

Original Research Article

Hemodialysis-associated oxidative stress: Comparison of Helixone® and Polysulfone® dialyzer

Abstract

Background: Patients at end stage renal failure require hemodialysis, a process that contributes to oxidative stress, where the quality of hemodialysis membrane plays a key role.

Aim of the study: We sought to investigate the effect of two different hemodialysis membranes (Helixone® vs Polysulfone®) on several blood biologic and oxidative stress parameters.

Patients and Methods: Among 86 patients of our hemodialysis facility at the University Hospital, 12 patients were included in the study according to inclusion and exclusion criteria. Patients used Polysulfone® membrane in a first step of the study, then they switched to Helixone® membrane. Under the two kinds of membranes, we measured routine biologic parameters, and pre- and post- dialysis plasma oxidative stress parameters (malondialdehyde and Total Anti-Oxidant Activity, as assessed respectively, by the method of thiobarbituric acid, and an anti-oxidant activity commercial kit).

Results: With both Polysulfone® and Helixone® dialyzers, there was an important and significant increase of malondialdehyde upon a single hemodialysis session, however, the increase of malondialdehyde concentration was significantly reduced with Helixone® dialyzer as compared to Polysulfone® one. Plasma total anti-oxidant activity was reduced significantly upon a single hemodialysis session with both dialyzers, however, such a reduction was significantly higher with Polysulfone® (28% reduction) than with Helixone® (11.7% reduction) dialyzer. The levels of other routine blood parameters related to the performance of dialysis process (urea, uric acid, creatinine) under both dialyzers were similar.

Conclusion: Hemodialysis-associated oxidative stress, as assessed by MDA concentration and plasma total anti-oxidant activity, seems to be significantly reduced with Helixone® dialyzer when compared to Polysulfone® dialyzer. This difference may bring positive impact on hemodialysis-associated side effects on cardiovascular and cerebrovascular systems.

30 Key words: Hemodialysis, membrane dialyzer, oxidative stress, malondialdehyde.

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32 **Introduction**

33 In the last two decades, hemodialysis process was ameliorated thanks to novel brands of
 34 membrane dialyzers known as biocompatible, such as synthetic and cellulose modified
 35 dialyzers [1-3]. Biocompatible dialyzers are known to induce less leucopenia and complement
 36 activation. New brands of synthetic dialyzers were produced, whose filtration qualities were
 37 improved by the so-called “Nano Controlled Spinning” technology [4,5]. The new
 38 dialyzers have better performance and are safer, because they have a better number of pores
 39 with a better diameter and better anatomical characteristics. Hemodialysis by itself is a pro-
 40 inflammatory and pro-oxidant process [6-12], and the goal in developing new brands of
 41 dialyzers is also to reduce inflammation and oxidative stress. An example of that is vitamin E-
 42 coated membranes [13,14]. Despite the above progress, the process of hemodialysis is
 43 still associated with high cardiovascular mortality and morbidity [15,16]. Other risk factors
 44 such as dyslipidemia, hyperglycemia and hypertension, are added to the general inflammatory
 45 state and malnutrition in hemodialysis patients [17,18]. Hemodialysis process is known to
 46 induce an oxidative stress [19-24], which is defined as a decrease of anti-oxidant capacity of
 47 the organism (less anti-oxidant enzymes, less anti-oxidant molecules), and a subsequent
 48 production of oxygen free radicals that oxidize molecular constituents of the cells, such as
 49 proteins, lipids and nucleic acids [25,26]. Malondialdehyde (MDA) is a toxic product derived
 50 from fatty acid peroxidation [27-29]. It is generally accepted that MDA represents a good
 51 biomarker of oxidative stress in physiopathology. It can be measured in biologic liquids by
 52 the method of thiobarbituric acid reactive substances (TBARS) with or without high pressure
 53 liquid chromatographic analysis [30,31]. Although this method is not very specific, it was
 54 used in many studies with consistent results about the generation of MDA in different
 55 experimental and pathologic situations. In the present study, patients of our hemodialysis
 56 facility experienced a replacement of membrane dialyzer, those, switching from Polysulfone®
 57 to Helixone® membranes. During this dialyzer replacement, we sought to investigate the
 58 effect of quality of dialysis membrane on blood parameters, especially those related to
 59 oxidative stress and molecule's filtration. Here, we demonstrate the improvement of oxidative
 60 stress in patients, where hemodialysis-associated MDA production was significantly reduced
 61 upon switching from Polysulfone® to Helixone® dialyzer.

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64 **Patients and Methods:**

65 Patients: Among 86 patients of our hemodialysis facility at the University Hospital, 12
66 patients were enrolled in the study, all of them were males, above 15 years of age. Exclusion
67 criteria were: CRP above 6, infectious episode or hospitalization in the last 15 days preceding
68 the study, diabetic and smoking patients. Serology results of patients were negative to HIV,
69 hepatitis B and C. Patients included in the study did not receive erythropoietin nor copper
70 therapy during the study. To participate in the study, patients signed a written consent, and the
71 study was approved by a local ethic committee.

72 Hemodialysis session: In a first step, patients were using Polysulfone® (F6HPS) membrane
73 dialyzer, and blood samples were obtained both before and after each hemodialysis session.
74 Plasma or sera were prepared and frozen at – 80°C until use, in order to assess MDA, plasma
75 total anti-oxidant activity and other blood parameters. In a second step, patients have switched
76 to Helixon® (Fx8) membrane dialyzer, and then six weeks later, as in the first step, blood
77 samples were obtained both before and after hemodialysis session. Plasma was prepared
78 for MDA assay and to measure plasma total anti-oxidant activity, and sera was prepared for
79 other blood parameters assessment. For hemodialysis sessions, bicarbonate buffer was used
80 and pump flow rate was set at more than 300 ml /min (Kt/V above 1.2). Sodium heparin was
81 used as anti-coagulant. Both membrane dialyzers were from Fresenius Medical Care.

82 MDA measurement: The method of TBARS [30,31] was used to determine MDA levels in
83 blood plasma of patients. The method is based on the production of an adduct which is
84 produced upon a chemical reaction of MDA and thiobarbituric acid. The above adduct, after
85 extraction, was followed by reading the absorbance of the reaction mixture at 532 nm.
86 Tetramethoxypropane was used as a chemical standard in the assay, as detailed in a previous
87 paper on plasma MDA production in hemodialysis patients [20]. All reagents were of
88 analytical grade, and were purchased from Sigma Aldrich.

89 Total anti-oxidant activity: Blood plasma was used to determine total anti-oxidant activity,
90 according to a method described in a commercial kit of Antioxidant Status Assay, purchased
91 from Calbiochem. Briefly, the assay is based on the ability of plasma samples to inhibit the
92 oxidation of ABTS (2,2-Azino-di-[3-ethylbenz-thiazoline sulphonate) substrate to ABTS⁺

93 product by metmyoglobin. The amount of ABTS⁺ product is monitored by reading the
94 absorbance of the reaction mixture at 600 nm.

95 Blood parameters: Routine biochemistry measurements of blood samples were performed at
96 the hospital laboratory according to standard methods.

97 Statistical analysis: Data are presented as mean $\pm$ SD. Excel software for Windows was used
98 for comparison of mean values with paired Student's T-test. For plasma MDA measurement,
99 a regression equation was calculated with Excel software in order to obtain a MDA
100 calibration curve, where a coefficient of determination (R^2) was always above 0.99.

101 **Results:**

102 Characteristic of patients and the origin of their nephropathy are shown in table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of study population

Variable	Value
Sex ratio (M/W)	12/0
Age (years)	31.5 $\pm$ 8.0
Duration in hemodialysis therapy (months)	48.58 $\pm$ 25
Origin of nephropathy:	
Hypertension	3
Glomerular	2
Genetic	1
Not determined	6

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104 Blood parameters did not differ significantly under both types of membranes (Table 2).

Table 2 : Blood parameters as measured before hemodialysis under both Polysulfone® and Helixone® membrane

Variable	Polysulfone membrane	Helixone membrane
Urea (g/L)	1.17 ± 0.28	1.44 ± 0.26 p= 0.305
Uric acid (mg/L)	66.33 ± 5.84	0.83 ± 0.20 p= 0.113
Creatinin (mg/L)	120.25 ± 23.37	0.32 ± 0.09 p= 0.357
Phosphoremia (g/L)	55.91 ± 12.4	1.45 ± 0.34 p= 0.075
Kaliemia (mEq/L)	4.77 ± 0.73	4.90 ± 0.70 p= 0.559
B2 microglobuline (mg/L)	50.82 ± 15.33	57.91 ± 17.08 p= 0.114
Albumine (mg/L)	42.84 ± 1.92	41.58 ± 3.27 p= 0.093
Ferritine (µg/L)	286.33 ± 257.86	353.84 ± 279.31 p= 0.342
Glucose (g/L)	1.07 ± 0.31	1.04 ± 0.18 p= 0.775

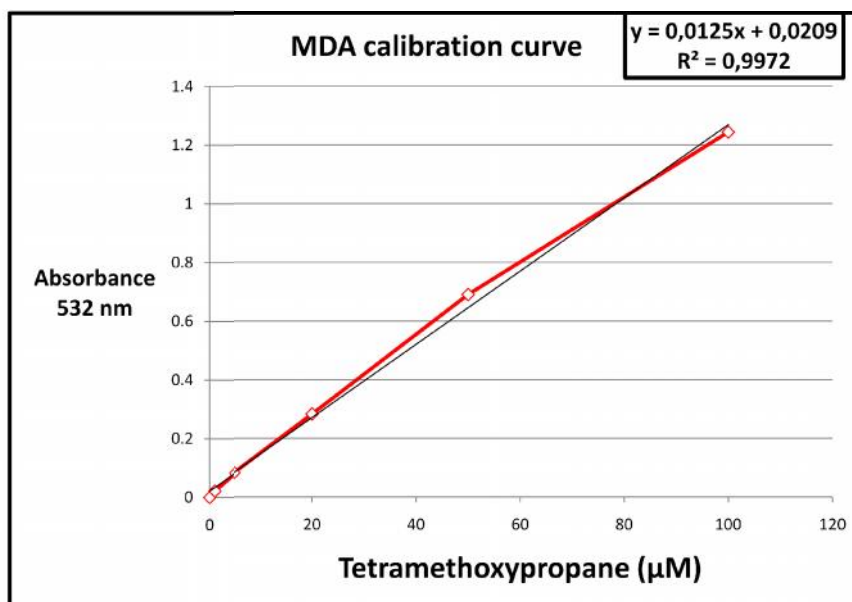
The filtration capacity of both membranes for urea, uric acid, and creatininewere similar, as assessed upon a single hemodialysis session (Table 3).

Table 3: Filtration properties of Polysulfone® and Helixone® membranes in hemodialysis (HD)

Variable	Polysulfone membrane		Helixone membrane	
	Before HD	After HD	Before HD	After HD
Urea (g/L)	1.17 ± 0.28	0.45 ± 0.16 p=0.000	1.34 ± 0.27	0.34 ± 0.22 p= 0.000
Uric acid (mg/L)	66.33 ± 5.84	15.75 ± 10.5 p=0.000	72.33 ± 15.67	15.50 ± 12.40 p=0.000
Creatinine (g/L)	120.25 ± 23.37	48.33 ± 14.24 p=0.000	123.25 ± 23.97	41.33 ± 21.24 p=0.000
Phosphoremia (g/L)	55.91 ± 12.4	29.5 ± 8.07 p=0.000	66.25 ± 28.24	30.66 ± 13.17 p=0.000
Kaliemia (mEq/L)	4.77 ± 0.73	3.81 ± 0.99 p=0.000	4.90 ± 0.70	3.54 ± 0.78 p=0.000

111 Oxidative stress was estimated through the levels of MDA and total anti-oxidant activity in
 112 patient's blood before and after a single hemodialysis session. Calibration curve of MDA
 113 measurement is shown in figure 1.

Figure 1: Calibration curve of plasma MDA analysis



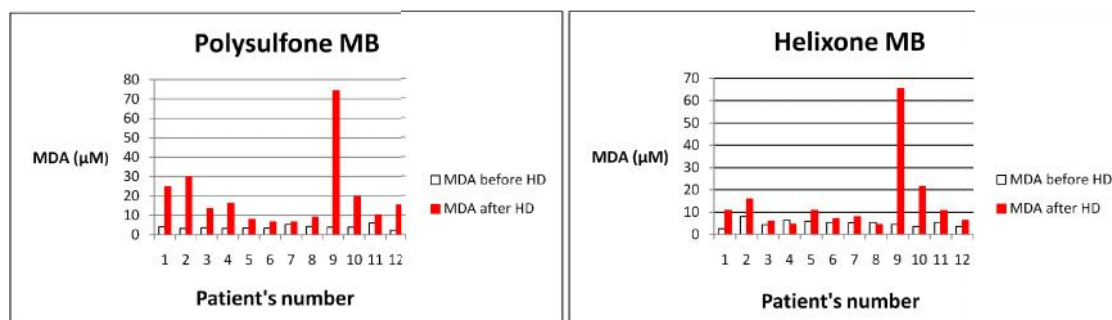
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117 MDA levels increased significantly in every patient's blood upon a single hemodialysis
 118 session as shown in figure 2, and thus, with both kinds of dialysis membrane. Interestingly,
 119 among all patients, patient number 9 has an exceptional very high increase of MDA level
 120 linked to the hemodialysis process with both kinds of dialysis membrane (Figure 2). For the
 121 above reason, MDA value of patient number 9 was not taken into account when calculating
 122 mean value of MDA of all patients(Inserted table in figure 2).

Figure 2: MDA production before and after hemodialysis (HD) with Polysulfone® and Helixone® dialyzers. Table below shows mean values of MDA concentrations under each dialyzer. p refers to comparison between means before and after HD. *: p= 0,032 refers to comparison between means under each membrane.



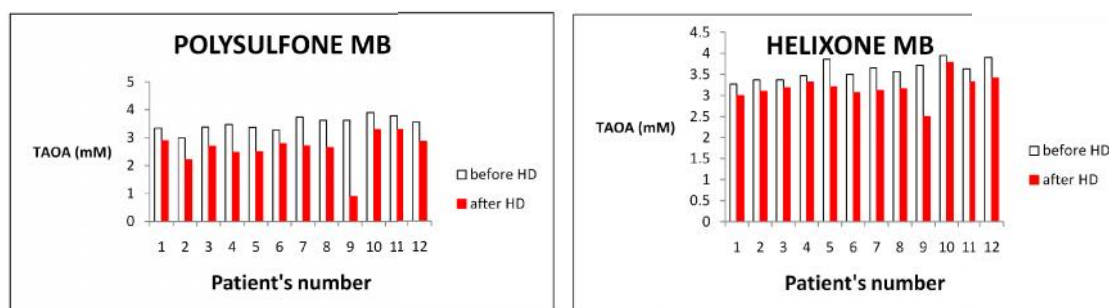
	Polysulfone membrane		Helixone membrane	
Variable	Before HD	After HD	Before HD	After HD
MDA (μM)	3.89 ± 1.02	14.58 ± 7.70 p=0.001	5.10 ± 1.49	9.65 ± 5.19 p=0.019 * p = 0.032

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125 There was more than 375% mean increase of MDA level upon hemodialysis session with
 126 Polysulfone® membrane, instead, there was about 189% mean increase of MDA level upon
 127 hemodialysis session with Helixone® membrane. The increase of MDA upon a single
 128 dialysis session was significantly reduced (33.77 % mean reduction) under Helixone®
 129 membrane, as compared to Polysulfone® membrane (Figure 2:14.58 ± 7.70 vs 9.65 ± 5.19,
 130 corresponding to post-dialysis MDA levels on Polysulfone® and Helixone® membranes,
 131 respectively, * p = 0.032; refers to comparison between the above means). Total anti-oxidant
 132 activity was significantly reduced upon hemodialysis process with both Polysulfone®
 133 (25.80% decrease) and Helixon® (11.78% decrease) membranes (Figure 3). A statistical
 134 significant difference (*: p = 0.000) was found between blood total anti-oxidant activity
 135 on Polysulfone® and Helixon® membranes upon hemodialysis session (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Plasma Total anti-Oxidant activity (TAOA) before and after hemodialysis (HD) with Polysulfone® and Helixone® dialyzers. Table below shows mean values of anti-oxidant activity. p refers to comparison between means before and after HD. *: p= 0,032 refers to comparison between means under each membrane.



	Polysulfone membrane		Helixone membrane	
Variable	Before HD	After HD	Before HD	After HD
TAOA (mM)	3.50 ± 0.61	2.59 ± 0.25 p=0.000	3.60 ± 0.22	3.18 ± 0.29 p=0.000 * p= 0.000

Discussion:

Oxidative stress plays a key role in hemodialysis process [7-12, 20-24]. Each single hemodialysis session is a physical burden for end stage renal failure patients, because it needs at least four hours as a median, and it is performed two to three times a week. On the other hand, the contact of blood components and circulating cells with dialyzer membrane leads to cell activation, which is a source of oxygen free radicals that play a crucial role in the inflammatory reaction and molecular damage. Biocompatible dialysis membranes were manufactured in the last two decades in order to reach a convenient and friendly dialysis process, so as to minimize inflammation, leucopenia and complement activation, as well as to improving the quality of blood filtration. In our present study, we have shown that switching from Polysulfone® to Helixone® membrane dialyzer brings two positive results on oxidative stress: the first one, is the reduction of MDA production upon hemodialysis, and the second one, is the improvement of plasma total anti-oxidant activity. In a previous prospective controlled clinical study [20], we have demonstrated that MDA production was stimulated upon hemodialysis sessions, and that ultrapure dialysis fluid also improved hemodialysis-

associated oxidative stress, through reduction of MDA production. Our present data confirm the better biocompatibility of Helixone® dialyzer over Polysulfone® one, and support the idea that more than being a good filter for blood detoxification, Helixone® membranes could play a role in cardiovascular and cerebrovascular protection against hemodialysis-associated oxidative stress.

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