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Exploring the Impact of Caffeine Intake on Ocular Physiology: A Comprehensive Analysis of Accommodation, Pupil Dilation, and Intraocular Pressure

[1]Nijin S G, [2]Canara Abdul Rahmath, [3]Della Davis

[1]Assistant Professor, [2]Optometrist, [3]Lecturer
[1]Department of Optometry,
[1]Kanachur institute of allied health sciences, Manglore, India.

Abstract :

Background : Caffeine is a psychoactive substance that people use in a variety of forms and in varying amounts all around the world. It has a well-known influence on intraocular pressure (IOP), pupil size and accommodation but the potential variations between consumption of low- and high-caffeinated drinks remain unknown.

Objective : To record and study the changes in IOP; amplitude of accommodation, and pupil size after caffeine consumption.

Purpose : Caffeine, an autonomic stimulant, is said to have an impact on visual performance. The point of this study was to see if caffeine ingestion was associated with accommodation, pupil dilation and IOP;

Methods : In this cross-sectional study, 77 healthy individuals were categorized for low- and high-caffeine consumption. All participants were ingested with caffeinated coffee and caffeinated soft drink with quantity of 150ml/cup and were measured at baseline, 20, and 40 min of ingestion.

Results : High caffeine consumption was linked to a significant increase in accommodation, IOP; and pupil size over time ($P<0.001$). Induced an IOP rise of mean (12.19±1.05) to (22.31 ± 20.70), Mean pupil size of (2.96 ±0.21) to (5.05 ±4.61) and accommodation from (10.48 ±1.65) to (18.02 ±2.12). Low caffeine ingestion leads to tolerable mean changes in ocular parameters. Mean difference is significant at 0.05 level. One-way ANOVA was used to analyse the data.

Conclusion : According to the findings of this study, caffeine have an effect on visual functions. These findings suggest that low caffeine tolerance exists, whereas high caffeine may have important implications in the management of glaucoma.

IndexTerms **- Caffeine, Intraocular pressure (IOP), Pupil diameter, Accommodation, Visual functions, Glaucoma**

INTRODUCTION

Caffeine, a widely consumed psychoactive substance [1]found in coffee, tea, and various energy drinks, has been a topic of interest not only for its stimulating effects on the central nervous system but also for its potential impact on ocular parameters. This paper delves into the nuanced relationship between caffeine intake and three critical aspects of ocular physiology: accommodation, pupil dilation, and intraocular pressure.

Accommodation, the eye's ability to adjust its focus on objects at varying distances, plays a pivotal role in visual acuity and overall eye function. The focusing of images onto the retina is achieved through ocular accommodation, a reflex driven by the need to eliminate blur. This process involves the contraction or relaxation of the ciliary muscles, altering the shape of the eye's crystalline lens as it adapts to objects at various distances[1].Pupil dilation, regulated by the autonomic nervous system, is a dynamic response to changes in ambient light, influencing the amount of light entering the eye and subsequently affecting visual perception[2]. Intraocular pressure, a crucial parameter in maintaining the structural integrity of the eye, is tightly regulated and has implications for conditions such as glaucoma. The iris sphincter muscle undergoes constriction, leading to a reduction in pupillary diameter under the influence of parasympathetic innervation, while the iris dilator muscle experiences activation by sympathetic innervation, resulting in an increase in pupil diameter[3-5].

Intraocular Pressure (IOP) refers to the pressure exerted by the fluid in the anterior cavity known as aqueous humor, with a normal range typically falling between 10 to 20 mmHg. The regulation of IOP is primarily governed by the equilibrium between the production and drainage of aqueous humor[1,2]. An imbalance in the production and drainage of aqueous humor can elevate intraocular pressure (IOP) beyond normal levels, subsequently resulting in damage to the optic nerve head and the emergence of visual field defects[3-4].Increaased IOP is said to be a major risk for Glaucoma[5,6]. Women were found to be more prone for developing Glaucoma than men[7-10].

While the effects of caffeine on the central nervous system and its role as a stimulant are well-documented, the impact of caffeine on ocular dynamics remains a less-explored domain, but it is said to have changes in ocular parameters including tear secretion, intraocular pressure and macular perfusion[11-13].Recently, some researchers have found significant changes in some vision related tasks associated with caffeine intake[14,15]. The existing literature provides some evidence of caffeine's potential to influence ocular parameters, yet a comprehensive and systematic analysis is lacking. This paper aims to bridge this gap by synthesizing existing knowledge and presenting new insights into how caffeine intake may modulate accommodation, pupil dilation, and intraocular pressure.

Understanding the interplay between caffeine consumption and ocular physiology holds significance not only for individuals seeking to optimize their visual performance but also for clinical implications in the management of ocular conditions. As we delve into the intricate web of caffeine's effects on the eye, this research contributes to the broader understanding of lifestyle factors influencing ocular health, paving the way for informed recommendations and potential interventions in both preventative and therapeutic contexts

NEED OF THE STUDY.

While there is limited evidence regarding the direct impact of caffeine on ocular physiology, it primarily functions as a central nervous system stimulant with documented effects on blood pressure and heart rate. Current research on the association between caffeine consumption and ocular conditions such as glaucoma remains inconclusive. If a public awareness campaign is considered, collaboration with eye care professionals is advised to ensure that information is evidence-based and accurately reflects the latest scientific understanding. Recommendations to patients should be crafted with caution, acknowledging the variability in individual responses to caffeine and prioritizing guidance from healthcare professionals.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This cross-sectional study aims to investigate the health-related characteristics of 77 healthy young individuals from Kanachur Institute of Allied Health Sciences, Manglore. Ethical considerations include obtaining informed consent, and the study has received approval from an ethics committee. The inclusion criteria for this study encompassed healthy participants of both sexes, specifically aged 19 to 25 years, possessing a refractive correction of spherical equivalent $\leqslant \pm 0.50$D, and achieving a best spectacle-corrected visual acuity of 6/6 or better. Additionally, participants were required to be free of any systemic or ocular diseases, not currently taking any medication, and devoid of allergies to xanthines. The baseline intraocular pressure (IOP) of participants had to be less than 21mmHg. Conversely, exclusion criteria comprised individuals with a history of ocular surgery or systemic/ocular health diseases, those exhibiting accommodative anomalies or pupillary defects, and individuals who were regular smokers.

All participants were recruited following the acquisition of written informed consent, with a focus on investigating the potential influence of routine coffee consumption on various ocular parameters. The inclusion criteria stipulated a minimum coffee and caffeinated soft drink intake of 150ml as part of participants' daily routines. A thorough ocular examination was conducted, encompassing patient history assessment, visual acuity testing, retinoscopy, slit lamp examination, and fundus examination. Following a standardized 20-minute interval and 40-minute post-coffee consumption, the measurement of monocular amplitude of accommodation utilized the Royal Air Force (RAF) Ruler, with subjects wearing spectacles at a 15 mm vertex distance and focusing on a movable target at 40 cm. Pupil size, measured in a dimly lit room using a ruler, involved recording the horizontal diameter in cm, which was then converted to millimeters. Intraocular pressure (IOP) was assessed with a Schiotz tonometer, employing weight-based technology, and the readings were referenced on a conversion table to determine IOP values.

Statistical analysis

Statistical analysis was performed using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to explore potential differences in the measured parameters. Descriptive statistics were employed for demographic data, and significance was set at $p < 0.05$

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Total of 77 subjects, 154 eyes were considered for the study. Out of 77 subjects, 8 were of 19 years, 16 were of 20 years, 21 were of 21 years, 15 were of 22 years, 8 were of 23 years, 5 were of 24 years and 4 were of 25 years.

Table 1: comparison of IOP, pupil size and accommodation in both low and high caffeine consumers

ocular parameters	high/low content	baseline		20 minutes		40 minutes	
		OD	OS	OD	OS	OD	OS
pupil size	low consumption	2.96±0.21	2.98±0.19	3.28±0.24	3.31±0.20	3.63±0.27	3.64±0.23
	high consumption	3.08±0.22	3.15±0.19	3.69±0.14	3.73±0.17	4.47±0.23	5.05±4.61
intraocular pressure	low consumption	12.19±1.05	12.22±0.99	13.00±1.14	13.08±1.03	13.91±1.31	15.53± 13.73
	high consumption	12.07±0.89	12.09±0.88	15.47±1.34	15.47±1.36	19.97±1.70	22.31± 20.70
		baseline		20 minutes		40 minutes	
amplitude of accommodation	low consumption	10.48±1.65		11.05±1.66		11.75±1.75	
	high consumption	10.42±1.63		13.95±1.67		18.02±2.12	

Comparison between all the ocular parameters (table 1) declared that there is a difference in high and low consumers of caffeine in all 3 time intervals with slight variations in both the eyes too. Amplitude of accommodation, IOP and pupil size did not differ significantly between males and females ($P>0.05$). Consumption of the caffeine-containing beverage by subjects resulted in increase in amplitude of accommodation, pupil diameter and intraocular pressure.

In the context of this cross-sectional study, caffeine, a member of the xanthine class of weak stimulants, has garnered widespread use owing to its purported beneficial effects. The investigation revealed a significant increase in both the amplitude of accommodation and pupil diameter ($p < 0.001$) following the ingestion of a caffeine-containing beverage. These findings align with previous research, including studies by Kirshner and Schmid[13], who observed a heightened tonicity of ciliary muscles after caffeine consumption, leading to the rejection of reading plus lenses. Similarly, Zhai et al [14]reported an enhanced accommodative response under specific stimuli conditions following caffeine intake.

The observed increase in IOP with caffeine intake suggests a potential tolerance development linked to habitual caffeine consumption. This finding holds particular significance for ophthalmologists and optometrists, especially when advising glaucoma patients or those at risk. The study recommends caution in interpreting IOP assessments in patients with habitual caffeine intake and suggests refraining from caffeine consumption before IOP evaluations for accurate assessments, particularly in individuals with glaucoma diagnoses or ocular hypertension.

In summary, the study indicates that caffeine exerts paradoxical effects on the intrinsic eye muscles, manifesting as pupil dilation, increased IOP, and heightened accommodative amplitude. These findings contribute valuable insights into the complexities of caffeine's impact on ocular parameters, emphasizing the need for nuanced considerations in clinical recommendations and evaluations, particularly in the context of eye health and related visual functions.

The ingestion of caffeine was found to impact pupil size, intraocular pressure (IOP), and accommodation in this study, indicating a potential influence on various visual functions. Preliminary evidence suggests that the effects of caffeine on IOP response may be subject to tolerance. These findings have implications for eye care specialists, particularly in the management and prevention of glaucoma. The observed alterations in pupil size, IOP, and accommodation underscore the intricate relationship between caffeine and ocular parameters, urging caution and individualized recommendations based on caffeine habits. As this evidence is preliminary, further research is needed to elucidate mechanisms and refine guidelines for managing patients with glaucoma or those at risk. In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the nuanced relationship between caffeine consumption and ocular parameters, prompting thoughtful consideration in the context of eye care practices

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