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## Effectiveness of sub-maximal intermittent exercise on muscle glycogen depletion, PGC-1 $\alpha$ and PDK-4 gene expression

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### ABSTRACT

Several metabolic gene expressions are regulated in concert with muscle glycogen status. We hypothesized that intermittent exercise performed at high but sub-maximal intensities with long recovery periods would induce a low glycogen state that would stimulate peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor- $\gamma$  coactivator-1 $\alpha$  (PGC1- $\alpha$ ) and pyruvate dehydrogenase kinase-4 (PDK-4) gene expression in muscle. Nine young human subjects performed two intermittent exercise sessions. One session consisted of 60 s cycling bouts at VO<sub>2</sub>max (IE<sub>100%</sub>), and the other session consisted of 75 s cycling bouts at 80% VO<sub>2</sub>max (IE<sub>80%</sub>). Twelve bouts of exercise were completed in both sessions with a 4 min rest between each bout. Muscle specimens were obtained at pre-exercise and immediately, 1.5 h and 3 h post-exercise. Muscle glycogen was significantly decreased after both sessions (IE<sub>100%</sub>, 94.1  $\pm$  5.8 to 38.7  $\pm$  5.5 mmol/kg w.w.; IE<sub>80%</sub>, 94.6  $\pm$  9.1 to 53.3  $\pm$  4.8 mmol/kg w.w.; both P < 0.05 vs pre-exercise). Muscle glycogen depletion was greater in IE<sub>100%</sub> than in IE<sub>80%</sub> (P < 0.05). PGC-1 $\alpha$  and PDK-4 mRNA expression were significantly increased after exercise in both IE<sub>100%</sub> and IE<sub>80%</sub> (PGC-1 $\alpha$ : ~3.7 and ~2.9-fold, respectively; PDK-4: ~11.1 and ~3.5-fold, respectively; all P < 0.05). Maximal PDK-4 mRNA expression after exercise was significantly greater in IE<sub>100%</sub> than in IE<sub>80%</sub> (P < 0.05). In conclusion, high but sub-maximal intermittent exercise decreased muscle glycogen and stimulated PGC-1 $\alpha$  and PDK-4 mRNA expression, suggesting that increasing exercise intensity contributes to muscle glycogen depletion and PDK-4 mRNA expression in human skeletal muscle.

### KEYWORDS

 Intermittent Exercise; Muscle Glycogen; Peroxisome Proliferator-Activated Receptor- $\gamma$  Coactivator-1 $\alpha$ ; Pyruvate Dehydrogenase Kinase-4

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