



Original Research Article

Prognostic value of mannose binding lectin and vitamin D in dengue: Study from a tertiary care centre from southern India

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Abstract

Background: Dengue disease severity is related to dysregulated immune response. Mannose binding lectin and vitamin D alter innate and adaptive immune responses. Hence, we wanted to assess the predictive value of these early serum biomarkers for reducing mortality and morbidity.

Aim and Objectives: To determine serum mannose binding lectin and vitamin D levels in patients diagnosed with Dengue and to correlate with Dengue severity.

Results: The study patients were divided into three groups, dengue without warning signs (group 1), dengue with warning signs (group 2), and severe dengue (group 3). Mannose binding lectin levels were found to have significant P values between group 1 and group 3 ($p=0.002$), and group 2 and group 3 ($p=0.005$). Vitamin-D levels showed a significant p-value between Group 1 and Group 2 ($p=0.008$), group 1 and Group 3 ($p=0.000$), and Group 2 and 3 ($p=0.000$). Hence lower levels of mannose binding lectin are associated with severe dengue and patients with low normal levels of vitamin D had severe dengue.

Conclusions: This study highlights the immunomodulator role of Mannose binding lectin and vitamin D in shifting immune responses from Th-1 to Th-2 resulting in dengue severity. The role of vitamin D is always thought to be protective but it may act as a double-edged sword. This study also opens new doors of therapeutics for treating dengue infection.

Keywords: Cytokines, T cells, Molecular biology, Dengue, MBL, Vitamin D.

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1. Introduction

Dengue burden amplified 30-fold over the last 50 years. The dengue cases have increased up to 50-100 million annually worldwide.^{1,2} The virus, host genetics, and host immune factors play a vital role in the severity and complications of dengue, depending on individual, epidemiologic, and ecologic conditions.³

High viral loads and the mechanisms that regulate cytokine production lead to impairment in the control of dengue virus (DENV) leading to the overproduction of pro-inflammatory cytokines and hence dengue severity.⁴

After a mosquito bite, DENV replicates in the dermal dendritic cells (DC) and macrophages, these cells enable further propagation to peripheral tissue and a

proinflammatory cytokine storm secondary to exuberant activation of poorly lytic cross-reactive T cells, and excessive complement activation occurs.⁵

Opsonization and lysis of the pathogen, production of potent proinflammatory molecules, and generation of the classical inflammatory response occur by activation of complement cascade.⁶ Commencement of the complement system occurs via three convergent pathways referred to as the classical, lectin, and alternative pathways. Mannose-binding lectin (MBL) or ficolin initiates the lectin pathway.

Mannose-binding lectin (MBL) is a pattern-recognition molecule of liver origin that recognizes specific sugar moieties present on the surface of microorganisms, including DENV. It functions as a first line of defense in the innate

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immune response.⁷ In addition, it can induce cytokine production as well.

Therefore, MBL is important in host defense, especially in infancy, when the acquired immunity has not fully developed. Individuals lacking this protein may develop severe episodes of bacterial infections from early life.⁸ MBL is also important when the immune system of an individual is compromised, such as when a patient is under immunosuppressive therapy, or receiving chemotherapies or a bone marrow transplant.⁹

In young children and immunocompromised patients enhanced susceptibility to infections was observed with low MBL serum levels. In adults HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and herpes simplex virus disease progression is influenced by low serum MBL concentrations.^{10,11}

Additionally, vitamin D3 being an immunomodulator, enhances immunoregulatory mechanisms that avoid damage to the host and acts as a key factor in governing immune responses that arise from excessive inflammatory responses to several pathogens, as in dengue disease.^{12,13}

1, 25(OH) 2D3 inhibits IL-12 production by macrophages and DC by suppressing transcriptional activation of the p35 and p40 genes. Importantly, this inhibition is dependent, at least in part, on the downregulation of NF- κ B activation and binding to a κ B sequence identified within the p40 promoter.¹⁴

The inhibitory effect of 1, 25-(OH) 2D3 on DC maturation and differentiation is very similar to that of IL-10, an anti-inflammatory cytokine, and to that of glucocorticoids.¹⁵

Interleukin 12 is an important immunoregulatory cytokine that is produced mainly by antigen-presenting cells, it bridges the early nonspecific innate resistance and the subsequent antigen-specific adaptive immunity.¹⁶ The type of adaptive immune responses decided by the host are determined by the expression of IL-12, which regulates innate response. IL-12 induces interferon- γ (IFN- γ) production and triggers CD4+ T cells to differentiate into type 1 T helper (Th1) cells and help in the elimination of pathogens.¹⁷

The Antiviral function and immunomodulatory role of MBL and vitamin D in dengue virus infection have not been investigated precisely. Hence, we plan to assess the levels of vitamin D and MBL and correlate them with dengue severity.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Study design

Observational study.

2.2. Duration of study

26th July 2018 to 31st JULY 2019.

2.3. Methodology

All Patients who presented to the Medicine clinic during 1 year with fever and were dengue positive were enrolled in this study based on inclusion and exclusion criteria after obtaining written informed consent from the subjects. An Institutional Ethical Committee approval was granted for this study through a letter numbered (Rc. No. IEC/GMC/2017) and dated (30/12/2017).

2.4. Inclusion criteria

Patients above 18 years, confirmed as Dengue by either NS1 Ag/ IgM/IgG were included.

2.5. Exclusion criteria

Patients suffering from the following disorders have been excluded

1. Haematological disorders with bleeding manifestation.
2. Documented autoimmune diseases and immune-compromised states.
3. Other bacterial, viral, and parasitic infections.
4. Drug-induced thrombocytopenia and malignancies.
5. Previous heparin usage in the last 100 days.
6. Rheumatological diseases.
7. Pregnant woman.

All patients were confirmed to have dengue by detection of DENV antigen via NS1 assay (Pan-E dengue early ELISA kit) or DENV-specific antibodies via in-house capture IgM/IgG Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay (ELISA). Patients were divided into three groups based on the WHO 2009 criteria as dengue without warning signs (Group 1), with warning signs (Group 2), and severe dengue (Group 3). Detailed history regarding clinical features was taken and laboratory investigations were performed.

Blood from the patients was collected within 24-48 hours of fever onset. Serum samples were separated into two aliquots and were stored at -80°C. The MBL levels in the serum of all patients were analyzed using ELISA (Human-MBP/MBL QY-E03418) kits. Raw data was initially measured as the relative fluorescence intensity and then converted to MBL concentration based on the standard curve generated from the reference concentrations supplied in the kit. Levels less than 500ng/ml were used to define patients as MBL deficient.²⁷ Vitamin D levels were estimated by CLIA-ADVIA Centaur XPT immunoassay system, using ADVIA Centaur vitamin D ready pack reagents (REF 10699201). Analytical measuring range (4.2-150ng/ml).

2.6. Statistical analysis

The parameters were recorded and systematically analyzed with a chi-square test to discover the relationship between two categorical variables. One-way ANOVA was used to evaluate differences between raw MBL levels among three groups of dengue patients. To establish the correlation between MBL, vitamin D, and clinical parameters/findings, Pearson's two-tailed correlation was applied.

Results are given as correlation coefficient, r (ranges from -1 to +1). A two-tailed P value of less than 0.05 was considered to be significant for all tests performed. All three statistical analyses performed were done using IBM SPSS Version 22.0.

3. Results

A total of 100 patients who met the inclusion and exclusion criteria were included in this study. Patients were divided into three groups based on the 2009 WHO classification to determine independent predictors of severity and morbidity. 38 patients fell into dengue without warning signs (Group 1), 40 patients into dengue with warning signs (Group 2), and 22 patients in severe dengue (Group 3). Male preponderance was noted as 62 were males and 38 were females. The Mean Age among groups is not significant. Clinical symptoms like Gum bleeding, Rash, Petechiae, Malena, Epistaxis, Joint pains, Retro orbital pain, and abdominal pain had a significantly higher frequency in the severe dengue group (**Table 1**).

The co-morbid conditions like Diabetes, Hypertension, and Asthma were insignificantly associated with dengue fever with p values of 0.520, 0.169, and 0.439 respectively in groups.

Clinical signs like subconjunctival haemorrhage, pallor, pleural effusion, gallbladder edema, conjunctival congestion, and ascites had a P value <0.05 among three categories of patients (**Table 2**).

Haemoglobin, white blood cell counts, serum electrolytes, Creatinine, calcium, and bilirubin were not found significant among three categories of patients, with p -values >0.100 . (**Table 3**).

Platelet counts have dropped significantly in group 3 compared to other groups with a mean of 53078.9474 ± 6321.336 in group 1, 36900.00 ± 5508.594 in group 2, and 24904.761 ± 6014.2310 in group 3 with p -value significant between group 1 and group 2 ($p=0.045$) and group 1 and group 3 ($p=0.004$). Thrombocytopenia is observed to be more common in severe dengue compared to other groups. (**Figure 1**)

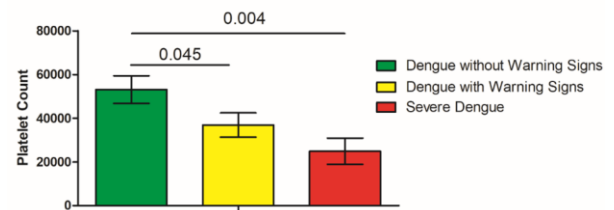


Figure 1: Bar diagram of platelet count and dengue types. Data is shown in Mean with standard error

The MBL levels are statistically significant among groups. (**Figure 2**). MBL levels are 43.022 ± 1.976 in group 1, 41.89 ± 1.944 in group 2, and 33.131 ± 2.078 in group 3 with P value significant between group 1 and group 3 ($p=0.002$) and group 2 and group 3 ($p=0.005$).

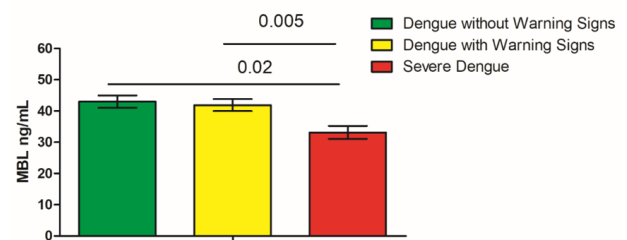


Figure 2: Bar diagram of MBL and dengue severity. Data is shown in Mean with standard error

Vitamin- D value is 14.508 ± 0.995 in group 1, 19.811 ± 1.199 in group 2, and 32.568 ± 2.813 in group 3 with p -value significant between group 1 and group 2 ($p=0.008$), group 1 and group 3 ($p=0.000$), group 2 and group 3 ($p=0.000$) (**Figure 3**)

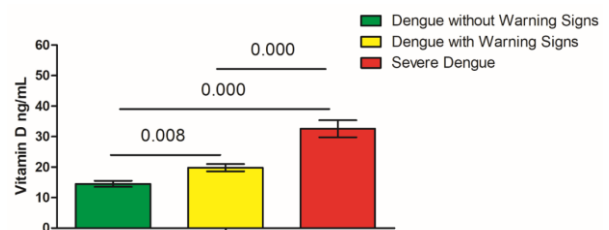


Figure 3: Bar diagram of vitamin D and dengue severity. Data is shown in Mean with standard error

There is a negative correlation between MBL and vitamin D with $r=-0.270$ with a p -value of 0.007. (**Figure 4**)

Markers for hepatocellular damage like ALT and AST were elevated significantly in group 3 compared to the other two groups and these enzymes showed a negative correlation with MBL, values being $r = -0.202$, p -value 0.044 and $r = -0.278$, p -value 0.005 for ALT and AST respectively.

Vitamin D showed a significant positive correlation with the markers for Liver injury with values as $r=0.483$, p -value 0.000 and $r=0.401$, p -value 0.000 for ALT and AST respectively (**Figure 5**)

Table 1: Showing clinical symptoms of dengue patients in the study

Clinical Symptoms	Groups						Total Cases		Chi-square	p-value
	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3		Yes	No		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No				
Headache	16	22	15	25	12	10	43	57	1.703	0.427
Retroorbital Pain	12	26	3	37	10	12	25	75	12.32	0.002
Myalgia	23	15	32	8	19	3	74	26	6.082	0.048
Joint Pains	10	28	13	27	13	9	36	64	6.851	0.033
Rash	3	35	3	37	9	13	15	85	14.852	0.001
Petechiae	1	37	3	37	7	15	11	89	12.958	0.002
Purpura /Ecchymosis	0	38	0	40	2	20	2	98	7.236	0.027
Hematemesis	0	38	2	38	0	22	2	98	3.061	0.216
Melena	0	38	28	12	11	11	39	61	41.572	0
Epistaxis	0	38	3	37	4	18	7	93	7.101	0.029
Haemoptysis	0	38	1	39	1	21	2	98	1.554	0.46
Bleeding Gums	0	38	2	38	9	13	11	89	26.27	0
Haematuria	0	38	1	39	1	21	2	98	1.554	0.46
Vaginal Bleeding	0	38	3	37	5	17	8	92	9.801	0.007
Abdominal Pain	0	38	17	23	12	10	29	71	26.034	0
Edema	0	38	1	39	3	19	4	96	7.138	0.028
Restlessness	0	38	2	38	6	16	8	92	14.896	0.001
Breathlessness	0	38	2	38	5	17	7	93	11.465	0.003
Altered Sensorium	0	38	0	40	2	20	2	98	7.236	0.027
Seizures	0	38	1	39	4	18	5	95	10.574	0.005
Chest Pain	0	38	0	40	2	20	2	98	7.236	0.027

Table 2: Showing clinical signs of dengue patients in the study

Signs	Groups						Total Cases		Chi Square Test	p-value
	Group-1		Group-2		Group-3		Yes	No		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No				
Pallor	0	38	1	39	3	19	4	96	7.138	0.028
Conjunctival Congestion	0	38	2	38	5	17	7	93	11.465	0.003
Subconjunctival Haemorrhage	0	38	3	37	6	16	9	91	12.837	0.002
Pleural Effusion	0	38	4	36	11	11	15	85	28.627	0
GB Edema	0	38	2	38	10	12	12	88	30.355	0
Ascites	0	38	4	36	7	15	11	89	14.477	0.001
IC Bleed	0	38	0	40	2	20	2	98	7.236	0.027

Table 3: Showing laboratory parameters of dengue patients in the study

		Dengue without warning signs Group 1	Dengue with warning signs Group 2	Severe Dengue Group 3	p-value
HB	Mean±	12.528	13.125	11.977	0.197
	SE	0.415	0.359	0.527	
WBC	Mean±	4383.95	5035.5	4280	0.301
	SE	357.297	366.576	395.222	
HCT	Mean±	37.994	38.715	42.386	0.02
	SE	1.012	0.912	1.22	
Sodium	Mean±	136.21	137.28	137.86	0.586
	SE	1.26	0.748	1.3	
Potassium	Mean±	3.908	3.775	3.909	0.476
	SE	0.077	0.073	0.155	
Chloride	Mean±	99.11	101.5	100.95	0.063
	SE	0.981	0.544	0.66	
Creatinine	Mean±	0.74	0.771	0.757	0.666
	SE	0.022	0.026	0.032	
ALT	Mean±	70.752	123.74	170.263	0
	SE	3.842	3.626	7.023	
AST	Mean±	69.542	101.772	350.44	0
	SE	10.666	3.559	27.818	
Bilirubin	Mean±	0.856	1.081	1.369	0.236
	SE	0.065	0.109	0.46	
ALP	Mean±	118.742	207.742	224.518	0.044
	SE	5.668	45.256	5.582	
PT	Mean±	12.186	16.902	16.304	0.223
	SE	0.563	3.085	0.409	
INR	Mean±	0.778	1.194	1.39	0
	SE	0.03	0.019	0.045	
APTT	Mean±	35.15	52.415	76.66	0
	SE	0.951	1.954	2.387	
ESR	Mean±	9.84	13.7	15.73	0
	SE	0.429	0.273	0.596	
BT	Mean±	4.58	6.35	8.09	0
	SE	0.171	0.222	0.286	
CT	Mean±	9.68	10.68	13.77	0
	SE	0.329	0.236	0.436	
Calcium	Mean±	8.936	8.7	8.727	0.178
	SE	0.093	0.101	0.109	

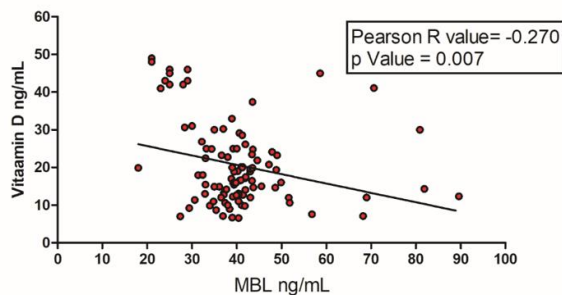


Figure 4: Correlation graph between MBL and Vitamin D

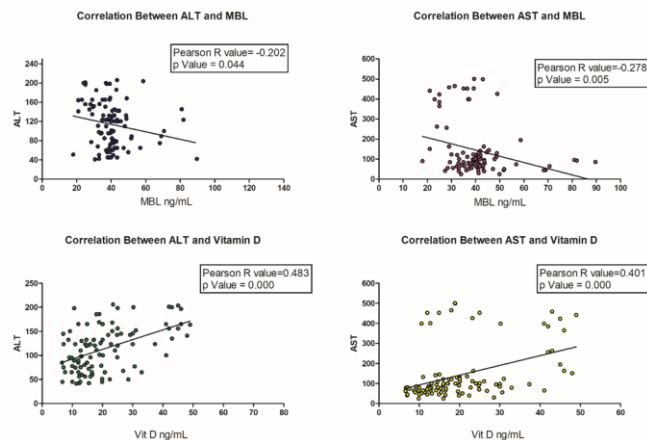


Figure 5: Figure label showing correlation graphs between liver enzymes (ALT, AST) and MBL & liver enzymes (ALT, AST) and Vitamin D

4. Discussion

The most common presenting symptoms in this study were Myalgias, Headache, Malena, joint pains, and abdominal pain. The observed frequencies of symptoms in this study are similar to the previous studies but with some notable differences.² Age and gender did not affect the severity of dengue fever as all the age groups of both genders are equally affected. In this study, the mean platelet count in the Severe Dengue group was significantly lower than other Dengue groups similar to other studies.¹⁸

In this study all the dengue patients were found to have MBL deficiency and patients with severe dengue had lower levels compared to patients without warning signs and with warning signs. These findings are in concordance with the study done by Kalichamy Alagarasu *et al.*²⁴

Human MBL inhibits infection of all DENV serotypes by both complement-dependent and complement-independent mechanisms. Lectin pathway-mediated neutralization of DENV-2 is by direct opsonization, regulation of cytokine production, and amplification of adaptive immunity which depends on MBL concentration.¹⁹ Another explanation is that MBL deficiency may impact dendritic cell (DC) function hence low concentrations of MBL lead to increased secretion of the proinflammatory cytokines interleukin- 6, interleukin -1 β , and tumor necrosis

factor α Which in turn shifts the immune response towards Th-2 and thereby subsequent disease progression.²⁰

Low MBL concentrations have been associated with increased susceptibility to infections in both animal models and humans, as well as with poor disease prognosis.^{10,11,21} The modulation of disease severity is partly thought to be through a complex, dose-dependent influence on cytokine production.

Patients with severe dengue had near-normal Vitamin D values compared to the other groups. Vitamin D is known for its beneficial effects rather than deleterious effects. A Positive association between a total of 25(OH)D concentrations and severe dengue is an interesting finding. This association may be attributed to the inducing effect of vitamin D on Fc γ receptor expression which might subsequently lead to higher viral load in dengue cases and development of severe dengue.²² This association is further strengthened by our finding that normal levels of vitamin D are associated with clinical features of rash, petechiae, ecchymosis, epistaxis, bleeding gums, vaginal bleeding, pain abdomen, subconjunctival hemorrhage, pleural effusion, GB edema, ascites, and all these findings are statistically significant with $p < 0.05$.²³ A study done by Kalichamy Alagarasu *et al*²⁴ has shown that elevated levels of vitamin D were associated with dengue severity unlike in our study where severe dengue patients had near normal vitamin D levels compared to other groups. Similar findings were noted in a study done by Bharara T *et al.*²⁹ Explanatory mechanisms remain speculative. When 1 α ,25-(OH) $_2$ D $_3$ is added to mitogen-stimulated human peripheral blood lymphocytes in vitro, it inhibits their proliferation, Ig synthesis, and accumulation of transcripts for IL-1, IL-2, IL-6, TNF- α , and - β and IFN- γ .¹² Further studies are required to confirm this hypothesis. A study by Iqtadar S *et al*²⁸ and Sadarangani SP *et al*³⁰ have shown that vitamin D Deficiency is associated with severe Dengue. Hence further studies are needed to know the exact role of Vitamin D.

Deranged liver function in dengue infection can result from the virus's direct effect on hepatocytes or an unregulated host immune response against the virus.²⁵ Both AST and ALT were significantly raised in patients with Severe Dengue and the increase in AST was higher than the increase in ALT.²⁶

In the present study too, the difference in both AST and ALT levels among the groups was significant, suggestive of dengue hepatopathy. Further, AST, ALT, and ALP showed a strong positive correlation with vitamin D and a strong negative correlation with MBL (**Figure 5**) which reinforces that dysregulated immune response is the major contributor to organ damage during severe dengue.

Finally, the th1/th2 paradigm can provide the basis for the severity of dengue disease which is mediated by complement cascade and vitamin D-induced immune

modulation.^{21,23} This study emphasizes the importance of serum MBL and vitamin D levels as prognostic markers in assessing the severity of dengue and the potential role of therapeutic MBL replacement in the management of severe dengue.

5. Limitations

1. MBL genotypes were not determined.
2. Larger studies are needed to confirm our results and elucidate the underlying mechanisms.
3. The study needs to be validated in larger samples to understand the role of Vitamin D in dengue severity.

6. Conclusions

In our study Levels of vitamin D were found to be low in patients of group 1 compared to groups 2 and 3, indicating that patients with low normal levels of Vitamin D had less severe dengue. MBL levels were found to be low in all patients with dengue (<500ng/ml) but MBL levels in patients with severe dengue were further less compared to group 2 and group 1. Hence low serum levels of MBL are associated with severe dengue.

7. Abbreviations

DSS: Dengue shock syndrome; D.F: Dengue fever; DHF: Dengue haemorrhagic fever; DENV/DEN/DV: Dengue virus; AST: Aspartate aminotransferase; ALT: Alanine aminotransferase; ALP: Alkaline phosphatase; WHO: World Health Organization; ELISA: Enzyme-Linked immunosorbent assay; NS1Ag: Non-structural antigen; IgM: Immunoglobulin M; IgG: Immunoglobulin G; TNF: Tumor necrosis factor; NF κ B: Nuclear Factor κ B; IL: Interleukin; VDR: Vitamin D receptor; MBL: Mannose binding lectin; MASP: MBL associated serine protease; GlcNAc: N Acetyl glucosamine; SNP: Single nucleotide polymorphism; DC: Dendritic cells; CLEC5A: C-Type lectin domain family 5, member A; MR: Mannose receptor; PRP: Pattern recognition receptor; RIG 1: Retinoic acid inducible gene 1; MDA 5: Melanoma differentiation associated protein 5; IRF: Interferon regulator factors; DBP: Dengue binding protein; HSP: Heat shock protein; RXR: Retinoid x receptor; VDRE: Vitamin D response elements; HRP: Horse radish peroxidase; OD: Optical density; ROC: Receiver operative characteristic; SOB: Shortness of breath; DM: Diabetes mellitus; HTN: Hypertension; BA: Bronchial asthma; GB edema: Gall bladder edema; GBS: Guillain barre syndrome; MODS: Multiple organ dysfunction syndrome.

8. Ethical Approval

This study was approved by Institute Ethical review committee with ref. no. IEC/GMC/2017() dated 30/12/2017.

9. Source of Funding

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10. Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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