

Association of the new visceral adiposity index with coronary artery calcification and arterial stiffness in Korean population

Da-Hye Son ^{a,b,1}, Hyun-Su Ha ^{b,1}, Hye S. Lee ^c, Donghee Han ^d, Su-Yeon Choi ^e,
Eun J. Chun ^f, Hae-Won Han ^g, Sung H. Park ^h, Jidong Sung ⁱ, Hae O. Jung ^j,
Ji-Won Lee ^{a,*,1}, Hyuk-Jae Chang ^{k,**,1}

^a Department of Family Medicine, Yonsei University College of Medicine, Seoul, Republic of Korea

^b Department of Medicine, Graduate School, Yonsei University, Republic of Korea

^c Biostatistics Collaboration Unit, Department of Research Affairs, Yonsei University College of Medicine, Seoul, Republic of Korea

^d Department of Imaging and Medicine, Cedars Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles, CA, USA

^e Division of Cardiology, Seoul National University Healthcare System Gangnam Center, Seoul National University College of Medicine, Seoul, Republic of Korea

^f Department of Radiology, Seoul National University Bundang Hospital, Seoul, Republic of Korea

^g Department of Internal Medicine, Gangnam Heartscan Clinic, Seoul, Republic of Korea

^h Department of Radiology, Gangnam Heartscan Clinic, Seoul, Republic of Korea

ⁱ Division of Cardiology, Department of Medicine, Sungkyunkwan University School of Medicine, Heart Stroke & Vascular Institute, Samsung Medical Center, Seoul, Republic of Korea

^j Division of Cardiology, Cardiovascular Center, College of Medicine, Seoul St. Mary's Hospital, The Catholic University of Korea, Seoul, Republic of Korea

^k Division of Cardiology, Severance Cardiovascular Hospital, Yonsei University College of Medicine, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Received 2 November 2020; received in revised form 24 February 2021; accepted 25 February 2021

Handling Editor: A. Siani

Available online 23 March 2021

KEYWORDS

Cardiovascular disease;
Vascular calcification;
Visceral fat

Abstract *Background and aims:* The new visceral adiposity index (NVAI) is an indirect marker of visceral adipose tissue recently developed using a Korean population. Here we examined the association of NVAI with coronary artery calcification and arterial stiffness in asymptomatic Korean patients.

Methods and results: We analyzed data from 60,938 asymptomatic Korean adults. Odds ratios and 95% confidence intervals (CIs) for coronary artery calcification score (CACS) > 100 and brachial–ankle pulse wave velocity (baPWV) ≥ 14 m/s were calculated across NVAI tertiles using multiple logistic regression analysis. Receiver operating characteristic (ROC) and area under the curve (AUC) analyses were used to assess the ability of NVAI to predict moderate to high risk of cardiovascular disease. The prevalence of moderate and high risk of cardiovascular disease increased significantly as the NVAI tertile increased. The odds ratio (95% CI) of the highest NVAI tertile for CACS > 100 was 5.840 (5.101–6.686) for men and 18.916 (11.232–31.855) for women, after adjusting for confounders. All NVAI AUC values were significantly higher than the AUC values for other visceral adiposity markers.

Conclusions: This study provides the evidence that NVAI is independently and positively associated with coronary calcification and arterial stiffness in asymptomatic Korean adults.

© 2021 The Authors. Published by Elsevier B.V. on behalf of The Italian Diabetes Society, the Italian Society for the Study of Atherosclerosis, the Italian Society of Human Nutrition and the Department of Clinical Medicine and Surgery, Federico II University. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

* Corresponding author. Department of Family Medicine, Yonsei University College of Medicine, Gangnam Severance Hospital, 211 Eonju-ro, Gangnam-gu, Seoul, 06273, Republic of Korea. Fax: +82 3462 8209.

** Corresponding author. Division of Cardiology, Severance Cardiovascular Hospital, Yonsei-Cedars-Sinai Integrative Cardiovascular Imaging Research Center, Yonsei University College of Medicine, Yonsei University Health System, 50-1 Yonsei-ro, Seodaemun-gu, Seoul, 03722, Republic of Korea. Fax: +82 2365 6100.

E-mail addresses: indi5645@yuhs.ac (J.-W. Lee), hjchang@yuhs.ac (H.-J. Chang).

¹ These authors contributed equally to this work.

Introduction

Cardiovascular disease is a major cause of death worldwide. In 2019, the World Health Organization attributed 17.9 million deaths (31% of all deaths) to cardiovascular disease alone. Obesity is a well-known risk factor for cardiovascular disease [1–3]. Indeed, several studies have linked visceral adipose tissue to coronary artery disease and carotid atherosclerosis [4–6]. Although computed tomography (CT) is used to precisely and reliably identify visceral adipose tissue, it is expensive and accompanied by substantial radiation exposure. Anthropometric markers, such as body mass index (BMI), waist circumference (WC), and waist-to-hip ratio, have also been used, but these markers do not distinguish between subcutaneous and visceral fat mass, and their accuracy remains controversial in routine clinical practice.

Considering the limitations of the aforementioned methods for assessing visceral fat, Amato et al. developed the visceral adiposity index (VAI), which considers BMI, WC, triglycerides (TG), and high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol [7]. They validated the index using abdominal magnetic resonance imaging. VAI has been associated with insulin resistance, cardiovascular disease, cerebrovascular disease, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, and type 2 diabetes in Caucasian populations [7]. Additional indices have been developed for Asian populations because of differences in fat distributions across ethnic groups. For example, the Chinese VAI (CVAI) was developed for Chinese individuals [8], and our group developed the new VAI (NVAI) for Korean individuals [9]. NVAI was validated using nationally representative data and has more predictive accuracy for atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease risk than previously developed indices [9].

Coronary artery calcification is an important clinical feature of coronary atherosclerosis and implies the presence of cardiovascular disease [10]. The coronary artery calcification score (CACS) is a reliable, noninvasive index for assessing cardiovascular risk and is calculated using cardiac CT [11]. Similarly, brachial–ankle pulse wave velocity (baPWV) is a useful and noninvasive measure of arterial stiffness and another reliable surrogate of vascular damage and early atherosclerosis [12].

Although several studies have demonstrated a link between visceral adipose tissue (measured by abdominal CT) and coronary atherosclerosis or arterial stiffness, most of these studies were limited by their small sample size [13,14]. To date, only one study has reported a significant association between VAI and CACS, which was observed only in men [13]. Furthermore, the association of NVAI with coronary atherosclerosis and arterial stiffness are not fully understood. To address this, we examined whether NVAI is associated with CACS and baPWV in a large group of asymptomatic Korean individuals.

Methods

Study participants

In this retrospective, observational, multicenter registry study, we analyzed data from the Korea Initiatives on Coronary Artery Calcification registry between December 2012 and August 2016. This registry includes data from asymptomatic subjects who underwent a health examination at one of six healthcare centers in a self-referral setting in South Korea. Of the 93,707 people enrolled in the registry during the study period, we excluded individuals with a history of ischemic heart disease or stroke ($n = 5237$), or no coronary artery calcium scan results ($n = 856$). Also, we excluded 26,675 individuals with insufficient data for calculating NVAI including those who had no data of WC ($n = 26,613$), no data of MBP ($n = 53$), and no data of TG ($n = 9$). A total of 60,938 patients were included in the final analysis (Fig. 1). The study procedures were approved by the institutional review boards of each participating healthcare center, which waived the need for written informed consent because of the retrospective nature of the study.

Data collection

Data regarding the presence of hypertension, dyslipidemia, and diabetes mellitus, as well as smoking and exercise status, were recorded by an experienced physician. A smoker was defined as a current or previous smoker. An exerciser was defined as a person who exercised at least three times per week. Anthropometric parameters were measured in the standing position with patients wearing light indoor clothing and no shoes. BMI was calculated as weight (kg) divided by height (m)². WC was measured at the umbilicus. Blood pressure was measured using an automatic manometer after the patient rested for at least 5 min. Mean blood pressure (MBP) was calculated as $1/3$ systolic blood pressure + $2/3$ diastolic blood pressure. Blood samples were obtained from an antecubital vein after a minimum 8-h fasting period (following relevant guidelines and regulations) and were tested for low-density lipoprotein cholesterol, HDL cholesterol, TG, creatinine, and fasting glucose.

Coronary artery calcification score

The patients underwent coronary artery calcification testing using a >16-slice multi-sensor CT (MSCT) scanner (GE 64-slice Lightspeed, Siemens 16-slice Sensation, Philips Brilliance 256 iCT, or Philips Brilliance 40-channel multi-detector). Horiguchi et al. found a high agreement between 16-slice MSCT scanner and EBCT in CACS [15]. A study by Kopp et al. showed that using MSCT scanners resulted in less inter-scan variability compared to using EBCT [16]. CACS was calculated using the Agatston scoring system [17]. To obtain an accurate score, observers performed a modification procedure to remove calcium

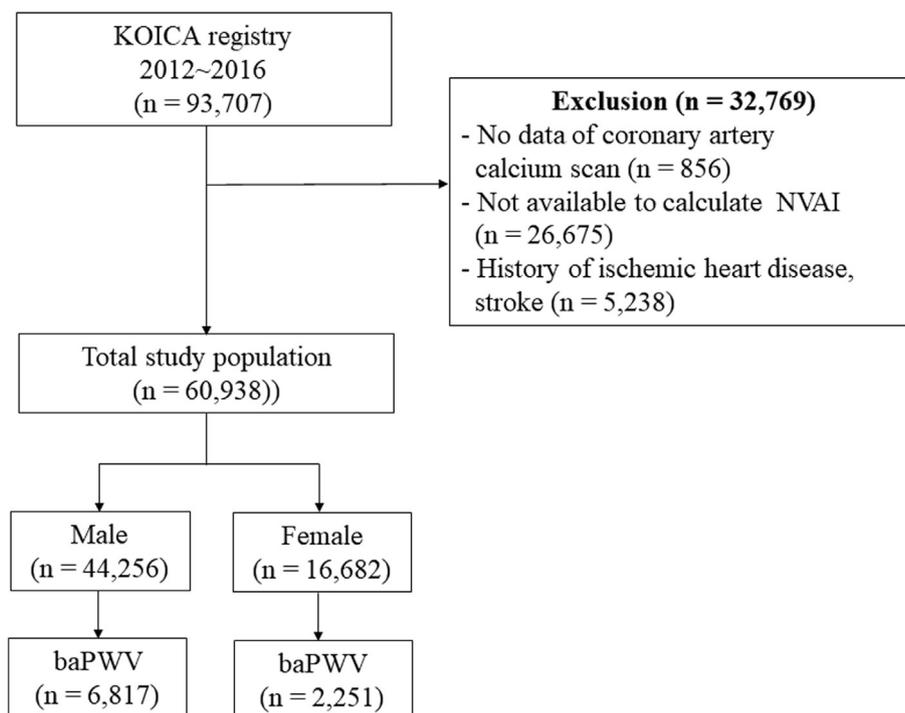


Figure 1 Study flowchart. NVAI, new visceral adiposity index; PWV, pulse wave velocity.

located outside the coronary arteries. CACS was categorized into four groups: very low risk, 0; low risk, 1–100; moderate risk, 101–400; and high risk, ≥ 401 . Also, prior studies have demonstrated excellent inter-scanning reproducibility for Agatston, mass, and volume score [18].

Brachial–ankle pulse wave velocity

Arterial stiffness was assessed by determining baPWV using an automatic waveform analyzer (Omron Healthcare Co, Ltd) and the volume plethysmographic method. Previous study validated the use of automatic waveform analyzer (Omron Healthcare) and demonstrated that this method increases the reproducibility of ABI estimation compared to manual measurement [19]. The highest baPWV value (on either the right or left) was used for analysis. baPWV results were categorized into three groups according to Japanese guidelines [12]: low risk, < 14 m/s; moderate risk, 14–17.9 m/s; and high risk, ≥ 18 m/s.

Visceral adiposity indices

NVAI was calculated as indicated below. For men,

$$1/[1 + \exp\{-(-21.858 + (0.099 \times \text{age}) + (0.10 \times \text{WC}) + (0.12 \times \text{MBP}) + (0.006 \times \text{TG}) + (-0.077 \times \text{HDL}))\}].$$

For women,

$$1/[1 + \exp\{-(-18.765 + (0.058 \times \text{age}) + (0.14 \times \text{WC}) + (0.057 \times \text{MBP}) + (0.004 \times \text{TG}) + (-0.057 \times \text{HDL}))\}].$$

VAI was calculated as

$$[\text{WC}/\{39.68 + (1.88 \times \text{BMI})\}] \times (\text{TG}/1.03) \times (1.31/\text{HDL}), \text{ for men and } [\text{WC}/\{36.58 + (1.89 \times \text{BMI})\}] \times (\text{TG}/0.81) \times (1.52/\text{HDL}), \text{ for women.}$$

For men, CVAI was calculated as

$$-267.93 + (0.68 \times \text{age}) + (0.03 \times \text{BMI}) + (4.00 \times \text{WC}) + (22 \times \log \text{TG}) - (16.32 \times \text{HDL}).$$

For women, CVAI was calculated as

$$-187.32 + (1.71 \times \text{age}) + (4.23 \times \text{BMI}) + (1.12 \times \text{WC}) + (39.76 \times \log \text{TG}) - (11.66 \times \text{HDL}).$$

Statistical analysis

Continuous variables are expressed as mean \pm standard deviation and categorical variables are expressed as number (percentage). Men and women were classified into tertiles (T1 to T3) based on their NVAI (men: T1, ≤ 0.27 ; T2, 0.28–0.75; and T3, > 0.75 ; women: T1, ≤ 0.02 , T2, 0.03–0.18; and T3, > 0.18). Patient characteristics according to NVAI tertiles were analyzed using weighted one-way analysis of variance for continuous variables and Chi-squared test for categorical variables. Pearson correlation was conducted between visceral fat markers and PWV or log-transformed CACS for the overall study population. Odds ratios (ORs) and 95% confidence intervals (CIs) for moderate to high risk CACS and PWV were calculated after adjusting for confounding variables, including BMI, diabetes mellitus, smoking status, exercise

status, and serum creatinine, across NVAI tertiles using multiple logistic regression analysis. Receiver operating characteristic (ROC) and area under the curve (AUC) analyses were performed without adjustment to compare the predictability of moderate to high risk coronary artery calcification and arterial stiffness between NVAI and previous indicators, such as BMI, WC, VAI, and CVAI. Comparison of ROCs was performed using the DeLong method. Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS (version 23.0; IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA) and R (version 3.1.3) software. P values < 0.05 were considered statistically significant.

Results

A total of 44,256 men and 16,682 women were included in the analysis (Table 1). In both men and women, WC, BMI, lipid profile values, fasting glucose, and prevalence of hypertension, diabetes mellitus, and dyslipidemia were higher in the highest NVAI tertile compared with the lowest NVAI tertile. Prevalence of moderate to high risk CACS, as well as moderate to high risk baPWV, also increased significantly as NVAI tertile increased (Fig. 2). On Pearson correlation analysis, age, WC, VAI, CVAI, and NVAI were significantly correlated with both baPWV and log-transformed CACS (Table 2). Age, WC, and NVAI positively correlated with both baPWV and log-transformed CACS, whereas VAI and CVAI were negatively correlated with log-transformed CACS.

Compared with the lowest tertile (reference group), the OR (95% CI) of the highest NVAI tertile for CACS >100 was 5.840 (5.101–6.686) for men and 18.916 (11.232–31.855)

for women. These ORs were adjusted for BMI, diabetes mellitus, smoking status, exercise status, and serum creatinine (Table 3). The OR (95% CI) of the highest NVAI tertile compared with the lower tertile for baPWV \geq 14 m/s was 7.594 (6.298–9.156) for men and 12.465 (8.366–18.571) for women, after adjusting for the same confounding factors.

The ability of NVAI to predict CACS >100 generated an AUC of 0.717 (95% CI, 0.710–0.723) for the total population, 0.677 (95% CI, 0.669–0.685) for men, and 0.785 (95% CI, 0.770–0.800) for women. These values were significantly higher than those for all other markers (Fig. 3, Table 4). Similar trends were observed for the ability of NVAI to predict baPWV \geq 14 m/s: the AUC was 0.679 (95% CI, 0.669–0.690) for the total population, 0.693 (95% CI, 0.681–0.706) for men, and 0.710 (95% CI, 0.689–0.731) for women. These values were also significantly higher than those for all other markers.

Discussion

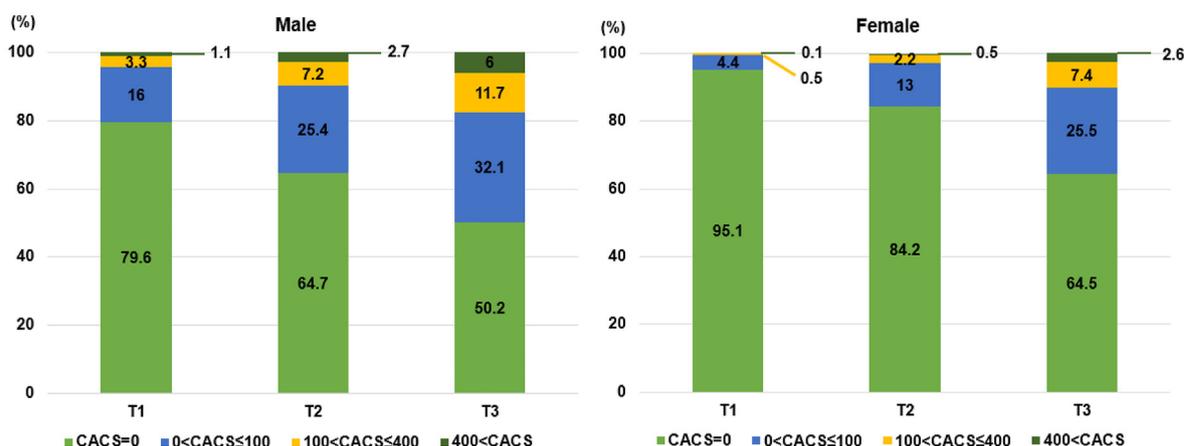
In this study, NVAI was independently associated with coronary artery calcification and arterial stiffness in an asymptomatic Korean population. NVAI predicted moderate to high risk of cardiovascular disease more accurately than other visceral adipose markers. Moreover, NVAI had the highest AUC among all visceral adipose markers, and the highest NVAI tertile was associated with significantly higher odds of presenting with moderate to high cardiovascular disease risk in both men and women. This trend remained significant after adjusting for confounding variables, including BMI, diabetes

Table 1 Clinical baseline characteristics of NVAI tertiles according to sex.

| Characteristics | Males | | | P-value | Females | | | P-value |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------|
| | NVAI Tertile 1 (\leq 0.27) | NVAI Tertile 2 (0.28–0.75) | NVAI Tertile 3 ($>$ 0.75) | | NVAI Tertile 1 (\leq 0.02) | NVAI Tertile 2 (0.03–0.18) | NVAI Tertile 3 ($>$ 0.18) | |
| Number | 14,765 | 14,771 | 14,765 | – | 5560 | 5563 | 5559 | – |
| Age, y | 46.4 \pm 8.9 | 51.7 \pm 8.6 | 55.9 \pm 9.3 | <0.001 | 44.5 \pm 9.0 | 53.7 \pm 8.0 | 59.7 \pm 8.4 | <0.001 |
| WC, cm | 82.5 \pm 6.2 | 87.6 \pm 5.9 | 92.3 \pm 7.1 | <0.001 | 70.9 \pm 5.5 | 79.1 \pm 5.0 | 88.1 \pm 7.3 | <0.001 |
| BMI, m/kg ² | 23.3 \pm 2.3 | 24.8 \pm 2.3 | 26.2 \pm 2.8 | <0.001 | 20.6 \pm 2.0 | 22.6 \pm 2.1 | 25.4 \pm 3.1 | <0.001 |
| Hypertension, n (%) | 1502 (10.2) | 3265 (22.1) | 5485 (37.1) | <0.001 | 204 (3.7) | 832 (15.0) | 1976 (35.5) | <0.001 |
| Dyslipidemia, n (%) | 1518 (10.3) | 2374 (16.1) | 2826 (19.1) | <0.001 | 274 (4.9) | 718 (12.9) | 1037 (18.7) | <0.001 |
| DM, n (%) | 714 (4.8) | 1273 (8.6) | 1758 (11.9) | <0.001 | 49 (0.9) | 177 (3.2) | 545 (9.8) | <0.001 |
| Smoker, n (%) | 8130 (55.1) | 8108 (54.9) | 7968 (54.0) | 0.036 | 1454 (26.2) | 2084 (37.5) | 2219 (39.9) | <0.001 |
| SBP (mm Hg) | 112.8 \pm 11.5 | 120.4 \pm 11.5 | 131.3 \pm 13.4 | <0.001 | 107.6 \pm 11.5 | 116.8 \pm 13.7 | 128.1 \pm 15.4 | <0.001 |
| DBP (mm Hg) | 70.8 \pm 8.3 | 77.6 \pm 8.2 | 84.8 \pm 9.3 | <0.001 | 65.5 \pm 8.7 | 71.6 \pm 9.7 | 77.6 \pm 10.1 | <0.001 |
| LDL-C (mg/dL) | 122.2 \pm 30.0 | 126.6 \pm 30.7 | 123.8 \pm 31.5 | <0.001 | 110.0 \pm 29.0 | 125.7 \pm 31.7 | 127.7 \pm 33.4 | <0.001 |
| HDL-C (mg/dL) | 57.7 \pm 13.0 | 49.3 \pm 10.0 | 44.0 \pm 8.7 | <0.001 | 68.9 \pm 14.0 | 58.4 \pm 11.6 | 50.2 \pm 10.2 | <0.001 |
| TG (mg/dL) | 103.4 \pm 46.7 | 137.5 \pm 66.9 | 185.4 \pm 118.9 | <0.001 | 72.6 \pm 28.7 | 95.3 \pm 44.8 | 133.6 \pm 77.3 | <0.001 |
| Total-C (mg/dL) | 196.4 \pm 32.9 | 198.0 \pm 34.4 | 197.2 \pm 36.0 | 0.001 | 194.1 \pm 33.9 | 203.5 \pm 35.4 | 203.4 \pm 37.3 | <0.001 |
| Creatinine (mg/dL) | 0.97 \pm 0.1 | 0.98 \pm 0.2 | 1.00 \pm 0.2 | <0.001 | 0.72 \pm 0.2 | 0.74 \pm 0.2 | 0.76 \pm 0.2 | <0.001 |
| Fasting glucose (mg/dL) | 94.8 \pm 16.4 | 100.7 \pm 20.3 | 106.5 \pm 24.9 | <0.001 | 88.4 \pm 10.3 | 93.0 \pm 14.4 | 101.6 \pm 23.7 | <0.001 |
| CACS >100 | 657 (4.4) | 1466 (9.9) | 2611 (17.7) | <0.001 | 31 (0.6) | 158 (2.8) | 558 (10.0) | <0.001 |
| baPWV \geq 14 m/s | 610 (4.1) | 1087 (7.4) | 1615 (10.9) | <0.001 | 151 (2.7) | 380 (6.8) | 488 (8.8) | <0.001 |

Values are mean \pm standard deviation or n (%). baPWV, brachial–ankle pulse wave velocity; BMI, body mass index; CACS, coronary artery calcium score; DBP, diastolic blood pressure; DM, diabetes mellitus; HDL-C, high-density lipoprotein cholesterol; LDL-C, low-density lipoprotein cholesterol; NVAI, new visceral adiposity index; SBP, systolic blood pressure; TG, triglycerides; Total-C, total cholesterol; WC, waist circumference.

(A) Coronary Artery Calcium Score



(B) Brachial-ankle Pulse Wave Velocity

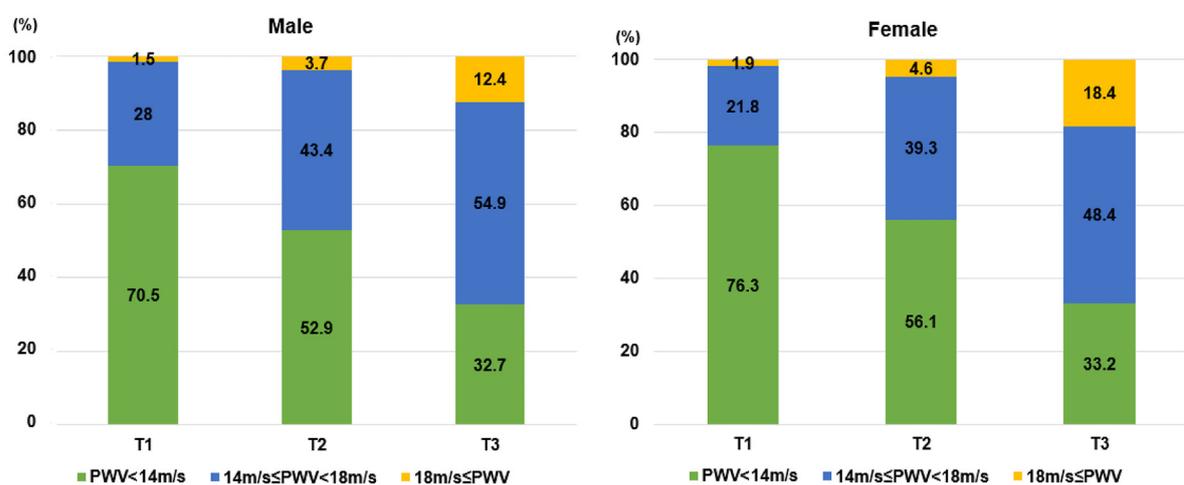


Figure 2 Coronary artery calcification score and brachial–ankle pulse wave velocity according to NVAI tertile. CACS, coronary artery calcium score; NVAI, new visceral adiposity index; PWV, pulse wave velocity.

mellitus, smoking status, exercise status, and serum creatinine. The relationship between NVAI and cardiovascular risk factors is more confirmatory than novel. However, because NVAI adjusts for age and blood

pressure, it offers enhanced predictability over other visceral adiposity markers. We will continue to improve on this advantage, and research more accurate and more advanced prediction models.

Table 2 Pearson correlation matrix of clinical variables.

| | Age | BMI | WC | VAI | CVAI | NVAI | Log (CACS) | baPWV |
|------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Age | 1 | | | | | | | |
| BMI | 0.024 ^a | 1 | | | | | | |
| WC | 0.177 ^a | 0.842 ^a | 1 | | | | | |
| VAI | −0.026 ^a | 0.381 ^a | 0.343 ^a | 1 | | | | |
| CVAI | 0.109 ^a | 0.272 ^a | 0.24 ^a | 0.514 ^a | 1 | | | |
| NVAI | 0.377 ^a | 0.557 ^a | 0.672 ^a | 0.478 ^a | 0.397 ^a | 1 | | |
| Log (CACS) | 0.277 ^a | 0.006 | 0.056 ^a | −0.024 ^a | −0.017 ^b | 0.154 ^a | 1 | |
| baPWV | 0.518 ^a | 0.015 | 0.094 ^a | 0.072 ^a | 0.043 ^a | 0.334 ^a | 0.247 ^a | 1 |

baPWV, brachial–ankle pulse wave velocity; BMI, body mass index; CACS, coronary artery calcium score; CVAI, Chinese visceral adiposity index; NVAI, new visceral adiposity index; SE, standard error; VAI, visceral adiposity index.

^a Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

^b Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

Table 3 Odds ratios for CACS >100 and baPWV ≥14 m/s according to NVAI tertiles.

| | Odds ratio (95% CI) for CACS >100 | | | Odds ratio (95% CI) for baPWV ≥14 m/s | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| | Tertile 1 | Tertile 2 | Tertile 3 | Tertile 1 | Tertile 2 | Tertile 3 |
| Male | | | | | | |
| Unadjusted | 1 | 2.366 (2.152–2.602) | 4.613 (4.221–5.042) | 1 | 2.122 (1.873–2.403) | 4.921 (4.334–5.588) |
| Model 1 ^a | 1 | 2.638 (2.394–2.907) | 5.641 (5.124–6.211) | 1 | 2.693 (2.362–3.070) | 8.237 (7.089–9.571) |
| Model 2 ^b | 1 | 2.712 (2.367–3.107) | 5.840 (5.101–6.686) | 1 | 2.531 (2.149–2.980) | 7.594 (6.298–9.156) |
| Female | | | | | | |
| Unadjusted | 1 | 5.214 (3.541–7.676) | 19.900 (13.833–28.629) | 1 | 2.532 (2.020–3.174) | 6.530 (5.145–8.286) |
| Model 1 ^a | 1 | 5.605 (3.792–8.284) | 23.552 (16.030–34.604) | 1 | 3.254 (2.562–4.132) | 13.170 (9.606–18.055) |
| Model 2 ^b | 1 | 4.490 (2.638–7.640) | 18.916 (11.232–31.855) | 1 | 2.980 (2.202–4.033) | 12.465 (8.366–18.571) |

baPWV, brachial–ankle pulse wave velocity; CACS, coronary artery calcium score; CI, confidence interval.

^a Adjusted for body mass index.

^b Adjusted for body mass index, diabetes mellitus, smoking status, and serum creatinine.

Visceral adipose tissue plays a key role in the development of atherosclerosis via the inflammatory atherothrombotic pathway [20]. Excess visceral adiposity leads to increased secretion of inflammatory cytokines (e.g., interleukin-6, tumor necrosis factor-alpha, plasminogen activator inhibitor type-1) and decreased secretion of the

protective adipokine, adiponectin, which is an anti-inflammatory and anti-atherogenic protein [21]. Many studies have demonstrated that visceral adipose tissue is more pathogenic than subcutaneous fat in terms of contributing to cardiometabolic complications [22]. Although CT is the gold standard for distinguishing

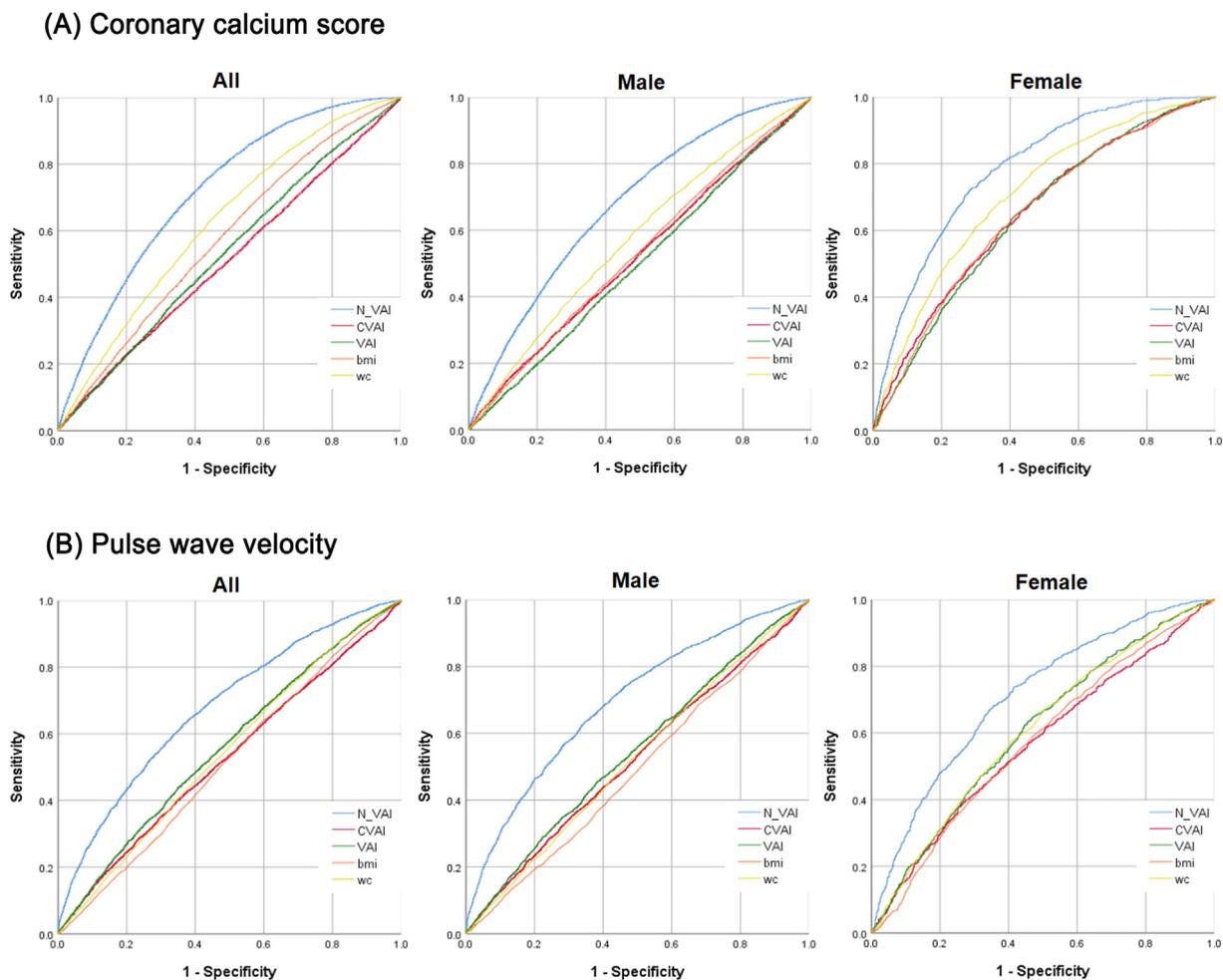


Figure 3 Receiver operating characteristic curves of NVAI and other visceral adiposity markers for coronary artery calcium score and brachial–ankle pulse wave velocity. BMI, body mass index; CVAI, Chinese visceral adiposity index; NVAI, new visceral adiposity index; VAI, visceral adiposity index; WC, waist circumference.

Table 4 Area under the curves of NVAI and other visceral adiposity markers for CACS >100 and baPWV \geq 14 m/s.

| | | All (n = 60,938) | | Males (n = 44,256) | | Females (n = 16,682) | |
|---------------------|------|------------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|
| | | AUC | 95% CI | AUC | 95% CI | AUC | 95% CI |
| CACS >100 | NVAI | 0.717 | 0.710–0.723 | 0.677 | 0.669–0.685 | 0.785 | 0.770–0.800 |
| | CVAI | 0.512 | 0.504–0.521 | 0.524 | 0.515–0.533 | 0.653 | 0.633–0.673 |
| | VAI | 0.534 | 0.526–0.542 | 0.501 | 0.493–0.510 | 0.644 | 0.625–0.663 |
| | BMI | 0.574 | 0.567–0.583 | 0.530 | 0.521–0.538 | 0.650 | 0.630–0.669 |
| | WC | 0.625 | 0.618–0.633 | 0.574 | 0.565–0.582 | 0.710 | 0.692–0.728 |
| baPWV \geq 14 m/s | NVAI | 0.679 | 0.669–0.690 | 0.693 | 0.681–0.706 | 0.710 | 0.689–0.731 |
| | CVAI | 0.528 | 0.516–0.540 | 0.523 | 0.509–0.537 | 0.571 | 0.547–0.594 |
| | VAI | 0.560 | 0.549–0.572 | 0.544 | 0.530–0.558 | 0.607 | 0.584–0.631 |
| | BMI | 0.516 | 0.504–0.528 | 0.492 | 0.478–0.506 | 0.574 | 0.550–0.598 |
| | WC | 0.545 | 0.533–0.557 | 0.524 | 0.510–0.538 | 0.607 | 0.584–0.630 |

AUC, area under the curve; baPWV, brachial–ankle pulse wave velocity; BMI, body mass index; CACS, coronary artery calcium score; CI, confidence interval; CVAI, Chinese visceral adiposity index; NVAI, new visceral adiposity index; VAI, visceral adiposity index; WC, waist circumference.

visceral adipose tissue, its disadvantages include high cost, radiation exposure, and lack of routine availability. Thus, indirect visceral adipose tissue markers, such as VAI, CVAI, and NVAI, have been developed. VAI was developed using data from 315 healthy Italian adults; it is a useful visceral adiposity marker for assessing cardiovascular disease risk [7]. CVAI was subsequently developed using data from 485 Chinese adults to account for ethnic differences [8]. We previously developed NVAI based on data from 539 healthy Korean adults and validated this index using nationwide population-based cross-sectional survey data (n = 29,235) [9]. NVAI exhibited high accuracy for predicting atherosclerotic cardiovascular events, including myocardial infarction, angina, and stroke, in our previous study [9] and had significantly higher prediction accuracy than CVAI in the present study. However, as NVAI was only recently developed, further studies are required to confirm its efficacy for predicting cardiovascular risk.

In this study, we used CACS and baPWV as markers of cardiovascular disease risk. The existence of calcification at one or more coronary arteries reflects the presence of atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease. Coronary artery calcification provides a reasonable estimate of total coronary atheroma, including noncalcified plaque burden [23]. Moderate to high CACS, defined as >100 in the present study, is associated with moderate atherosclerotic plaque burden [18,24,25]. In a recent study from Hungary, VAI was associated with a CACS >100, but this association was only detected in men [13]. Here, we found a significant association between NVAI and CACS >100 in both men and women. The discrepancy between studies could be attributed, in part, to ethnic differences.

A recent meta-analysis showed that a higher baPWV (as a measure of arterial stiffness) was associated with an increased risk of developing cardiovascular disease [26]. High baPWV is also associated with inflammation, vascular damage, and coronary atherosclerosis [27,28]. Although the reference value for baPWV differs according to blood

pressure and age, baPWV \geq 14 m/s is an established predictor of cardiovascular disease [12].

This study had limitations. First, because of its retrospective cross-sectional design, caution is advised when inferring causal and temporal relationships. Second, study participants were individuals who self-referred for health promotion screenings; therefore, the study population may not be representative of the general Korean population because of selection bias. Third, the study population consisted of a single ethnic cohort of Korean adults. Therefore, future studies are required to evaluate more heterogeneous populations. Finally, since the data were observational and collected using a cross-sectional design, baPWV was the only tool to assess arterial stiffness. Nevertheless, our study is unique in that we used a Korean-specific visceral adipose tissue measure, NVAI, to predict moderate to high cardiovascular disease risk based on both CACS and baPWV in a large population of asymptomatic adults.

In conclusion, this study provides novel evidence that NVAI is independently and positively associated with coronary calcification and arterial stiffness in asymptomatic Korean adults. Also, NVAI showed better prediction for coronary calcification and arterial stiffness compared to previous surrogate markers such as BMI, WC, VAI, and CVAI in Korean population.

Author contributions

Conceptualization, DH Son and HS Ha.; methodology, HS Lee.; software, DH Son.; validation, HS Ha, HS Lee and DH Han.; formal analysis, DH Son and HS Ha.; investigation, SY Choi, EJ Chun, HW Han, and SH Park.; resources, J Sung and HO Jung; data curation, HJ Chang.; writing—original draft preparation, DH Son and HS Ha.; writing—review and editing, JW Lee and HJ Chang.; visualization, HS Lee; supervision, JW Lee and HJ Chang; project administration, JW Lee and HJ Chang; funding acquisition, JW Lee and HJ Chang. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding

This work was supported by an Institute for Information & communications Technology Promotion (IITP) grant funded by the Korean government (MSIT) (2019-31-1293, Autonomous digital companion framework and application), as well as the Technology Innovation Program (20,002,781, A Platform for Prediction and Management of Health Risk Based on Personal Big Data and Lifelogging) funded by the Korean Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Energy.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgements

We thank all those who conducted the KOICA registry, as well as the participants in the survey.

References

- [1] Després JP. Body fat distribution and risk of cardiovascular disease: an update. *Circulation* 2012;126:1301–13.
- [2] Després JP, Lemieux I, Bergeron J, Pibarot P, Mathieu P, Larose E, et al. Abdominal obesity and the metabolic syndrome: contribution to global cardiometabolic risk. *Arterioscler Thromb Vasc Biol* 2008;28:1039–49.
- [3] Van Gaal LF, Mertens IL, De Block CE. Mechanisms linking obesity with cardiovascular disease. *Nature* 2006;444:875–80.
- [4] Fujimoto WY, Bergstrom RW, Boyko EJ, Chen KW, Leonetti DL, Newell-Morris L, et al. Visceral adiposity and incident coronary heart disease in Japanese-American men. The 10-year follow-up results of the Seattle Japanese-American Community Diabetes Study. *Diabetes Care* 1999;22:1808–12.
- [5] Nicklas BJ, Penninx BW, Cesari M, Kritchevsky SB, Newman AB, Kanaya AM, et al. Association of visceral adipose tissue with incident myocardial infarction in older men and women: the Health, Aging and Body Composition Study. *Am J Epidemiol* 2004;160:741–9.
- [6] Lear SA, Humphries KH, Kohli S, Frohlich JJ, Birmingham CL, Mancini GB. Visceral adipose tissue, a potential risk factor for carotid atherosclerosis: results of the Multicultural Community Health Assessment Trial (M-CHAT). *Stroke* 2007;38:2422–9.
- [7] Amato MC, Giordano C, Galia M, Criscimanna A, Vitabile S, Midiri M, et al. Visceral Adiposity Index: a reliable indicator of visceral fat function associated with cardiometabolic risk. *Diabetes Care* 2010;33:920–2.
- [8] Xia MF, Chen Y, Lin HD, Ma H, Li XM, Aleteng Q, et al. A indicator of visceral adipose dysfunction to evaluate metabolic health in adult Chinese. *Sci Rep* 2016;6:38214.
- [9] Oh SK, Cho AR, Kwon YJ, Lee HS, Lee JW. Derivation and validation of a new visceral adiposity index for predicting visceral obesity and cardiometabolic risk in a Korean population. *PLoS One* 2018;13:e0203787.
- [10] Otsuka F, Sakakura K, Yahagi K, Joner M, Virmani R. Has our understanding of calcification in human coronary atherosclerosis progressed? *Arterioscler Thromb Vasc Biol* 2014;34:724–36.
- [11] Alluri K, Joshi PH, Henry TS, Blumenthal RS, Nasir K, Blaha MJ. Scoring of coronary artery calcium scans: history, assumptions, current limitations, and future directions. *Atherosclerosis* 2015;239:109–17.
- [12] Yamashina A, Tomiyama H, Arai T, Hirose K, Koji Y, Hirayama Y, et al. Brachial-ankle pulse wave velocity as a marker of atherosclerotic vascular damage and cardiovascular risk. *Hypertens Res* 2003;26:615–22.
- [13] Bagyura Z, Kiss L, Lux Á, Csobay-Novák C, Jermendy Á L, Polgár L, et al. Association between coronary atherosclerosis and visceral adiposity index. *Nutr Metabol Cardiovasc Dis* 2020;30:796–803.
- [14] Yang F, Wang G, Wang Z, Sun M, Cao M, Zhu Z, et al. Visceral adiposity index may be a surrogate marker for the assessment of the effects of obesity on arterial stiffness. *PLoS One* 2014;9:e104365.
- [15] Horiguchi J, Yamamoto H, Akiyama Y, Marukawa K, Hirai N, Ito K. Coronary artery calcium scoring using 16-MDCT and a retrospective ECG-gating reconstruction algorithm. *AJR Am J Roentgenol* 2004;183:103–8.
- [16] Kopp AF, Ohnesorge B, Becker C, Schröder S, Heuschmid M, Küttner A, et al. Reproducibility and accuracy of coronary calcium measurements with multi-detector row versus electron-beam CT. *Radiology* 2002;225:113–9.
- [17] Agatston AS, Janowitz WR, Hildner FJ, Zusmer NR, Viamonte Jr M, Detrano R. Quantification of coronary artery calcium using ultrafast computed tomography. *J Am Coll Cardiol* 1990;15:827–32.
- [18] Greenland P, Blaha MJ, Budoff MJ, Erbel R, Watson KE. Coronary calcium score and cardiovascular risk. *J Am Coll Cardiol* 2018;72:434–47.
- [19] Richart T, Kuznetsova T, Wizner B, Struijker-Boudier HA, Staessen JA. Validation of automated oscillometric versus manual measurement of the ankle-brachial index. *Hypertens Res* 2009;32:884–8.
- [20] Després JP. Abdominal obesity and cardiovascular disease: is inflammation the missing link? *Can J Cardiol* 2012;28:642–52.
- [21] Neeland IJ, Ross R, Després JP, Matsuzawa Y, Yamashita S, Shai I, et al. Visceral and ectopic fat, atherosclerosis, and cardiometabolic disease: a position statement. *Lancet Diabetes Endocrinol* 2019;7:715–25.
- [22] Sam S. Differential effect of subcutaneous abdominal and visceral adipose tissue on cardiometabolic risk. *Horm Mol Biol Clin Invest* 2018;33.
- [23] Stary HC, Chandler AB, Dinsmore RE, Fuster V, Glagov S, Insull Jr W, et al. A definition of advanced types of atherosclerotic lesions and a histological classification of atherosclerosis. A report from the Committee on Vascular Lesions of the Council on Arteriosclerosis, American Heart Association. *Circulation* 1995;92:1355–74.
- [24] Budoff MJ, Gul KM. Expert review on coronary calcium. *Vasc Health Risk Manag* 2008;4:315–24.
- [25] Neves PO, Andrade J, Monção H. Coronary artery calcium score: current status. *Radiol Bras* 2017;50:182–9.
- [26] Ohkuma T, Ninomiya T, Tomiyama H, Kario K, Hoshida S, Kita Y, et al. Brachial-ankle pulse wave velocity and the risk prediction of cardiovascular disease: an individual participant data meta-analysis. *Hypertension* 2017;69:1045–52.
- [27] Lee YJ, Lee JW, Kim JK, Lee JH, Kim JH, Kwon KY, et al. Elevated white blood cell count is associated with arterial stiffness. *Nutr Metabol Cardiovasc Dis* 2009;19:3–7.
- [28] Sawabe M, Takahashi R, Matsushita S, Ozawa T, Arai T, Hamamatsu A, et al. Aortic pulse wave velocity and the degree of atherosclerosis in the elderly: a pathological study based on 304 autopsy cases. *Atherosclerosis* 2005;179:345–51.