Prevalence of Lactose Intolerance in Patients of Irritable Bowel Syndrome in a study in Bangladesh

Mohammad Sofiul Kadir[1], Md. Shakhawat Hossain[2], Md. Shahidur Rahman[3], Md. Khalequzzaman Sarker[4]

1. Assistant Professor
   Dept. of Gastroenterology
   Sheikh Hasina Medical College
2. Assistant Professor
   Dept. of Gastroenterology
   Rangpur Medical College
3. Assistant Professor
   Dept. of Gastroenterology
   Mymensingh Medical College
4. Assistant Professor
   Dept. of Gastroenterology
   Rajshahi Medical College

Correspondence to:
Md. Shakhawat Hossain
Assistant Professor
Department of Gastroenterology
Rangpur Medical College, Bangladesh.
Email: drshparvez@gmail.com
Mobile: +8801973223892

Abstract:

Background:
Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a common disorder in our daily clinical practice which is a chronic, relapsing gastrointestinal problem, characterized by abdominal pain, bloating and changes in bowel habit. Symptoms caused by lactose malabsorption may be confused with those of IBS and the two disorders can also co-exist in the same person. The aim of this study was to see the prevalence of lactose intolerance in persons with IBS and also to see the prevalence of lactose intolerance in persons without IBS.

Methods:
This descriptive type of observational study was carried out in the Department of Gastroenterology of BSMMU, Dhaka during July 2010 to September 2011.Total 100 patients fulfilling Rome III criteria for IBS and 30 age and sex matched people without having any symptoms of IBS or organic gastrointestinal disease or systemic disease were enrolled and were advised for lactose tolerance test (LTT). For lactose tolerance test fasting blood glucose level was measured, then 50gm of lactose was given orally and blood glucose was measured after 30mins of ingestion of lactose. An increase less than 20mg/dL over base line after 30 minutes indicate positive lactose intolerance.

Results:
Lactose intolerance was found 62 (62%) in IBS and 13 (43.3%) in control group (p>0.05). Among the lactose intolerance patients, maximum patients were service holder in both group, which was 43.5% and 53.8% in IBS and control group respectively. The mean age was 31.47±8.36 years in IBS and 37.77±10.44 years in control group in patients with lactose Intolerance. Patients with lactose intolerance, the mean blood glucose during fasting was 5.0±0.49 mmol/L in IBS and 5.28±0.56 mmol/L in control group. After lactose the mean blood glucose was 5.67±0.49 mmol/L and 5.97±0.55 in IBS and control group respectively.

Conclusions:
Our recommendation is to perform lactose tolerance test before the diagnosis of IBS. Further large scale study is suggested.

Key words: Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), Lactose tolerance test (LTT).

Introduction:

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a common disorder worldwide. It is found in 10% to 20% of general population using standard diagnostic tools such as the Rome II criteria[1]. In Bangladesh the prevalence of IBS was found to be 8.5% in rural community[2]. It is a chronic, relapsing gastrointestinal problem, characterized by abdominal pain, bloating and changes in bowel habit. IBS is troublesome disorder, with a significant negative impact on quality of life and social functioning in many patients[3,4]. Lactose intolerance is the most common manifestation of disaccharidase deficiency[5]. Deficiency of the intestinal brush border enzyme lactase lead to lactose malabsorption (LM), which can result in

lactose intolerance. Lactose intolerance may be congenital, may be acquired. Acquired lactose intolerance can again be divided into two way such as acquired primary lactase deficiency (adult type hypolactasia) and lactase deficiency induced by underlying intestinal diseases[6]. Most of the symptoms of IBS can also occur as a result of lactose malabsorption[7]. So symptoms caused by lactose malabsorption may be confused with those of IBS and the two disordered can also co-exist in the same person. So diagnosis of lactose intolerance should be tried before the diagnosis of IBS is made, at least in patients with milk related symptoms. The recent study has reviewed the results of numerous investigations in more than 1000 IBS patients and found the prevalence of LM to be 23%, virtually the same as what would be expected in the general US populations[8]. Therefore a test for LM has been performed before the diagnosis of IBS is made, at least in patients with milk related symptoms.

Methods:

This descriptive type of observational study was carried out in the Department of Gastroenterology of BSMMU, Dhaka during July 2010 to September 2011, to see the prevalence of lactose intolerance in persons with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) (Rome III criteria) and without irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

For this purpose, a total number of 100 patients of either sex, age 18 years and above fulfilling Rome III criteria for IBS were studied and 30 age and sex matched people without having any symptoms of IBS or organic gastrointestinal disease or systemic disease was studied as control group in this study. Informed written consent were taken from all study subjects.

After initial enrollment clinical history was noted in a standard data sheet and they were advised for base line investigations. After final selection of patients they were advised for lactose tolerance test (LTT). For lactose tolerance test fasting blood glucose level was measured, then 50gm of lactose was given orally and blood glucose was measured after 30mins of ingestion of lactose. An increase less than 20mg/dL over base line after 30 mins. indicate positive lactose intolerance. Statistical Analysis was done using the Statistical package for social science (SPSS version 16). Test of association between lactose intolerance and IBS was carried out by Chi square test and Unpaired t-test. Ethical issue of this study was approved by institutional review committee of BSMMU, Dhaka.

Results:

A total of 130 subjects age belonged to 18 to 60 years of ambulatory patients of both sexes were enrolled in this study, out of which 100 patients fulfilling Rome III criteria for IBS was consider as case and 30 matched people without having any symptoms of IBS or organic gastrointestinal disease or systemic disease was considered as control group. In this current study it was observed that the mean (±SD) age was 31.67 years with range from 17 to 51 years and 34.73±7.55 years with range from 19 to 52 years in IBS and control respectively. The age distribution between two groups was almost similar, no significant (p>0.05) difference was found between two groups. Maximum number was found in the 3rd decade in both groups. In this present study male was found 84.0% in IBS and 73.3% in control group and male female ratio was 4:1 in the whole study subjects (Table-I).

Table-I: Age distribution of the study patients (n=130)

Age (in year)	IBS (n=100)		Control (n=30)		P value
	n	%	N	%	
20	6	6.0	2	6.7	
21-30	48	48.0	11	36.7	
31-40	30	30.0	10	33.3	
41-50	15	15.0	6	20.0	
>50	1	1.0	1	3.3	
Mean ± SD	31.67	±8.59	34.73	±7.55	
Range (min -max)	(17	-51)	(19	-52)	0.081 ns

Regarding the occupational status it was found in this current series that most of the patients were service holder in both groups, which were 40.0% in IBS and 63.3% in control group. Housewife was found 11.0% in IBS and 10.0% in control group. In this series it was observed that lactose intolerance was higher in patients with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), which was 62.0% in IBS and 43.3% in control, that was not statistically significant (p>0.05) between two groups. A total of 62 in IBS and 13 in control groups having lactose intolerance in this present series (Table-II & III). Lactose intolerance found 83.9% in IBS and

76.9% in control in male patient. Female was found 16.1% and 23.1% in IBS and control group respectively, which was not statistically significant (p>0.05) between two group.

Table-II: Distribution of lactose intolerance in IBS patients (n=100)

Lactose intolerance	Number of patients	Percentage
Present	62	62.0
Absent	38	38.0

Table-III: Distribution of lactose intolerance in control group (n=30)

Lactose intolerance	Number of patients	Percentage
Present	13	43.3
Absent	17	56.7

In this study it was observed in the lactose intolerance patients most of them were service holder in both group (43.5% vs. 53.8%) and female patients were mostly housewife, which were 11.3% and 15.4% in IBS and control respectively.

In this current study it was observed that the mean age was 31.47±8.36 years in IBS and 37.77±10.44 years in control group in patients with lactose Intolerance. The mean age was significantly (p>0.05) younger in IBS group in patients having lactose intolerance. On the other hand, patients without lactose Intolerance the mean age was 32.0±9.06 years and 34.16±6.69 years in IBS and control group respectively, which was almost similar between two groups not statistically significant (p>0.05) difference was found between two groups in patients without lactose intolerance (Table-IV).

Table-IV: Mean age distribution according to lactose intolerance present or absent in both groups (n=130)

Age in years	IBS (n=100)		Control (n=30)		P Value
	Mean	±SD	Mean	±SD	
Lactos e intolerance (present)	31.47	±8.36	37.77	±10.44	0.021 s
Range (min -max)	(18	-50)	(22	-52)	
Lactose intolerance (absent)	32.0	±9.06	34.18	±6.69	0.371 ns
Range (min -max)	(17 -51)		(25 -45)		

Patients with lactose intolerance it was observed in this present study that the mean blood glucose during fasting was 5.0±0.49 mmole/L in IBS and 5.28±0.56 mmole/L in control group. After lactose the mean blood glucose was 5.67±0.49 mmole/L and 5.97±0.55 in IBS and control group respectively. On the other hand, patients without lactose intolerance the mean blood glucose during fasting was 4.87±0.49 mmole/L in IBS and 4.82±0.37 mmole/L in control group. Similarly, after lactose the mean blood glucose was 6.33±0.58 mmole/L and 6.32±0.42 mmole/L in IBS and control group respectively. The mean difference was not statistically significant (p>0.05) in patients with lactose intolerance and patients without lactose intolerance between two groups (Table-V).

Table-V: Mean blood sugar during fasting and after lactose in the lactose intolerance present or absent in both groups (n=130)

Blood glucose	IBS		Control		P value
	Mean	±SD	Mean	±SD	
Present	(n=62)		(n=13)		
Fasting (mmole/L)	5.00	±0.49	5.28	±0.56	0.072 ns
Range (min-max)	(4	-6.5)	(4.2	-5.9)	
After lactose (mmole/L)	5.67	±0.49	5.97	±0.55	0.053 ns
Range (min-max)	(4.7	-7.4)	(4.9	-6.8)	
Absent	(n=38)		(n=17)		
Fasting (mmole/L)	4.87	±0.49	4.82	±0.37	0.709 ns
Range (min-max)	(4	-5.9)	(4.2	-5.4)	
After lactose (mmole/L)	6.33	±0.58	6.32	±0.42	0.949 ns
Range (min-max)	(5.1	-7.4)	(5.6	-6.9)	

Discussion:

Irritable bowel syndrome is common in our country. In Bangladesh the prevalence of IBS was found to be 8.5% in rural community[2]. Lactose intolerance is also common in our country.

In this current study it was observed that the mean (±SD) age was 31.67 years with range from 17 to 51 years and 34.73±7.55 years with range from 19 to 52 years in IBS and control respectively. The age distribution between two groups was almost similar, no significant (p>0.05) difference was found between two groups. Maximum number was found in the 3rd decade in both groups. Similarly, Gupta et al. 2007 found the mean age was 35.5±11.1 years in IBS and 33.5±9.1 years in controls[9]. Corrao et al. (2001) showed the mean age at diagnosis was 35·7± 14·1 years in their

study patients[5]. In milk intolerance patients the mean age was 32.1±13.5 years in male and 36.1±14.8 years in female. The above findings regarding the mean age are comparable with the current study. In another study, Farup et al. (2004) reported the mean age in their study patients were 48.8 years and 46.3 years in IBS and control respectively[10]. Hamm et al. (1999) showed the mean age of their patient was 45.3 years in IBS and 44.8 years in control group[8].

In this present study male was found 84.0% in IBS and 73.3% in control group and male female ratio was 4:1 in the whole study subjects. Gupta et al. (2007) found male 73.0% and 72.0% in IBS and control respectively, which is consistent with the present study[9]. Dean et al. (2005), Andrews et al. (2005), Hamm et al. (1999), Corrao et al. (2001) found female predominant in their study[3-8].

Regarding the occupational status it was found in this current series that most of the patients were service holder in both groups, which were 40.0% in IBS and 63.3% in control group. Housewife was found 11.0% in IBS and 10.0% in control group.

In this series it was observed that lactose intolerance was higher in patients with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), which was 62.0% in IBS and 43.3% in control, that was not statistically significant (p>0.05) between two groups. Bourlioux and Pochart (1988) and Scrimshaw and Murray (1988) reported in their study that the incidence of lactose malabsorption is estimated to be 25.0% in the U.S. and as much as 75.0% worldwide[12]. The incidence of lactose malabsorption 23.0% seen by Hamm et al. (1999)[8]. In our country, Madhusudhan et al. (2016) showed the prevalence of lactose intolerance 85.54% in patient having IBS, which is comparable to that expected in the general population[27].

The high frequency of LI in patients with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and in HS is in accordance with previous reports that show LI to be common in India (Gupta et al. 2007) in contrast to developed countries[9]. Matthews et al. (2005) documented in their study that this may be related to differences in genetic, ethnic and geographic background all of which are known to influence the frequency of LI in a population[25]. Genetic bases for differences in loss of lactase activity with increasing age have been reported.

Farup et al. (2004) showed lactose malabsorption 4.1% in irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and health volunteers 3.8% (P>0.05)[10]. Hamm et al. (2001) mentioned that the lactose HBT was positive in 66.9% irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) patients, while 4.6% patients were classified as hydrogen non-producers[8].

A total of 62 in IBS and 13 in control groups having lactose intolerance in this present series. Lactose intolerance found 83.9% in IBS and 76.9% in control in male patient. Female was found 16.1% and 23.1% in IBS and control group respectively, which was not statistically significant (p>0.05) between two group. Hamm et al. (2001) showed female sex increased the risk of subjective lactose intolerance, where OR=2.1 with 95% CI (1.1-4.5)[8]. In the same study, the authors had done a lactose hydrogen breath test, performed on 122 irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) patients, was positive in 27.0% and negative in 73.0%. The proportion of men to women and was not significantly different in those having a positive or negative LHBT (P>0.05).

In this current study it was observed that the mean age was 31.47±8.36 years in IBS and 37.77±10.44 years in control group in patients with lactose Intolerance. Farguson et al. (1984) have shown the age distribution not significantly different in those having a positive or negative LHBT (P>0.05)[16].

Patients with lactose intolerance it was observed in this present study that the mean blood glucose during fasting was 5.0±0.49 mmole/L in IBS and 5.28±0.56 mmole/L in control group. After lactose the mean blood glucose was 5.67±0.49 mmole/L and 5.97±0.55 in IBS and control group respectively. On the other hand, patients without lactose intolerance the mean blood glucose during fasting was 4.87±0.49 mmole/L in IBS and 4.82±0.37 mmole/L in control group. Similarly, after lactose the mean blood glucose was 6.33±0.58 mmole/L and 6.32±0.42 mmole/L in IBS and control group respectively. The mean difference was not statistically significant (p>0.05) in patients with lactose intolerance and patients without lactose intolerance between two groups.

Conclusion:

This observational study was carried out with an aim to establish the prevalence of lactose intolerance in persons with IBS (Rome III criteria) and

without IBS. The study showed lactose intolerance is common both in IBS (62.0%) and in control group (43.3%). The results of the present study showed that age, sex, lactose intolerance were almost comparable in both groups, however lactose intolerance was higher in patients with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) but is comparable.

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