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Antacid Use in HIV Patients: Implications for Drug Absorption, Metabolism, and Adverse Effects

[*]Emmanuel Ifeanyi Obeagu[1] and Getrude Uzoma Obeagu[2]

[1]Department of Medical Laboratory Science, Kampala International University, Uganda

[2]School of Nursing Science, Kampala International University, Uganda

[*]Corresponding authour: Emmanuel Ifeanyi Obeagu, Department of Medical Laboratory Science, Kampala International University, Uganda, emmanuelobeagu@yahoo.com, ORCID: 0000-0002-4538-0161

Abstract

Antacid use is prevalent among HIV patients due to gastrointestinal symptoms and the side effects of antiretroviral therapy (ART). This review examines the implications of antacid use in HIV patients, focusing on drug absorption, metabolism, and adverse effects. Antacids, including proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) and histamine-2 receptor antagonists (H2RAs), alter gastric pH, potentially reducing the bioavailability of ART components requiring acidic conditions for absorption. Furthermore, antacids may interfere with drug metabolism via cytochrome P450 enzymes, impacting ART plasma concentrations. Adverse effects of antacids in HIV patients include electrolyte imbalances and vitamin deficiencies. Clinical management should prioritize antacid selection, individualized dosing, and ART monitoring to optimize treatment outcomes. Further research is needed to refine guidelines for managing antacid-ART interactions in HIV patients.

Keywords*: Antacids, HIV, drug absorption, drug metabolism, adverse effects, proton pump inhibitors, histamine-2 receptor antagonists, antiretroviral therapy*

Introduction

Antacid utilization is commonplace among individuals living with HIV, primarily due to the prevalence of gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms and the side effects associated with antiretroviral therapy (ART). These patients frequently experience acid-related conditions such as acid reflux, gastritis, and peptic ulcers, necessitating the use of acid-suppressing medications for symptom relief. Among the commonly prescribed antacids are proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) and histamine-2 receptor antagonists (H2RAs), which function by reducing gastric acid secretion through distinct mechanisms. While these medications offer symptomatic relief, their concurrent administration

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with ART raises concerns regarding potential interactions that could impact the absorption, metabolism, and efficacy of antiretroviral drugs. Antacids exert their therapeutic effects by modulating gastric acidity, a factor crucial for the absorption of various drugs, including those used in ART regimens. Certain antiretroviral agents, particularly protease inhibitors (PIs) and integrase inhibitors (INIs), exhibit pH-dependent solubility and absorption profiles. Therefore, alterations in gastric pH resulting from antacid use have the potential to disrupt the absorption kinetics of these drugs, leading to suboptimal plasma concentrations and compromised therapeutic outcomes. Understanding the intricate interplay between antacids and ART is essential for optimizing treatment efficacy and minimizing the risk of virological failure and drug resistance in HIV patients.[1-30]

Beyond their effects on drug absorption, antacids may also modulate drug metabolism through interactions with hepatic cytochrome P450 (CYP) enzymes. PPIs and H2RAs have been shown to inhibit CYP enzymes, particularly CYP3A4, a major enzyme involved in the metabolism of many antiretroviral drugs. Consequently, concurrent administration of antacids and ART may result in altered plasma concentrations of ART components, potentially leading to toxicity or therapeutic failure. These pharmacokinetic interactions underscore the importance of vigilant monitoring and tailored dosing strategies in HIV patients receiving both antacids and ART. In addition to pharmacokinetic considerations, the use of antacids in HIV patients may contribute to a spectrum of adverse effects, ranging from electrolyte imbalances to vitamin deficiencies. Chronic use of PPIs, in particular, has been associated with an increased risk of infections and bone fractures, raising concerns about their long-term safety in this population. Healthcare providers must weigh the benefits of symptom relief against the potential risks of adverse effects when prescribing antacids to HIV patients, emphasizing the importance of individualized treatment approaches and regular monitoring.[31-60]

In light of these considerations, this review aims to comprehensively explore the implications of antacid use in HIV patients, focusing on its effects on drug absorption, metabolism, and adverse effects. By elucidating the complexities of antacid-ART interactions, healthcare providers can make informed decisions regarding antacid selection, dosing optimization, and monitoring strategies to ensure the effective management of both HIV and associated GI conditions while minimizing the risk of treatment-related complications.

Antacid Mechanisms and HIV Patients

Antacids play a vital role in alleviating gastrointestinal symptoms in HIV patients, commonly arising from both the disease itself and the side effects of antiretroviral therapy (ART). Understanding the mechanisms of action of antacids is essential for appreciating their therapeutic impact in this population. Proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) and histamine-2 receptor antagonists (H2RAs) are the two main classes of antacids prescribed to HIV patients. PPIs, such as omeprazole and lansoprazole, exert their effects by irreversibly inhibiting the hydrogen-potassium adenosine triphosphatase (H+/K+ ATPase) enzyme system in the gastric parietal cells. This inhibition leads to a profound reduction in gastric acid secretion, resulting in elevated gastric pH levels. By

effectively suppressing acid production, PPIs provide symptomatic relief from conditions like gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) and peptic ulcers, which are prevalent among HIV patients. However, the long-lasting suppression of gastric acid secretion by PPIs can pose challenges regarding drug absorption, particularly for antiretroviral drugs requiring an acidic environment for optimal dissolution and absorption.[61-90]

H2RAs, including famotidine and ranitidine, act by selectively blocking histamine-2 receptors on the gastric parietal cells, thereby reducing histamine-mediated acid secretion. Unlike PPIs, H2RAs offer reversible inhibition of acid secretion and have a shorter duration of action. Nevertheless, they remain effective in managing mild to moderate acid-related conditions in HIV patients. By mitigating gastric acid production, H2RAs alleviate symptoms such as heartburn and gastritis, enhancing the quality of life for individuals living with HIV. However, similar to PPIs, H2RAs can also influence drug absorption and metabolism through alterations in gastric pH and potential interactions with cytochrome P450 enzymes. In the context of HIV infection, the use of antacids introduces complexities regarding drug absorption, particularly for certain antiretroviral agents that exhibit pH-dependent solubility and absorption profiles. Protease inhibitors (PIs), for instance, require an acidic environment for optimal dissolution and absorption in the gastrointestinal tract. Therefore, the concomitant administration of PPIs or H2RAs may compromise the bioavailability of PIs, potentially leading to subtherapeutic plasma concentrations and treatment failure. Similarly, integrase inhibitors (INIs) such as raltegravir and dolutegravir may also be affected by alterations in gastric pH, emphasizing the importance of considering antacid use when prescribing ART regimens to HIV patients.[91-120]

Implications for Drug Absorption

The interaction between antacids and antiretroviral therapy (ART) has significant implications for drug absorption in HIV patients. Antacids, including proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) and histamine-2 receptor antagonists (H2RAs), modulate gastric pH, which can profoundly affect the absorption kinetics of certain antiretroviral drugs. Protease inhibitors (PIs) are a class of antiretroviral drugs commonly used in HIV treatment regimens. PIs exhibit pH-dependent solubility and are absorbed optimally in an acidic environment. However, the concurrent use of antacids, particularly PPIs, which drastically elevate gastric pH, can impair the dissolution and absorption of PIs in the gastrointestinal tract. As a result, HIV patients taking PIs in combination with PPIs may experience reduced drug bioavailability, leading to subtherapeutic plasma concentrations and compromised virologic suppression. Integrase inhibitors (INIs), another class of antiretroviral drugs, are also susceptible to alterations in gastric pH. Drugs like raltegravir and dolutegravir have demonstrated pH-dependent solubility profiles, with reduced absorption observed in neutral to alkaline pH environments. Therefore, the concurrent administration of antacids, particularly PPIs, may diminish the absorption of INIs, potentially impacting their efficacy in achieving viral suppression in HIV patients.[121-150]

Furthermore, nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NRTIs), a cornerstone of ART, may also be affected by alterations in gastric pH induced by antacid use. While NRTIs do not exhibit pH-

dependent solubility to the same extent as PIs or INIs, changes in gastric pH can still influence drug absorption indirectly by altering gastrointestinal transit times and drug dissolution rates. Although the clinical significance of antacid-NRTI interactions may be less pronounced compared to other classes of antiretroviral drugs, their impact on overall treatment outcomes should not be overlooked. In light of these considerations, healthcare providers should carefully assess the necessity of antacid therapy in HIV patients and consider alternative strategies to manage gastrointestinal symptoms while minimizing the risk of drug interactions. When antacids are deemed necessary, selection of antacid agents with minimal impact on gastric pH, such as antacids with shorter durations of action or non-systemic antacids like calcium carbonate, may be preferred. Additionally, spacing out the administration of antacids and antiretroviral drugs to minimize concurrent exposure may help mitigate the potential for drug absorption interactions.[151-170]

Effects on Drug Metabolism

In addition to influencing drug absorption, the use of antacids in HIV patients can also impact drug metabolism, particularly through interactions with hepatic cytochrome P450 (CYP) enzymes. Both proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) and histamine-2 receptor antagonists (H2RAs) have been implicated in modulating the activity of CYP enzymes, which are essential for the metabolism of many antiretroviral drugs. PPIs, such as omeprazole and lansoprazole, have been shown to inhibit CYP enzymes, particularly CYP2C19 and CYP3A4, which are major enzymes involved in the metabolism of several antiretroviral drugs. By inhibiting these enzymes, PPIs can potentially increase the plasma concentrations of certain antiretroviral agents, prolonging their half-life and enhancing their pharmacologic effects. This could lead to an increased risk of adverse drug reactions, including toxicity from antiretroviral medications metabolized by these pathways. Similarly, H2RAs, including famotidine and ranitidine, have also been reported to inhibit CYP enzymes, albeit to a lesser extent compared to PPIs. By interfering with CYP-mediated metabolism, H2RAs may alter the plasma concentrations of antiretroviral drugs metabolized via these pathways, potentially impacting their therapeutic efficacy and safety profile. Consequently, HIV patients concurrently using H2RAs and ART may require dosage adjustments or closer monitoring to ensure optimal treatment outcomes.[171-180]

The impact of antacid-induced alterations in drug metabolism extends beyond individual antiretroviral drugs to encompass entire treatment regimens. For instance, some antiretroviral combinations may rely on specific metabolic pathways for activation or elimination, making them particularly susceptible to interactions with antacids. Therefore, healthcare providers must carefully evaluate the potential for drug metabolism interactions when prescribing antacids to HIV patients, considering both the individual drug characteristics and the overall treatment regimen. Moreover, the effects of antacids on drug metabolism may not be limited to the liver but could also extend to other organs involved in drug metabolism and elimination, such as the intestine and kidney. Consequently, the full extent of antacid-induced alterations in drug metabolism in HIV patients warrants further investigation to elucidate potential implications for treatment efficacy and safety.[171-183]

Adverse Effects and Clinical Management

The use of antacids in HIV patients is associated with various adverse effects, which necessitate careful clinical management to optimize treatment outcomes while minimizing the risk of complications. Common adverse effects of antacids include electrolyte disturbances, vitamin deficiencies, and an increased susceptibility to infections, all of which can have significant implications for the health and well-being of HIV patients. One of the primary adverse effects associated with the long-term use of proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) is the risk of electrolyte imbalances, particularly hypomagnesemia and hypocalcemia. PPIs can interfere with the absorption of magnesium and calcium in the gastrointestinal tract, leading to deficiencies that may manifest as muscle cramps, cardiac arrhythmias, and osteoporosis. HIV patients, who may already be predisposed to electrolyte abnormalities due to the effects of the virus or concomitant medications, are at heightened risk of experiencing these adverse effects with prolonged PPI use.[180-183]

Furthermore, chronic PPI use has been linked to vitamin deficiencies, including vitamin B12, vitamin C, and vitamin D deficiencies, which can have wide-ranging effects on health. Vitamin B12 deficiency, in particular, can lead to neurological symptoms such as peripheral neuropathy and cognitive impairment, exacerbating existing HIV-related neurologic complications. Vitamin D deficiency, on the other hand, can increase the risk of bone fractures and exacerbate HIV-associated bone disorders, such as osteoporosis and osteopenia. In addition to electrolyte disturbances and vitamin deficiencies, the use of antacids in HIV patients may also increase the risk of infections, including gastrointestinal infections and respiratory tract infections. PPIs, in particular, have been associated with an increased risk of Clostridium difficile infection, a potentially life-threatening gastrointestinal infection that can be challenging to manage in HIV patients with compromised immune function. Furthermore, the suppression of gastric acid secretion by PPIs may predispose HIV patients to respiratory tract infections, including pneumonia, by impairing the clearance of ingested pathogens.[150-160]

Given these potential adverse effects, clinical management strategies for antacid use in HIV patients should prioritize the selection of appropriate antacid agents, judicious dosing, and regular monitoring of electrolyte levels and vitamin status. Healthcare providers should carefully weigh the benefits of symptom relief against the potential risks of adverse effects when prescribing antacids to HIV patients, considering individual patient characteristics and comorbidities. Furthermore, healthcare providers should be vigilant for signs and symptoms of electrolyte disturbances, vitamin deficiencies, and infections in HIV patients receiving long-term antacid therapy and intervene promptly to mitigate these complications. This may involve supplementing deficient electrolytes and vitamins, adjusting antacid dosages, or discontinuing antacid therapy altogether in cases of severe adverse effects.[160-170]

Conclusion

The use of antacids in HIV patients presents a complex clinical challenge, requiring careful consideration of their implications for drug absorption, metabolism, and adverse effects. While antacids such as proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) and histamine-2 receptor antagonists (H2RAs) offer symptomatic relief for acid-related gastrointestinal symptoms, their concurrent use with antiretroviral therapy (ART) can have significant consequences for treatment efficacy and safety. Antacids can disrupt drug absorption by altering gastric pH, particularly affecting drugs with pH-dependent solubility profiles such as protease inhibitors (PIs) and integrase inhibitors (INIs). The reduction in drug bioavailability resulting from antacid use may compromise virologic suppression and increase the risk of treatment failure in HIV patients. Additionally, antacids can interfere with drug metabolism through interactions with hepatic cytochrome P450 enzymes, potentially altering the pharmacokinetics of antiretroviral drugs and increasing the risk of adverse drug reactions. Moreover, the use of antacids in HIV patients is associated with various adverse effects, including electrolyte disturbances, vitamin deficiencies, and an increased susceptibility to infections. These adverse effects can have significant implications for the health and well-being of HIV patients, necessitating careful clinical management strategies to mitigate risks while optimizing treatment outcomes.

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