Cocoa polyphenols treatment ameliorates visceral obesity by reduction lipogenesis and promoting fatty acid oxidation genes in obese rats through interfering with AMPK pathway

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This study was conducted to investigate the pharmacological activity of cocoa polyphenols (CPs) on visceral obesity markers and the possible mechanisms. In this study, Sprague–Dawley (SD) rats were fed either a low-fat diet (LFD) or a high-fat diet (HFD). After 12 wk of diet intervention, only one group of HFD rats (n = 10/group) were treated at a dose of 600 mg/kg bw/day CPs (HFD + CPs) for 4 wk. The gene and protein expression levels of phosphorylation of AMPK-activated protein kinase α/β (AMPK α/β) were measured using real-time-PCR and Western blotting. The mRNA expression of lipogenic key enzymes (Acaca, Fasn, Mcat, and Scd-1), and β-oxidation key enzymes (CPT1, Prkaa1, Acox1) were investigated. In addition, the upstream transcription factors (PPARα, PPARγ, C/EBPα, and SREBP-1c) were also examined. In accordance with these findings, CPs treatment improved visceral adiposity, adipocytes hypertrophy, and liver steatosis. AMP-activated protein kinase α/β (AMPK α/β) phosphorylation in liver and adipose tissue of HFD + CPs-treated rats was activated compared with HFD-fed rats. The expression of lipogenesis related-genes was decreased, while expression levels of β-oxidation-related genes were increased compared with HFD-fed rats. Together, these data partially unravel the ameliorative effects of CPs treatment on visceral obesity markers by inhibiting lipogenesis and promoting β-oxidation related-genes through activation of the AMPK pathway.

Practical applications: There is a metabolic logic linking the expended visceral or abdominal fat depot to dyslipidemia. The conceivability of using a natural dietary supplement to regulate lipid metabolism homeostasis is appealing as this by product of the defatted cocoa juice industry is non-toxic, cheap, and has shown hypolipidemic properties. This is essentially significant in the context of the rising costs of obesity and its related diseases care. The ability of polyphenolics to suppress SREBP-1c, the target of statins, while activating PPARα, the target of fibrates, suggest it can naturally find its role in the treatment of hyperlipidemia.

Keywords: AMPK pathway / Cocoa polyphenols / Fatty acid β-oxidation genes / Lipogenesis genes / Visceral obesity

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1 Introduction

Visceral obesity is a growing global disease that usually develops from excessive fat storage and adiposity of mesenteric adipose tissue. Because obesity is accounted as a major risk factor for most metabolic diseases, including dyslipidemia, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease, many studies have been conducted to disclose the main components in energy homeostasis, which is critical to develop therapeutic agents for obesity and obesity-associated metabolic diseases [1–3]. A group of transcription factors such as peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor γ

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Abbreviations: cDNA, complementary deoxyribonucleic acid; CMC, carboxymethyl cellulose; CPs, cocoa polyphenols; FFAs, free fatty acids; GAPDH, glyceraldehyde-3-phosphate dehydrogenase; HFD, high fat diet; LFD, low fat diet; MES-WAT, mesenteric white adipose tissue; mRNA, messenger ribonucleic acid; NCBI, National Center for Biotechnology Information; PPARs, peroxisome proliferator-activated receptors; qRT-PCR, quantitative real-time polymerase chain reaction; SD, Sprague–Dawley; TC, total cholesterol; TG, triglyceride

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