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**Abstract**

**Relationship between Fatigue Severity and Heart Rate Variability in Middle-Aged Male Workers**

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**Objectives:** This study investigated the relationship between the severity of fatigue and the cardiac autonomic function by analyzing the heart rate variability on middle-aged male workers.

**Methods:** The severity of fatigue and heart rate variability were assessed with the control measures of age, body mass index, blood pressure, alcohol consumption, smoking history, regular exercise on 82 healthy middle-aged male workers in an annual health checkup. The severity of fatigue was evaluated by the Fatigue Severity Scale (FSS), which was developed by Krupp. The 5-minute electrocardiographic recordings were analyzed as a function of the time and the frequency domain methods of the heart rate variability (HRV). Standard Deviation of the NN intervals (SDNN), Root-Mean-Square of Successive Differences (rMSSD), Total Power (TP), Low Frequency (LF: 0.04~0.15 Hz) power, High Frequency (HF: 0.15-0.4 Hz) power, LF/HF ratio were used as the indices of the HRV. For a comparison of autonomic nervous functions and other variables, the subjects were divided into three fatigue groups based on the FSS score as follows: low (N=31), moderate (N=33), high (N=18) fatigue groups

**Results:** There were no significant differences in age, blood pressure, heart rate, body mass index, alcohol consumption, or regular exercise except for the smoking history among the groups. In addition, there were no significant differences in the time domain analysis (SDNN, rMSSD) of HRV among the groups. Spectral analysis of the HRV showed that the mean amplitudes of the HF and LF component were lower in the high fatigue group, whereas there was no significant difference in the LF/HF ratio among the fatigue groups. There were no significant differences in the HRV indices between the smoking and non-smoking groups. No significant interacting effects between the severity of fatigue and smoking on the HRV were observed.

**Conclusions:** The association between severe fatigue and the reduced high and low frequency components of the HRV in middle-aged male workers reflects a dysregulation of the cardiac autonomous control. Although the pathophysiological mechanism of this association remains unclear, these results might explain their increased risk for cardiovascular disease. However, these effects need to be confirmed through a well-designed prospective study.

**Key Words:** Fatigue, Heart rate variability, Autonomic nervous function, Middle-aged men

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Force of the European Society of Cardiology and the North American Society of Pacing and Electrophysiology, 1996).

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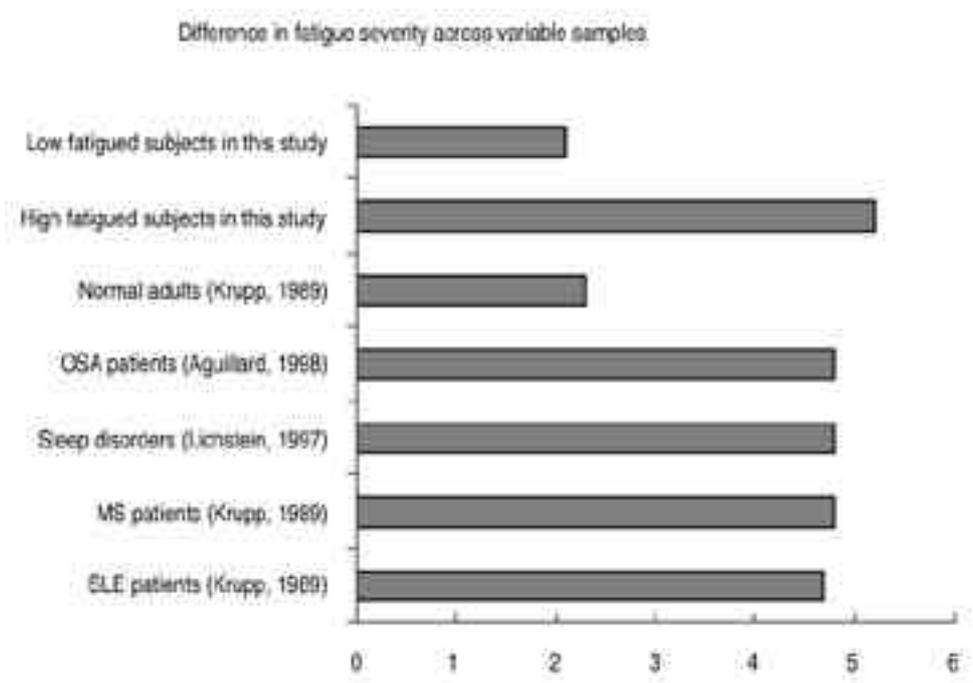
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(Wessely, 1995). 1989 Krupp Fatigue Severity Scale(FSS) 가 ( ). Fatigue Severity Scale 가- 9

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Zung SDS(Self-rating Depression Scale) 가- ( , 2000), DSM-IV 가 (Taylor et al. 2000).

( , 2001). Fatigue Severity Scale(FSS) 가 , Krupp (1989)



**Fig. 1.** Fatigue assessment in different populations showing comparison between normal and various disorders known to be associated with subjective report of high fatigue. (OSA: obstructive sleep apnea, MS: multiple sclerosis, SLE: systemic lupus erythematosis)

Friedberg(1995) 가 FSS score가 3.0, 4.5, 3.0, 4.5, 2.1±0.7, 5.2±0.4 Scheffe (log transformation, ln) 가 SPSS (version 11.0) 5%

Fig. 1

FSS score Krupp (1989) 2.3±0.7, 4.7±1.5, 4.8±1.3 Lichstein (1997) 206 4.8 Aguiard (1988) 32 FSS score가 4.8±1.4 1. 2) 31, 33, 18 (FSS score) 2.1±0.7, 3.7±0.4, 5.2±0.4 (p<0.001). SA-2000E(MEDICORE) 5 (p=0.010), 가 64.5% 가 RR (SDNN, The Standard deviation of Normal to Normal intervals, in milliseconds) RR (rMSSD, Square root of the mean of the sum of the square of differences between adjacent NN intervals, in milliseconds) 가 2. (TP, Total Power:  $1.15 \times 10^{-5} \sim 0.40$  Hz), Scheffe (LF, Low Frequency Power: 0.04~0.15 Hz), (HF, High Frequency Power: 0.15~0.40 Hz), (LF/HF ratio) (Akselrod et al, 1981; Malik & Camm, 1993).

82, 18, 9, 5, 72.7%, 61.1%, (Table 1).

3. In(natural logarithm) LF HF (p=0.009, p=0.015) In TP LF/HF ratio (Table 2).

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(Table 3).

**Table 1.** Comparisons of participant characteristics among fatigue groups

	Low fatigue (n=31)	Moderate fatigue (n=33)	High fatigue (n=18)	P value*
Age (years)	34.8 ± 2.7	35.1 ± 3.6	34.9 ± 3.4	0.939
FSS score	2.1 ± 0.7	3.7 ± 0.4	5.2 ± 0.4	<0.001
Heart rate (beats/min)	66.1 ± 9.8	67.7 ± 9.5	66.6 ± 8.1	0.766
Resting SBP (mmHg)	121.8 ± 11.6	118.6 ± 13.2	123.2 ± 12.1	0.397
Resting DBP (mmHg)	77.7 ± 10.0	76.1 ± 9.0	77.7 ± 7.2	0.742
BMI (kg/m <sup>2</sup> )	23.7 ± 2.3	22.8 ± 2.2	23.9 ± 3.4	0.227
Alcohol drinking				0.962
No <sup>†</sup>	8 (25.8%)	8 (24.2%)	5 (27.8%)	
Yes	23 (74.2%)	25 (75.8%)	13 (72.2%)	
Cigarette smoking				0.010
No	20 (64.5%)	9 (27.3%)	7 (38.9%)	
Yes	11 (35.5%)	24 (72.7%)	11 (61.1%)	
Regular exercise				0.662
No	17 (54.8%)	18 (54.5%)	12 (66.7%)	
Yes <sup>‡</sup>	14 (45.2%)	15 (45.5%)	6 (33.3%)	

\* <sup>2</sup>-test was used to test univariate associations between categorical variables (alcohol, smoking, exercise). One-way ANOVA was used to compare other continuous variables for the low fatigue, moderate fatigue, and high fatigue groups. Data are expressed as mean ± standard deviation and number(%).

<sup>†</sup> Alcohol consumption: teetotallers <sup>‡</sup> Regular exercise: 30min/day and 3/week

FSS: Fatigue Severity Scale (Krupp et al. 1989) BMI: Body mass index

**Table 2.** Comparisons of cardiac autonomic function assessed by heart rate variability among fatigue groups

	Low fatigue (n=31)	Moderate fatigue (n=33)	High fatigue (n=18)	P value*
Time domain analysis				
SDNN (msec)	54.61 ± 20.83	47.24 ± 17.50	45.98 ± 20.11	0.210
rMSSD (msec)	39.30 ± 18.00	33.37 ± 14.42	31.08 ± 14.76	0.166
Spectral (frequency) power				
ln TP (msec <sup>2</sup> )	7.48 ± 0.85	7.21 ± 0.86	7.01 ± 0.62	0.135
ln LF (msec <sup>2</sup> )	6.39 ± 0.86 <sup>†</sup>	5.95 ± 0.94	5.60 ± 0.70 <sup>†</sup>	0.009
ln HF (msec <sup>2</sup> )	5.74 ± 0.80 <sup>‡</sup>	5.44 ± 0.79	5.03 ± 0.82 <sup>‡</sup>	0.015
LF/HF ratio	2.30 ± 1.40	2.03 ± 1.20	2.34 ± 1.89	0.687

\* One-way analysis of variance and Scheffe's multiple comparison test were used for comparing differences in heart rate variability variables among fatigue groups. Data are expressed as mean ± standard deviation.

<sup>†</sup> Significant comparison; low fatigue vs. high fatigue, P<0.05

<sup>‡</sup> Significant comparison; low fatigue vs. high fatigue, P<0.05

SDNN: the standard deviation of normal to normal intervals

rMSSD: root-mean-square of successive differences

TP: total power for the 5-minute cycle (0~0.40 Hz)

LF: low-frequency power (0.04~0.15 Hz)

HF: high-frequency power (0.15~0.40 Hz)

LF/HF ratio: low-frequency/high-frequency power ratio

ln: natural logarithm (The spectral power data were log transformed.)

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**Table 3.** Effect of fatigue and smoking on cardiac autonomic nervous functions by two-way analysis of variance

	Fatigue		Smoking		Interaction	
	F	P	F	P	F	P
Time domain analysis						
SDNN (msec)	1.07	0.35	1.65	0.20	0.96	0.39
rMSSD (msec)	1.33	0.27	0.53	0.47	0.17	0.85
Spectral (frequency) power						
ln TP (msec <sup>2</sup> )	1.38	0.26	0.77	0.39	0.43	0.65
ln LF (msec <sup>2</sup> )	3.71	0.03	0.95	0.33	0.19	0.82
ln HF (msec <sup>2</sup> )	3.92	0.02	0.19	0.66	0.22	0.80
LF/HF ratio	0.67	0.51	1.29	0.26	1.37	0.26

SDNN: the standard deviation of normal to normal intervals

rMSSD: root-mean-square of successive differences

TP: total power for the 5-minute cycle (0~0.40 Hz)

LF: low-frequency power (0.04~0.15 Hz)

HF: high-frequency power (0.15~0.40 Hz)

LF/HF ratio: low-frequency/high-frequency power ratio

ln: natural logarithm (The spectral power data were log transformed.)



Scale(FSS)  
 (N=31), (N=33),  
 (N=18) 가  
 5  
 Standard Deviation of NN intervals(SDNN),  
 Root-Mean-Square of Successive Differences  
 (rMSSD) Total Power(TP), Low  
 Frequency(LF: 0.04~0.15 Hz) power, High  
 Frequency(HF: 0.15~0.4 Hz) power, LF/HF  
 :  
 0.4, 2.1±0.7, 3.7±  
 5.2±0.4 (p<0.001).  
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가 (Fatigue Severity Scale)

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2.	.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	가 .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	가 가 가	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	, 가	1	2	3	4	5	6	7