

## **Effect of Resistance Exercise Intensity on the mRNA Expression of PGC-1 $\alpha$ Isoforms in Human Skeletal Muscle**

Neil A. Schwarz, Sarah K. McKinley, Mike Spillane, Joshua J. Gann, Thomas L. Andre, and Darryn S. Willoughby

Exercise Biochemical Nutrition Laboratory; Department of Health, Human Performance, & Recreation; Baylor University; Waco, TX

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*Advisor / Mentor: Willoughby, Darryn (darryn\_willoughby@baylor.edu)*

### ABSTRACT

Peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor gamma coactivator-1 alpha (PGC-1 $\alpha$ ) is a co-activator of transcription demonstrated to facilitate beneficial adaptations in skeletal muscle induced by exercise, such as mitochondrial biogenesis and enhanced capillarization. Recently, novel variants of PGC-1 $\alpha$  that result from transcription initiation from an alternative upstream promoter (exon 1b) and alternative splicing of the primary transcript have been identified. The original PGC-1 $\alpha$  isoform transcribed from the canonical promoter has been designated as PGC-1 $\alpha$ 1, and the novel PGC-1 $\alpha$  isoforms have been named PGC-1 $\alpha$ 2, PGC-1 $\alpha$ 3, and PGC-1 $\alpha$ 4. PGC-1 $\alpha$ 1, PGC-1 $\alpha$ 2 and PGC-1 $\alpha$ 3 have been shown to specifically affect energy metabolism in brown adipose tissue and skeletal muscle; whereas, PGC-1 $\alpha$ 4 has been implicated to promote skeletal muscle hypertrophy. The purpose of this study was to describe the mRNA expression of PGC-1 $\alpha$  isoforms in response to two resistance exercise intensities. In a randomized, uniform-balanced, cross-over design, 10 men [23.7  $\pm$  0.9 years old (mean  $\pm$  SE)] performed two separate lower-body resistance exercise sessions consisting of a lower-intensity protocol (50% of 1-RM) and a higher-intensity (80% of 1-RM) protocol with equal volume loads. Muscle samples were obtained at baseline, 45-min post-exercise (PE), 3-hr PE, 24-hr PE, and 48-hr PE from the vastus lateralis. From each muscle sample, mRNA expression of PGC-1 $\alpha$ 1, PGC-1 $\alpha$ 2, PGC-1 $\alpha$ 3, and PGC-1 $\alpha$ 4 was determined using reverse transcriptase-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) and normalized to  $\beta$ -actin. Two-way repeated-measures ANOVA were performed ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) with intensity and time as main effects. Post-hoc analyses were performed using Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) Test. Significant main effects existed for time ( $p < .05$ ), but not intensity ( $p > .05$ ) for all PGC-1 $\alpha$  isoforms. Additionally, no interaction effects were observed ( $p > .05$ ). Post-hoc analyses revealed mRNA expression of PGC-1 $\alpha$ 1 to be decreased at 24-hr and 48-hr PE. PGC-1 $\alpha$ 2 expression increased at 45-min and 3-hr PE before returning to baseline levels at 24-hr PE. PGC-1 $\alpha$ 3 expression increased above all other time points at 3-hr PE. Interestingly, PGC-1 $\alpha$ 4 mRNA expression decreased at 45-min PE before increasing to peak expression at 3-hr PE. At 48-hr PE, PGC-1 $\alpha$ 4 expression returned to below baseline expression similar to expression at 45-min PE. The results of this study demonstrate PGC-1 $\alpha$  transcription to initiate exclusively from the alternative upstream promoter in response to resistance exercise. Future research is needed to describe the expression of these PGC-1 $\alpha$  isoforms at the translational level in order to help elucidate their potential role in human skeletal muscle adaptations to resistance exercise.

