establishment of IR throughout the study period. The consumption of HFS affects the hepatic production of FA and leads to FA imbalance. Indeed, absorbed fructose is delivered to the liver through the portal vein and, once phosphorylated into fructose-1-phosphate, it is either converted to glycerol or metabolized in the glycolytic pathway and then induces an enhancement in the rate of de novo lipogenesis and triglyceride synthesis (Mayes, 1993; Mittendorfer and Sidossis, 2001). More importantly, fructose bypasses the main control
point in glycolysis, 6-phosphofructokinase and, unlike glucose, is not limited by feedback inhibition by citrate and ATP (Basciano et al., 2005). The increase in the availability of gluconeogenic substrates such as pyruvate, lactate and glycerol and the accumulation of acetyl CoA resulting from an increase in FA oxidation have been suggested to be the major cause of fasting hyperglycemia in HFS-fed rats. This has been confirmed by the high level of fructose-1,6 bisphosphatase, a key gluconeogenic enzyme (Thresher et al., 2000; Storlien et al., 1993). Furthermore, an increase in circulating FA leads to IR through the inhibition of the insulin-signaling system (Dresner et al., 1993). The hypertriglyceridemia induced by a high fructose and/or high fat diet is due to an increase in the production of very low density lipoproteins (VLDLs) and/or to a decrease in triglyceride clearance (Abdullah et al., 2009; Zammit et al., 2001). The increase in total cholesterol induced by both lard and high fructose intake (Abdullah et al., 2009; Bantle et al., 1986) results from a higher cholesterol synthesis and/or an alteration of cholesterol metabolism. Furthermore, a moderate HFS-diet duration (10 weeks) induced similar weight gains in both groups, in agreement with the literature (Abdullah et al., 2009; Girard et al., 2005). In contrast, after a lengthy diet (30 weeks), the weight gain was lower in the HFS group than in the standard group, even though the HFS diet provides additional calories. This weight difference has previously been reported in long-term high-fructose diets (Comte et al., 2004) and could be explained by a reduction in food intake in HFS rats, since no diarrhea or changes in physical activity were observed in the HFS group. This observation may indicate an interaction between a high-fructose diet and the regulation of food intake, involving insulin, leptin and ghrelin hormones (Havel et al., 2005). Consumption of HFS induces metabolic disorders that are not accompanied by obesity, contrary to consumption of a high energy-starch diet (Berkane et al., 2007).

It is well known that the HFS diet modifies liver and plasma FA distribution (Abdullah et al., 2009; Girard et al., 2005). However, the effects induced on plasma FA distribution by a prolonged diet have not previously been investigated. We showed changes in plasma FA composition after 10 and 30 week HFS diets. Indeed, the plasma FA profile in HFS rats was characterized by a higher proportion of SFA and MUFA, notably ∆9D products (16:1n-7, 18:1n-9), as well as by a lower proportion of n-6 PUFAs (18:2n-6, 20:4n-6). This profile is consistent with liver and plasma FA composition studies in rats fed with high-fructose and/or saturated-fat diets (Abdullah et al., 2009; Girard et al., 2005; Comte et al., 2004). After 30 weeks of the HFS diet, we observed significant changes in plasma MUFAs and n-6 PUFAs. Indeed, 16:1n-7 levels decreased and 20:4n-6 levels increased between 10 and 30 weeks of the HFS-diet while 18:1n-9 and 18:2n-6 levels were unchanged. We also showed that alterations of saturated and unsaturated FA levels in HFS rats affect desaturase activities, as estimated from the product/precursor FA ratios. These enzymes introduce a double bond at the Δ9, Δ6 or Δ5 position of the FA carbon chain (Nakamura and Nara, 2004) and therefore catalyze with elongases the synthesis of long chain MUFAs and PUFAs (Fig. 2). Furthermore, in several studies, Δ9D (also known as stearoyl-CoA desaturase or SCD) indexes, estimated from plasma or tissues, were correlated with the expression of the SCD mRNA (Attie et al., 2002; Hulver et al., 2005; Sjögren et al., 2008). We found that after 10 weeks an HFS diet induces an increase in Δ9D and Δ6D activities and a decrease in Δ5D activity. Between 10 and 30 weeks of the HFS diet, Δ9D (18:1n-9/18:0) and Δ6D activities were unchanged while Δ9D (16:1n-7/C16:0) decreased and Δ5D increased. The hepatic activity of Δ9D, which is directly linked to the proportion of SFA substrates, mainly 16:0, is repressed by dietary PUFA intake (Ntambi, 1995). The PUFA regulation of SCD activity allows cellular unsaturated fatty acid balance to be maintained. The main role of SCD is to increase membrane unsaturation in response to an elevation of saturated fat or carbohydrate dietary intake and to reduce the availability of 16:0 by converting it into 16:1n-7. Palmitate (16:0) is the main component of phospholipids in membranes and it has been shown to mediate alterations of the insulin signalling pathway, causing IR through an activation of de novo ceramide synthesis (Schmitz-Peiffer et al., 1999). Additionally, 16:0 induces a decrease in the proliferative capacity of rodent and human β-cells and promotes β-cell apoptosis while 16:1n-7 counteracts the toxic effects of 16:0 (Maedler et al., 2001; Maedler et al., 2003). Chronic exposure of pancreatic islets to 16:0 completely abolishes acute glucose-stimulated insulin secretion, and addition of 16:1n-7 partly restores such glucose stimulation (Maedler et al., 2001; Maedler et al., 2003). Palmitoleic acid has a
protective role against both pancreatic β-cell cytotoxicity and the deleterious effects on glucose-stimulated insulin release induced by palmitic acid. Our data showed that the protective effects of 16:1n-7 declined when the HFS diet duration increased to 30 weeks. The availability of palmitic acid could also be reduced by increasing its elongation to 18:0, which could subsequently be desaturated to 18:1n-9. Our results showed that the proportion of 18:1n-9 increased after 10 weeks and remained high after 30 weeks of HFS suggesting a sustained-activation of Δ9D. The higher proportion of MUFAs observed in HFS rats was directly related to the increase in Δ9D activity. Indeed, the HFS diet promotes a higher proportion of MUFAs in plasma FA profiles because of its fructose and lard content. Fructose is highly lipogenic. It has been observed in several studies that hepatic de novo fatty acid synthesis (including the desaturation stage) is stimulated after acute fructose ingestion, with fructose providing carbon atoms for both the glycerol and the fatty-acyl parts of triglycerides (Chong et al., 2007; Clark et al., 1974; Parks et al., 2008). Fructose may also increase the expression of key lipogenic enzymes in the liver. It has been shown to induce the expression of the factor of transcription sterol regulatory element binding protein 1c (SREBP-1c), the principal activator of lipogenic genes including that encoding for SCD (Matsuzaka et al., 2004; Miyazaki et al., 2004; Shimomura et al., 1999). Moreover, numerous investigations have shown an enhancement of MUFA production in fructose administration, due to an increase in hepatic SCD (e.g., Waters et al., 1994). Furthermore, dietary saturated fat strongly induces SCD expression involving the activation of the lipogenic transcription factors liver-X-receptor (LXR) and SREBP-1c (Sampath et al., 2007). A HFS diet that contains high proportions of palmitic (16:0) and stearic (18:0) acids may be likely to increase SCD activity. Indeed, the increase in palmitoleic acid (16:1n-7) as MUFA, which was found to be associated with insulin resistance and related disorders, does not directly reflect the proportion of this fatty acid in the HFS diet. The content of this fatty acid was very small in the HFS diet and not different from that of the control diet. Rather, it reflects increased endogenous desaturation of palmitic acid (16:0) by SCD (leading to increased 16:1n-7), as a consequence of the HFS diet. Thus, the increased proportion of 16:1n-7 in the HFS group after 10 weeks, does not reflect the dietary proportion of this FA, but is due not only to an increase in substrate availability but also to an increase in SCD activity as indicated by the significantly increased ratio of (16:1n-7/16:0) used as a surrogate measure of this activity. Regarding oleic acid (18.1n-9), a large proportion of this FA in plasma is probably of dietary origin, given the high dietary abundance of 18:1n-9 in the HFS diet. Nevertheless, other observations reveal that endogenous 18.1n-9 synthesized by SCD, provides a more readily accessible FA pool than the dietary pool for the synthesis of triglycerides and cholesterol esters in the liver (Ntambi et al., 2004; Miyazaki. et al., 2001). In addition, Attie et al. (2002) showed that the plasma ratio 18:1n-9/18 used as a desaturation index was correlated with SCD activity. Furthermore, the Δ9-desaturation product of 18:0, 18:1n-9, was required for fructose induction of lipogenic gene expression through dependent and independent mechanisms of SREBP-1c (Miyazaki et al., 2004). In the liver and in skeletal muscle, high Δ9D activity increases the production of malonyl-CoA which is a substrate for de novo lipogenesis and a potent inhibitor of carnitine palmitoyltransferase I (CPT1), the rate-limiting enzyme of FA β-oxidation (Hulver et al., 2005; Dobrzyn et al., 2004). Therefore, elevated levels of SCD influence the partitioning of FA towards synthesis and storage of triglycerides and away from β-oxidation. Elevated SCD activity is found in a wide range of disorders including diabetes, atherosclerosis, obesity and metabolic syndrome (Ntambi et al., 2002).
Among PUFAS, linoleic acid (18:2n-6) and arachidonic acid (AA or 20:4n-6) decreased by more than 50% after 10 weeks of HFS diet relative to the control group. Between 10 and 30 weeks of the HFS diet, 18:2n-6 levels were unchanged while 20:4n-6 exhibited a 2-fold increase and γ-linolenic acid (18:3n-6) decreased dramatically.

**Fig. 2 Fatty acid metabolism**

Among PUFAS, linoleic acid (18:2n-6) and arachidonic acid (AA or 20:4n-6) decreased by more than 50% after 10 weeks of HFS diet relative to the control group. Between 10 and 30 weeks of the HFS diet, 18:2n-6 levels were unchanged while 20:4n-6 exhibited a 2-fold increase and γ-linolenic acid (18:3n-6) decreased dramatically. ∆6D and ∆5D are required for the conversion of 18:2n-6 to 20:4n-6 and of α-linolenic acid (18:3n-3) to n-3 PUFA (EPA: eicosapentaenoic acid, DHA: docosahexaenoic acid) (Fig. 2). The production of AA from linoleic acid requires the formation of two FA intermediates, γ-linolenic acid (GLA) and dihomo-linolenic acid (DHLA or 20:3n-6). The first step is the ∆6-desaturation of linoleic acid to GLA followed by the elongation of GLA into DHLA. Finally, a ∆5-desaturation of DHLA leads to AA production (Fig. 2). High consumption of fructose during 30 weeks compared to 10 weeks induced an increase in ∆5D activity whereas ∆6D activity was unchanged. ∆6D is the rate-limiting enzyme involved in the conversion of linoleic acid to AA (Vessby, 2000). Thus, the generation rate for 18:3n-6 and its elongation to 20:3n-6 might still be regulated by ∆6D. Lower ∆5D levels could be responsible for the decrease in 20:4n-6 levels in different tissues from diabetic rats (Hu et al., 1994). In diabetic patients, 20:4n-6 levels increased or decreased depending on the tissues considered (Clifton and Nestel, 1998; Simopoulos, 1997). Metabolic pools of 20:4n-6 seem to be tissue-specific. 20:4n-6 is the precursor of n-6 eicosanoids, including the 2-series prostaglandins which have greater biological activity than the 3-series prostaglandins derived from n-3 PUFA (Hu et al., 1994). This 20:4n-6 metabolism pathway involves cyclooxygenase and lipoxygenase that use molecular oxygen to generate reactive oxygen species (ROS) that are implicated in IR development and in impaired insulin secretion (Evans et al., 2003). Also, excessive production of n-6 eicosanoids from 20:4n-6, such as the 2-series prostaglandins, may give rise to pathophysiological signalling (Rustan et al., 1997). The lower proportion of 20:4n-6 that we observed after 10 weeks of the HFS diet compared to the proportion after 30 weeks seems to be due to a decline in ∆5D activity (Table 3) rather than to an increase in prostaglandin production. The decrease in 18:3n-6 levels between 10 and 30 weeks of the HFS diet could be explained by an increase in 20:4n-6 production correlated with an increase in ∆5D activity. On the other hand, 20:4n-6 is one of the most oxidation-prone FAs (Vazquez et al., 1998) and it activates NADPH oxidase (Shiose and Sumimoto, 2000), generating ROS. The stimulation of neutrophil NADPH oxidase by advanced glycation end-products could be mediated by an increase in 20:4n-6 production resulting from phospholipase A2 activation (Wong et al., 2003). Furthermore, the lower levels of n-6 PUFA and 20:4n-6 after 10 weeks of HFS-diet compared to the levels after 30 weeks might prevent lipid peroxidation. However, after 30 weeks of the HFS-diet, 20:4n-6 levels increased, suggesting that this prevention declines over time. Interestingly, other studies have reported an

In summary, our results showed changes in plasma FA composition in rats fed for 10 or 30 weeks with HFS, especially in 16:1n-7 (MUFA) and 20:4n-6 (n-6 PUFA). These disruptions, associated with the appearance of hyperinsulinemia, could be linked to the development of IR. It remains to be determined whether these FA modifications contribute to IR or are initiated in response to IR. Nevertheless, 16:1n-7 levels observed after 10 weeks of HFS could counteract the toxicity induced by an excess of palmitic acid and 20:4n-6 could prevent lipid peroxidation. These changes in FA profile could be considered as preventive mechanisms against fuel excess, as observed in the early stages of IR, rather than as a deleterious response. After 30 weeks of HFS-diet, the protective response of 16:1n-7 and 20:4n-6 seems to decrease or disappear with the development of IR associated with the deleterious effects of glucolipotoxicity. It could be hypothesized that, after an HFS-diet prolonged to 30 weeks, rats are not able to develop a sustained response that adequately compensates for IR. Further experiments are required to elucidate this phenomenon.

Acknowledgments

The authors thank Ben S. Abdou-Rahamane for technical assistance, Fabienne Guillaumond for precious advice and Corinne Delaurent and Claude Aubert for performing the GC analysis of plasma FA.

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