Cerebrovascular Responses to Hypoxia and Hypocapnia in Ethiopian High Altitude Dwellers

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Background and Purpose—Cerebrovascular responses to hypoxia and hypocapnia in Peruvian altitude dwellers are impaired. This could contribute to the high incidence of altitude-related illness in Andeans. Ethiopian high altitude dwellers may show a different pattern of adaptation to high altitude. We aimed to examine cerebral reactivity to hypoxia and hypocapnia in healthy Ethiopian high altitude dwellers. Responses were compared with our previous data from Peruvians.

Methods—We studied 9 Ethiopian men at their permanent residence of 3622 m, and one day after descent to 794 m. We continuously recorded cerebral blood flow velocity (CBFV; transcranial Doppler). End-tidal oxygen (P_{ET}\text{O}_2) was decreased from 100 mm Hg to 50 mm Hg with end-tidal carbon dioxide (P_{ET}\text{CO}_2) clamped at the subject’s resting level. P_{ET}\text{CO}_2 was then manipulated by voluntary hyper- and hypoventilation, with P_{ET}\text{O}_2 clamped at 100 mm Hg (normoxia) and 50 mm Hg (hypoxia).

Results—During spontaneous breathing, P_{ET}\text{CO}_2 increased after descent, from 38.2 ± 1.0 mm Hg to 49.8 ± 0.6 mm Hg (P < 0.001). There was no significant response of CBFV to hypoxia at either high (−0.19 ± 3.1%) or low (1.1 ± 2.9%) altitudes. Cerebrovascular reactivity to normoxic hypocapnia at high and low altitudes was 3.92 ± 0.55% mm Hg⁻¹ and 3.09 ± 0.4% mm Hg⁻¹; reactivity to hypoxic hypocapnia was 4.83 ± 0.7% mm Hg⁻¹ and 2.82 ± 0.5% mm Hg⁻¹. Responses to hypoxic hypocapnia were significantly smaller at low altitude.

Conclusions—The cerebral circulation of Ethiopian high altitude dwellers is insensitive to hypoxia, unlike Peruvian high altitude dwellers. Cerebrovascular responses to P_{ET}\text{CO}_2 were greater in Ethiopians than Peruvians, particularly at high altitude. This, coupled with their high P_{ET}\text{CO}_2 levels, would lead to high cerebral blood flows, and may be advantageous for altitude living. (Stroke. 2008;39:336-342.)

Key Words: cerebrovascular responses ■ Ethiopia ■ high altitude ■ hypoxia

Individuals living permanently at high altitude must contend with chronic hypobaric hypoxia. Several compensatory mechanisms have evolved to enable these people to live and work in this inhospitable environment. In Andeans, these adaptations include raised hemoglobin concentrations with high hematocrits, large lung volumes, and blunted hypoxic ventilatory responses. In addition, our recent studies of healthy Peruvian high altitude dwellers (HA Peruvians) have demonstrated that they are hypoxic, hypocapnic, polycythemic (high packed cell volumes with normal plasma volumes), and have exceptionally high orthostatic tolerances. Peruvian altitude residents also have a high incidence of chronic mountain sickness (CMS), a maladaptation syndrome characterized by excessive hypoxia, abnormally high hematocrits, and various clinical manifestations including dyspnoea, insomnia, and symptoms of cerebral dysfunction. The incidence of CMS is dependent on altitude of residence; 28% of men living at 3510 m and 52% of men living at 4100 m in the Andes have CMS. It has emerged recently that Ethiopian altitude dwellers may use different adaptive strategies to hypoxia. Ethiopians living on high plateaux have lower hemoglobin levels and hence presumably lower hematocrits than Peruvians, and there are no reports of CMS in Ethiopians. The adaptations of Ethiopians may be more beneficial for high altitude living, which could explain the apparent absence of CMS in Ethiopia.

Many of the symptoms of CMS are thought to be attributable to cerebral hypoxia and possibly also hypocapnia. Hypoxia normally increases cerebral blood flow and hypocapnia causes marked decreases in flow. Because responses to hypocapnia are usually much greater than those to hypoxia,
Cerebrovascular Responses to Hypoxia

By adjusting the flow of inspiratory gases we clamped the subject’s P\text{\textsubscript{ET,CO\textsubscript{2}}} at his own resting level throughout. P\text{\textsubscript{ET,CO\textsubscript{2}}} was initially clamped at approximately 100 mm Hg for 10 minutes, until steady-state was reached. We then adjusted the inspired gases to decrease P\text{\textsubscript{ET,CO\textsubscript{2}}} in a single step to approximately 50 mm Hg for 10 minutes, until steady-state was reached. Cerebrovascular responses were calculated as steady-state percentage changes in CBFV that occurred in response to the step decrease in P\text{\textsubscript{ET,CO\textsubscript{2}}} during isocapnia. Data were analyzed offline and represent averages of 2 respiratory cycles. Responses were normalized to allow for small differences in P\text{\textsubscript{ET,CO\textsubscript{2}}} between subjects and to allow for comparison of data obtained at different altitudes:

\[
\text{CBFV response} = \frac{\text{(change CBFV)} / \text{change P\text{\textsubscript{ET,CO\textsubscript{2}}}} \times 50 \text{ mm Hg}}{	ext{50 mm Hg}}
\]

Cerebrovascular Responses to Hypocapnia

We assessed cerebrovascular reactivity to hypocapnia during normoxia (P\text{\textsubscript{ET,CO\textsubscript{2}}} 100 mm Hg) and hypoxia (P\text{\textsubscript{ET,CO\textsubscript{2}}} 50 mm Hg) at both altitudes. P\text{\textsubscript{ET,CO\textsubscript{2}}} was decreased over a range of values by asking the subject to hyperventilate. Cerebrovascular responses were calculated from the linear regression of the relationship between P\text{\textsubscript{ET,CO\textsubscript{2}}} and the percentage change in CBFV. Data were only included in the linear range and where the correlation coefficient describing the relationship was statistically significant. The gradient of the relationship was used as the measure of the vascular reactivity. Data were analyzed offline and represent averages of 2 complete respiratory cycles.

Statistics

All data are expressed as mean±SE. Within-group comparisons were performed using paired Student \(t\) tests. Comparisons with previously published data in Peruvian high altitude dwellers were performed using ANOVA with Tukey post-hoc tests. Correlations were examined using the Spearman correlation coefficient. Statistical significance was assumed at the level of \(P<0.05\). NS denotes “not significant”.

Results

One subject declined to descend to low altitude for the repeat studies, and so was excluded from all analyses. No subject showed evidence of CMS. The mean CMS score was 0.13±0.1. The mean age was 36.0±1.4 years, height was 1.67±0.2 m, and weight 53.0±1.1 kg. Hematocrit was 48.4±1.8%.

When studied at high altitude, resting values of systolic and diastolic arterial pressure were 128±3.2/69±2.7 mm Hg and heart rate was 64.8±2.8 bpm. These values were not significantly different after descent (130±3.8/64±2.8 mm Hg and 64.3±1.9 bpm). At high altitude, resting SaO\textsubscript{2} was 88±1.1%, P\text{\textsubscript{ET,CO\textsubscript{2}}} was 58.4±1.3 mm Hg, and P\text{\textsubscript{ET,O\textsubscript{2}}} was 38.2±1.0 mm Hg. After descent these values increased to 97±0.5%, 97.6±1.9 mm Hg and 49.8±0.6 mm Hg, all P<0.001.

Cerebrovascular Responses to Hypoxia

There was no significant effect of the hypoxic stimulus on blood pressure or heart rate. P\text{\textsubscript{ET,CO\textsubscript{2}}} was effectively clamped at approximately 100 mm Hg for 10 minutes, until steady-state was reached. We then adjusted the inspired gases to decrease P\text{\textsubscript{ET,CO\textsubscript{2}}} in a single step to approximately 50 mm Hg for 10 minutes, until steady-state was reached. Cerebrovascular responses were calculated as steady-state percentage changes in CBFV that occurred in response to the step decrease in P\text{\textsubscript{ET,CO\textsubscript{2}}} during isocapnia. Data were analyzed offline and represent averages of 2 respiratory cycles. Responses were normalized to allow for small differences in P\text{\textsubscript{ET,CO\textsubscript{2}}} between subjects and to allow for comparison of data obtained at different altitudes:
Cerebrovascular Responses to Hypocapnia

During hyperventilation, changes in $P_{ET}CO_2$ were minimized by adjustments of the inspired gases. However, despite this, hyperventilation resulted in concomitant changes in $P_{ET}CO_2$. At high altitude $P_{ET}CO_2$ increased by 29.4±6.3 mm Hg and 11.9±1.5 mm Hg during normoxia and hypoxia, respectively, and at low altitude by 10.8±3.1 mm Hg and 6.7±3.1 mm Hg. Changes in $P_{ET}CO_2$ induced by hyperventilation were similar in all conditions (high altitude: 16.3±0.9 mm Hg and 14.5±1.3 mm Hg; low altitude: 16.5±1.0 mm Hg and 15.9±1.9 mm Hg, during normoxia and hypoxia respectively). Blood pressures and heart rates were not significantly affected by hyperventilation during the high or low altitude studies either when performed under conditions of normoxia or hypoxia.

A representative example response of the cerebral circulation to hypocapnia during both hypoxia and normoxia in an Ethiopian subject at high altitude can be seen in Figure 1. All $P_{ET}CO_2$-CBFV gradients were significantly correlated. The mean correlation coefficients at the high and low altitude studies were 0.96±0.01 and 0.97±0.01 during normoxia and 0.95±0.01 and 0.93±0.02 during hypoxia.

The sensitivity of the cerebral circulation to hypocapnia during normoxia was similar at both altitudes (3.92±0.50%, mm Hg$^{-1}$ at high and 3.09±0.44%, mm Hg$^{-1}$ at low altitude).

The sensitivity of the cerebral circulation to hypocapnia during hypoxia was 4.83±0.72%, mm Hg$^{-1}$ at high altitude and 2.80±0.52%, mm Hg$^{-1}$ after descent to low altitude. The sensitivity to hypocapnia during hypoxia was significantly greater at high altitude ($P<0.01$).

To eliminate possible effects of alterations in mean arterial pressure (MAP) during hyperventilation on CBFV, we performed multiple regression analyses of CBFV, $P_{ET}CO_2$, and MAP. MAP was not significantly changed by the procedure and did not contribute significantly to CBFV during any protocol or at any altitude ($P>0.4$).

Discussion

This study revealed markedly different adaptations to high altitude living in Ethiopian highlanders compared with our recent reports in Peruvians. The principal findings of the present study are: (1) There was no evidence of CMS in Ethiopians as shown from their low CMS score; (2) The cerebral circulation of Ethiopians is completely insensitive to hypoxia, but reacts strongly to hypocapnia; (3) The relatively high $P_{ET}CO_2$ at high altitude implies that Ethiopians do not hyperventilate in response to hypoxia; (4) Ethiopians had higher SaO$_2$ both at high and low altitudes, than Peruvians. These findings confirm previous suggestions that the Ethiopian pattern of adaptation to altitude may be beneficial for high altitude living.

Incidence of CMS

Based on data from the Andes, we would expect to see evidence of CMS in approximately 30% of our Ethiopian cohort. This was not the case, and Ethiopian CMS scores (0.13±0.1) were even lower than previously reported in healthy Peruvians (7.0±4.0). Our data are consistent with the lack of evidence of CMS based on hemoglobin levels and SaO$_2$ reported in earlier population-based studies from the Ethiopian highlands, and suggests that Ethiopians are better adapted for high altitude living.

Comparison of Responses in Ethiopians and Peruvians

Responses in Ethiopians were compared with those previously reported in HA and CMS Peruvians, using the same methods, at their resident altitude of 4338 m, and the day after descent to near sea level (150 m). Subject characteristics can be seen in Table 1. The Peruvian subjects were resident at a slightly higher altitude. CMS scores were higher in CMS Peruvians than the other 2 groups, and were lowest in Ethiopians; all but 1 subject scored 0. Hematocrits were similar in Ethiopians and HA Peruvians, and lower than in CMS Peruvians.

Resting Cardiovascular and Respiratory Parameters

Resting cardiovascular and respiratory parameters for the 3 groups at high and low altitude are shown in Table 2. The tendency for higher blood pressures and faster heart rates in Ethiopians compared with Peruvians has been noted before and probably reflects altered cardiovascular autonomic regu-
Cerebrovascular responses to hypoxia and hypocapnia

The cerebral circulation of Ethiopians is insensitive to hypoxia, unlike that of Peruvians. In Ethiopians, cerebral responses to exogenous NO donors after descent, particularly at high altitude, suggest that this is not attributable to NO-mediated vasodilatation. Ethiopians demonstrate altitude-dependent responses to exogenous NO donors, whereby responses at high altitude are robust, but at low altitude are small. Conversely, in Peruvians, responses to NO donors were small at high altitude and larger at sea level. In Peruvians, this increased cerebral sensitivity at low altitude is consistent with the increased response to hypoxia at low altitude. In Ethiopians there was no increase in reactivity to NO donors after descent, in fact the opposite occurred, and no increase in the responsiveness to hypoxia.

Implications of These Results for Life at High Altitudes

For effective adaptation to high altitude living it would be advantageous to maximize oxygen delivery to the brain. Hypoxia increases CBFV, and thus increases oxygen delivery to brain tissue during hypoxic stress. Insensitivity to hypoxia, as seen in Ethiopians, may therefore appear disadvantageous to high altitude living. However, the hypoxic stimulus at a given altitude is much less in Ethiopians, because their SaO₂ are not reduced as much as expected for the altitude (Table 1; see also Beall et al14). Furthermore, the cerebral circulation of Ethiopians is much more sensitive to changes in CO₂ than oxygen, the vasodilatation to hypercapnia is greater in Ethiopians than Peruvians, and this is coupled with considerably higher PETCO₂ in Ethiopians than Peruvians. Taken together, this would promote marked cerebral vasodilatation in Ethiopians, and thus their responses appear to be advantageous.

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However, the insensitivity to hypoxia at both high and low altitude, despite robust cerebral responses to exogenous NO donors in Ethiopians, suggests that this is not mediated by differences in NO responsiveness.

In Peruvians, this increased cerebral sensitivity at low altitude is consistent with the increased response to hypoxia at low altitude. In Ethiopians there was no increase in reactivity to NO donors after descent, in fact the opposite occurred, and no increase in the responsiveness to hypoxia. However, the insensitivity to hypoxia at both high and low altitude, despite robust cerebral responses to exogenous NO donors in Ethiopians, suggests that this is not mediated by differences in NO responsiveness. It seems more

Table 2. Resting Supine Cardiorespiratory Variables in the Three Groups, Breathing Ambient Air, During High and Low Altitude Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Ethiopian</th>
<th>HA Peruvian</th>
<th>CMS Peruvian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SAP, mm Hg</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128±3.2</td>
<td>130±3.8</td>
<td>113.7±3.0</td>
<td>110.7±4.6†††</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAP, mm Hg</td>
<td>69±2.7</td>
<td>62±2.8</td>
<td>73.1±2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAP, mm Hg</td>
<td>88±2.7</td>
<td>86±1.7</td>
<td>86.4±2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR, bpm</td>
<td>64.8±2.8</td>
<td>64.3±1.9</td>
<td>58.9±2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P_{ET}CO₂, mm Hg</td>
<td>58.4±1.3</td>
<td>97.2±1.9***</td>
<td>50.4±1.2††††</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P_{ET}O₂, mm Hg</td>
<td>38.2±1.0</td>
<td>49.8±0.6***</td>
<td>27.3±1.2††††</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SaO₂, %</td>
<td>88±1.1</td>
<td>97.0±0.5***</td>
<td>86±1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SAP indicates systolic arterial pressure; DAP, diastolic arterial pressure; MAP, mean arterial pressure; HR, heart rate; P_{ET}CO₂, end-tidal carbon dioxide levels; SaO₂, arterial oxygen saturations. Data in Peruvians taken from references 5, 6, 13.

Significant differences from high and low altitude: *P<0.05; **P<0.01; ***P<0.001. Significant difference from Ethiopians: †P<0.05; ‡P<0.01. Significant difference from CMS Peruvians: ††P<0.001. Significant difference from high altitude shown by *; †††P<0.001. Significant difference from CMS Peruvians: ††P<0.01. Significant difference compared with Ethiopians shown by †P<0.01.
PETco₂ may be associated with endothelial dysfunction. The cerebral circulation of Ethiopians was more reactive to hypocapnia than that of Peruvians, particularly when studied at high altitude and in conjunction with hypoxia. Given that the relationship between P₆₇CO₂ and CBFV is linear and highly significant, this suggests that, in addition to larger reductions in CBFV during hypocapnia in Ethiopians, there would also be larger increases in CBFV during hypocapnia in Ethiopians. Peruvians had lower P₆₇CO₂ levels both at high and low altitude, and thus reduced sensitivity of the cerebral circulation to P₆₇CO₂ may be beneficial to minimize cerebral constriction during hyperventilation-induced hypocapnia. Ethiopians had markedly elevated P₆₇CO₂ both at high and low altitude. In this instance, increased sensitivity of the cerebral circulation may serve to maximize the cerebral vasodilatation induced by (relative) hypocapnia, and maintain CBFV and thus oxygen delivery during altitude-induced reductions in inspired oxygen. Indeed, the resting CBFV at high altitude in Ethiopians (59.9 ± 3.7 cm sec⁻¹) was greater than HA Peruvians (50.7 ± 4.5 cm sec⁻¹) and was markedly increased compared with CMS Peruvians (33.8 ± 2.8 cm sec⁻¹; *P < 0.001). Resting CBFV was also reduced in CMS Peruvians compared with HA Peruvians (*P < 0.01). The mechanisms underlying the different sensitivities to alterations in P₆₇CO₂ in these different altitude populations are uncertain, but may also be related to NO. Indeed, reduced cerebral reactivity to P₆₇CO₂ may be associated with endothelial dysfunction. The extreme polycythaemia in Peruvian subjects would be expected to lead to increased shear stress and possible endothelial damage, which could promote reduced cerebral sensitivity to P₆₇CO₂.

Thus, decreased sensitivity to hypoxia and increased sensitivity to hypocapnia in Ethiopians may serve to protect CBFV at altitude, and appears to represent further evidence of beneficial adaptations to high altitude living in Ethiopians. Given that the symptoms of CMS are thought to be ultimately attributable to cerebral hypoxia, these alterations in cerebral autoregulatory control, coupled with a higher CBFV and SaO₂, may explain the apparent lack of CMS on the Ethiopian plateau.

**Respiratory Adaptations**

Ethiopians do not appear to hyperventilate in response to hypoxia, as demonstrated by markedly elevated P₆₇CO₂ levels at high altitude, unlike Peruvians. After descent to low altitude, Ethiopians had further increases in P₆₇CO₂, whereas Peruvians continued to hyperventilate and P₆₇CO₂ did not increase. These findings are in direct contrast to previous reports that Peruvians with CMS have blunted hypoxic ventilatory responses, which is proposed to underlie their predisposition to CMS. Based on the P₆₇CO₂ levels, it appears that both groups of Peruvians actually chronically hyperventilate. Indeed, P₆₇CO₂ levels in HA and CMS Peruvians, both at their permanent high altitude residence and after 24 hours of normoxia after descent to sea level, are lower than those of Peruvians born and living at sea level. PETco₂ levels in Sherpa at 4243 m are intermediate to those of Peruvians and Ethiopians, and both Sherpa and Buddhist monks from the Himalayas are reported to use respiratory patterns similar to yoga breathing that help maintain higher SaO₂ and lower hematocrits. Furthermore, lowland dwellers acutely exposed to high altitude who practice slow yogic breathing maintain higher SaO₂ levels. It was proposed, therefore, that these slow diaphragmatic breathing techniques may be more efficient. The breathing patterns in the Ethiopian subjects are unknown, but could potentially explain some of the adaptive differences between these high altitude dwelling groups.

Not only do Peruvians hyperventilate in response to high altitude hypoxia, but they are also at increased risk of periodic breathing and apnoea, particularly during sleep, which may be attributable to their reduced cerebral reactivity to

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**Figure 3. Cerebrovascular responses to normoxic hypocapnia.** There were no significant differences in the cerebral reactivity to hypocapnia during normoxia in the 3 groups when tested at high or low altitude. Responses tended to be greater (NS) in the Peruvian subjects. There was no significant effect of descent to low altitude in the 3 groups. Data in Peruvians taken from Norcliffe et al. **Figure 4. Cerebrovascular responses to hypoxic hypocapnia.** The cerebral reactivity to hypocapnia during hypoxia was greater in Ethiopians than Peruvians when tested at high altitude (*P < 0.05). After descent to low altitude, responses were significantly reduced in all 3 groups (*P < 0.05; **P < 0.01). Responses tended to be greater (NS) in the Ethiopian subjects at low altitude. Data in Peruvians taken from Norcliffe et al.
hypocapnia. Indeed, low baseline CBFV (as seen in Peruvian high altitude dwellers), is suggested to contribute to chronic hyperventilation via increased local stimulation of central chemoreceptors attributable to reduced perfusion and lack of clearance of [H\(^+\)].

**Mechanisms Underlying Different Patterns of Adaptation to Altitude**

There are likely to be genetic differences that influence the pattern of altitude adaptation in different populations. One suggestion is that African altitude dwellers should be better adapted for high altitude living than South Americans because humans arrived in the Americas at a later date, and their migration to high altitude was delayed by lack of population pressures. Certainly, Africans seem to be well adapted to high altitude living, as seen from the absence of CMS. This is supported by our recent report that they had greater cerebrovascular responses to exogenous NO than Peruvians, which was suggested to be an index of fitness for altitude life. Consistent with this, many examples of genetic adaptation have been suggested, although actual genetic data are few because these adaptations are complicated quantitative traits affected by many different gene loci and are highly variable depending on age, sex, and other environmental factors.

**Clinical Relevance**

Stroke is the third most common cause of death in the USA. Central sleep apnoea is linked to both chronic hypoxia and stroke, and patients with recurrent transient ischemic attacks have reduced cerebral CO\(_2\) reactivity. In addition, NO is implicated in cerebrovascular disease and stroke at sea level and likely mediates altered cerebral responses to hypoxia and hypocapnia. Thus, the alterations in cerebral reactivity to hypoxia and hypocapnia described in this study not only have implications for the 100 million people living and working at high altitude, but may also be of relevance in the clinic with regard to hypoxic cardiovascular disease and stroke.

**Limitations**

The principle limitation of this study is that these field studies, carried out on 2 continents, preclude, because of constraints imposed by geography, exact matching of altitudes of residence. The Ethiopian high altitude studies were performed at a slightly lower altitude, and thus higher P\(_{\text{a}}\)O\(_2\) than the Peruvian studies, corresponding to an increased inspired oxygen tension (PiO\(_2\)) of approximately 10 mm Hg (Ethiopian PiO\(_2\)=94.9 mm Hg; Peruvian PiO\(_2\)=84.6 mm Hg). This would affect baseline end-tidal gas concentrations and may also have affected some of the blood and cardiovascular variables in the Ethiopian subjects. However, we feel that this is unlikely to fully explain the differences seen, particularly the absence of CMS in Ethiopians, because Andeans living at even lower altitudes (2700m, PiO\(_2\)=104 mm Hg) still have much higher CMS scores than the Ethiopians in this study. Furthermore, even after descent to near sea level, the Ethiopians still had consistently elevated P\(_{\text{ET}}\)CO\(_2\) levels and SaO\(_2\) compared with Peruvians, suggesting that differences in altitude alone cannot explain the different responses in the Ethiopian and Peruvian populations. Similarly, because of geographical constraints, the low altitude studies were not matched exactly for altitude. However, because the effects of altitude are not linear and are negligible below 1500 m, any differences in responses when retested after descent in Peruvians (150 m) and Ethiopians (794 m) could not be explained by this small altitude difference. Finally, as expected because of the altitude differences, the ambient temperature of the sea level studies, both in Peru and Ethiopia, was greater than the high altitude studies, and this could potentially influence the changes occurring after descent. The temperatures at comparable altitudes, however, were similar in Peru and Ethiopia.

Although the control of P\(_{\text{ET}}\)CO\(_2\) was excellent throughout this study, the control of P\(_{\text{ET}}\)O\(_2\) during the hyperventilation studies was technically more difficult, and P\(_{\text{ET}}\)O\(_2\) tended to rise during these protocols. However, given that the cerebral circulation of our Ethiopians was insensitive to manipulation of P\(_{\text{ET}}\)O\(_2\), this is not likely to have influenced our observations. In the Peruvian studies the control of both P\(_{\text{ET}}\)CO\(_2\) and P\(_{\text{ET}}\)O\(_2\) was excellent, and P\(_{\text{ET}}\)O\(_2\) did not rise during hyperventilation.

**Summary**

We present further evidence for increased fitness for high altitude living in Ethiopian altitude dwellers. There was no evidence of CMS in Ethiopia, evidenced by increased SaO\(_2\), and reduced hematocrit and CMS scores. The cerebral circulation of Ethiopians showed increased responsiveness to CO\(_2\), but was insensitive to hypoxia. This is the opposite to that of Peruvians. Ethiopians did not hyperventilate in response to high altitude hypoxia, unlike Peruvians. Increased cerebral sensitivity to P\(_{\text{ET}}\)CO\(_2\) coupled with high P\(_{\text{ET}}\)CO\(_2\) levels, may help to protect cerebral perfusion in Ethiopians. These data have great implications for people living and working at high altitude and may be of relevance in the clinic with regard to hypoxic cardiovascular disease and stroke.

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**Disclosures**

None.

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