



## ARAŞTIRMA / RESEARCH

# Effects of Quercetin and Coenzyme Q10 on gentamicin-induced nephrotoxicity in rats

Quercetin ve Koenzim Q10'un sıçanlarda gentamisin kaynaklı nefrotoksisite üzerine etkileri

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** We investigated the effects of Quercetin and Coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub> antioxidant, on gentamicin-induced renal failure in rats.

**Materials and Methods:** The rats were given gentamicin (100 mg/kg/day, i.m., once a day), gentamicin (100 mg/kg/day, i.m. once a day) + Quercetin (15 mg/kg i.p. once a day) and gentamicin (100 mg/kg/day, i.m.) + Coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub> (8 mg/kg i.m. once a day).

**Results:** In control the BUN value was 26.8 ± 0.8 (mg/100 mL); whereas, it was 117.3 ± 15.4 in gentamicin group. Renal histopathologic examination confirmed acute tubular necrosis in this group. In rats treated with gentamicin + Quercetin and gentamicin + Coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub>, a partial improvement in biochemical and histologic parameters was observed. BUN values were 117.3 ± 15.4, 44.0 ± 8.3, 47.8 ± 13.8 in gentamicin, gentamicin plus Quercetin and gentamicin plus Coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub> treated groups, respectively. Creatinine values were 4.3 ± 0.6, 0.8 ± 0.1, 1.5 ± 0.4 in gentamicin, gentamicin plus Quercetin and gentamicin plus Coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub> treated groups, respectively.

**Conclusion:** These results suggest that the administration of Quercetin and Coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub> may have a protective effect on gentamicin-induced nephrotoxicity in rats.

**Keywords:** Gentamicin, nephrotoxicity, Coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub>, Quercetin

### Öz

**Amaç:** Gentamisinle böbrek yetmezliği oluşturulan sıçanlarda Quercetin ve CoQ10 nun antioksidan etkilerini araştırmak amaçlanmıştır.

**Gereç ve Yöntem:** Sıçanlara gentamicin (100 mg/kg/day, i.m., günde 1 kez), gentamicin (100 mg/kg/day, i.m.) + Quercetin (15 mg/kg i.p. günde 1 kez) and gentamicin (100 mg/kg/day, i.m.) + CoQ10 (8 mg/kg i.m. günde 1 kez) uygulandı.

**Bulgular:** Kontrol grubundaki BUN değeri 26.8 ± 0.8 (mg/100 mL); buna karşın gentamisin grubunda 117.3 ± 15.4 bulunmuştur. Böbrek histopatolojik inceleme, bu grupta akut tübüler nekrozu doğruladı. Gentamicin + Quercetin ve gentamicin + CoQ10 uygulanan sıçanlarda biyokimyasal ve histolojik parametrelerde kısmi iyileşme gözlemlenmiştir. BUN değerleri gentamisin, gentamisin + Quercetin and gentamisin + CoQ10 gruplarında sırasıyla 117.3 ± 15.4, 44.0 ± 8.3, 47.8 ± 13.8 bulunmuştur. Gentamisin ile aralarında anlamlı farklılık bulunmuştur. Kreatinin değerleri gentamisin, gentamisin + Quercetin ve gentamisin + Koenzim Q10 ile tedavi edilen gruplarda sırasıyla 4.3 ± 0.6, 0.8 ± 0.1, 1.5 ± 0.4 idi.

**Sonuç:** Bu sonuçlar Quercetin ve CoQ10 uygulanmasının gentamisinle nefrotoksisite oluşturulan sıçanlarda koruyucu etkisi olduğunu göstermiştir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Gentamisin, nefrotoksisite, Coenzyme Q10, Quercetin

## INTRODUCTION

Gentamicin, is a aminoglycoside antibiotic. Gentamicin accumulates in renal proximal tubules, brush border loses, cell desquamation and reduced

glomerular filtration rate, its stimulates tubular necrosis. Oxidative stress and inflammation has been reported to plays an important role in nephrotoxicity induced by gentamicin<sup>1</sup>.

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It has been showed that gentamicin increases the production of free oxygen radicals and leads to a deficiency in antioxidant enzymes. In different pathological conditions including renal and cardiac diseases, reactive oxygen species (ROS) were claimed to be the death cause of some cells<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, it was stated that both free radical scavengers and some antioxidant agents such as rosuvastatin<sup>3</sup> and irbesartan<sup>4</sup> prevented gentamicin-induced renal failure.

Quercetin (3,5,7,3',4'-pentahydroxy flavone), is a natural polyphenolic flavonoid existing in vegetables, fruits, cereals, plants, tea, grapes and red wine. Flavonoids widely exist in edible plants<sup>2</sup>. Quercetin have some distinct characteristics such as anticancer effects<sup>5</sup>, antihypertansif effects<sup>6</sup>, antiinflamatuvar effects<sup>7</sup>. Several mechanisms are attributed to the antioxidant effects of quercetin like free radical scavenging, chelating metal ions, protecting LDL from peroxidation and inhibiting key enzymes such as xanthine oxidase and NADPH oxidase<sup>8</sup>. An essential component of the mitochondrial respiratory chain, Coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub>, shuttles electrons from complexes I and II and from electron transferring flavoprotein dehydrogenase (ETF-DH) to complex III<sup>9</sup>.

Coenzyme Q or ubiquinone is a redox- active lipoidal substance present in the hydrophobic middle region of the phospholipid bilayer of cellular membranes including those of the mitochondria. Three main functions are attributed to this lipid depending on distribution and concentration. Coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub> is highly efficient in preventing lipid, protein and DNA oxidation and it is continuously regenerated by intracellular reduction systems<sup>10</sup>.

Coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub> can be synthesized in tissue from farnesyl diphosphate and tyrosine and can be obtained from the consumption of meat, poultry, fish, vegetables and fruits; however, total absorption of coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub> from food is thought to be lower than 10%. Coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub> supplementation reduces oxidative stress and increases antioxidant enzyme activity in patients with coronary artery disease<sup>11</sup> and breast cancer<sup>12</sup>.

The purpose of our study is to examine protective effects of quercetin (coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub> and polyphenolic flavonoid) on nephrotoxicity caused by gentamicin in rats.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

In our study, Gentamicin sulphate (İ.E.Ulagay Genta ampoule 80 mg), Quercetin dehydrate (purity degree:  $\geq 98\%$  HPLC powder) (Sigma) and as well as Quercetin dissolved in DMSO were used. Solution was prepared by using SF to obtain 25% DMSO. 45 ml stock solution was prepared to obtain 3 mg of Quercetin in 1 ml. Furthermore, CoQ<sub>10</sub> (Sigma) dissolved in olive oil was used.

In our study, we used twenty-three male Wistar albino rats weighing 250 to 300 gram and taken from Center for Medical Research and Application. Rats were kept in metabolic cages in an ambient where room temperature is  $24 \pm 2^\circ\text{C}$ . 12 hours light-12 hours dark cycle was applied. Rats were fed by normal water and bait. The experimental protocols were confirmed by the Local Ethics Committee of the Çukurova University Medical Sciences Experimental Search and Application Center. The procedures in the study were in accordance with the NIH Guide for Care and Use of Animals.

The rats were divided into 4 groups and both water consumption and urine excretion of the animals were monitored for 7 days.

**1. Control Group:** 0.2 ml of physiological saline was daily intramuscular injection (i.m.) once administered to 5 rats for 7 days.

**2. Gentamicin Group:** 100 mg/ kg (i.m.) of gentamicin was daily once intramuscularly injected to 8 rats for 7 days.

**3. Gentamicin and Quercetin Group:** Intramuscular injection of once 100 mg/kg gentamicin and daily once 15 mg/kg i.p Quercetin was administered to 5 rats for 7 days.

**4. Gentamicin and Coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub> Group:** Daily once 100 mg/kg of i.m gentamicin and daily once 8 mg/kg of i.m CoQ<sub>10</sub> (by dissolving in olive oil) was administered to 5 rats for 7 days.

24 hours after the last injection, urine samples were collected. Intracardiac blood samples were taken following anesthesia by 40 mg/kg of ketamine and then the animals were decapitated. For histopathological examination, left kidney of the animals was removed by incision of center-line of abdomen. After being fixed in 10% formaldehyde, tissues were sent to pathology. In blood samples taken from experimental animals, BUN and serum creatinine were evaluated. Creatinine clearance was

measured by means of standard methods [urine creatinine (mg/dl) x volume of daily urine x 1.73 / serum creatinine (mg/dl) x 1440].

After removed kidneys were fixed in 10% formaldehyde solution, they were embedded in paraffin. Sections at thickness of 3-5  $\mu$ m were obtained and stained with hematoxylin-eosin. Following these procedures, samples were examined by light microscopy. Parameters such as tubular necrosis, degeneration, tubular atrophy, hypertrophy and peri-vascular inflammation were evaluated by light microscopy and the ranking was as follows: +: slight, ++: moderate, +++: severe changes according to the extent of damage observed.

### Statistical analysis

Data values were expressed as mean  $\pm$  SEM. SPSS 21 software was used for statistical analysis. Kruskal-Wallis test was applied to determine the normal distribution or variance of groups that were not homogenic. The Mann-Whitney U test was applied for comparison within the group. Significance level was set up as  $p < 0.05$ .

### RESULTS

A significant difference was found in terms of serum BUN levels between these groups [H (3, N=23)=14.9  $p=0.002$ ]. BUN levels significantly increased in Gentamicin group (U=0.00  $p=0.003$ ) and Gentamicin + Quercetin (U = 1.5  $p = 0.021$ ) compared to control group. When compared with Gentamicin group, this value significantly decreased in Gentamicin + Quercetin (U=2  $p=0.008$ ) and Gentamicin + CoQ<sub>10</sub> (U=3  $p=0.013$ ) groups. There was no significant difference between the groups of Gentamicin + Quercetin and Gentamicin + CoQ<sub>10</sub>. A significant difference was found in terms of serum

creatinine levels (mg/dl) between the groups [H (3, N=23) = 18.3  $p=0.000$ ]. Creatinine levels significantly increased in Gentamicin group (U=0.00  $p=0.003$ ), Gentamicin + Quercetin group (U=0.00  $p=0.005$ ) and Gentamicin + CoQ<sub>10</sub> group (U=0.00  $p=0.005$ ) compared to control group.

A significant decrease was detected in Gentamicin + Quercetin group (U=1  $p=0.005$ ) and Gentamicin + Coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub> group (U=3  $p=0.013$ ) compared to Gentamicin group. There was no significant difference between the groups of Gentamicin+ Quercetin and Gentamicin + Coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub> (U=5.5  $p=0.14$ ). No significant difference was found between the creatinine levels of the groups [H (3, N=23) = 2.09  $p=0.55$ ] (Table 1).

### Histopathological analysis

In histopathological examination, kidney sections were evaluated in terms of tubular necrosis, tubular degeneration, glomerular atrophy, glomerular hypertrophy, peri-vascular inflammation (Table 2). As expected, normal histopathological findings were observed in control group (Figure 1A). Severe tubular necrosis, tubular degeneration, glomerular atrophy and hypertrophy, and peri-vascular inflammation were obviously observed in gentamicin group (Figure 1B).

It was observed that tubular necrosis, tubular degeneration and glomerular hypertrophy were at slight levels while glomerular atrophy and peri-vascular inflammation were at moderate levels in Gentamicin + Quercetin group (Figure 1C). On the other hand, tubular necrosis, glomerular atrophy and peri-vascular inflammation were at slight levels, while tubular degeneration and glomerular hypertrophy were at moderate levels in Gentamicin + Coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub> group (Figure 1D).

**Table 1. Comparison of levels of BUN, creatinine and creatinine clearance in blood samples of test groups**

	BUN (mg/dl)	Creatinine (mg/dl)	Creatinine Clearance	n
Control	26.8 $\pm$ 0.8	0.3 $\pm$ 0.0	0.69 $\pm$ 0.28	5
Gentamicin	117.3 $\pm$ 15.4 <sup>+</sup>	4.3 $\pm$ 0.6 <sup>+</sup>	0.25 $\pm$ 0.06	8
Gentamicin+Quercetin	44.0 $\pm$ 8.3 <sup>+</sup> *	0.8 $\pm$ 0.1 <sup>+</sup> *	0.16 $\pm$ 0.06	5
Gentamicin+CoQ <sub>10</sub>	47.8 $\pm$ 13.8*	1.5 $\pm$ 0.4 <sup>+</sup> *	0.28 $\pm$ 0.09	5

Data were expressed as mean  $\pm$  SE.

\*Shows the significance level compared to Gentamicin group ( $p < 0.05$ ).

<sup>+</sup>Shows the significance level compared to control group ( $p < 0.05$ ).

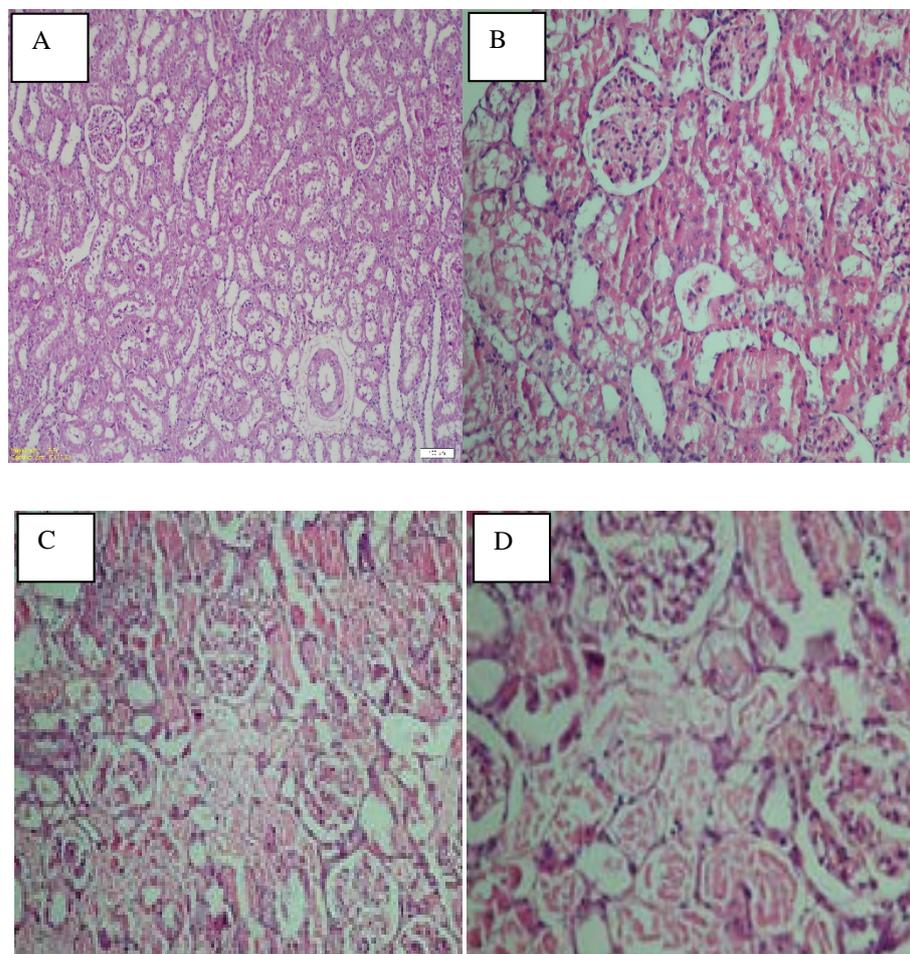


Figure 1. Histopathological kidney sections: (A) Control group, (B) Gentamicin, (C) Gentamicin + Quercetin group, (D) Gentamicin + CoQ10, (H & E  $\times$  100).

Table 2. Results of histopathological analyses

	Control	Gentamicin	Gentamicin + Quercetin	Gentamicin + CoQ <sub>10</sub>
Tubular necrosis	-	+++	+	+
Tubular degeneration	-	+++	+	++
Glomerular atrophy	-	+++	++	+
Glomerular hypertrophy	-	+++	+	++
Perivascular inflammation	-	+++	++	+

Damage was evaluated qualitatively as +: slight, ++: moderate, +++: severe

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## DISCUSSION

Gentamicin-induced nephrotoxicity is caused by direct tubular necrosis in the proximal tubules. Gentamicin accumulated in the renal proximal tubules. The exact mechanism of gentamicin-induced nephrotoxicity is unknown. It has been reported that free radical

formations are the major mechanism of gentamicin-induced nephrotoxicity<sup>4</sup>. Severe complications of nephropathy, which gentamicin caused, restrict clinical usage of gentamicin. Aminoglycoside toxicity, including gentamicin, develops as a result of generation of destructive ROS. Gentamicin causes renal mitochondria to produce superoxide ( $O_2^-$ ),

anion-peroxide (H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>) and hydroxyl radicals (HO) which are strong mediators of tissue injury. Gentamicin toxicity develops as a result of production of destructive free oxygen radicals, and decreases the glomerular filtration rate by means of other mechanisms<sup>13</sup>. Several studies demonstrated that free O<sub>2</sub> radicals caused renal damage. Furthermore, a number of studies showed free radical scavengers had useful effects on renal damage<sup>14,15,16,17</sup>.

It was found that polyphenols, which exist in large quantities in foods, not only removed free oxygen radicals but also had an important role in antioxidant system as a result of their ability to act as if enzyme modulator and chelating metal agent<sup>18</sup>. Quercetin is a natural polyphenolic flavonoid existing in vegetables, fruits, cereals, plants, tea, grapes and red wine<sup>2</sup>. Several mechanisms are attributed to the antioxidant effects of quercetin like free radical scavenging, chelating metal ions, protecting LDL from peroxidation and inhibiting key enzymes such as xanthine oxidase and NADPH oxidase<sup>8</sup>.

Coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub> is known as an intracellular antioxidant protecting membrane phospholipids, mitochondrial membrane proteins and low-density lipoproteins from oxidative damage caused by free radicals<sup>11</sup>.

Taking into account all these data, we examined the protective effects of antioxidant agents (Quercetin and Coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub>) against nephrotoxicity caused by gentamicin in our study. In our study, it was observed that levels of serum BUN and creatinine increased, while level of creatinine clearance declined in gentamicin group. In renal histopathological examination, extensive degenerative changes were detected in tubules. These findings suggested development of acute kidney failure in gentamicin group. To prove renal damage, we examined levels of serum BUN and creatinine, calculated creatinine clearance by means of standard methods and as well as evaluated kidney histopathology.

100 mg/kg/day of Gentamicin was administered for 7 days to create nephrotoxicity. At the end of our study it was observed that gentamicin administered at the dosage of 100 mg/kg not only increased serum creatinine levels but also decreased GFR, which showed development of nephrotoxicity. In addition, glomerular dysfunction was accompanied by the increase of serum BUN levels. At the early stages of kidney diseases, serum creatinine levels are more

important than BUN levels because BUN levels appear after renal parenchymal damage.

As seen in previous studies, our study showed that gentamicin increased serum BUN and creatinine levels which are biochemical indicators of kidney function. These increased levels of serum BUN and creatinine indicated glomerular damage. On the other hand, serum BUN and creatinine levels significantly decreased when combination of Quercetin + gentamicin administered. However, no significant decrease was seen in terms of creatinine clearance. Significant decrease was also seen in serum BUN and creatinine levels when combination of Coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub> + gentamicin administered. We can see that Quercetin and Coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub> prevented renal toxicity caused by gentamicin.

Regarding that biochemical and histopathological values of kidney improved following the use of Quercetin and Coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub>, we can assume that free O<sub>2</sub> radicals play a role in nephrotoxicity caused by gentamicin. In a previous study it was seen that CoQ<sub>10</sub> both prevented glomerular hyperfiltration and proteinuria and had beneficial effects on preventing increased oxidative stress in diabetic rats<sup>20</sup>.

In our study we observed histopathological improvement in Gentamicin + Quercetin group compared to Gentamicin group. We also observed decreased tubular necrosis and tubular degeneration compared to Gentamicin + Quercetin group. Moreover we found a significant decrease in terms of tubular necrosis, glomerular atrophy, perivascular inflammation in Gentamicin + Coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub> group compared to Gentamicin group. There was no significant difference between the groups of Genta + Quercetin and Genta + Coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub>. In conclusion, it was found that gentamicin led to acute kidney failure in rat kidney, and that administration of antioxidants such as Quercetin and Coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub>, had protective effects against nephrotoxicity caused by gentamicin. Since they improved biochemical and histopathological toxic effects of Gentamicin on kidney, we can say that Quercetin and Coenzyme Q<sub>10</sub> are potent free radical scavengers.

**Yazar Katkıları:** Çalışma konsepti/Tasarımı: YK; Veri toplama: NP, YKD; Veri analizi ve yorumlama: GG; Yazı taslağı: NP; İçerğin eleştirel incelenmesi: NP; Son onay ve sorumluluk: NP, YK, GG, YKD; Teknik ve malzeme desteği: YKD; Süpervizyon: YK; Fon sağlama (mevcut ise): yok.

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